Common Ground: Discursive Practices and the Building of Trust Among Participants of Executive Training Program

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Common Ground: Discursive Practices and the Building of Trust Among Participants of Executive Training Program

Abstract
In traditional academic instruction, the classroom may be viewed as a kind of speech community composed of an expert (the teacher) and those who are at various stages of socializing into the cultural models and norms of that community (students), although this is an overly simplistic and unilinear view. In executive development programs, students are already socialized into a professional community of importance to them, and many are pursuing learning to further develop skills to be applied in the organizational contexts in which they are already embedded and deeply invested. This dissertation begins with the conceptualization that a classroom is essentially a transient social network with multiple functions, and one of these functions is to create or facilitate student access to resources that generate social capital in other networks. Additionally, a classroom is structurally a type of organization and socially a type of community. As an organization, the classroom confers identities to its participants. As a social network, the classroom can be characterized as a type of speech community. Trust is “an extensive co-belonging in a social category” (Agha, December 6, 2010, personal communication)—or community—that is represented linguistically through co-constructed and mutually-enforced social and professional registers. This dissertation argues that trust and the co-construction of a classroom register are in a reflexive relationship. Together, they form the dynamic processes of social positioning and interactional footing, ideally leading to register-mediated alignment among students and instructors. It is this register-mediated alignment that I refer to as “common ground.” Thus, the overarching question this dissertation has sought to answer is: How does the enactment of certain practices move a classroom from being simply a transient social network of diverse individuals to becoming also a speech community? Findings indicate that training and development professionals facilitate the co-construction of a learning community first by dedicating an extended period of time to get to know participants. This period of building the learning community also introduces and establishes a communicative norm of recontextualizing participant speech and reframing contexts over an extended period.

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COMMON GROUND: DISCURSIVE PRACTICES AND THE BUILDING OF TRUST
AMONG PARTICIPANTS OF EXECUTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Christopher Allen Thomas

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in

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude goes out to my wife, Erika, and two daughters, Emily and Kaylee. It is their love, dedication, and perseverance that have seen me through these several years.
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This dissertation would never have been completed without the help, support, and advice of several people. Dr. Charles E. Dwyer has been my mentor and inspiration since my first day of class at the University of Pennsylvania. His counsel has kept me going through this process.

I would also like to acknowledge my dissertation chair and advisor, Dr. Marybeth Gasman. Dr. Gasman is the patron saint of lost causes. Without her guidance and perseverance, I would not have made it.
ABSTRACT

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Christopher Allen Thomas
Marybeth Gasman

In traditional academic instruction, the classroom may be viewed as a kind of speech community composed of an expert (the teacher) and those who are at various stages of socializing into the cultural models and norms of that community (students), although this is an overly simplistic and unilinear view. In executive development programs, students are already socialized into a professional community of importance to them, and many are pursuing learning to further develop skills to be applied in the organizational contexts in which they are already embedded and deeply invested. This dissertation begins with the conceptualization that a classroom is essentially a transient social network with multiple functions, and one of these functions is to create or facilitate student access to resources that generate social capital in other networks. Additionally, a classroom is structurally a type of organization and socially a type of community. As an organization, the classroom confers identities to its participants. As a social network, the classroom can be characterized as a type of speech community. Trust is “an extensive co-belonging in a social category” (Agha, December 6, 2010, personal communication)—or community—that is represented linguistically through co-constructed and mutually-enforced social and professional registers. This dissertation argues that trust and the co-construction of a classroom register are in a reflexive relationship. Together, they form the dynamic processes of social positioning and interactional footing, ideally leading to
register-mediated alignment among students and instructors. It is this register-mediated alignment that I refer to as “common ground.” Thus, the overarching question this dissertation has sought to answer is: How does the enactment of certain practices move a classroom from being simply a transient social network of diverse individuals to becoming also a speech community? Findings indicate that training and development professionals facilitate the co-construction of a learning community first by dedicating an extended period of time to get to know participants. This period of building the learning community also introduces and establishes a communicative norm of recontextualizing participant speech and reframing contexts over an extended period.
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Chapter 1

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In traditional academic instruction, the classroom may be viewed as a kind of speech community composed of an expert (the teacher) and those who are at various stages of socializing into the cultural models and norms of that community (students), although this is an overly simplistic and unilinear view. Moreover, not just one relevant set of norms exists. There exist many potentially relevant ones, both in the traditional classroom and in executive training programs. However, a number of important differences between traditional and executive students are worth considering. Traditional students are pre-service; few have ever worked in their intended profession. They have little or no access to a professional community or its norms save through teachers and textbooks. In executive training, students are already socialized into a professional community of importance to them, and many are pursuing learning to further develop skills to be applied in the organizational contexts in which they are already embedded and deeply invested.

This dissertation begins with the conceptualization that a classroom (physical or virtual) is essentially a transient social network with multiple functions, and one of these functions is to create or facilitate student access to resources that generate social capital in other networks. Additionally, a classroom is structurally a type of organization and socially a type of community. As an organization, the classroom confers identities to its
participants. As a social network, the classroom can be characterized as a type of speech community.

Trust, as it is used in this dissertation, can be understood as “an extensive co-belonging in a social category” (Agha, December 6, 2010, personal communication)—or community—that is represented linguistically through co-constructed and mutually enforced social and professional registers. I will argue that trust and the co-construction of a classroom register are in a reflexive relationship. Together, they form the dynamic processes of social positioning and interactional footing, ideally leading to register-mediated alignment among students and instructors. It is this register-mediated alignment that I refer to as “common ground.” Thus, the overarching question this dissertation seeks to answer is: How does the enactment of certain practices move a classroom from being simply a transient social network of diverse individuals to become also a speech community?

The Classroom: A Diversity of Motives

While an idealistic approach to education views the process as serving the specific function of learning, one cannot expect that all students and faculty in any particular program or classroom are actually dedicated to that purpose. There are many motives and goals that have little to do with education. A student may be working towards a certificate or degree to obtain status, especially when the training is offered at a prestigious university such as an Ivy League school. Another goal is increased pay, and the student may have very little desire to learn new skills—for instance, when a particular promotion requires the employee to hold a master’s or a doctorate degree. Students may be focused on networking—building relationships with instructors and fellow students. If a company
pays tuition, the student’s goal may simply be to take advantage of a high dollar value perk. Or, as the case may be, the student does not even have a choice and must attend as part of a corporate initiative. Students may be motivated to enroll in and attend a program to use it as an ostensibly legitimate holiday from work and family. In short, the motives are many and diverse. One cannot assume “We all came here to learn.” Even in the case that all the students are highly motivated to learn, the value each places on that learning is likely to be different. Similarly, professors may not be so idealistically motivated by a calling to teach. Teachers of executive education courses are often compensated handsomely for work that occurs over shorter periods of time and less likely than traditional teachers to be rigorously evaluated. On the other hand, many professors find executive education highly rewarding for other than financial reasons. On many occasions, professors have told me that they find delivering education to working professionals who have a desire to learn and apply that learning to their work lives the most rewarding aspect of their teaching careers.

Executive students are typically much older—often a similar age to the instructors teaching them. Because they are mid-career and have selected the education format to facilitate career development but not to interfere with work, executive students (or their companies) pay a premium for their education and have some well-formed, specific, and often expectations of what they and their companies will get out of the investment that differ from traditional students.

**About the Executive Education Format**

The executive format of education is designed for delivery of education to working professionals, whether through an academic university, a corporate university, or
a private training program. Although the structure of executive training varies considerably from program to program, many utilize blended learning formats that include synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication, educational contexts that have been understudied in terms of discourse analysis yet lend themselves easily to data collection. Face-to-face instruction in traditional classroom settings occurs over short periods of time, often one or two weeks per block—or less—so as not to interfere with students’ professional work. During these short periods when students meet in the physical classroom, the classes (or modules) are often led by many different faculty members from a variety of academic or professional traditions.

While traditional sources of money have been through the government, research and program grants, gifts, and income generated from university endowments, these may not be sufficient to cover all costs. Traditional students take up a lot of resources. Many traditional students attend on scholarships and don’t pay tuition. In short, traditional students and programs may cost the school money. To help bring in revenue, many schools have turned to executive programs. The brevity of programs, coupled with the fact that top dollar is paid for attendance, means that such programs are drivers of profit for schools that are often strapped for cash.

**Cultural Barriers**

As a teaching assistant (TA) and as a researcher in executive education formats, I have had the opportunity to interact with students and faculty over three years. During that time, I have often heard it said in various ways by students that they and the faculty seem to speak two different languages and see the world very differently from one another. Based on my own experiences, this would seem to be true; a great deal of my
time as a TA has been spent in looking for ways to translate and explain instructor and academic requirements to students who were professional learning leaders in their own right—people who felt that the views of learning of instructors did not fit the day-to-day exigencies of organizational life. Furthermore, while I noticed camaraderie among most of the students, I also noticed that they also tended to group together in predictable gender, occupational, and cohort-oriented patterns. I also noted a salient lack of trust between students and instructors, and it seemed that these patterns influenced the affective and empirical stances that participants in the learning environment adopted, and negative stances (attitudes) seemed to be associated with student and instructor levels of involvement, as well as a decrease of ability to absorb information from others. For these reasons, I believe that a qualitative, discourse-analytic approach would be useful to understanding language, trust, and classroom dynamics.

Multiple Stakeholders

To further complicate matters, executive training tends to have multiple stakeholders, many of whom function at cross-purposes. Two of these stakeholders are, of course, the individual students and the instructors. As mentioned above, students may have a variety of reasons—or a combination of reasons—for their participation. For the instructors, this may also be the case. A typical executive development program is often led by one lead instructor, and other instructors are called upon to teach or facilitate individual modules. Ideally, the selection of instructors for these modules might be based upon ability and specific interest in the particular topic, students, and program. The reality tends to be less idealistic, and instructors are tapped for the role based on availability and the fact that teaching a module tends to pay well for the short amount of
time and effort that it requires. Depending on how instructors are chosen, those who teach the different modules may not interact with one another in the planning or delivery of the executive training.

In addition to instructors and students, organizations are important stakeholders. Companies may have sent the student or paid for attendance. In the former case, the leaders of the company who have sent the employee or paid for attendance may have specific expectations about the work to be done and the outcome of the training. Even if this is not the case, the student may have specific expectations as to how the program is to influence his or her work situation, whether this is through the additional status that comes with program completion or through application of knowledge gained from the program. Other organizations that are stakeholders include the administration of the college offering the program as well as the university within which the college is situated.

A Brief Note on Evaluation

Evaluation of the quality of executive development programs may be lacking for a number of reasons. These include the brief duration of programs; the fact that there are multiple stakeholders with different academic, professional, and personal expectations; and the use of instructors on the basis of availability. Additionally, because students come from professional backgrounds and are not socialized into academic life, an intensely rigorous academic program may result in a high failure rate, leading potential students to avoid the program. If the program fails to meet students’ expectations or needs, there may be a threat to the program’s long-term viability. For instance, during economic downturns such as the one experienced beginning in 2007, if the return on investment in executive development programs is in doubt, students and organizations
may be less willing to lay out cash for attendance. In sum, evaluation of the quality and
effectiveness of executive programs may be difficult, but it is necessary to ensure that the
needs of paying stakeholders are met.
Chapter 2

A MODEL OF THE CLASSROOM

This chapter creates a model of the executive education classroom as a series of four interconnected spaces: a social network, an interactional space, a semiotic space, and an institutional space. These four spaces are captured in Figure 1:

**A Classroom Is a Variety of Interconnected Spaces**

**A Social Network:**
A classroom is a social network formed around the explicit ideology of dissemination of information. Language is a form of social capital, as well as a form of currency for access to social capital.

**An Interactional Space:**
A classroom is an interactional space in which participants are engaged in a continual process of identity work through the process of interactional footing, played out in classroom discourse.

**A Semiotic Space:**
A classroom is a semiotic space characterized by processes of enregisterment. Discourse registers are differentially valued by participants, while register-mediated alignment is a process through which a speech community is formed.

**An Institutional Space:**
A classroom is a social institution, with explicit ideologies and implicit hegemonies that frame the interactional space, determine the distribution of power, and organize interactions. Other institutions are introduced to the classroom space through intertextuality.

Figure 1: Model of the Classroom

**Social Networks**

A classroom can be understood as a transient social network that begins at a defined start point with the group of students and instructors coming together for the transfer of information through instruction. Similarly, the social network of the classroom can be perceived as ending after the instruction has terminated. It may be the case that
connections developed in the classroom are absorbed in the personal and professional networks of the individuals and developed long after instruction is over. Furthermore, as participants are socialized into new ways of thinking, communicating, and interacting, they are introduced into the social network of a speech community, where they develop relationships and assimilate into and reinforce communicative norms. Underlying all this is a form of trust—a collective sense of responsibility for maintaining and enforcing the norms that structure cooperative communication.

**Social Networks and Social Capital**

A classroom can be understood as a transient social network designed for the purpose of granting accelerated access to information to be used elsewhere. Executive training programs differ from traditional classroom environments in that in most cases the networks tend to be more temporary. Additionally, in executive programs, learners have a specific business network in which to build social capital via the acquisition of resources in the learning network.

Social capital can be understood as the resources embedded in a social network to which an individual has access. Nan Lin (2001) offers perhaps the most straightforward and succinct explanation of the core premise behind theories of social capital: “investment in social relations with expected returns” (Lin, 2001: 6). “Investment” presupposes an expectation of return. Lin offers four explanations as to why investment in social relations results in an expectation of returns:

1. It facilitates the flow of information.
2. It may positively influence decisions made by others.
3. It can enhance an individual’s standing within a network, and hence the social
capital the individual has to offer to others.

4. It reinforces identity and recognition.

Points 2–4 can be subsumed under the first point, as each represents effects of the useful
flow of information. Knowledge creation is the process of assimilating information.

Taking this view, one can say that information is a resource external to the individual and
knowledge is a resource internal to the individual. Access to information that exists as
knowledge in the minds of others requires a connection to that person in a network. Such
a network can connect the recipient to the source via language artifacts (e.g., books,
scrolls, etc.), via communication media (e.g., videos, telephones, mail), or through direct
contact. All three require a common language form for successful transmission of
information to occur, but the first two forms of information transfer do not require the
knowledge source to be part of the individual’s social network. In fact, the knowledge
source could be dead centuries or millennia before the information is transferred to a
particular person. Here, it is social networks I am concerned with. Investment in social
relations can facilitate the flow of information through increased communicative contact
with others who provide access to that information. As Lin (2001) notes, some people are
better positioned location-wise and hierarchically to be better informed about a wide
range of things that may be of use to others, as in the case of instructors or facilitators of
training programs.

**Language and Social Capital**

Pool (1991), arguing an economics-based approach to understanding language
diffusion within populations, showed that a language increases in value the more people
speak it. A person’s language reach is equivalent to the proportion of a population with whom one shares a language repertoire. Translated into the language of social capital, each person has a language benefit that is an increasing function of the individual’s language reach (Pool, 1991). As more people speak a language, the pool of knowledge one has access to through use of that language as a communicative medium also increases. Furthermore, projects such as socialized education become more feasible as the supply of teachers increases and the cost of textbooks decreases. Perhaps even more importantly, a language with a large body of speakers very easily accommodates innovation, allowing it to be expressed explicitly because language and thought reflexively interact (Whorf, 1956). The more speakers, the more reflexive interaction there is between the language and various ideas. In short, the more speakers there are, the more communication occurs. Although the cognitive costs of learning a language do not decrease, the potential benefits increase as the population of speakers grows. However, this does not mean that a single, world-dominant “language” is an inevitable outcome, because language repertoires are arguably always context dependent (Agha, 2007); broader contexts, by definition, are not locally embedded ones.

**Language as Social Capital and As Access to Social Capital**

Building on the relationship between communication and information and on Bourdieu’s (1984) idea of cultural capital, Thomas Clark (2004) proposes the idea of language as social capital. Clark goes on to explore six major themes in social capital theory, each of which relies on language. However, Clark does not make a clear distinction between social capital and human capital, as does Burt (2001). Following Burt, it would appear that language itself represents a form of human capital. Language seen as
a set of communicative skills only would contribute to human capital. However, language is not simply an individual skill or talent—it is a social construct. Language itself provides the most complete access to social norms, conventions, and cultural information, as well as providing access to other information possessed by its speakers.

In his discussion of register formation (register here refers to a particular style of language usage by a subpopulation within a wider language community), Agha (2007) identifies three ways in which using the “right” language can increase social capital:

- It allows the speaker access to social practices.
- Registers (or varieties of languages) provide the speaker with the ability to judge the appropriateness of certain types of activities.
- Some registers are institutionally more valued than others.

English may be more valued as a language of global communication in the wider organization, but the language(s) and registers in a localized community, such as a classroom, are more highly valued in that particular locale for a variety of social and work-related activities. Agha’s ideas here are substantively identical to Lin’s (2001) list of the value of social capital.

**Social Capital as Communicative Competence**

To “hear” a message or “see” information in ways consistent with speakers, a hearer must be acculturated to the network, be it a social, business, or classroom network, in which a unique set of communicative norms are dominant. This process takes time, as does any process of acculturation.

