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Communication as Constitutive of Organization: Practicing Collaboration in and English Language Program

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Communication as Constitutive of Organization:
Practicing Collaboration in an English Language Program

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about collaboration as an organizational practice that is communicatively constituted. Specifically, I examine how members of a team in an English language program located in a large southeastern university in the United States make sense of what they define as a collaborative work environment and materialize it in their meetings in spoken and written discourse, and in their mention and use of organizational artifacts. Though the study examines the practices of one organizational setting, the insights generated illuminate broader organizational and discourse dynamics and speak to important issues in the discipline of communication such as authority, leadership, organization sensemaking, materiality, and the role of texts in organizations.

The data in this dissertation consists of spoken and written discourse. The spoken and written discourse data consist of 11 audiorecorded and transcribed meetings. To collect these data, I attended team meetings for a period of one year. I transcribed selected meeting data, and analyzed this data using a tool kit called discourse analysis. The written discourse data I examine is comprised of two documents: The Statement of Core Values and the Philosophy on Teamwork. My analysis shows how team members operating in a collaborative environment favor strategies that lead to consensus. These strategies include the use of politeness strategies such as the use of mitigating and inclusive language. Team members also use discursive strategies that demonstrate top down leadership and authority, albeit marked by indirectness. I offer practical recommendations for practice starting with the idea that collaboration does not have meaning outside of communication; collaboration means what the members of a discourse

community say it means. I contend that discourse analysis can be a useful tool for organizational members as it can help them become mindful of the language they use and its constitutive force in the workplace. I also offer suggestions that can help organizations retroactively make sense of their organizational texts to ensure that they are accountable to others for what their organizations stand for.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study of spoken discourse dynamics in the context of team meetings. The meetings took place over a period of one year in an English language program located on the campus of a university in the southeastern United States. As a communication scholar who studies the social consequentiality of everyday interaction, my overall aim is to argue how what may appear inconsequential or mundane at first glance, is, in fact, the very fabric of an organization. I begin this work with an excerpt from a team meeting in the English language program where I conducted my research for this work. This example is typical of the kinds of conversations that took place during these meetings.

Excerpt 1.1:

- 29 L: °Yeah°
- 30 T: So that it's kinda like ah: (.5) they can share materials they can have you
31 know discussion board if they want to about a course or they can they can
32 put up you know activities or rubrics or quizzes ki-kinda like ah
- 33 L: Can that be done in a course shell↑ (2.0)
- 34 N: The idea of course shell is a little bit different because it's=
35 L: =So then for a course I'd have a course shell and a faculty collaborative
36 course and then I'd have to copy and make my own course
- 37 J: Does the course- does the collaborative course go on from semester to
38 semester↑

- 39 T: Yeah [yeah
40 J: [Or is it↑ It's just n[ot
41 T: [It would
42 J: one cour-
43 T: It would be ongoing
44 J: OK=

In excerpt 1.1, Trent (T) is explaining how a process works for him, as others in the meeting contribute to making sense of and shaping the process as part of the exchange. When I look at the transcript, I also see how texts, objects and technologies, such as course shells and discussion boards, are brought up as things in the conversation that are both worthy of discussion and have a voice in and of themselves. This interplay or mediation between our embodied and immediate utterances, the texts that order them and preserve them over time and are themselves brought back into the conversation, and the objects and ideas of which we speak as if they were present are all important aspects of how we communicate in an organization. I will say much more as to how this locally produced conversation is connected to other conversations and texts that happened outside the walls of the meeting space. For now, it suffices to say that the extract above is an example of how I understand notions of leadership, authority, and power: As complex and multifaceted discourse dynamics, inhabited by the material world of texts and other objects, and framed (as I will argue in this study) by the ever-present notion of collaboration, in a team which values collaborative ways of working.

My interest in the topic of communication and how it is constitutive of organizations grew during a period of intense change in the English language program, where I began my career in international education 20 years prior. When I began my career, it was called the

English Language Institute (ELI), and as organizations, ELIs exist on campuses across the United States. My work life in the ELI at that time was predictable: Each semester was similar to the previous one, and the main concern we had was meeting our enrollment projections. ELIs are members of a category called Intensive English Programs (IEPs) and are volatile organizations in the sense that it is impossible to predict with any degree of certainty how many international students will actually enroll each semester. The competition for students is fierce, with programs fighting for a piece of the international student enrollment market across the country. As in many industries, there are times of plenty and times of famine. For example, the period after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 was especially challenging to the industry, and not every program survived the downturn. However, the ELI was able to adapt and thrive.