Language proficiency is a blend of linguistic and communicative skills. The set of linguistic and communicative skills that make up language proficiency in sociolinguistic
literature is termed *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1972). Communicative skills necessary for competency in any language variety include tacit knowledge of a wide range of cultural and interactive norms shared by the community of speakers. Hymes (1972) notes that communicative competence is not merely grammatical competence. It also includes knowledge of appropriateness of speech, how much to speak, when not to speak, what to speak about, and in what manner. Such skills are more familiarly mentioned in organizational learning literature as schemas or mental maps, which consist of tacit knowledge individuals acquire regarding how to conduct themselves in social and communicative interactions, as well as how to encode and interpret verbal and nonverbal behavior in culturally meaningful ways. Hymes’ (1972) description of the acquisition of communicative competence is of a learning spiral: “The acquisition of such competency is, of course, fed by social experience, needs, and motives, and issues in action that is itself a renewed source of motives, needs, experience” (278).

In general, the development of new communicative competencies requires one to develop intercultural communication strategies (Gumperz, 1972) and to have prolonged interaction in a community, which shares a set of communicative norms, or schema. In sociolinguistic literature, these communities are called speech communities, while in management literature they may be termed social or business networks. Individuals belong to multiple speech communities, or networks, and each community is defined by norms, which are the tacitly understood rules that drive the schemas community members use to guide their verbal and nonverbal behavior in interactions. Hymes (1972), drawing on Goodenough (1957) and Searle (1967), elaborates on the importance of social
interaction in these networks and how that interaction builds the communicative schema necessary for building competence:

From a finite experience of speech acts and their interdependence with sociocultural features, [speakers] develop a general theory of the speaking appropriate in their community, which they employ, like other forms of tacit cultural knowledge (competence) in conducting and interpreting social life (Hymes, 1972: 279).

Hymes (1972) was concerned with making the distinction between linguistic and communicative competence. Linguistic competence has to do with knowledge of syntax, semantics, and phonology. One could have perfect knowledge of these topics as they pertain to a language, yet still fail to be able to effectively communicate—to express oneself and accurately interpret the self-expression of others. To give an example, thousands of people worldwide have an expert knowledge of Latin. They can read the texts written in Latin, can conjugate verbs properly, and have no problem with articulation. However, this is a far cry from actually carrying on a conversation in the ancient tongue with a native speaker, a Roman who used it for all his or her daily activities. For these things, one would need to be immersed in the culture, to know firsthand the unwritten conventions, to participate in social discourse, to understand how the language can be bent to the will of the speaker, to create devices such as metaphor, irony, and hyperbole—in short, one would have to be acculturated. But one does not have to use dead languages to make this point. The same is true of any language, and indeed, different varieties of a single language, or registers. In fact, Agha (2007) argues that it is not possible to study the grammatical organization of a language separately from the
organization of its register(s): “Attempts to do so tend to conflate ‘grammaticality’ with pragmatic infelicity, and, more to the point, tend to obscure the system of social relations embedded in the denotational norms of the language” (Agha, 2007: 143).

In the context of executive development, without a sufficiently high level of interaction in the classroom network of a training program, executive learners may not be capable of developing a general theory of the communicative behavior, and may not be able to fully produce and interpret the cultural behavior appropriate to the environment. Without this tacit knowledge, learners may continue to have limited linguistic, cultural, and semiotic awareness, finding themselves not only incapable of absorbing relevant knowledge available in the learning program, but also engaging in avoidable miscommunications that can lead to conflict and open hostility. For example, in intercultural relations within global business networks, Beechler and Bird (1999) document numerous examples of miscommunications between Japanese expatriates and non-Japanese employees. Such miscommunications had little to do with linguistic competence and typically stemmed from one or more participants’ lack of communicative competence in the particular setting. If executive students are to be effective knowledge transfer agents between the training program and their respective companies, the development of communicative competence as it pertains to the classroom is crucial.

While there is a lack of research on acculturation processes in executive training programs, a direct analogy can be drawn from the business practice of expatriation, in which an employee is transferred temporarily to a foreign subsidiary. An expatriate employee who does not become centrally embedded in the social networks of his
organization may take considerable time to become acculturated to the organization’s context and may never acquire a level of acculturation needed to operate successfully in the assignment. Although some expatriates’ linguistic competence is, of necessity, well-developed, they often may have difficulty developing the communicative competence necessary for interaction in the new culture. For instance, acculturation brings with it tacit knowledge of semiotic forms, which are largely unconscious, and define and limit much of one’s social and psychological experiences (Mertz & Parmentier, 1985). According to Lucy, “limits to linguistic and semiotic awareness have much broader significance in accounting for human action, and the general limitations to semiotic awareness will interact with other factors limiting consciousness to produce complex outcomes” (Lucy, 1993: 28). In other words, much of the knowledge one has access to from one’s environment is restricted by limits imposed due to a lack of semiotic and linguistic awareness. The knowledge is available, yet remains invisible to the expatriate without a clear comprehension of the local culture. Expatriates have difficulty accessing local knowledge and consequently may be unable to act in ways that they perceive are in the best interests of their organizations.

**Social Networks Can Act As Amplifiers of Perceptions**

One characteristic of social networks is their ability to amplify or dampen the power of individual perceptions such as trust. For instance, if a student has some small amount of trust in an instructor or facilitator, by itself that amount may have no power to change the relationship. But by drawing on the perceptions of others, an individual’s perception of trust can be amplified to the point of changing his or her affective stance and increasing that student’s level of attentiveness, receptiveness, and cooperation. The
same can go for other affective stances such as respect. Of course, negative emotions can be amplified by drawing on the collective perceptions of others in the network as well, resulting in a decrease in attentiveness, receptiveness, and cooperation. Additionally, an individual’s perception may be met with the perceptions of others in the network that contradict it. In this case, the effect may result in a dampening of a particular perception. This quality of social networks can be linked to the social nature of learning. It can also be linked to the concept of social capital.

**An Interactional Space**

A classroom is an interactional space where participants enact a variety of communicative registers and engage in interactional footing. Interactional footing is like a dance, where interaction is grounded in a complex series of expectations. Underlying this interactional dance of meaning making and interpreting is trust, or expectations based on more than mere probability. Furthermore, these expectations can only partially be predetermined. Much of meaning making occurs in the moment, as behaviors and their interpretations add layers of meaning and influence subsequent behaviors. If this process of meaning making were based purely on an interpretation of the current state, it could be interpreted as a Markov process—a process in which the probability of the next state (or behavior) is determined solely on the properties of the current state. As the following section will show, this is not the case.

**Registers and Footing**

Halliday and Hasan argue that function is a fundamental principle, not simply a use, of language. Their analysis identifies the four components of the semantic system of every language system as experiential, interpersonal, logical, and textual, which they
describe as “strands of meaning…interwoven in the fabric of discourse” (Halliday & Hasan, 1989: 23). Agha uses the metaphor of “lamination” to indicate that each layer of meaning is not only additive but essentially inseparable once applied (Agha, 2007). Every instance of language use from this perspective is inherently multifunctional.

Ways of speaking among groups can vary in terms of prosodic features (e.g., pitch, intonation), syntactic features (e.g., tense formation), lexical repertoire, and such things as timing and volume. A register is, broadly speaking, a subset of language used by people who share communicative norms, often for a particular purpose or within particular social, regional, or functional contexts. The social functions of language, according to Halliday (1973), determine the forms that ‘diatypic’ language varieties, or registers, take. A community’s register range, then, is determined by the variety of uses to which language is put. Uses more commonly enacted within a community will be present in the register repertoires of most, if not all, individuals. Some registers are ‘rarified’ and are ‘designed’ for highly specific uses allowed by a select few people. Registers may not ‘confer’ identity, but they do act as badges or emblems that signify the validity of a particular social identity (Agha, 2007). For example, secret and semi-secret societies rely on a restricted set of linguistic and nonlinguistic signs to delineate a boundary between them and outsiders. Another example is the so-called “gay-dar” that allows homosexuals to identify potential partners. The display of these signs, or a combination of them, at the right time and in the right order signals membership within the group. The use and recognition of these signs also explains how group members who have never met frequently and serendipitously run into each other.
In his discussion of register formation, Agha (2007) identifies three ways in which using the “right” language can increase an individual’s access to social power. First, it allows the speaker access to social practices. Second, registers provide the speaker with the ability to judge the appropriateness of certain types of activities. Finally, some registers are institutionally more valued than others. A person’s register range “equips a person with portable emblems of identity, sometimes permitting distinctive modes of access to particular zones of social life” (Agha, 2007: 146). Thus, this range influences what activities one is legitimately able to participate in, as well as social positioning. Social positioning is a process in which recognizable categories of identity become applied to an individual, either through implicit or explicit means (Wortham 2004). “The social positioning of self and others” is identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005: 586). However, the use of a particular register is not necessarily felicitous. The con artist or the actor might spend considerable time perfecting a register in order to appear to have legitimate access to a particular activity or social positioning. Alternatively, a register could be mocked, explicitly violated, or accentuated for a variety of reasons, such as rejecting a social position or making fun of others (Agha, 2007). Distinct registers may also be mixed in cases where emblems of two or more identities serve useful functions.

Biber and Finegan (1994) argue that the term register “entails text and implies a relationship between text and context” (p. 7). In order for a register to be a salient manifestation of a language variety, there must exist samples of text, whether written or spoken, in which unique constructions are present. In addition, these constructions are linked to particular contexts in which they communicate, as Agha (2007) points out, “categories of personhood” and relationships between participants, as well as between
participants and things, ideas, activities, etc. Insomuch as an individual speaker has access to a repertoire of registers, or ways of speaking, she also has a variety of ways of enacting and presenting different identities, depending on the context of communication, the topic, and the communicative intent. To the extent that the selection of a register contributes to the identity and the ideology that one wishes to present, the choice of register and the form it takes is listener directed. For example, many medical doctors to communicate their knowledge and expertise use vastly different ways of speaking and behaving. One of these is reserved for patients and is described in phrases such as “bedside manner,” while others are used with other medical professionals—perhaps one way of speaking with general practitioners, another for communication with nurses, and still another for interaction with colleagues in the same specialty.

Hymes’ (1984) preferred term for register variation is “verbal repertoire,” but the concept remains essentially the same: “No human being talks the same way all the time” (p. 44). He goes on to argue that verbal repertoire must be the focus of inquiry if one is to understand the abilities of individuals and of communities. Such an undertaking would focus on a cross-section of standard linguistic features, as well as include ethnographic inquiry to connect registers to roles, statuses, activities, settings, “and other characteristic features of voice and discourse” (Hymes 1984: 44). Such an enterprise is, in essence, a sociolinguistic inquiry into the division of labor in society. Ure (1982) argues: “Each language community has its own system of registers…corresponding to the range of activities in which its members normally engage” (p. 5). A shared register between co-communicants would indicate a shared identity in relation to an activity, while the use of different registers would suggest that co-communicants are engaged in fundamentally
different activities. In other words, the differential use of language is indicative of engagement in different types of labor. This is very much in line with the views of Charles Goodwin over the years (e.g., 1994, 1996, 2000, 2007), who has argued that language and the meanings it indexes can only be understood as a situated practice.

**Code Switching**

Blom and Gumperz (1986) identify two different types of code switching in their research. The first type they termed *situational switching*, and it involved alteration in dialect in an individual’s speech that correlated with contextual features in the social situation. Context here referred to the people, the social setting, and the temporal boundaries of the event. For example, a code switch might indicate changes in participants, where a new participant has an outsider status. In other words, changes in the context might result in the introduction of people who are not ratified users of a particular register. Ratification includes more than the ability to speak or understand the language variety, it also includes implicit permissions to participate, which are given or withheld by other in-group members. In other cases, switching indicates a shift between home and workplace. Bringing one’s work home includes more than doing work at home, it also includes the thought and speech patterns that accompany work. Leaving work at work, then, means switching to a different register outside of the work environment. In the Japanese language, these kinds of switches are part of a system referred to as *omote/ura* (roughly translated as outside/inside). Certain words, behaviors, and entire registers are used only in specific company and settings (Bachnik, 1992; Maynard, 1997).

The other kind of switching that Blom and Gumperz (1986) refer to is *metaphorical switching*, where shifts occur because the topic or subject matter changes as
opposed to the social situation. Agha (2007) disagrees with this division of situational and metaphorical switching because it is based on the assumption that “social and referential features of talk” are independent—that they are not linked in some way. Agha argues that they are “intimately linked” in many ways (p. 141). Shifts in talk that involve the same people, contexts, and temporal bounding are endemic of the process of interactional footing. These shifts, Goffman (1974, 1981) would attribute to changes in frame. Agha (2007) notes that these shifts in referential stances are displays that create different levels of alignment among participants:

“A register exists as a bounded object only to a degree set by sociohistorical processes of enregisterment, processes whereby its forms and values become differentiable from the rest of the language (i.e., recognizable as distinct, linked to typifiable social personae or practices) for a given population of speakers” (p. 168).

Hence, shifts in register would indicate shifts in context in the sense that different sociohistorical processes, ideologies, and, as a result, communicative norms and interaction patterns come to bear on the talk.

**Register-Mediated Alignment and Footing**

Registers are dynamic; they are reflexive cultural models of communication (Agha, 2002, 2005). Encounters with registers allow individuals to establish footing with co-communicants and to develop alignment through the establishment and reproduction of communicative norms, the sharing of information, and the strengthening of social ties. **Register-mediated alignment** is a process of group homophilization centered on the functions of language in a social network (i.e., speech community). *Footing*, Goffman
(1974) proposes, is a process that results in speaker-hearer alignment. The process is reflexive, and changes in footing occur continually throughout any communicative event. Not only do speakers and hearers align to each other, they do so in a way that is mediated by a continually changing context. These changes in footing, inasmuch as they are successful in developing and maintaining speaker-hearer alignment, are processes of *enregisterment* in which communicative norms are identified, established, and maintained.

Goffman (1981) tells a story of an encounter in the early 1970s between President Nixon and a young White House press journalist named Helen Thomas. At the end of the press conference, the president spoke directly to Ms. Thomas about the fact that she was wearing pants and how it reminded him of being in China. Nixon, a conservative, preferred women in dresses, and he ordered her in a friendly way that that was the attire he expected from her in the future. Goffman’s point in the recounting of this story is that certain people, by virtue of their position, have the power to change the entire nature of an encounter. In this case, President Nixon was, without effort, able to take Helen Thomas out of her professional role (that of a journalist covering the news) and recast her in a sexual, domestic one. The president had the power to choose the discourse—to change the current one to another that suited his values.

What President Nixon did was change the footing. One of the reasons he could do this is because of the power he held. But another reason was that he was indexing a social definition that women must always be ready to receive comments on their “appearance” (Goffman, 1981: 125). While social changes over the past few decades have taken much of that power away from US heads of state, the social definition certainly still exists. One
need look no further than the 2008 presidential primary and general election, when both Hilary Clinton and Sarah Palin both received daily commentaries on many of the news channels regarding what they wore and how they looked. Their clothes became part of the campaign. While they were talking about policies, all somebody from a newspaper, magazine, or television show had to do to change the footing from one of politics to one of trifles was to mention Hilary’s pantsuit or Sarah’s wardrobe—to change them from being participants in a discourse to being the object of it. Is it not surprising, given this fact, that neither made it to the office they were seeking?

The ability to choose discourses is a form of power. The other person in an encounter must constantly be on the ready to accommodate the shift in discourse—to find their footing—while at the same time may have no power to rebel from it. While frames are “the mental structures that shape the way we see the world” (Lakoff, 2004), footing is the public stance we, as participants in a communicative interaction, take with regard to others, to how the discourse is framed, and to the semantic and emotional content of an utterance (Levinson, 1988). Within a particular frame, footing is the “relationship between the objects and/or elements within the frame, their footing vis-à-vis one another” (Wine, 2008: 2).

Goffman (1981) explains that when a person changes footing, it is also implied that along with it is a change in the alignment the person takes with regard to themselves, others, and the management in “the production or reception of an utterance” (p. 128). These changes in alignment can be seen in code switches—the switch from one variety of language to another—which Goffman argues is a constant feature of just about any stretch of talk. Code switching from this perspective does not refer only to the switching
from one major language to another, such as from French to English. It includes switching from a professional register to small talk, or when signaling movement from one type of participation structure to another, such as from a lecture to a discussion, even though both might utilize a particular academic register. Gumperz (1976) found code switching everywhere he looked. What’s more, in most cases, participants seldom pay any attention to the fact that they are making these sometimes significant switches in code and changes in footing, each keeping up with the other as if absolutely nothing were amiss. Taking this perspective, then, I argue that register-mediated alignment occurs both within and across the different registers appropriated into a discourse. It involves keeping up with code switches as they occur. It is a skill participants bring with them to communicative encounters, but it is also a skill that participants learn during the course of each individual encounter as they make sense of the unfolding discourse.

Central to Goffman’s (1981) discussion to footing is the recognition that the traditional speaker/hearer dichotomy is insufficient to understand participation structures. For instance, recipients of speech can fall into multiple categories. They can be official or unofficial. An official recipient is one who has been, through some form of interactional mechanism, “ratified,” as an intended recipient—as someone who is being addressed. Furthermore, in talk that occurs in groups, there may be a host of addressees constituting an audience. Even then, there are times where a speaker selects one or two persons as an intended focused recipient, such as when a professor singles out a student in class. The other participants retain their ratified status, but are being indirectly addressed. A bystander or overhearer may also be indirectly addressed, as when a communication is tailored for their consumption. Unratified participants may be bystanders within earshot.
or visual range who are not privy to the communication but nevertheless can overhear or eavesdrop, especially in a public sphere. In many cases, these unratified participants have an effect on the communication.

A common characteristic of certain types of groups (and to some degree a description of all groups) is the tendency for them to bifurcate, to divide into subgroups, each with their own talk occurring. Another possibility is for there to be sideplay, crossplay, and byplay. These are “subordinated” forms of communication of particular types. Sideplay is when bystanders talk with each other, often in quiet tones, in order to avoid breaking into the talk of ratified participants. Crossplay occurs when there is communication between ratified participants and bystanders. Byplay occurs when communication involves a subset of those participants who are ratified. These forms of subordinated communication may occur openly or may be surreptitious, in which case Goffman (1981) terms it as “collusion.” Various mechanisms can be employed here, including loading words, phrases, and gestures with multiple meanings that may be interpreted differently by the different ratified and unratified participants, as in the case with innuendo.

Goffman (1981) offers a framework for the study of footing in this dynamic scenario of communication that he has presented. The first step is to take a metaphorical “cross-section” of the communicative interaction. Then, each member of the interaction is identified in terms of his or her ratified or unratified participation status in relation to the particular utterance. The grouping of all the participants and their individual statuses is a “participation framework” for the cross-section of speech. To this can be added contextual features, such as the different frames of reference that are indexed by the
discourse and by the talk at that particular moment within the discourse, as well as the institutions that give structure to the whole interaction.

**Participant Ratification**

Goffman (1981), lecturing on the topic of lecture as a form of talk, begins by calling attention to the institutional frame that links speaker and audience, and then he notes that certain topics are not typically permissible. Violating these permissions is a breach of contract, in Goffman’s view. In other words, ratified participants in a talk that occurs within a particular institutional frame are bound by a contract. I suggest that this contract, if it exists, is akin to what Searle (1969) terms “felicity conditions.” These felicity conditions are restrictions that require users of particular speech acts to meet certain criteria, such as having authority to perform the act. For instance, only a restricted set of professionals (e.g., clergy, justices of the peace) are allowed to proclaim two individuals married, and even then, other contextual conditions must be met, such as willingness on the part of the two people getting married, submission to applicable laws (e.g., a marriage license, blood tests), the presence of witnesses, and so forth. When these conditions are met, institutional authority exists and the utterance has power.

However, breaking frame, or violating the institutionally-ratified contract, carries with it important functions and meanings. It calls attention to the frame itself, allowing participants to examine and potentially call into question the validity of the frame, the power for which the institution is a place marker, and the organization of the institution itself. For these reasons, breaking frame—violating the “contract”—can become a valuable tool for facilitating learning. Stepping outside of the contract can provide the
instructor and the students with the means to collectively work toward development of alternative ways of interacting that may be better suited to the learning context.

Institutions bear on the participation structure and the communication in an interaction. The classroom is an organization designed for the purpose of serving the values and meeting the needs of the participants. This organization takes place within different levels or layers of institution, such as the particular education or training program, the school, and the social institution of education. I argue that to a certain degree, each of these layers of institution has a hand in ratifying participation in the organization called a classroom. Indeed, their effect in ratifying participants and participation structures is so powerful that the participants themselves may end up doing very little work to ratify themselves or others in the ensuing talk, slipping easily into the roles that have been preordained for them as students and instructors. However, it is my contention that in adult learning such as executive development programs, the different institutions brought to bear on the organization can be a source of conflict. This is especially true because the institutions themselves may be in conflict. When this occurs, neither professors nor students can afford to rely on these institutions to ratify participation. Rather, the classroom should be seen as necessarily co-constructed by the participants in recognition of the different institutions that may be in conflict. The need for a mindful process of ratification can be seen in the relative presence or absence of certain types of interactions in classrooms. In particular, the use of extended introductions is something that is often used in the introductory phase of graduate-level courses and adult learning programs, but is relatively less used in undergraduate courses, and is largely absent in primary and secondary education. I would argue that the presence of the
activity is reflective of a need to acknowledge the identities, motivations, values, and other facets of the different participants, and is itself an explicit means of self- and other-ratification—an “onboarding” process to the classroom organization, if you will.

Program instructors use different methods of ratifying participants. One program in Wharton Executive Education has a five-hour introduction process for a three-week course. Other programs merely have a round robin of introductions, where participants state their names, their organizations, and their reasons for being in the class. But what is relatively certain is that instructors can ill afford to rely on institutional ratification and forgo some method of explicitly bringing participants in executive development programs into the discourse. Additionally, participants can and often do selectively “unratify” themselves in the participation structure. They may do so surreptitiously, such as by excusing themselves from the classroom to take a phone call or by absorbing themselves in work via computer or other technologies. They may infrequently openly engage in protesting the discourse and participation structure. In such cases, some might say that the organization itself is in crisis. Whether this is the case or not, the result may be that very little learning actually occurs when the institution that organizes participation breaks down. Such an organization is no longer serving the values of the members. It can hardly be said to be a classroom at all.

**A Semiotic Space**

**Registers As Ideological Phenomena**

An institution is, broadly speaking, a network or collection of rules, norms, processes, and beliefs that serves to unify a group and differentiate it from others. The network of semiotic linkages that index classifications of people to social practices to
language is, in this sense, an institution. Inasmuch as institutions are eva-

luable, they act

as unifying ideologies, whereas a non-evaluable institution is hegemonic in nature. The

building and maintenance of register-mediated social identities is made possible through

the evaluative behavior of a register’s users and of others. Ideologies are also power

structures, which is to say that the system of normative values serves the interests of

some more effectively than of others, resulting in inequality.

Register formations are under constant pressure (both from within and without)

that results in diachronic changes of the register system as layers of sociohistorical

context are “laminated” onto the formations. The impetus for reanalysis comes from

within the register as the lack of equality leads to competing valorizations of semiotic

forms. The products of competing reanalyses synchronously co-exist within a register as

proponents of each vie for its supremacy. This may (and often does) lead to rifts that

often occur along predictable lines, resulting in polarization. During the 2008 election

cycle, there was increasing evidence of polarization along generational, geographic,

racial, economic, sexual, and educational lines among those self-identifying as

Democrats. Functional re-analyses and counter-valorizations have been ongoing among

Republicans, as well, where there has developed a rift between traditional conservatives

and neoconservatives. When such rifts continue to widen, a schism may occur within the

ideological registers named after the two political parties. Evidence of such a potential

schism can be found in the emergent “Tea Party” movement and the recently emerged

“Green Party,” to name two salient examples.

Registers are bounded objects only to the degree set by sociohistorical processes

of enregisterment, whereby forms and values become differentiable from other registers
and from the language as a whole. Dimensions along which registers are organized and may change are:

- Repertoire characteristics (size, grammatical range, and semiotic range)
- Social range (indexical focus, icons, and the positive and negative values associated with the register)
- Social domain (domains of recognition and fluency)

**Stereotypes of Indexicality**

Communication transmission is a process that is dependent upon linkages between semiotic events for a group of co-communicants. A stereotype exists where linkages between semiotic events are commonly understood before any application of contextual effects. When these stereotypes occur for one particular classification of people often enough to differentiate the classification from other classifications, the system of linkages constitutes a unique register.

Indexical stereotypes provide a framework for normalizing the usage of register forms. *Metapragmatic stereotypes*, or indexical stereotypes, set defaults for the construal of relevant social contexts of speaking. They exist socially; their defaults are set by institutional processes that link figures of personhood and relationship to specific, performable signs. Furthermore, they exist for a social domain of users who, through socialization (i.e., through shared sociohistorical contexts), come to construe particular signs in relatively similar ways. The indexical stereotypes of a register are evidence of the relative stability of the register. A register’s social existence must be confirmed by the evaluative acts of others. When others’ apparent or expressed “construals” conform to one’s own, and when typifications recur, they provide evidence of an indexical stereotype.
A group identity develops. The use of the register acts as a social passport, allowing “entry into a range of social practices” (Agha, 2007: 147). The conventions of a register allow for users to make judgments of appropriateness regarding various behaviors and the activities made up of them. Additionally, users of the register signal their awareness of and ability to act within these conventions.

Stereotypes of indexicality allow for the metapragmatic activity of talking about signs (i.e., meaning), an important aspect of the reflexive nature of register formations. One genre in which this becomes quite obvious is in the discussion of the norms of etiquette. Whether she realizes it or not, Miss Manners (nee Judith Martin) is one of America’s top experts on social registers—especially registers of high-status social identities. One excerpt I recall from her Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior discussed the difference between old and new money, or the dynastically wealthy and the nouveau riche (Martin, 1979). Miss Manners argues that the semiotic registers of these two groups differ in subtle but important ways, one of which is whether one’s silver is bought or passed down. New silver (or furniture, or jewelry), therefore, becomes a sign of someone having been poor (“poor” being anyone who is not independently wealthy), and thus a “social climber.”

To provide another example, forensic profilers are experts of register analysis. Given a set of behaviors, it is their job to identify the possible registers to which an individual lays claim by determining what metapragmatic stereotypes the behavioral signs index. Through this process, they attempt to build a comprehensive identity, called a profile, of the person under investigation. Behavioral signs may provide information as to the individual’s age, gender, ethnicity or race, socioeconomic status, socioeconomic
background, geohistorical background, work background, interests, religious and political views, sexual orientation, and any number of other identities. All this may be available, provided that one has the ability to recognize the linguistic and non-linguistic signs that pertain to each type of identity enactment.

A sign out of place calls attention to itself. If it is egregiously out of place, it becomes a fatal error, drawing a clear and often insurmountable distinction between the person’s identity and that of the group. For instance, a lawyer must not only have a command of legalese, he must also know when, where, in what order, and how often to use legal jargon. In addition, non-linguistic behaviors, including gesture, posture, and dress, round out the picture. The ability to do so allows one to differentiate lawyers from legal-drama fans, but it can also allow one to differentiate courtroom lawyers from office lawyers, criminal lawyers from civil lawyers, and prosecutors from defense lawyers.

**Entextualized Effects**

The term *textuality* refers to the co-occurrence of a register “token” with other signs to form co-textual context. Registers also have a sociohistorical context that is enacted simply through the use of the register. Indexical stereotypes are default settings for construal that exist before entextualized effects are factored in during the process of construal. The standing-for relationship is always susceptible to change in what significance is assigned to the cultural form. In short, this is because context is “sticky.” Textual effects are applied to each new construal, and some residual of prior textual effects becomes part of each new construal as well. A cultural form does not have to take on any invariant form (i.e., be shared identically across time or across people); rather it
need only be “fractionally comparable across different social domains” for it to “mediate patterns of coordinated social interaction” (Agha, 2007: 79).

This is not to say that information is transmitted like a billiard ball. Rather, it is reproduced, much like an icon in a series of Andy Warhol paintings. None in the series is “copied” in the sense of an exact replica. Rather, each copy is a unique construal based upon a unifying cultural reality that itself does not circulate. It is the idea that is constantly being recontextualized and reanalyzed. Thus, even though, as the old line goes, a rose₁ is a rose₂ is a rose₃ is a rose₄, the romantic love of rose₁ given by a boyfriend to his girlfriend on Valentine’s Day is not the filial love of rose₂ given by a son to his mother on Mother’s Day, and so forth. The roses may all be indexical of strong emotional commitment to the recipient, but each rose is different upon the application of textual effects to the construal of its meaning.

Text-Level Indexicality and Interactional Tropes

Agha (2007) notes that the use of certain non-linguistic behavioral displays or combinations of linguistic forms may be “culture-internal” prerequisites of each other’s use. In other words, linguistic and nonlinguistic signs work together to form a register, and users judge one another as legitimate participants through the co-occurrence of these linguistic and non-linguistic displays. Text-level indexicality is concerned with the congruent or incongruent ordering of signs. Agha notes that “the comparability of co-occurring signs in the temporal flow of behavior itself carries information,” and this co-occurrence may involve multiple channels woven together in a text, where the information is “not reducible to the indexical values of any of its parts” (Agha, 2007: 24). Additionally, this text-level indexicality is emergent in the flow of discourse and
“reflexively shapes” participants’ interpretation of behavior. Meaning is emergent as the discourse unfolds and the evidence for its construal is the coordination of linguistic and nonlinguistic behaviors as they occur and in relation to what has previously occurred and what is anticipated. Such meaning cannot be deconstructed. Rather, context is “baked into” the construals that occur as the text is being constructed. Isolated portions of the text do not yield their secrets to analysis.

Agha (2007) holds up interactional tropes (e.g., sarcasm and irony, double entendres, innuendos) as particularly salient examples of emergent meaning. These tropes occur through the manipulation of communicative norms in highly context-dependent ways, and yield layers of interpretation, any one of which might be missed by an outsider to the particular stylized usage. In some cases, they serve as veiled aggressive displays using a “secret” language that is intended for only certain participants in a conversation as well as a “public language” intended for other participants and observers. Secret organizations such as mafias and Al Qaeda survive precisely through individual members’ use of interactional tropes to affirm their own membership and to test the membership of others. Any misstep in the complex temporal structuring of verbal and nonverbal behaviors can lead to a sudden loss of trust which is not easily regained and can lead to the most dangerous of situations for the person trying to pass as a member. Interactional tropes to signal meaning are not only used by criminal societies, however. They are used in social, class, professional, and other groups.

**Register Tropes**

Register tropes are also evidence of the stability of a register, because it is the stability afforded by indexical stereotypes that tropes capitalize on. Tropes presuppose
the existence of indexical stereotypes to achieve their intended meanings. I will discuss two examples here: one from Lakhota and one from Japanese.

**Example 1:**

Lakhota, like many other languages, has different registers for men and women. Agha (2007: 161) discusses an interaction between an adult Lakhota male and a small child in which the adult speaks to the child in the register reserved for women. The mismatch between the speaker’s apparent (or known) identity and the register chosen carries a meaning that is intended by the adult speaker to be construed by the child. Men and women are not only differentiated biologically, the two genders are also associated with different social practices. Women are more closely associated with nurturing and interaction with small children than are men. By taking on the female register in his speech, the Lakhota male is signaling not that he is a woman (a proposition that must be rejected on its face) but that he is approaching the child in communicative interaction the way a woman might. By extension, he is signaling for the child that he is not currently taking on the social roles typically associated with adult males in that society. If the participants in the interaction did not already have access to the indexical stereotypes linking figures of personhood, social roles, and registers, the intended tropic effects would have failed.

**Example 2:**

Japanese has a rich repertoire of status-marking indexicals that are obligatorily used in all reference to individuals. The most commonly used honorific indexical is -san, which must be used in all direct reference to addressees or third persons who are 1) adult, 2) roughly the same age or older, and 3) of equivalent or higher status. The honorific -
sama is used rarely in direct address, reserved only for those who are much higher elevated in social status. It is also used to talk about beloved cultural icons (e.g., Leo-sama, for Leonardo DiCaprio) and honored guests (as it is understood that all guests are honored). The indexicals -chan (female) and -kun (male) are used by adults in informal settings to address or index youth, those of lower social status, and offspring. When a parent addresses or references a son or daughter, -kun or -chan is used, reinforcing a status differential between older and younger generations. In address or reference in formal settings, -san is mutually used because status marking can undermine authority and cause one to lose face. Therefore, -chan and -kun are most frequently used to address or refer to youth—by adults or by other youth.

The system of address, one that is easily troped upon, relies on indexical stereotypes to link social status, gender, age, and social practices. My Japanese wife’s female cousin is nearly twenty years younger than me. Yet occasionally when addressing me, she calls me Chris-chan. The term, when used by a youth, indexes a female youth of equivalent or lower age and social status. By using the term in address to me, she is troping upon gender, as well as relative age and social statuses, a risky move to which an addressee could legitimately take heavy offense. However, in this case, the intended (and successful) effect is to index an endearing relationship. It also constitutes a type of flirting behavior that only young women are allowed to engage in.

Status is stereotypically indexed through the use of a marker, but it is also conferred through the tropic use of a marker. Thus, although an older, higher-status individual will stereotypically address someone as -chan/-kun, the use of -san can be used in an interaction to indicate that for the intent and purpose of a particular interaction,
status equality is assumed. For instance, a parent may refer to or address his adult offspring as -san in formal settings, while in more informal, casual settings using -chan or -kun.

Register formations are evaluable; they are ideologically stabilized. Semiotic registers provide people with conceptual maps for construing the world. The indexical stereotypes that make up registers are social phenomena. Inasmuch as registers exist socially, individuals must be socialized into the register in order to add it to their repertoire. Registers serve to mediate communication by indexing stereotypic relationships between people, language, and social practices. More widespread social practices result in larger registers, while many registers are related to highly specific domains of social practices, such as baby-talk and legalese.

Enregisterment processes that add sociohistorical and co-textual effects add layers of meaning to each construal of indexical stereotypes. Because registers are ideologically-anchored, they index power differentials that exist within the register. For these reasons, registers are constantly subject to forces that result in diachronic changes of the register in a process of valorization and counter-valorization. In addition, stereotypical indexical relationships can and are often troped upon to produce desired interaction effects. Finally, fully-contextualized, register-mediated communication is a process of interactional footing in which interactants commit to various social personae, suppress others, and mutually establish the register norms to dominate during a particular communicative event.
Institutional Space

Goffman (1981) defines *lecture* as “an institutionalized extended holding of the floor in which one speaker imparts his views on a subject, these thoughts comprising what can be called his ‘text’” (p. 165), while the audience has the right to stare using an extended gaze. The drawback is that the audience only has recourse, at least initially, to backchannel communication to indicate their response to the text. This is because the institution makes no space for an audience member’s taking the floor from the lecturer. In his lecture on lecture, Goffman (1981) engenders trust with his audience, in a sense, by making the participant contract in the speech event explicit and then specifying his obligations under the contract. Although he is breaking frame by engaging in “metatalk” about lectures—another violation, according to Goffman—he does so for a particular purpose. This is to reinforce the impression that he is both the author and principal of the text he is reading.