During my years with the ELI, I had many roles in different areas of the management of an IEP: teaching, student activities, admissions, marketing, and recruitment. Change had been more the norm than the exception for me and for the organization. The ELI experienced three transformations in leadership during this period, which resulted in changes in how things were done. For instance, during this period, the ELI changed its curriculum focus from a task-based curriculum to a content-based curriculum. The ELI went from teaching students listening, reading, writing, and speaking as separate skills to teaching based on specific content where the attention is paid to both content and skills. In addition, leadership approaches were different with each new director. When I started working in the ELI, the director was someone who believed in centralized leadership, and most of the work had to be coordinated through her. We were a very small program then, with only five people in the administrative team and between 150-180 students each semester.

At the time when I became interested in the topic of meetings as a potential research topic, our new director, Carla, followed a more hands-off approach. She gave everyone more space to do work independently without having to confirm every move with her. I was even able to pursue other interests I had at work and use my experience in other ways that had not been possible before. For example, I was interested in marketing, and after a conversation with Carla, my role expanded to include the management of marketing and admissions. In this role, I created a database of 133 agents to help us attract and recruit international students. I also began traveling abroad on recruitment trips. I even took a course on international marketing to increase my knowledge base. I was ready to travel to Japan on my first recruitment trip in Asia. We had nurtured some important relationships with universities in Japan throughout the years, and I was going to visit education agents as well. The ELI was poised for growth, and all in the organization were looking at a bright future ahead.

A big change was on the horizon, however, which took all of us by surprise. The university where the ELI was housed (hereafter referred to as “the University”) decided to take the unprecedented step of merging our program with a private company dedicated to recruiting international students. We did not have any advance notice of the change that was coming our way. One day, Carla, was summoned to the Provost’s Office, where this new initiative was announced. We did not have much time to prepare or to strategize for a different outcome, as it became clear to all involved that the merger was going to take place. We attended meetings with University and company representatives to learn about this new organization that was emerging. We even took a trip to visit another program in the US who had also experienced a merger to learn how the different units within the merger operated. Almost everyone in the ELI experienced great fear and trepidation as to what was ahead for us. The administrators and

faculty were concerned as to how their roles would change and if we were going to be able to control the curriculum and keep our academic integrity. The University and company administrators coordinated the changes under a series of communication activities such as meetings, email messages, and contract negotiations, which led to the creation of a new organization. At the time when these changes were taking place, I understood change as a process, with clear steps. In fact, even the way I am writing about change in this introduction is as if it happened outside of communication. All of these activities I now recognized as part of the discursive construction or reconstruction of our organization, but at the time when these changes were taking place, I did not conceive of organizations as discursively constructed. This has been the most important part of this project: the recognition that communication is an organizing force, as it is through discourse that all of these changes were mediated. This has completely transformed how I see myself in the organization and how I understand and conceive of my own reality.

For me, the most difficult part was the change I experienced firsthand. The ELI used to be a self-supporting unit with control (or what we thought was control) of our destiny. This was clearly no longer the case, and we had to scramble to make sense of what was happening and see how we could fit in. Needless to say, my role within the organization changed overnight. Not only was my role different, but the way I understood our organization was different. We were now organized as a public-private partnership, which came with advantages, but also with disadvantages. One big change was that now we were working with a corporation with its own interests and goals, and we were no longer the ones who steered the ship. Instead, we changed from an organization that ran all aspects of its operation to an academic unit within this larger organization.

Our director at the time, Carla, decided that she did not like the direction in which we were going and left the organization. A new director was promoted from within after an intense search. Lila, the new director, features heavily in this study. With Lila's promotion came even more changes to how we did things at work. This new way of doing things was not dramatically different; rather, it was a subtler shift. I noticed, for instance, an emphasis on asking teachers and administrators to work together on projects. Specifically, I noticed the emergence of the concept of collaboration. While the topic of organizational change was of great interest to me as I embarked on this project, I decided to change course after listening to the spoken discourse data I had collected, and instead focused on how the administrative team (hereafter referred to as "the admin team") communicated during meetings within what I now conceptualized as a collaborative framework. For us, a collaborative framework meant that we were expected to ask others for feedback, work in teams and working groups, conduct meetings in a way that decision making was shared. Collaboration can take many shapes depending on the organization. In our case, it also meant that organizational members organized around texts such as the Statement of Core Values, which delineated a way of working and relating with one another. It also meant that most of the important work happened in committees made up of different members of the organization.