Goffman (1981) proposes a framework for text production that recognizes three distinct roles. The *animator* is the source of the sounds that arise in talk. It is the vocalizer, which he refers to as the “talking machine” (p. 167). The *author* is the person(s) who wrote, formed, created, or in some other way produced the actual text. The *principal*, on the other hand, is the person(s) whose values are served by the text (Goffman, 1981).

In Dwyer’s (1991) framework, *the principal is the power behind the text*. Goffman (1981) explains that the principal personally believes in the text message, but this is a confusing and unnecessary position to take. For one thing, it contains an implicit assumption that texts arise out of cooperative communication. For another, it would not explain what it
means when an audience member personally believes in the message of the text. Does the audience member gain status as a principal?

By arguing that the principal is the one whose values are purposefully served by the text, we can link the principal to authorship, at least in a causative way. And in this case, it will not matter whether the principal is a recipient of the text, since even an audience member can be part of the production process. Especially in the classroom, this is true. If a student perceives that his values are not being served, there is no reason to be in the classroom in the first place. Goffman argues that to engender trust with the audience, the lecturer has to be seen as not just the animator, but also the author and principal. These are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions. For a lecturer to engender trust, the audience also must be involved in the principalship of a text.

**Substantive Engagement**

Arguably, in every classroom setting, substantive engagement has its benefits. An instructor thus engaged communicates linguistically and nonlinguistically a personal investment in the outcome of the course and that the outcome of “doing a lesson” is more than simply the result of an automatized procedure. It communicates attentiveness, and attentiveness communicates both cognitive and emotional investment. In short, it builds interpersonal trust. While procedural displays and reliance on them are indications of institutional-level trust, both are needed to yield the most positive outcomes (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; Bloome & Theodorou, 1989; Rymes, 2009).

This may be especially true in executive education, where students are not necessarily socialized into the procedural displays of “doing a lesson.” Additionally, executive students who actively pursue training to fulfill specific needs may have
expectations of an educational product that is more than “off the shelf” and addresses their specific needs. Shea, Smith, and Gilmore (1998) argue that in particular, in order to “maximize the potential benefits of helping participants take in new frameworks, attitudes and skills that are essential to adapting to the transformations occurring in our organizations,” those who receive executive education must take an approach of substantive engagement—what they call a “mindful” approach (Shea, Smith, & Gilmore, 1998: 1).

**Social Institutions and Normalization**

Agha (2007: 81) notes that “stereotypic indexical values are assigned to performable signs” through a process called *enregisterment*. As one does things with language (i.e., performs various speech acts), particular instances of language use become associated with behavioral effects and with the classifications of the person performing the speech acts. Enregisterment is an ongoing process; stereotypic indexical values “emerge” as speech variation in particular sociohistoric locales (e.g., an executive development program) are reanalyzed. Agha uses the term enregisterment to add transparency to the concept that “a register’s existence is mediated by activities which make known (or ‘enregister’), and thus make usable, facts of semiotic value associated with signs” (Agha, 2007: 80).

Register socialization processes continue throughout life and occur at the micro level of individual socialization to registers, as well as at the macro level across populations. With a register-based approach, the concept of “fluency in a language” quickly runs into trouble. This is because socialization processes link ways of speaking to figures of personhood and to social behavior. These ways of speaking make up the
registers available within a language. People obtain fluencies in various registers. The term fluency actually presupposes both a refined register repertoire and recognition of indexical stereotypes. Fluency is, in a very real sense, a type of membership in a community of register speakers—a membership that is granted to the extent that the semiotic register is internalized by each individual as a set of communicative norms. The register itself is a type of institution, differentiating those who use it from those who recognize it from those who don’t recognize it. These institutions of replication that stabilize register formations are often, but not necessarily, hegemonic; to the extent that ways of speaking are consciously evaluable, they are ideological, but much of the machinery that drives the indexical stereotypes are not consciously accessible, which allows the ideology they project to operate relatively unchallenged and to stabilize the register.

Major Constructs of the Dissertation

Power

When others’ belief systems differ from one’s own, it is logical to assume that the expression of those belief systems may come into conflict with one’s own desire to control resources. For instance, theoretical and applied researchers have very different views on the value of knowledge and the types of questions worth asking. In some schools, theoretical research is highly valued, and applied programs consequently may become starved for resources. In other schools, the opposite may be true. A variation of this may be seen in an executive development program. For example, students with an industry-facing perspective and a desire to apply learning directly to work problems may have a strong desire to focus classroom resources on the examination of work-related
issues, while academic instructors may wish to spend more time on the theoretical underpinnings of the topics they cover. Views of education may differ widely. One professor I was familiar with spent an entire module discussing education from a socialist perspective, which did not go over well with a class of learning executives from major multinational corporations. The professor held the floor but failed to connect with students, who found themselves suddenly needing to take care of work-related problems via phone or email. Several students walked out. It is clear that the classroom, as with any collection of individuals, is a potential ideological battleground, even at the same time that its “ideal” function is to increase students’ access to and effective use of resources.

*Power* is the ability to access the resources of an organization in the service of one’s values (Dwyer, 1991: 24). From this definition, it follows that the expression of power is an expression of ideologies. Going one step further, one can conclude that the holding of values, of whatever kind, is a first expression of power—the power to muster one’s own cognitive resources to form and maintain a system of beliefs and the values they serve. Dwyer (1991) argues that in modern society, we face unique challenges as a result of globalization and the increasing ubiquitousness of information and communication technologies (ICTs): value fragmentation, or the heterogeneity of values, and the diffusion of power. These two phenomena, he explains, occur simultaneously and result in an increase in often unhealthy conflict and competition for resources. It might be more helpful, however, to see these two things not as separate phenomena but as two different expressions of the same phenomenon—namely, the democratization of authority. With the democratization of authority comes the problem that one must constantly seek to increase one’s power in order to effectively negotiate with others for access to precious
resources. This negotiation process involves others who have ostensibly valid (i.e., recognized and conditionally legitimate to others) and alternative beliefs, values, and ideologies. If the beliefs, values, and ideologies are not ostensibly valid, then there is no real room for negotiation—only for coercion or conflict.

Dwyer (1991) presents a framework that distinguishes between power, authority, and responsibility. While power is the self-expression of behaviors to serve one’s own values, authority is an organizational or institutional privilege that is extended to the individual or group “to engage in certain behaviors” with the expectation of being supported—either by one’s superiors in the organization or by social convention. He notes that authority is fragile, costly, and susceptible to disappearing suddenly depending on the conditions of the organization or environmental factors. What Dwyer (1991) refers to as authority, then, is what others refer to as power or hegemony (e.g., Blommaert, 2005; Fairclough, 2003), while what he refers to as power is something else entirely.

Responsibility is what one is expected or required to accomplish through a combination of authority and power. He notes that there always exists a gap between one’s authority and one’s responsibility, and that this gap must be bridged by power if one is to accomplish tasks.

The goal of the classroom as conceptualized in this dissertation is to increase students’ power through the development of cognitive tools such as self-reflection, the building of skills needed to access and make effective use of information, the fostering of awareness of previously unrecognized resources, and the conferment of status. The classroom instructor is in a unique and often difficult position in the classroom network—that of gatekeeper. The students’ access to resources (e.g., knowledge,
certification, grades) is dependent on two things: the instructor’s efficacy in facilitating learning and the instructor’s evaluation of each student’s grasp of the material. The power to connect students to resources is the domain of the teacher, and however fraught with potential missteps or abuses, it is not a power that can or should be discarded if used responsibly. What this paper is concerned with, then, is in what ways that power is expressed linguistically and nonlinguistically in the context of the classroom environment.

Identity

This diffusion of values (Dwyer, 1991) has consequences for the expression of power in classroom life, and perhaps nowhere more so than in adult learning. The adult learner, unlike the traditional student, is immersed in life events that alter his or her values in important ways. The traditional student—one who went directly to college from high school, did not marry, has not parented, lives in a dormitory or at home, and is not gainfully employed—has a different worldview from the working professional, adult learner, because the latter has been exposed to different institutions and has different responsibilities (Lynch, Gottfried, Green, & Thomas, 2010). The end result is that adult learners are different from traditional students regarding development, experiences, and roles (Bash, 2003; Clark & Caffarella, 1999; Knowles, 1990; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). To meet these differing needs, colleges and universities have responded with an increasing number of course and program offerings. In addition, the leadership of many colleges, which have traditionally been geared toward a different kind of student, has had to reexamine attitudes and educational policies with regard to the increasing number of adult learners (Bash, 2003; Lane, 2003; Pusser, Gansneder, Galloway, & Pope, 2005).
The role of language in executive learning environments would seem to be particularly crucial, given that executive students have valued professional identities and are already immersed in the discourses of their respective professions, organizations, and work groups. Executive trainers also bring with them a variety of academic and professional identities. In executive courses, academic and professional registers may “collide,” resulting in frustration and the development of oppositional stances on the part of both students and instructors. Agha refers to the situation in which users of different registers vie with each other for status as “valorization” and “counter-valorization” (Agha, 2007). Particularly in executive learning contexts, where students are already embedded in their careers, it seems that classroom discourse analysis would be a logical and extremely useful approach to both understand the value of and recommend improvements upon classroom practices.

**Trust and Its Role in Learning**

As a concept, trust is inherently vague. If you ask ten different people how they define trust, it is certain that you would receive ten different answers. Wikipedia defines trust as a relationship of reliance. A cursory examination of the definitions of trust available on Princeton’s web-based dictionary includes:

- Reliance on someone based on past behavior
- The trait of believing in the honesty and reliability of others
- Complete confidence in a person, plan, etc.
- To allow without fear
- To extend credit to
There are many different definitions of trust because there are myriad ways of framing the concept of trust. The willingness to go to sleep in the presence of another person or animal is a form of trust—the belief that you will wake up unharmed. Other examples of trust are the willingness to sit on a piece of furniture, eat a bite of food, or step in a particular location. They represent the belief (whether correctly or incorrectly) that the chosen action will not yield harm.

Trust is a form of belief that is directed at the perceived predictability of actions. In its most general conceptualization, any entity whose behavior is believed to be predictable generates trust—whether it is a friend, an enemy, or an institution. The maxim that it is beneficial to know your enemy is an example of the importance of trust in choosing apt behavior. So, for that matter, is the admonition to watch where you step.

Trust is an emotion that is closely tied to the cognitive process of learning. In second-language acquisition, Krashen (1985) argues that a learner’s affective stance in the classroom has consequences for the ability to absorb and process new information. Specifically, he hypothesizes that there is an affective “filter” that either freely passes or blocks information from being processed as input. Self-confidence, level of motivation, and anxiety all contribute to one’s affect in the classroom. However, his list is limited by its portrayal of the student as deficient. Not only is self-confidence a factor, but also confidence in others as the source of information. In this sense, if there is lack of trust in the information or its source, the information is discounted. It may not be processed at all, or processed only superficially. Krashen looks at motivation as a quality solely of the individual learner. If this is true, then what is the role of leadership?
This dissertation examines “positive” trust in a learning community, what Agha has called an “extensive co-belonging in a social category” (Agha, 2010, personal communication). Positive trust is one’s perception that there is a high probability that others will be beneficial in providing access to resources in the furtherance of one’s values. In the case of executive learning environments, trust is a measure of the learners’ belief that the instructor(s) and program will sufficiently lead to increased success in their work environments. In social networks, trust is also related to the degree of homophily, or common ground, among members, and it has an effect on the ease or difficulty of individual access to information. Trust is complicated in executive learning formats by the necessity of learned information to produce a positive effect in learners’ work lives. This means that trust in such situations includes a belief that the value of the information the learner has access to in the classroom in terms of its useful work-based applicability is sufficiently high (i.e., will generate enough social financial, and emotional capital) to outweigh the cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and financial costs of the program.

In the classroom, among other things, trust is manifest in the belief that the course, the work, and the instruction will yield beneficial learning, further one’s own vocational agenda, or at least be an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. There may be trust that the letters on the degree, the brand name of the institution, or the strength of its reputation will confer status—and with it, all the social and economic benefits. What links all these forms of trust together is the idea that the trusting entity expresses a willingness to allow someone, something, or some institutional process to have power (whether potential or expressed) in a given context and for a given purpose. In the classroom, trust is both
institutional and interpersonal. At one level, it is the willingness to be affiliated with a certain institution and judged by its representatives under certain circumstances.

At another level, it manifests as the willingness to be influenced by the instructor for a given purpose and on a given topic. For instance, an important outcome that can arise out of executive training is for students to learn alternative methods of solving work-related issues. But the acceptance of these alternative methods can be difficult, since it can amount to an admission of failure. Nietzsche famously noted that the value of new knowledge would be underestimated if the learner did not have to overcome a great deal of humiliation in attaining it (Nietzsche, 1907).

Instructors achieve trust at least partially through establishment of credibility, which helps them to successfully engage the learners and effectively contribute to their socialization into new ways of being. An important source of credibility may come from an expert knowledge of and ability to communicate in the target register, as in the case of law professors studied by Mertz (2007). The instructor can serve as a model of the appropriate communicative behavior as well as an expert enforcer of associated norms. Another source of credibility is also institutional and lies in the rights conferred to instructors to determine and enforce target behavior via testing, grading, or the awarding of certificates of completion. Instructors may rely on these institutional sources of credibility alone, but such procedural displays of institutional-level credibility may not be sufficient to promote substantive engagement among co-participants of the learning community. To achieve this, they may actively seek out or capitalize on opportunities to create a community in which they share co-membership with learners. Professional students in executive education who have valued professional identities may nonetheless
be novices in a particular discourse community, but there is a difference between being uninitiated and being unappreciated for the knowledge and expertise and experience they do carry. Furthermore, it may be the case that some executive education learners seek not to be socialized into a discourse register, but rather to be socialized across registers such that the development of a new social and professional identity does not diminish or replace the existing social and professional identity but rather adds value to it.

Instructors are presented as experts not just of a particular field of study but also of particular ways of being, doing, and talking. Cetina defines experts as “those who have learned to engage with objects in reliable trust relationships and who, therefore, are trusted by colleagues who cannot engage in those relationships directly” (Cetina, 1999: 135). Adding to this definition, Carr notes, “successful enactments of expertise hinge on the would-be expert’s ability to establish an interpretive frame through which to view that object” (Carr, 2010: 23). Urban (2001) argues that people emerge as experts to varying degrees through discursive processes through which culturally-valued objects are represented.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Discourse analysis as a methodology has had limited penetration in many classroom contexts. While many high-quality discourse analyses have been published using classroom data in K-12 settings, relatively few studies have examined classroom contexts involving adult learners, and most of these have focused on language education in adult second-language classrooms. Very few discourse analyses have been conducted in college classrooms. None at the time of this review have focused on executive education.

Classroom Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is the study of language and its communicative environment. It is the study of how context shapes meaning, as well as how context-based meaning gives shape to context as it unfolds in a discourse. It is the study of text and context—or more specifically, text-in-context. In educational contexts where communication is a critical element of the interaction, discourse analysis (DA) can improve understanding and, hopefully, improve the quality of learning. A great deal of classroom DA research has examined structured learning environments in K-12 educational institutions, while a few have been conducted in university contexts. Additionally, much of the research has focused on the specialized educational context of second-language learning (e.g., Allen, Fröhlich, & Spada, 1984; Allwright, 1980; Auerbach, 1995; Chaudron, 1988; Long, 1980; McCarthy & Carter, 1991; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Tollefson, 1995). At the level of higher education, classroom discourse analysis (DA) as a research methodology is almost unused. In adult learning, classroom DA has not been used in other than adult second-
language learning contexts. A review of the literature reveals that there are no published accounts of classroom DA in executive training.

   Every interaction between people is communicative. It involves linguistic and nonlinguistic vehicles of meaning. Discourse analysis is, broadly speaking, the study of communicative interaction and its contexts. Gee (1990) has described discourse as involving socially-accepted “ways of using language, of thinking, believing, valuing, and of acting” that function to identify group membership or to index a particular role (p. 143). This approach supports a functional perspective of language and of the identities that are constructed through language.

   Context

   The classroom is the most immediate and obvious context that shapes classroom discourse (Rymes, 2009). However, it needs to also be remembered that a classroom is many things, and each one of these things adds a contextual layer to how meaning is constructed, communicated, and construed. First of all, a classroom is a physical space—a room in which individuals gather together, ostensibly for the purpose of learning from one or more individuals who have come for the purpose of teaching, instructing, or facilitating that learning. To that end, interaction in this physical (or increasingly, blended or virtual) space, is structured around a lesson plan, a lecture, or some form of engagement to cause the process of learning to transpire. In this physical space, the arrangement of the chairs and lecture boards, the lighting, the location of doors and windows, where the instructor sits or stands, the presence or absence of a podium, the size of the room, and a number of other features all carry with them messages about how
interaction is (or is intended to be) structured, who is participating, in what capacity, and how each person’s participation is valued (Bloome & Clark, 2006).

Beyond the space of the physical classroom is the physical space of the building that houses it, as well as the campus or community that houses the building. Taking the physical structure of a building as an example, Gieryn (2002) notes that it does a lot more than keep the elements out: “Buildings stabilize social life. They give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks, persistence to behavior patterns” (Gieryn, 2002: 35). In other words, buildings are part of the context that shapes discourse. Gieryn (2002) goes on to note that buildings give routine to physical movement, interaction, and participation. A building also adds structure to the social interactions of the people who use it, as well as communicates the ideologies and values of those who have constructed it, those for whom it was commissioned, and those who use it (Gieryn, 2002).

Virtual classrooms and schools may be even more overt in the ideologies that go into structuring social interaction and participation than physical classrooms. Many buildings have life spans far longer than the institutions they house. Those that use them may not choose the construction, materials, and even their location. On the other hand, in a virtual organization, all structure is designed around interaction. A virtual organization is basically an electronic interface through which participants interact.

**Observable Behaviors**

Elizabeth Mertz’ discourse analysis of language socialization in law school classrooms is an excellent source for formulating a scheme for specifying observable behaviors in the current study (Mertz, 2007). Although her work did not focus on executive education, her CDA specifically examines socialization into a professional
register to create “an extensive co-belonging in a social category”—in the case of her study, being a lawyer (Agha, December 6, 2010, personal communication). Mertz’ study coded specific, observable information in the data set to assist in the subsequent analysis of student socialization into a legal register (Mertz, 2007: 34):

- Speaker identity (number or pseudonym)
- Speaker gender
- Speaker racial identification
- Order of appearance (a number assigned to speakers based on the order in which they spoke in the class)
- Linguistic “type”—e.g., monologue, various types of dialogue
- Kind of turn—e.g., called upon without volunteering; volunteered and called on; spoke without being called on; etc. (Also, spoken, nonverbal, and silent turns)
- Length of turn, timed to the half-second
- Evaluation—whether the communication in the turn contained an evaluation of a preceding turn, either positive or negative
- Backchannel behavior

This dissertation adopts Mertz’ coding scheme, offers some additional observables for identification and analysis in the data set, and suggests a few more for coding:

- Interruptions
- Turns representing topic shifts
- Forms of address, including honorifics

In addition to the abovementioned elements, this dissertation will also focus on four other observable behaviors that represent enactments of expertise. Expertise, Carr (2010: 18)
explains, is more aptly understood as what a person does as opposed to something that a person has or holds. Enactments of expertise are important observable behaviors because these are invariably manifestations of ideological stances. Students and instructors alike engage in these behaviors, though they are not experts in identical domains. The five areas are recasts; recontextualizations; analogies and metaphorical extensions; pitch and intonation; and clarification requests and comprehension checks.

Recasts

Discussed primarily in second-language acquisition literature (e.g., MacKay & Philp, 1998), recasts are an expert’s modification of linguistic elements of a novice’s utterance as an overt act of reframing it in a way appropriate to the valorized register. Modifications can take a variety of forms, such as a shift in voice, markers of stance, grammatical structure, or semantic constructions appropriate to the register the expert is modeling. In one exchange Mertz analyzes, a law professor references the student’s non-legal discourse register, layering onto the conversation an evaluative statement that denigrates an identity associated with the unacceptable register while at the same time offering an evaluative statement that confers a new, more appropriate identity. Mertz states that in doing this, “the professor…not only imports for [the student] a way of talking, but an entire persona and set of normative orientations” (Mertz, 1992: p: 330).

Recontextualization

Mertz (2007: 45) notes that recontextualization is a process in which “speakers segment discourse into texts that can be removed from one context (decontextualized) and put into another (recontextualized).” As in recasts, there is an act of reformulation,
but in this case, the text remains unchanged and either the existing context is modified or a completely new context is applied to the text.

**Analogies, Metaphorical Extensions, and Illustrative Examples**

These can be used to translate information or ideas formed within one register into ostensibly equivalent ideas in another register. The act of using such devices as a reformulation of another’s utterance may signal an act of countervalorization, indicating an ideological struggle. When the speaker uses an analogy, metaphorical extension, or example to elicit a point that he or she is attempting to make, the act may be one of bridging two competing registers in the classroom, and is evidence that the speaker is making an attempt to facilitate an aligned group identity.

**Pitch and Intonation**

Mertz (1992) notes that pitch and intonation are used by law school professors as indicators of positive or negative evaluation of students’ utterances. Of course, pitch and intonation can be and are also often used by students for the same purpose.

**Clarification Requests and Comprehension Checks**

These may be “true” clarification requests and comprehension checks, or they may be constructed in furtherance of a particular genre in order to implicitly enforce a particular ideology by signaling that the recast of an utterance is in order so as to conform to a valorized register (Mertz, 1992).

**Genres**

Genres are characteristic ways of combining words, prosody, and actions associated with a particular discourse and a style of expression (Fairclough, 2003). Genres assist listeners in quick identification of the particular function(s) a text is
intended to perform. By recognizing the genre, the listener is able to recognize presuppositions and entailments, understand roles and participation structures, recognize enacted identities, and correctly interpret the intended meaning(s) in the text. In other words, the listener can make sense of the indexical relationships. Fairclough (2003) notes that genres vary a great deal in the degree of their stability. An example of a highly stable genre is the research paper for publication in academic journals. It is easy to distinguish an academic journal article from a research article presented in a trade publication or a white paper. Aspects of the research article genre include a number of features: title, author affiliation, abstract, and citation and reference style.

**Intertextuality**

Gee (1999) explains that this process of “borrowing” from language of other discourses is a kind of code switching or mixing called intertextuality, and can be accomplished in a number of ways. For instance, a language user may encapsulate a string of oral or written text within another, offset by quotation marks or a suitable oral equivalent. Alternatively, this same text can be paraphrased to include the content, intent, or sentiment in language forms functionally equivalent to the original text being borrowed. Fairclough (1992) notes “intertextuality is basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth” (p. 84).

The instructor of a classroom may or may not have created the materials, written the lecture, or designed the activities. In other words, the instructor may not have been the author, in Goffman’s terms (Goffman, 1981). Even if the instructor created the materials, they may or may not have been produced for the purpose of teaching the
particular group of individuals in the particular class of interest to the researcher. Even when the instructor is the author, he or she may not be the principal—the agent whose values the text serves. These factors have implications for interpreting and understanding meaning. Rymes (2009) argues that in order to understand what any particular utterance means, one must necessarily understand how “the utterance was used, its context, and the purpose(s) for uttering it” (p. 6).

To further complicate matters, the construction of the texts used in instruction necessarily involves the cobbling together of a variety of materials from perhaps a wide variety of sources: different scholars, authors, and experts, past events, professional codes, ethics and standards, school standards and requirements, and so on. “Everything said in a classroom,” Rymes (2009) notes, “is also influenced to varying degrees by contexts beyond the classroom” (p. 7). The instructor may additionally pepper the lecture with facts and information about his or her professional and social life, may move in and out of different types of activities—switching code, and with it, participation structures, purposes, and values. Students, likewise, bring into the classroom space their personal, professional, and social lives as they interact with one another, the material, and the instructor. In short, in an instructional setting, “text” and “context” represent a confluence of texts and contexts that reach far beyond the walls of the classroom to include community, society, tradition, pop culture, and personal and professional lives (Rymes 2001, 2009). The setting also includes to varying degrees the school, the larger academic institution, professional institutions, and different social, political, and philosophical discourses. As the discourse unfolds, past events in the classroom become part of the
historical context, giving shape to it in a process of iterative lamination. In short, meaning is intensely dynamic.

**Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis**

Classroom discourse analysis, according to Rymes (2009), is more than just examining language use in context. It also necessarily includes “the purpose of improving future classroom interactions and positively affecting social outcomes in contexts beyond the classroom” (Rymes, 2009: 9). Essentially, Rymes’ view of critical classroom DA is action research. My own definition of what a classroom is at the beginning of this dissertation entails that affecting “social outcomes beyond the classroom” is essentially the ideal function of classroom education. To the extent that critical classroom discourse analysis seeks to uphold this purpose, it is a tool for examining and improving the effectiveness of classroom instruction.

**Power and CDA**

Power is a central focus in organizational discourse analysis, of which classroom DA is one form. In addition, it is an important contributor to contexts, generally, and as such, has enormous influence on the interpretation of meaning. According to van Dijk (2005), power in this context is the “social power of groups and institutions” (p. 354) to control resources, discourses, and what identities are valued. Institutions of education have a hand in, among other things, the circulation and modification of cultural models as well as the construction and valuation of identities (Wortham, 2008). Language—or more precisely, register competence—is conceptualized in this dissertation as a form of social power, or the power of influence. It is also social capital—an individual’s position within and among networks that grants him access to resources.
**Procedural Display and Substantive Engagement**

Each genre has its procedural displays and participation structures. Together, along with contextual imagery and characteristic language, the genre can be quickly recognized and participants are able to orient to the genre and access the set of assumptions that are self-contained in the genre. If the genre is not recognized, the requisite set of assumptions is not accessible and participants may have difficulty achieving an appropriate footing. They may have to spend considerable time to figure out how to contextualize the interaction; they may have difficulty inferring meaning.

Procedural displays in well-defined genres are characterized by stereotypical ways of behaving and interacting. As defined by Bloome, Puro, and Theodorou (1989), procedural display in the classroom “is display by teacher and students to each other of a set of interactional procedures which themselves count as doing a lesson” (p. 165). Certain participation structures in classroom discourse are well-documented and discussed, such as the patterned sequence called *initiation-response-evaluation* (IRE). In this structure, the teacher *initiates* the sequence with a question, which solicits a student *response*, followed by the teacher’s *evaluation* or feedback, which closes the sequence (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005). IRE structures are predictable because of “a series of shared assumptions about who has the right to the floor during that conversation, based in large part on shared expectations about rights and responsibilities” in speech situations that support them, such as a classroom (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005: 29). IRE is a procedural display that relies on this set of shared assumptions.
Another procedural display in the classroom was discussed by Goffman (1974), who called attention the participation structure of lectures. The professor has the institutionalized right to speak at length on a topic chosen by the instructor to be of relevance to the course, while students are expected to sit attentively and hold a fixed gaze on the instructor. When not watching attentively, according to the participation frame, students may take or examine notes. To facilitate the participation structure, students are gathered in a way so as to face the lecturer and not each other while the lecturer performs his monologue. Seating arrangements, the presence of a lectern or a desk facing the students, a blackboard, and a projector screen all contribute to framing the participation structure.

Using microethnographic analysis, Bloome, Puro, and Theodorou (1989) argue that all classroom lessons “need to be understood as procedural display” (p. 265). Additionally, part of the content that students learn in the classroom is “how to be a student and how to do school” (p. 287). In other words, students are socialized into the semiotic register of classrooms. They learn to abstract patterns of engagement to facilitate the process of sense making, to recognize these displays as signs. However, procedural display is only one way of approaching an understanding of participation in the classroom. Additionally, its benefits are tied to its drawbacks. For example, relying on knowledge of such displays, both students and instructors can simply “go through the motions” and cover a lesson without any substantive engagement. Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) term this condition “procedural engagement,” while substantive engagement had a strong, positive effect on classroom achievement (p. 261). Substantive engagement they
describe as “a sustained personal commitment to understanding…issues raised by the [classroom] work itself” (p. 262).

In classroom practice, evidence of substantive engagement can come in a variety of ways. For instance, intentionally breaking frame—violating procedural display—can mix things up, according to Rymes (2001), who recommends that instructors “listen dangerously,” to step away from traditional discourse patterns and allow student’s voices to come out in the classroom (pp. 164–165). To mindfully analyze narratives, to publicly identify generic patterns of procedural display, to pull local knowledge from students and communities, and to encourage breaking traditional frames are all tools of substantive engagement (Rymes, 2001).

Due to this complete lack of literature for a review of discourse analysis in these settings, the methodology for this study will begin by conducting open-ended, qualitative interviews with two groups of individuals: former or current participants of executive education, and instructors or facilitators of executive education. Because CDA of an executive education course might provide the analyst with an insufficient amount of data to identify themes, other sources of discourse data can be used to “calibrate” an analytic tool to approach the classroom-level discourse. Agha (2007) notes: “…types of metalinguistic activity [can] result from interventions by the analyst” such as asking questions (p. 18). Thematic analysis, then, is a way of bringing in metalinguistic activity that can be treated as data to fine-tune the methodological approach to the classroom data.

Once conducted, these interviews will be transcribed and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This approach is sensible in light of the absence of literature, and will allow the researcher to identify discourse themes that will assist in the second
phase, a classroom discourse analysis of an executive education program. Normally, a review of literature would be sufficient to allow a researcher to develop and use a theoretical lens through which to examine discourse data. The use of a thematic analysis methodology is intended principally as a replacement for a review of CDA literature from which to draw, and the themes identified are not intended to be the sole theoretical lens through which discourse data as enacted in the executive education classroom will be analyzed.

In order to understand students’ experiences of trust and community in executive education classrooms, my sample for thematic analysis should include students from both executive and traditional classroom settings in order to generate comparative information. These groups offer the conceptual context needed to frame executive education as distinct from traditional education.

Fairclough (2003) offers a rough heuristic for the identification of different discourses within a text. When characterizing a discourse, one should:

- “Identify the main part of the world (including areas of social life) which are represented—the main ‘themes’
- “Identify the particular perspective or angle or point of view from which they are represented” (Fairclough, 2003: 129).

What Fairclough means by the first is not simply a geographical representation, although his language leaves something to be desired regarding clarity. Continuing the geographical metaphor, he says that “areas of social life” should be identified as part of the contextual portrait. Granted that these “areas” may be strongly associated with a geohistorical location and cultural norms of a localized population, but I would argue that
we need to move away from such geographical metaphors of social norms, especially with regard to discourses that arise out of geographically- and culturally-dispersed populations. In the executive education classroom, individuals representing socioculturally diverse groups may come together to meet for only a couple days; here, classroom “norms” have little time to develop and are buffeted by preconceived classroom norms of a wide array of places and histories. Even in a traditional classroom, norms are far from solidified as students begin the course, even when participants share a great deal in terms of “areas of social life.”

Because the second of Fairclough’s (2003) two points follows from the first, it is difficult to imagine from where these perspectives emerge without knowing more about the historical context of the discourse space under analysis—and its related themes.

**Qualitative Interviews**

Interviews have long been used in ethnographic fieldwork. It is attractive as a vehicle for the delivery of large amounts of data in concentrated chunks using a standardized format (Briggs, 1986). Yet the attraction to using interviews as data also brings with it some problems. For instance, because relatively few people in any particular community are competent to “verbally express cultural information” (Briggs: 8), a researcher may come to rely on a small number of informants. Conversely, interviews of participants (both instructors and students) in executive education can yield valuable insights by examining the relationship between contextual variables in the classroom and the interview data, a relationship that Briggs (1986) indicates is crucial to understanding informant intent and meaning. Qualitative interviews in this study will be informed by events and observations that occur in the classroom; informants can be a
valuable source for obtaining metalinguistic data. The approach to analyzing interviews can be tailored to consider the contextual effects of the speech event, speech act, genre, and intertextuality. This research project will adopt Briggs’ (1986) four-phase framework, described in Table 1:

Table 1: Briggs 4-Phase Framework for Conducting and Analyzing Interviews

| Phase 1: Learning How to Ask | In this phase, the researcher attempts to discover the sociocultural knowledge, communicative norms, and metacommunicative routines underlying "the ability to participate in and interpret" interview events (Briggs 1986: p. 95). |
| Phase 2: Designing an Appropriate Methodology | This phase is concerned with the application of Phase 1 knowledge to the selection of individuals for interviews and the methodological design of the interviews, as well as with how interview data will be captured. |
| Phase 3: Reflexivity in the Interview Process | Once a few interviews have been conducted, an examination of the interview event is done with regard to interviewer and respondent roles, interactional goals, genre, social situation, and other factors. When possible, going over an interview with the informant will aid the researcher in identifying procedural problems that can lead to the researcher’s misconstrual of the interview data. Knowledge gained from the data can then be used to refine the interview process and subsequent analyses. |
| Phase 4: | The first step of analysis examines the interview itself as a social |
Analyzing Interviews

interaction and a communicative event, which must be analyzed as an “interactional whole,” followed by identifying “the metacommunicative properties of the individual utterances” (Briggs 1986: p. 103). This step adds an important layer onto the thematic analysis, which focuses on the second of Briggs’ two steps.

Identifying “Codable Moments”

Coding qualitative data, such as that found in texts, allows the researcher to link data to metadata, or “our ideas about the data” (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: p. 27). The identification of such codable moments is far from clear. However, as in discourse analysis, the inductive process of locating moments in the data essentially leads the researcher to identify such things as indicators of emotion and stance, stylized language belonging to a particular sociolinguistic register, as well as indicators of conflict, power, and identity (Boyatzis, 1998).

At this level of analysis, texts can be examined for affective stance, metaphors and analogies, hedges, persuasive language, intertextuality, and so forth. These instances often constitute the important moments, but at this point, they are not encoded (i.e., seeing the instances as representative of something, as constituting an indexical relationship). Once a sufficiently large number of these codable moments have been identified, patterns begin to emerge, at which point discourse themes can be examined more closely.
A primary objective of analyses of the interview data is the construction of a more sophisticated evaluative framework for interpreting the intent of participants’ utterances and interactions within the classroom, as well as for understanding their significance.