As an academic professional within an English language program, my identity has always been connected to the idea that I am an applied linguist first and foremost. I have always been a teacher, and all of my roles within the English language program combined teaching and administrative duties. When I started the Ph.D. in Communication and needed to find a focus for my dissertation, I was unsure as to how I could connect both fields. As I read more and more, I realized that many applied linguists and sociolinguists conduct communication research, and that

both fields of study are, in fact, interconnected. This inspired me, as I knew I was going to be able to combine both of these key areas of research.

In the new organization that was emerging, I noticed how we were spending much more time in meetings, and that they were central to our work. This is true of many different types of organizations, and it is no less true of the educational organization where I work. In the former ELI where I worked, meetings were also important, but I noticed that the types of meetings we were now holding sounded and looked different. In the new English language program (henceforth referred to as “the Program”), we hold a variety of formal meetings, in addition to informal ones that happen in an ad hoc manner in corridors or people’s offices. There are faculty meetings several times a semester, curriculum meetings, working group meetings, and admin team meetings to name just a few. The meetings we were having were changing in the sense that the circle of participation expanded. These meetings included people in different roles in the Program and not just members of the administration. Meetings have characteristics in common, but how meetings are run and what can be accomplished in these meetings has a lot to do with language use, which in turn creates an environment that can be conducive to the sharing of ideas or to the stifling of these same ideas. By looking closely at the discourse used in meetings to accomplish these and other tasks, I examine the micro-level practices that individuals use to accomplish the communicative work that continuously recreates their workplace.

The idea of “close looking” (Sacks, 1992, p. 420) at everyday practices as a window into what Goffman (1967) called the interaction order, or the organization of social life, is not new. A vast body of scholarship has addressed the micro-level communicative work by which organizations are continuously negotiated, re-created, challenged and maintained (Collinson, 1992; Dalton, 1959; Kunda, 1992). What is still missing, however, is an additional step that

moves organizational studies from a descriptive scholarship of “what happens” to an analysis of “the activities themselves [emphasis added] to consider how they were accomplished as those activities” (Llewellyn, 2008, p. 766). The shift may be subtle, but it is highly consequential, for it means moving from a phenomenological or thematic description of participants’ work to a close examination of how accounts are constructed and ratified to enable and constrain additional accounts and empirical claims by those speakers. In other words, an engagement with what Garfinkel (1967) referred to as the study of the rationally acceptable nature of everyday practices. Organizational life is one such practice.

Holding admin team meetings is a practice that is very common in organizations of all types. They are mundane events in the sense that they happen either weekly or biweekly, and what is discussed in these meetings, while important, is not considered out of the ordinary. It was Garfinkel (1967) who introduced this idea, novel at the time, of looking at ordinary everyday events to understand interaction. This idea was central to the ethnomethodology project (Heritage, 1985) where he observed how people go about their everyday activities by following common-sense logic that is available to everyone (Heritage, 1985). Heritage provides this useful definition of ethnomethodology:

The study of a particular subject matter: the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves. (Heritage, 1985, p. 4)

This definition is useful because it speaks to the work of this dissertation. Meetings are ordinary events that take place in meeting rooms all around the world. They are easily recognizable by their features (a meeting room, an agenda, meeting participants, a particular interactional order).

However, looking closely at what happens in these meetings is of great importance because the organization, as such, emerges and gets reconstituted through our discussions. Meeting participants make sense of what happens in these meetings because they follow a common-sense logic as to how meetings happen, and they follow an unwritten script that is recognizable by participants. I will say much more about meetings and about the idea that communication constitutes organization in Chapter 2, but for the moment, it is enough to say that what is discussed in these meetings is of great consequence to how the Program gets constituted, as ideas turn into policies, which, in turn, are adopted across the organization.