**Interpreting Data and Themes**

The process of interpreting data in terms of themes links wider social and historical contexts to discourses (the identified “themes”) embedded within and across texts, genres, and “Discourses,” or the other “stuff” beyond language-in-use that enacts “specific identities and activities” (Gee, 1999: p. 7).

One use of qualitative interviews is the ability to focus the discourse data collected onto specific topics of interest to the analyst and relevance to the project. This has the effect of “distilling” qualitative data to more quickly and easily identify emergent patterns across interviewees. Multiple individuals may make a contribution to a discourse theme from different perspectives, depending on how each interview is structured and who is being interviewed. The strength of such discourse themes is that they are instantiated in the speech of a broad group of individuals. In the current paper, one focus of the identifiable themes is to make salient the different frames (Goffman, 1981) that are activated in a given text, while the codable moments index the theme at the level of the text. Thus, the interview process is a method of identifying what Agha (2007) refers to as “texture.”

**Data Collection**

The data to be collected are classroom interactions and qualitative interviews with selected participants. During classroom interactions, observational notes and audio recordings will be gathered. Where possible (i.e., where permission is granted), video
recordings of classroom discourse will also be obtained. Video recordings are exceptional sources of data for conducting CDA, but they come at a cost. Many professors do not wish to have their “teaching” analyzed, particularly in executive education, and students may also be uncomfortable with the recordings. For this reason, all participants may not grant permission. At minimum, in-class observations and audio recordings will be obtained. In addition, handouts, electronic materials, syllabi, and assignments will be obtained for analysis. Classroom discourse and qualitative interviews will be transcribed for analysis.

**Research Sites and Questions**

The research sites for this dissertation were two executive development programs, each delivered over a period of one full week. Ideally, academic, professional, and corporate formats are desired for analysis. However, it is difficult to obtain permission for collecting qualitative data within corporate contexts. The broad overreaching questions this dissertation will attempt to answer are:

1) How is interpersonal trust in the classroom space engendered in the learning environment, and what are its effects on access to the resources of the classroom network?

2) What evidence is there of co-construction of communicative norms among instructors and executive students in the learning environment?

3) What evidence is there that embeddedness in professional or academic networks influences members’ participation?
4) What forms of communication and approaches to learning are valued, by whom, and how are they differentially valued by students and instructors in the classroom? What effect do they have on interactional footing and register-mediated alignment?

5) In the classroom, who is successful or unsuccessful in changing the footing, and under what conditions or situations? Additionally, in successful cases, what kind of shift has occurred—from what to what?
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

I had the opportunity to attend two professional development courses. Both courses lasted an entire week. In addition, coincidentally, both courses were delivered in the Southeastern United States: Quality Healthcare in Kentucky and University Executive Education in Virginia. Both courses dealt in similar material in that they were leadership development courses designed for the working professional.

One course was delivered at Quality Healthcare’s corporate headquarters, and participants were new and established employees in leadership roles from across the organization. University Executive Education’s leadership development program was delivered in the executive education branch of the university’s prestigious business school. This leadership development course had employees from several governmental and corporate organizations. The organizational sponsors of the program sent 1–4 employees to attend as students in the course.

University Executive Education runs the program with two facilitators and a team-building expert who takes the participants for a half-day in the middle of the week. Additionally, participants are divided into teams and conduct a simulation, utilizing principles communicated in the course. A team-building activity is frequently incorporated into the programs. At Quality Healthcare, one main facilitator runs the program with guest speakers at key points. The company’s CEO also comes in twice during the week and leads them through a block. The team-building activity at Quality Healthcare comes in the form of a team analysis of data points in a nursing home. The team-building activities in each course provide opportunities for participants to interact
with each other within the context of the leadership development course and use the language contained therein. Before these team-building activities occur, a great deal of work is conducted around reframing participant experiences as leadership—or potential leadership—experiences.

**Description of the Sites**

**Quality Healthcare**

Quality Healthcare\(^1\) is a privately-owned, palliative, end-of-life care organization that has been in operation for 12 years. The company operates 72 nursing homes in 5 states and employs about 12,000 employees to take care of its residents, who represent a variety of palliative care needs. The organization headquarters are located in Louisville, an urban area of the rural Southern state of Kentucky. Previously, the headquarters were located in Miami Beach, Florida, but they were moved to Kentucky at least in part as a cost-saving measure. A few years ago, QH underwent significant financial challenges, and the company was operating at a loss. Changes in the organizational structure and mission of the organization, along with moving the headquarters, have served to return QH to profitability.

Health care facilities typically are over 100 beds and serve urban and rural populations. Each nursing home is led by an individual, referred to in the industry as an administrator, who oversees business operations, nursing care, and therapist care. The mission of QH is organized around three ideologies, represented as *pillars*: intrapreneurship, spirituality, and education.

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\(^1\) Quality Healthcare is a pseudonym
Outline of the Program

The program is delivered at QH headquarters in Louisville, and administrators travel by car or plane to participate. Participants stay at one of two nearby hotels during the five-day program. While participating in the program, they do not do any work at their respective organizations. The course itself is essentially an onboarding program. Administrators who are new to the program or longer-term employees who are new to the administrative leadership role are required to attend. Particular attention is given in the program to explaining QH’s mission and vision, represented as the three pillars outlined above. Another goal of the program is to immerse new employees in the organizational culture.

Large chunks of the program are delivered by the CEO and the Chief Learning Officer (CLO), providing administrators with the opportunity for an extended period of interaction with the CEO to learn about the mission, vision, and values of the top leaders in the organization. This is in line with the literature indicating that organizational culture and values are actually projections of the values of the organization’s leadership (e.g., Dwyer, 1991). Additionally, portions of the first two days of the program are dedicated to introducing employees to organizational resources and encouraging administrators to draw on these resources as they perform their duties.

The course differs in important ways from a traditional onboarding program. A classroom is intentionally never composed entirely of new hires. Several seats are occupied by people who have more extensive history with the organization. For instance, some participants are administrators who have worked for QH for longer periods of time.
but are required to attend, primarily due to financial results deemed unsatisfactory. In other words, participation in the program for these administrators is more of an intervention than an onboarding process. Other participants are not administrators but serve other functions in the organization. Their participation is engineered as an attempt to break down silos in the organization, to improve interorganizational understanding, and to build the resource networks of administrators. Another important way in which the CEO program differs from traditional onboarding is that it is accredited. Participants are officially awarded *Continuing Education Units* (CEUs) after graduating from the program. CEUs are credits for successful participation in a professional development program that has been determined by an accrediting body as delivering relevant, updated knowledge. Healthcare administrators are required by law to be awarded a certain number of CEUs every five years through participation in accredited programs in order to retain licensure. Onboarding programs typically do not qualify for accreditation or for CEUs. The fact that this program does award CEUs indicates its relevance as a professional development program.

*Layout of the Classroom*

The CEO program classroom is about 50X80 feet. In the center of the room are four tables—two long tables and two short tables—arranged in a rectangle, with placards at each of the 16 seats. Facilitators occupy two of the seats at one end of the rectangle, while participants occupy the other 14 seats. At the front and back of the classroom, on either end of the rectangle, are two smart boards linked up with the computer system set up in one corner of the classroom. Presentations by facilitators, and later by participants, are projected on both smart boards, such that one of the boards can serve as a
teleprompter for individuals presenting to the classroom, while the other board can serve as a visual aid for participants. Along the back and side walls of the classroom are chairs that remain unoccupied for most of the course. During participant introductions and final presentations, members of QH’s leadership team are invited to the classroom to observe and provide feedback to participants.

A table near the door contains baskets of snacks—chips and candy—which are freely available to all the participants, who are not discouraged from eating or drinking during the course. Near the table is a small refrigerator that is stocked with water, juice, and soda for the participants. Outside of the classroom is a coffee and tea station, which participants are free to use at any time during the day. Frequent breaks are incorporated in the training to allow participants to make coffee and tea, but participants may exit the classroom at any time to get something to drink or utilize the restroom facilities as needed.

I occupied a small table in the front of the room, near the computer setup, where I could observe all participation in the classroom space. My video equipment was set up in an inconspicuous corner of the room to be as unobtrusive as possible. In addition to running video equipment, I also made audio recordings on a small portable device that I placed on the facilitator’s table. The audio recording was intended to facilitate the transcription process, as some of the participants tended to speak softly, and I feared I would not capture their voices on the video recording. In addition to the two forms of recording, I occupied my station during the entire program and took extensive notes.
**University Executive Education**

The University Executive Education program was delivered in a classroom in the main building of the large executive education building. Parking and entrance to the buildings are enforced by security. One of the buildings in the compound acts as a hotel, with luxury accommodations for participants in the programs. In the executive education building, a cafeteria serves professionally-prepared meals at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. All participants wear badges that allow them access to the building.

*Layout of the Classroom*

The classroom is designed as a miniature amphitheater, with four rows of seats at a roughly 70-degree arc. The classroom holds 60 people when full. Desks are spacious, and each space has its own outlet and peripherals for participant media. The “stage” is down in front of the classroom, with a podium, computer, and a number of media players. The entire room is wired with microphone pickups operated by IT. Classes may be audio or video recorded by IT, as needed. In addition to obtaining my own audio recordings (I was not allowed to video record these sessions), I received high-quality recordings from the IT department. I sat in the back to one side of the classroom, away from other participants where I could observe both participants and facilitators during the week.

Outside the classroom, a long table contained coffee, teas, juice, water bottles, and snacks that varied depending on the time of day. In the morning, yogurts, bagels, and muffins were freely available. Later in the day, candy, chocolate bars, chips, and trail mix were available. Participants received breaks on average about every 90 minutes. Participants brought snacks and drinks back to their seats to quietly eat during the program.
The class I was observing is an introduction course on leadership. Although a class such as this probably rarely holds more than about 40 people, the number this week was 14, a bit small for the circumstances. Open enrollment and specialized courses at expensive institutions have tended to suffer over the past several years following the great recession, with fewer individuals attending. The participants’ companies usually pay for programs, including this one. Closed enrollment courses, customized for specific companies, have also decreased. The difference is that the closed courses are either full or they don’t occur. Executive education’s competition for training dollars has become stiff as the market has tightened. In the current context, groups of individuals have been sent to the course by a military organization, a financial institution, a telecommunications company, and a technology firm. Each of the participants has recently been promoted, and this is their first leadership development training program.

Participants can sit at their tables with drinks and snacks. Indeed, snacks are encouraged, as they keep participants engaged and alert. Outside the room is a table with coffee and hot water for tea, breakfast cakes, yogurt, bagels with cream cheese, fruit, and breakfast bars, as well as a toaster. In the afternoon, the coffee and breakfast snacks will give way to cheese and crackers, as well as other snacks.

This section contains a discussion of two of the themes that emerged during the study. While many other themes exist, I have limited the focus to setting up the learning community, placing great emphasis on the early portion of the programs.

The first theme explores how identities are established and validated in the first segment of the courses. This first phase of the learning incorporates a highly relational
approach to introductions, turning the activity itself into a learning event that lasts several hours.

**Theme 1: Establishing Valid Identities**

**Name Tent Cards**

In both leadership development courses, participants each had printed tent cards with their names, their titles, and the organizations or sections of the organizations for which they worked. These name cards are in front of them from before the course begins until the course ends. In the corporate university, the main facilitator also had a tent name card. In the traditional university context, the facilitators occupied the podium and did not have name cards, but their information is prominently displayed on the smart board during introductions.

Name cards are, of course, reminiscent of desk or office door nameplates that are ubiquitous in the professional world. They confer identity and a sense of importance about the individual, communicating that he or she is uniquely qualified to represent the organization with whom he or she is identified. In the executive education context, whether at a corporate university or at a traditional college, the name card is all-important, and a course cannot proceed without one for each participant.

In traditional education contexts, such name cards are rarely, if ever, used. The instructor has a name everybody is of course aware of, but participant identities lack importance in the traditional institutional setting. There are no names save the attendance roster, which is taken in as unobtrusive a manner as possible. Names are to be remembered or forgotten, depending on the student’s performance and the instructor’s memory. It becomes a badge of honor for the instructor to “remember” a student’s name.
and call upon that person by, usually, the first name. Even if they work—indeed, some have prestigious jobs—these workplace contexts are unimportant in the traditional classroom and rarely, if ever, become acknowledged in the actual classroom space.

**What’s in an Introduction? Getting to Know All about You.**

Traditional education tends to not place too much stock on personal biography. The professor may or may not spend a few minutes talking about who she is, and occasionally students in an orderly fashion may one by one state their names and majors. It’s all finished in about 15 minutes, and then a rundown of the syllabus occurs. This tends not to be the case in executive education. At both sites, I observed a level of introduction that communicated a deep amount of information. This becomes an early opportunity for instructors to facilitate a behavior, and thus, learning, in furtherance of the course goals—that of developing leadership skills.

The facilitator at University Executive Education’s leadership development course introduces not just himself and his role. Rather, he introduces the institution from its highest level down to intra-organizational levels and then finishes with himself. In this way, he begins building for himself an identity that confers institutional and organizational authority to instruct—to lead the participants through the program:

F: The school, from an organizational point of view, our Dean has a long list of issues, not the least of which is we're one of the twenty schools that think we're in the top ten. From a departmental point of view, Fred, as I mentioned last evening, is our area coordinator for leadership and organizational behavior. We have two colleagues who won't talk to each other, one who won't be in the room if the other one is, one person who no matter what we suggest is always can't be done, can't be done kind of an Eeyore. Yet we're the people are supposed to go in and teach students how to get along with each other and manage teams. There is a certain hypocrisy to that, I suppose.
The facilitator lingers over some details that certainly do not paint the organization in a positive light. He even goes so far as to use the word hypocrisy, challenging his own institutional authority to conduct his job. It is an interesting trope, one that is designed for a couple different yet related effects. Although representing the institution—the school—as a teacher of leadership, he is also attempting to forge a relationship with the participants. As a representative of the institution, he distances himself, but by showing the institution to have flaws, he engages in an act of bonding with the participants through commiseration. He distances himself from the “Eeyores” of his organization and at the same time attempts to demonstrate that his organization has the same or similar types of problems as the organizations of participants in the course. It is the first of many acts to build common ground with participants.

The facilitator continues this effort in his personal introduction. Dropping to the individual level, he makes an additional effort to bond with participants through two actions. First, he presents an identity as a family man, and second, he continues with commiserating. In the literature, commiseration is referred to as “troubles talk,” and it serves as an agency to build rapport quickly, which can be useful for individuals in counseling roles (e.g., see Miller & Silverman, 2005):

F: But then at the individual level, as I mentioned, I'm 64. I have four children. My oldest son has schizophrenia. Even after a very pleasant evening last night I went home and we spent 2 ½ hours trying to deal with issues going on there. So it's kind of a daily energy “sink,” if you will. But each of you has your own issues.

The “pleasant evening” referenced in the above quote refers to a program kick-off dinner that preceded the first day of the course. So, in addition to 2 ½ hours the previous night, he engages in this extended introduction. Such extended introductions are exceedingly
rare in traditional education, but are quite common in executive education. Even after the long dinner the night before, the entire morning of the first day of this five-day program is devoted to introductions:

F: It may seem a little bit abrupt, hello, how are you, my name is Jim, what's your biggest problem in life? On the other hand we don't have a lot of time. So my hope is in this first hour and a half we could get acquainted with each other and sort out what the biggest issues are for you. Feel free to address any or all of those issues as you introduce yourself to the group. So hello, how are you, my name is Jim, what's your biggest challenge in life?

The facilitator, through this action, presents a model of leadership designed to build trust quickly, but also he creates a space and some time to listen to each participant’s issues coming into the program, as well as to gauge reactions from other participants. None of the information in the introductions goes to waste. All of it is captured on flipchart paper and put up on the walls around the classroom. This, in effect, creates a space that is enveloped with the real-life professional issues the participants face. Along with the tent cards, this brings their professional identities into the room.

In the corporate university setting of Quality Healthcare, introductions take on an even more central role of the program, consuming a full half-day even though all the participants and the facilitator work for the same organization:

F: Who am I?

P: Joe B.

F: That tells me about nothing. (laughter)

P: A doc.

F: A doc? What else?

P: Speech.
F: Speech! Now that’s interesting. I didn’t see that one coming. Speech. What else? Who am I?

P: Educator.

F: Communicator?

P: Educator.

In this opening, lively exchange, the facilitator begins immediately developing his identity, calling on the participants to offer up what they know of him. He is engaging in a trust behavior in that he allows some uncertainty with regard to how folks will answer. In fact, at one point, a participant calls out the word “speech,” which is a reference to the facilitator’s being a licensed speech therapist, a role that doesn’t come into play at the current organization. However, the company’s CEO has a speech impediment, and it is this impediment that led the facilitator to initially meet the CEO. So while this aspect of the facilitator is not part of the identity he wishes to promote as he builds his credentials, it is a known and important personal detail that has become part of the organizational lore regarding the facilitator. In the same exchange, the facilitator is again confronted with an identity he has to wrestle with. Upon being called an “educator,” he recasts it as “communicator,” which is more in line with leadership skills. However, the participants do not readily take up this identity. He lingers over this identity and explores it, to some effect, attempting to undermine that in favor of something else:

F: Educator. So how many of you liked school…when you were going through it? If you really liked school, raise your hand. (Half the group raise their hands hesitantly, elbows bent.)

F: So you would hear educator, and you’re thinking—woo-hoo! (laughter from several participants) Wahoo! The teacher is here. We’re going to have a great time! We love it! Now, how many of you struggled a little bit in school (raises his hand high) and maybe didn’t like it as much or at least at times didn’t like certain
teachers? Come on, be honest. (Two participants raise their hands high along with the facilitator. Another participant raises his hand, elbow bent.)

Throughout his introduction, the facilitator uses a number of interactional tropes, all the while reading and gauging his audience by the participants’ reactions. He’s putting on a show. In the monologue above, the facilitator performs a full assault on the identity of educator, or teacher. A teacher has students. A teacher imparts knowledge, and students take it up or fail to do so. A teacher judges students based on their performance. In adult learning, and in particular with regard to professional development, teachers recast themselves as “facilitators” and students as “participants.” In the latter configuration, learning is a thing that is seen as occurring as a result of the environment and the relationships between those who have knowledge and those who seek it. When a teacher becomes a facilitator, the relationship changes from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side” (King, 1993). That is the idea, anyway. But power dynamics, especially where institutions are concerned, can be extremely difficult to change. The facilitator takes another stab at driving home a recast of the identity of educator, arguing that it is inconsistent with how participants learn in the world. He makes an open assault on the register of educators, equating it with the incomprehensibility of all adults in the Peanuts comic and animation series:

F: So you…raise ‘em high. Let me see elbows. So you say, “Oh God! Here comes another talking head. Here comes another wo-wa-wo-wo-wo.” (uses hand to mimic talking) Right? Like a Peanuts character. And that’s all you know from a title, and basically a name.

Continuing on in this extended introduction, he uses the business card as an educational tool regarding identity creation. The dynamic created allows for one of the participants to engage in an interactional trope, while indexing her professional identity at the same time.
with a play on pronunciation. To help the reader understand, the business cards have the name of the organization in large print, and the first letter is an “S” done in a flourish. Add to the mix some southern pronunciation, and the following exchange becomes a bridge for facilitator and participants as they co-construct meaning when the facilitator plays along and amplifies the double entendre:

F: Now, if we go through this exchange of information—the business card—you see other things on there. (pulls out business cards to different participants on both sides of the room) What else do you see?

P: A big “S.” (sounds like “ass”)

F: A big “S”! (booming voice, sounds like “ass.” Everyone laughs.) What’s it for? Super teacher…Superior…Silly. I don’t know. Big S for [the name of the company]. What do you see more on me?

The facilitator keeps attention on the credentials, building out his resume, and in this fashion constructs his credentials for leading this class. His tactic here is to get participants to arrive at conclusions about his “right” to be directing the learning effort, one piece at a time. The exchange becomes rhythmic, as he and the participants develop an interactional footing:

P: Lots of letters after your name.

F: Lots of letters! More letters after my name than in my name. So let’s go through a few of those. What’s CCC-SLP?

P: Speech.

F: A speech language pathologist. How many of you did not know that I was a speech therapist? Everybody here knew that little secret? So what does it mean, though, as a speech language pathologist? What that means is that I have done *womb-to-tomb therapy*. I worked in the NICU all the way up in the nursing home with 102-year-old “Tessie.” So I might know something about what?

P: Healthcare.
F: Healthcare. I might know something about…?

P: People.

F: People. I might know something about therapy. Any therapists in the room? (raises his hand. No one else does.) So that doesn’t do a whole lot—all right! So what’s in the next set of letters?

The facilitator stumbles on his footing as he attempts to set up an interactional trope with regard to the letters for MBA, and again with OPM. He’s building out his credentials in business, but most of the participants are not “business” oriented, although they have key roles administering their facilities in the company. What he is attempting to develop is common ground to build the learning community, the interactional space in the classroom where learning is to occur over the rest of the week:

P: MBA…


F: A master of business administration. So what does that mean?

P: (tentatively) Driven.


P: Right.

F: I’ll tell you how I got all those degrees in a little while. Keep going. What does that MBA mean?

P: That you should know something about business.

F: I should know something at least by schooling about business. Now if I tell you that with that MBA I ran in the great state of Florida a hundred and two nursing homes? Does that change our dynamic at all? Does that change how you might look at me?

P: Uh-huh.
F: How so?

P: We respect you from a health…

F: There you go. Now how many of you knew I had done that before? (Four people raise hands.)

P: I didn’t know that before.

F: There you go. You (speaking directly to the participant who said he didn’t know that) know me fairly pretty well. Didn’t know that about me. But now how many of you are administrators? (Most people raise their hands.) Do you think we just got a common bond there? Might I have some information you can use?

P: Yes.

F: At least on paper, right?

P: Yes.

Finally, when he nears the end of his introduction, he confronts the identity of educator with the last acronym. But a tangible shift has taken place, and participants choose language other than “educator” to address this final credential, reframing educator as communicator, thus bringing the circle to a close:

F: What are those last sets of letters?

P: Doctor of education?

F: Doctor of Education. What does that mean?

P: That you know something about delivering the message.

F: There we go.

Recall at the beginning of this admittedly lengthy exchange that someone had called him an educator and he “mistakenly” had heard communicator. It becomes clear through examination of the exchange that this first mistake was actually the first in a long line of interactional tropes, seeking to build rapport with the participants and come to an
agreement regarding the identities that would be exhibited during the week. In this class, the facilitator is very explicit regarding his intentions:

F: Why am I doing it this way? Why am I introducing myself in this manner?

P: So we can boooooond and we’ll listen to you. (Everybody laughs.)

F: So we can bond and you’ll listen to me. Okay, let’s go backwards a little bit on that. Bonding, yes, and maybe relating more—because adult learning theory says what about adults and how they learn? They need what?

P: Interaction?

F: They need interaction; they need a reason. They want to have news they can use, and they want the source to be…

P: Credible.

From an interactional standpoint, there is a clear indication that facilitator and participants have found a particular footing that feels comfortable and relational. They are in the process of co-constructing an interactional register and building common ground.

What’s Family Got to Do with It?

Following facilitator introductions, each participant in the two programs engages in his or her own introduction, as well. While these introductions may be shorter than the facilitator’s, it is not entirely the result of having less to say or having less power in the classroom space, although the facilitator reserves power to control the flow of discourse. Rather, the process becomes more efficient as participants make their introductions, each participant learning first from the facilitator and then from the people who went before.

The introductions each also include signs and signaling that facilitate fast trust (Perks & Halliday, 2003) in relationships. Additionally, each introduction includes at least one
issue regarding leadership that the participant can contribute to the course. Often, this may be reframed, or recontextualized, by the facilitator or other participants, who draw out the issue through questioning or recast the issue in the language of leadership the course adopts:

P: So I'm Martin, originally from Argentina, have been in the States for eleven or twelve years. At the individual level I find myself in a good spot right now, good woman by myself with where I am. Work wise I'm having a good time in the last few years. I've been very productive. On the personal life actually I have balance. I have also a kid who has some issues. My kid, I have two kids but one of them is actually in the autism spectrum, so he is what's called high-functional autism. He is eight years old. For the last three or four years we've been trying to figure out what's sort of the right mix of tools from school therapy, medication, you name it. We finally think we found a process, we find when we get to a stage where we actually think we have line of sight to some calm for the next five years. We found a school that is right for him. We have the right therapy; we have the right mix of chemicals at this point going on in his body. So all that I think is, so again, at the individual level, the family level I think we're in that spot.

F: Thank you very much. It's finding the right chemistry is a major challenge, in my experience.

P: And then from the perspective when we talk about politics and all that is one of the things that we have struggled with my wife was leaving him in the suburbs of Washington, DC, and they don't really know how to tackle kids with my kid's condition. Even though when you're one of the richest counties in the country they still don't know how to do it. The good resources are there, but they're not really doing a good job.

F: So this issue of diversity and talent application will be an important issue throughout the course of the week. Generally we could say society has advanced in many ways, but what about the local abilities to address various issues? That will be part of the challenges you'll face. So thank you, Martin, appreciate it.

A couple interesting things are happening in this introduction. First, it begins with the individual and personal. Like the facilitator, who had earlier talked about his schizophrenic son in his own introduction, this participant, Martin, introduces his child, who also is having trouble fitting into society. It becomes a shared bond, as the facilitator
notes in his first response, which is drawn from personal experience. Interestingly, the
two merge with the idea of having the right “chemistry,” which sets up a double meaning
here, as chemistry is also about developing relationships. The entire introduction process
is a process of finding the right chemistry.

Second, the facilitator takes Martin’s story about the social challenges of finding
proper care for his son and recontextualizes it as a topic of leadership—“understanding
diversity and talent application.” This life lesson is captured on flipchart paper and
becomes part of the fabric of the class learning. On the heels of this reframing, the
facilitator also wields his power by signaling to Martin that his introduction is now over,
thanking him and taking the floor to authorize the next speaker to begin. Now in the
college setting, with facilitator and Martin, a pattern has emerged for how introductions
are made: self, family, personal issue, reframing, thanks. This is carried over to the next
introduction:

P: I've been married for 21 years, I've got three kids. My oldest is 18 and just went
to college. He's doing the home college thing. My middle son is 16 years old and I
have a daughter that's 10. My 16-year-old son about two years ago got leukemia
and we went through a bone marrow transplant and everything was great. He was
one of the lucky ones that made it through, but we're always kind of living on the
edge. It's a challenge for me and my wife. You're always fearing that something is
going to come back. So we've had a few minor hiccups, where the test results
have come back and they thought it was coming back and tested again and it's not.
So it's a challenge for us. My wife has gone back to school to get her RN degree.
So she's a full-time student and we're trying to balance the stuff obviously with
parenting. Obviously I travel a lot for work, so it creates some challenges and
difficulties and strain in what we have going on.

F: Both of you used the word 'balance.' This issue of work life balance where we
try to find the right mix of professional activity and personal and home activity.
For a long time I thought that was primarily a North American issue, but it turns
out if you ask this open-ended question what are your biggest challenges in life in
Bangkok or Kobe or Beijing or Johannesburg or wherever you go. It's the number
one issue that comes up. So work-life balance is kind of a global economy phenomenon, I guess. Thank you.

With two participant introductions, the facilitator is then able to pick up on themes or patterns that are relevant to the course and the learning within it. In this case, he focuses in on the hot topic of “balance” and extends it to work-life balance and then to globalism, capitalizing on the participant’s note of the importance of travel to his work.

Each subsequent introduction follows the pattern set up by the facilitator, and as each person performs his or her own introduction, the next person learns from the previous performers’ feedback and further refines the process.

Meanwhile, in the corporate university setting, introductions took a more formal turn. During a short break for the participants, a couple dozen employees from various functions around the headquarters building filtered into the classroom and took seats in the periphery of the room. Their job was to listen to each participant. Each participant then made their formal introduction to the group, after which they received feedback on their delivery and content. The rationale, ostensibly, is that a leadership skill is speaking personally in public:

F: Then, to really get to the point. So, I will give you the one-minute sign (raises hand high with one finger pointed) and then I will stop you. So you really do need to be clear, concise, and complete. At the end of your presentation, the audience will have one minute to listen to, reflect, ask you about, or give you any kind of feedback. Any questions from the participants? You will come up here and address the group and Laura, you're first.

P: Robin?

F: Robin. (Raucous laughter at the facilitator’s naming error) Oh Good!

P: Hello, my name is Robin Green. I'm at Westmoreland. My facility is located north of Nashville in a little town called Westmoreland. I run a 100-bed nursing
home. We do outpatient therapy. We do some community-based services. We're looking to...expand. Um, I've been in long-term care, um, since I was 17.

F: All right. Good. Okay. Audience, reaction to Robin. Do you know enough about her?

P: Laura, or Robin?

F: To Laura, who is she? What do you need to know, did she do what she needed to do?

O: I would have liked to know what she had done when you were 17. What did you do in the facility?

P: I was an activities director.

F: Remember this morning. It's not just what you know but whom you know and how they know you, so it's the Power of that Personal Story...that we'll be working on for the next week. Do all of you—here it is—it's not a matter of an A or a B or an F. It's do these presenters give you what you needed to know about them? Do you know enough about their facility and about them to have some kind of relationship? Do you know enough about them? Is there—do they leave you wanting more? Like a lot more? Jeff, what do you think?

J: Well, you know a lot of how you present yourself is also how you enunciate, it's speed. It's a little bit hard for me to hear you. Um, so I know, I know that you're Laura, and you go by a different name (laughter), but other than that, it's sort of—I got lost in the rest of it, so what is your position?

P: Administrator.


F: But that's something important to know. That if you have a weak voice or not very loud, then you're going to really have amplification, speak up, or move around to put yourself in a place where people can hear you. So again, at the end of this experience, each one of these presenters will go back to their unit, or facility, and have to tell them what they learned in CEO school, and how they will do things differently. Anything else from Robin? Thank you, Robin. Randy. (Randy starts to get up, moves to the front.)

The introductions by participants in the CEO school are far more institutionalized than the ones in the college executive education setting, but they serve similar purposes.
They each attempt to build the participants’ identities as a critical element in the success of the program. In both programs, participants and facilitators getting to know each other is a critical step toward building a social network to further each individual’s professional identity. In the CEO school, participants are introducing themselves to their colleagues who work at headquarters, and the practical implications for building the network in this scenario are far more relevant than in the open-enrollment leadership development course.

The facilitator in University Executive Education is the key source of feedback, while in the corporate university setting, the facilitator draws upon the resources of the company to provide feedback such that the participants are readily aware of the salience of the information and its import to their careers.

In both cases, it is also a time of bonding, of building fast trust in the classroom, and in the above scenario it also leads to an increasing awareness of the extended social network and significant self-awareness. Through others’ eyes, participants learn to discern what details are important emblems of identity in their leadership. This is what the course seeks to develop. In both cases, the facilitator has ultimate power to control speech in the exchanges, but in the corporate setting, this power is also handled with a series of tropes, such as the improper use of a participant’s name. For the remainder of the course, Robin became Robin/Laura.

In both cases, subsequent participants dramatically improved their performance in making introductions, working on enunciation, intonation, and delivery of the information others wanted and felt they needed to learn in order to make a meaningful connection. These repeated speech events serve to refine the relevant register for all participants such that the last person to make introductions delivered to near perfection,
according to the group. Interestingly, the group, including participants, becomes the overarching authority in what goes into a powerful introduction. This is a power that is co-constructed through the chain of introductions. Evidence of this is readily available, humorously, in the final introduction by a participant who had been away at a meeting and did not have the opportunity to learn from his peers in their successive deliveries.

The group, which now only included participants, made their power felt as they delivered pointed critiques of what was missing from his introduction:

F: All right, ladies and gentlemen, welcome back. Before we kind of debrief on that first experience and move on, we have one presentation. We know that Dave took the easy way out, he went upstairs and gave a board presentation—woa woa woa woa. (uses hand to simulate talking, mimics the adult language on Peanuts) There it's where the rubber hits the road. So—what we're going to do is give Dave the same constraints. He has three minutes. He is to introduce himself and his department, and you may give him feedback. Dave, to the front please.


F: Got it.

Dave: All right, very good. Hello everybody, how are you?

P: Good.

F: Good.

Dave: Dave O's my name, and Quality Healthcare Way is my game. (Participants chuckle.) Quality Healthcare Way is—who knows anything about Quality Healthcare Way, heard anything about it? (Most people raise their hands.) And what do you what do you believe it is—heard of?

P: It's a process of business, technique that we follow and do it.

Dave: And do it, yes. One in Misty's building, right? How'd that go over in your building Misty?

Misty: Great, everybody loved it. Front-line engagement is what it's all about. It's taking manufacturing principles and applying them to health care… (Speaks at length for a minute and a half)
Dave: ...Okay. So, that's what the Quality Healthcare Way is all about. And there's level 1's and level 2's where everybody's expected to go through level 1. And understand the process. Level 2 is for those who really want to take it to the next step and immerse it in their building and teach their peer buildings how to build those maps and make it a reality...in their world. So, questions, comments? Is that clear? Not. (Points at someone at the other end of the room) Got a puzzled look back there.

P: No, I'm good. I'm going to do process level 2 next time.

Dave: What about the young lady beside you? She had a puzzled look on her face like, “Is this guy on crack?”

Dave’s self-introduction is markedly different from all the others, which he, of course, fails to recognize. He doesn’t recognize it because he was not present for the learning chain of self-introductions that occurred earlier. What he perceived as confusion about his content was confusion about his delivery. How did Dave go so wrong? It takes a while before one of the participants confronts the issue—that he violated the principles they had just spent the last hour and a half perfecting:

P: I didn't hear anything about Dave's beautiful wife, his children. (The facilitator is emphatically pointing his finger at the participant speaking, indicating that her comment is particularly relevant.) Where he lives (some people start laughing), um, I didn't hear any of that.

F: Oh his name is...?

P: Paul.

F: And his game is...?

P: The Quality Healthcare Way.

F: And what do you know about Dave?

P: Nothing.

Paul: (With the facilitator pointing his finger directly at Paul) Very good. (loud laughter)
In just a few hours, in both programs but particularly in the Quality Healthcare corporate university setting, the facilitator and participants co-construct a professional register—a language unique to the single classroom setting that lays the foundation for the learning community by building trust and creating a common ground.

**Theme 2: Reframing, Recontextualizing, and Register-Mediated Alignment**

Throughout both leadership development courses, although the content and frameworks were markedly different, both engaged in remarkably similar practices. Facilitators from both courses had unique terminology and ways of looking at the world, and it is this language that a one-week immersion course in leadership development seeks to instill in participants. Trust having been built over the course of the first day, the facilitators and participants work together to make meaning out of the experience.

**The Role of Flipcharts**

At the beginning of each of her sessions in University Executive Education, for example, the co-facilitator, Sheila, looks closely at the flipcharts Jim has created and determines the language he covers. All of this information is captured in flipcharts that hang throughout the learning space. At Quality Healthcare, a similar process unfolds, and the walls fill up daily with captured messages. Flipcharts are used at University Executive Education and Quality Healthcare:

- To aggregate participants’ observations and inputs during the course of the program.
- To reframe those observations and inputs into the language of the course.
- As evidence that the course is grounded in participants’ lived experiences.
As evidence that these experiences are valued by the facilitators.

As artifacts of language for participants to view and assimilate.

Figure 2: Flipcharts at University Executive Education

Reframe, Reframe, Reframe

Throughout each program, a major activity of facilitators is listening to participant stories and reframing them in different language. Because language indexes ideology, reframing participant-given information demonstrates alternative ways of thinking, being, and engaging. Each program purports it to be a “leadership” way. This can be seen happening throughout the introductions of the first day, but it continues throughout the programs.

For instance, in University Executive Education, participants are asked to answer the question, “What is success?”

F: Did anyone else struggle with this question? What's hard about this question because it's really simple? The answer is simple.

P: Tell us. Tell us.

F: I mean it's a simple question. It's not compound with a lot of other stuff, right? So it's a simple two-word question, what is success, three-word question. And yet every time we have this conversation, people really struggle with trying to define and understand, and put words to what that is. So, what's the struggle about? What makes this difficult?
P: The struggle for me is my definition of success; is it realistic? Is it healthy? I think my definition of success is kind of more material, more power, more money, and whatever amount of money I have I know I'll just want more, not that I don't care about family but I don't have kids right now so that's not really a big issue. And I'm married but my wife works more than I do, so I don't really have any other focus. And I feel like I should, like speaking around the room, it should be more well-rounded, but it's all in one gap, and if anything I wish it was even more.

F: You want it even more in professional and material goals.

P: I'll try harder and more likely to accomplish my goal.

F: Yes, which is a never-ending target, a never-ending striving.

P: Right. It's a moving target.

In the above exchange, the participant struggles with putting his experience into words. It's not a regular exercise for the participant. The facilitator simply focuses on the essence of the struggle with words and reframes it in the language of the course. These reframes can be taken up by the participant or challenged. Most often, the new language is taken up and quickly put to use by the participant—indeed, elaborated on.

At other times, simple language doesn’t capture the essence of the concept, and elaboration is needed to expand the idea and explore it before achieving a new simplification:

P: I think it's actually, to me, I think it's the push, pull, between what people think you should be versus what you want to be.

F: I picked up on that language in what C. was saying.

P: Yes, it's this whole in and out, living outside, or inside out, what should it be?

F: And so for many of us, and I include myself in this category, we spend a lot of time living according to other people's expectations. Society says that we should want a lot of money. Society says that we should have a family. Society says that we should do this. And anytime we're not living in complete accordance with what society says, we feel like we're missing something. So that's part of why this is a hard question to answer because there's this struggle between what society
says we should want and living according to our own truth and our own set of values, and values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations [VABEs], because you'd be living from the inside rather than living from the outside. So the struggle is trying to make sense of—do I go with what I'm expected to do or do I go with what's really core to me? I'm curious because there are, you're at a fairly developed stage in your career. Right? You've been working for a few years.

P: Yes.

F: You're more seasoned in your career.

In the above passage, the facilitator engages the participants in a more detailed exploration and introduces a key self-awareness framework that is driven throughout the course: values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations, captured in the acronym VABE.

Meanwhile, in Quality Healthcare, similar reframing events occur as the facilitator listens to participants and feeds their information back to them in new language.

F: What do you take out of the leadership thing? If you had to say there was an overall theme or perspective that came out of this deal we just did, what would you say that the motto of that program was?

P: I think that there’s, well, it’s too simple almost, very distinct differences between the manager and the leader.

F: What is it that the leader does? So what is the focus of being a leader as it relates to this tool?

P: Being aware of yourself.

F: And?

P: Learning areas where your strengths and weaknesses are so you can plug into that.

F: So that you can…?

P: Be a better…

F: How you relate to people, right? Because it’s how you collaborate and relate to people. That’s all this is about. That’s all this is about is: how you see yourself and how you relate to people.
In the above exchange, the facilitator provides leading questions to scaffold the language he wants the participant to use. But he can only go so far before the participant needs some help, and finally, the facilitator reframes the language. In the following exchange, a similar type of reframing occurs. This time, bringing in other voices, such as the author of a leadership book:

F: Good leadership. Yes. That’s what that’s about, okay? So what we’re doing is working you through that over the next five days. So what is—give me a working definition of—management? What is management?

P: Working through others.

F: Okay, you could say it is what? Getting things done…

P: Through others.

F: There it is. That’s the Joe simpleton definition. Getting things done through others. For…as a comedian once said, getting people to do what they really don’t…want to do.

P: Want to do.

F: True or not true? Okay? What’s leadership, then? If management is the day to day, right? Getting things done through people, right? And we all have to manage, right? What is leadership, then? What’s at level 4 and 5?

P: The vision and…

JB: The vision, the mission, the motivation to drive and encourage and get those management things done through effective leadership. That’s how you get to be a level 5 leader. And we’re going to talk a lot about that. Okay.

The facilitator makes direct reference to the work of Jim Collins’ (2001) book, Good to Great, in which the author describes 5 levels of leadership. Although the two programs have widely different approaches, they both achieve similar results in that they capture participant language and participant views, ultimately redirecting that language through a series of moves that bring facilitators and participants closer together in register-mediated
alignment, building the common ground upon which additional activities and team building occur.

Theme 3: Intentionality

From the beginning of each program and throughout the instruction, one aspect became abundantly clear—the programs were built and delivered via intentional moves. Participants are free to get up and move around, grab a snack or coffee, use the restroom, or conduct other business, as needed. This was one of the first items of information shared in the programs.

Intentional Choices

Both executive development programs attempt to break the institutionalized norms of traditional education in a number of ways in the different spaces of the classroom.

Seating

While seating gave preferential location to the facilitator, it also ensured that all participants were in constant view of one another. University Executive Education had dedicated classrooms designed to facilitate participant awareness of each other, which then also was accentuated by the facilitators. Quality Healthcare repurposed rooms in the corporate headquarters for instruction, creating a circle in which participants faced each other. Traditional education tends to favor a one-to-many instructional style, in which all students face the instructor in grid-like fashion. This norm has been changing in traditional higher education, albeit slowly.
**Breaks**

In both programs, frequent breaks were the norm, and these breaks occurred with an established and catered break area, encouraged participants to meet and get to know one another. While participants were not forced to stay within the break area, it was made so comfortable that few strayed far from the group. Breaks also frequently followed participant interaction in the classroom, and participants eagerly followed up on topics of interest, engaging in conversation with one another. By the end of each program, participants had a collection of business cards or contact information from many, if not all, of the other participants. In fact, most participants took care to bring business cards in anticipation of exchanging contact and other professional information.

**Meals**

In both programs, the instruction was for five full days. This allowed participants three opportunities per day to break bread with each other. In addition, facilitators made particular effort to attend several meals in order to interact with participants socially. At these times, participants and facilitators felt comfortable asking and answering questions related to their careers and their work. By the middle of the week, each participant and facilitator knew a wealth of information about all the other members and could call on that information quickly during interactions inside and outside the classroom.

**Team Building and Team Projects**

Each program had specific time set aside for team building activities, which were built into the programs, matching people who had never worked with each other in a
collaborative space. In both programs, the activities occurred mid-way through, on Wednesday or Thursday.

**Facilitator vs Professor**

The instructors in both programs sought to lower their status as a means of elevating the status of participants. One simple method involved the use of the term “facilitator” rather than “professor” or “instructor.” A facilitator is, as put in one of the programs, “the guide on the side, and not the sage on the stage.” While the phrase has been in existence for decades, it takes on particular relevance in the two professional training programs I observed and in programs described to me by participants.

**Ratifying Participant Knowledge**

The programs I observed intentionally ratified participant knowledge throughout the programs. This was done in a number of ways, some of which have been discussed. From the beginning of the programs—even before—with the crafting of name tent cards and badges, participant identities, including their titles and organizations, are crafted and displayed. Each participant wears this identity into the classroom and displays it throughout the program.

Participant knowledge is also intentionally brought into the room and ratified in the first day with extended introductions followed up with opportunities to substantively engage each participant regarding what he or she does and how the work in the program would impact and be impacted by the participant. Flipcharts captured some of this information and remained in the classroom throughout the week.

Both programs had numerous breakout sessions—blocks of time in which small groups of participants would group together to engage in a task or activity. At University
Executive Education, the breakout sessions had dedicated space in numerous small rooms which the participants could use. At Quality Healthcare, breakout session locations were in different parts of the building, as decided by the participants. In both cases, the task or activity participants engaged in drew from participant professional knowledge and experiences, and the outcomes were discussed openly in large group debriefs and key takeaways written up on flipchart paper and placed around the room. In effect, over the course of the week, the participants were increasingly surrounded by their own words, experiences, and insights. Participants became increasingly at ease in both programs, sharing and contributing significantly more.

At the beginning of the week, much of the burden of communication was placed on the facilitator. Even though each participant had opportunities carved out for them to engage the group and share their knowledge, the facilitator held the floor for most of the talking. By the end of the programs, exchange was far more balanced, with participants and teams of participants contributing to the dialogue much more frequently.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation sought answers to five questions with regard to executive education in corporate university and standard university sites. While the sites were disparate and the contexts of the two courses were dissimilar, the goal of the learning was the same (leadership development) and some of the methods employed were remarkably similar.

The first question posited was how interpersonal trust is engendered in the learning environment and what the effects are on access to the resources of the classroom network. The first theme explored how that trust is established through explicitly employing and mutually validating professional and personal identities. The second theme showed how participants’ lived experiences are validated and incorporated into the learning environment. Additionally, participants receive a great deal of talk time to explore and try out new ideas, all the while guided by facilitators who reframe and recontextualize participant speech. Participants, meanwhile, accept these framings and incorporate the new language into their own speech, which is validated by facilitators as they drill deeper into the learning, leading to alignment, or common ground.

With regard to the classroom network, participants in the corporate setting were directly affected by a deepening awareness of the organization and of the resources it had to offer by being in the course. Such organizational awareness can foster greater entrepreneurial thought and activity, leading to increased innovation.

In the University Executive Education environment, participants’ engagement with other participants from different institutions and industries, as well as direct
interaction with facilitators who operate in both public and private sector spaces, increases their network of associates from outside their regular network. This leads to greater diversity of thought by developing bridging connections and expanding their network to include heterogeneous connections. Participants in the program remain in touch long after the program ends, developing friendships and professional relationships they would not ordinarily have.

The two themes explored also answer the second research question, which sought evidence that co-construction of communicative norms occurred in executive education learning environments. A great deal of evidence was presented to show that these communicative norms are established very early in the program through relational introductions and feedback, including reframing.

My third research question regarding what evidence there is that embeddedness in professional or academic networks influences members’ participation is answered partially through the data in the Theme 1 introductions, but it is also answered anecdotally through interviews with several participants in both programs. Facilitators spent a great deal of time and effort at explicitly establishing their credentials—both academic and professional—to the participants. Embeddedness in both academic and professional networks in the introductions but also through multiple examples of storytelling of past incidents and/or clients establishes expertise at different levels, convincing participants that a) the facilitators understood the professional contexts participants were experiencing, and b) had something of value to impart. The result was highly interactional participation.
The fourth research question sought to explore what forms of communication and approaches to learning are valued, by whom, and how they are differentially valued by students and instructors in the classroom, as well as what effect they had on interactional footing and register-mediated alignment. I believe this question to be only partially answered by the evidence presented in the themes. Facilitators really run the show in terms of how information is framed and how it is valued. However, they do not do so in an ostentatious way. Rather, the learning becomes a form of performance art, where the acts of influencing participants and controlling the footing seems and feels almost effortless to the participants. Participants want to be valued, and if they believe they will be valued by staying in the conversational flow of the activities, then they are incentivized to adopt communicative norms as members of the group perform them, although first demonstrated by facilitators.

The final question deals with power. As discussions of the examples in the two themes shows, the facilitators wield a great deal of power through framing the classroom interaction and the footing. This occurs regardless of how participants may feel about it. In the classroom, it is the facilitator who decides in most instances who speaks and for how long. Once participants have the floor, they may hold onto it for a considerable time, but not without the authority of the facilitator. Indeed, perhaps it is because facilitators have such power that they seek to downgrade its appearance—for instance, by framing themselves as facilitators rather than instructors or professors. This power is not to be taken lightly, as participants can and sometimes do stage revolts when they fail to see the value a facilitator or a block of training may offer. The two programs I observed were
very successful ones, and a key source of the success lies in the work the facilitators did to build the learning community in its early stages.

Executive education has entered nearly every aspect of adult professional lives. In addition, it has become increasingly important to traditional universities and colleges. Increased competition for educational dollars and spiraling costs of traditional education have meant that the high premiums paid for participation in executive programs fund more traditional ones. But this can only be done successfully when executive education performs well by convincing students that the training—and in particular, the trainer—is relevant to their needs and will further their professional aims. A key aspect of this influence can be seen in how the ground is laid for development of the learning community by building trust and creating a common ground. It is through this that participants are encouraged to adopt new communicative norms and expand their registers—and their knowledge.

**Recommendations for Research**

This dissertation qualitatively explored some of the dimensions of how facilitators and learners interacted in the early stages of two different professional development programs. In that sense, it is quite limited. I can only speak to how interaction occurred in these two week-long programs and cannot generalize to the entire field of professional development. Additional academic research to broaden and build upon the work started here is needed.

One of the findings in this dissertation is that the two programs, while different in many respects, shared remarkable similarity in how they developed the learning community. Both courses also employed similar methods of bringing the participants’
personal and professional lives into the classroom and making these an integral part of the course delivery. Additional research could focus on how—or whether—these occur in virtual and blended learning styles. Do they occur in similarly-structured courses outside of leadership development?

Both programs I observed were highly rated by participants, but do they pay off? Return on investment (ROI) in training can be measured relatively easily when training fills specific gaps in knowledge to which outcome measures can be developed. But what of programs that deliver leadership development, team development, and other relational skills that professionals and executives need? Demand for these learning subjects remains high across organizations over time. However, the proof of their effectiveness in terms of financial ROI has been notoriously elusive to the point that some researchers suggest that it is the wrong question to ask (Leonard, 2005; Weick, 2005).

Research that follows up on professional development courses has been limited by a number of factors, one of which is that of access. Indeed, in my own research, one of the critical barriers to gathering data on the training itself was access to the institutions that provide such training.

**Suggestions for Practice**

In 2014, organizations in the United States spent an average of $1,229 per employee for training and development, a 1.7% increase over the previous year (Association for Talent Development, 2014). The high-ticket training programs continue to be the face-to-face events, whether they occur through an elite school on a university campus or a corporate training center. The field of “executive-style” education has continued to grow, and more traditional colleges and universities are entering the market.
every year. In addition, corporations are expanding their training centers and building corporate universities. For the different types of organizations, there is a vested interest in getting things right with regard to delivering learning to students in the midst of their careers. Getting it right means taking how learning is delivered into as much consideration as what learning is delivered. Educators cannot simply transfer their teaching styles practiced in traditional learning institutions to the professional development format.

In professional development, the relational, interactional space in a learning community is one that appears to be constantly negotiated between the facilitator(s) and the participants. This dissertation did not determine the degree to which attention was explicitly considered in the development and delivery of the two programs. However, it is clear that personal, professional, and other identities come into play, and that finding or building the common ground is a critical factor in the early portions of programs. The programs I observed seem to have been designed with specific attention directed to concerns about interactional footing and its role in building the learning community.

Instructors who facilitate professional development programs are on strict limits with regard to time, because more often than not, each participant is a full-time employee seeking additional knowledge to augment a career trajectory he or she is already on. In order to impart quality knowledge in a way that maximizes uptake, I recommend that instructors design their programs to maximize the building of trust and rapport within the constraints of a tight program schedule. The two programs I chose as my focus for this dissertation happened to dedicate a significant chunk of the program’s time at the beginning for relational content. Frequent opportunities for interaction throughout the
week and particularly at the end were also designed into the programs, and this contributed to their success.

Participants in professional development programs have a great deal personally invested, whether time, money or both. The resources spent in the program could be used elsewhere. Most of the individuals I spoke with could recount instances in which the program failed for them. Two characteristics determined the participants’ acceptance or rejection of programs they had been involved in: the ability of the program to make a connection with the participant and the quality of the materials, as judged by the participants. The first characteristic can be addressed in at least a few ways by instructors:

- Intentionally designing relational activities, introductions, and opportunities to interact in meaningful ways.
- Designing opportunities to ratify participant professional knowledge and experience.
- Developing the program in ways that encourage substantive engagement on the part of the participants.

The second characteristic begins even before the program. Participants want to know what qualifies an instructor to deliver the course. They ask themselves, “Does the instructor of this program/module/block have information I can bring back to my professional life in a meaningful way?” Participants in professional development programs are, rightly, critical of the instructor and the materials. If a clear case is not made as to the importance of the material, they are likely to divert their resources (participation, attention) to activities that are more meaningful to them.
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