At this point, it is important to say that communication is not about unproblematically trespassing ideas from one person to the next, as in the container metaphor (Krippendorff, 1993; Reddy, 1979). In fact, this idea of communication as representation was pervasive at the time when Garfinkel was engaging with this ethnomethodological project. Language was only considered a means to represent the world outside, and words were simply a mirror of that outside world. My position in this work is that communication is not one separate aspect of an organization that happens only in a communication department. Communication has the ability to constitute, create, and recreate by how it self-structures via processes that are anchored in communication (Putnam, Nicotera, & McPhee, 2009). This constitutive ability of communication is evident through communication events like meetings. In meetings, it is possible to trace what the organization values and believes to matter, and through these conversations, these values and beliefs get reinforced and recreated, and become more tightly anchored in the organizational tapestry. In essence, this tapestry gets woven and rewoven continuously by what organizational members pay attention to during meetings.

By drawing from the work of Holmes (2000), Angouri, and Marra (2010) at the Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, among other organizational scholars, I explore how organizational members construct the (discursive) workplace they inhabit. I take seriously the idea that discourse is social action, consequential and material in the very literal sense that it organizes us around what matters (Cooren, 2015), and what matters is directly connected to what is relevant to organizational members. If something is consequential, the organization will allocate linguistic and other resources to make this something salient to organizational members. Adopting a discursive approach to organizational communication means making theoretical claims as to how, in our communication, we index the larger social universe that, reflexively, organizes and orders our communication.

An umbrella term for various approaches to language and social interaction (Tracy, 2008; Tracy & Mirivel, 2009), discourse analysis (DA) encourages the analyst to pay attention to the turn by turn, pragmatic, synchronic, and diachronic aspects of social interaction in spoken and written discourse. DA entails both inductive inferences on the relationship of small stretches of interaction patterns in the larger corpus, and deductive reasoning across the data set. For example, I ask questions about how collaboration happens in communication by analyzing the ways in which admin team members enact collaboration in their interactions and how this enactment helps or hinders admin team members in advancing their agendas. Instead of looking at collaboration as something that exists outside of communication, I look at how meeting participants make real this value of collaboration that is material to them because, as Cooren (2015) argues, “when you contact with organization, you soon discover that there are specific values, norms, artifacts, or practices that tend to characterize it” (p. 83). These values are what

meeting participants orient to, as they know they matter to their organization. As a result, a particular way of doing their work, exemplified by the way they talk in meetings, becomes naturalized. I take seriously Jones' (2016) invitation to broaden our "circumference" (par. 1) of what is happening in a particular interaction. It is not enough to look at what is taking place locally in a conversation; we need to broaden our view to take in what is happening outside of it.

Relevance of the Study to the Field of Organizational Communication

My study takes place at one research site, the Program, and looks closely at meeting interactions of admin team members for a period of one year. Though arguably a case study, my research adds to organizational studies in communication because, in as much as "people build actions in light of overarching social and organizational considerations" (Llewellyn, 2008, p. 784), an organization is connected to a much larger institutional framework, including, in this case, the University, the corporate partner, and the larger academic field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). In other words, the Program does not exist in a vacuum; it is engaged in a web of communication with other entities that has an impact as to what it can say, what it can do, and what it can become. For example, in the meetings that are the focus of this study, what meeting participants orient to during meetings (e.g. mission statement, memos, policies, websites, handbooks, and procedures) is not only locally produced, but dislocated; that is, they are connected to a larger universe outside the meeting room that indexes institutional knowledge existing beyond its physical boundaries. In this work, I take a situated approach to the study of collaboration and how this is accomplished through politeness and the enactment of authority/power as I show the practical accomplishments of admin team members based on what takes place during admin team meetings. I look at what members say during meetings and make sense of how what is said is connected not just to the moment when it was produced but to what

was said before by others in separate conversations or in written messages. As Bartesaghi (2015b) asserts, speakers depend on other texts, written and unwritten, to form an “intertextual relationship of reliance on one another” (p. 2). Putnam (2013) is also informative when she writes about how local conversations are always connected to global conversations across time and space through “metaconversations” (p. 26).

In this work, I align with Craig (1989) when he states that communication is a practical discipline. It follows that my approach connects analysis to praxis by identifying the discursive practices that allow admin team members to perform politeness and power anchored in the concept of collaboration, which is an idea that the admin team values, as evidenced in its texts and practices. This study helps identify practices that can be useful for the members of this admin team and for other teams in similar organizations, which will be stated in Chapter 8. While it is not possible to identify one model of effective communication that works in every situation and in every organization, it is possible, through the lens of discourse analysis, to show in what specific instances it makes sense to be less direct, for example, or how using a different approach may help a team arrive at a decision much faster, and thus, help them save valuable time. As Vine, Holmes, Marra, Pfeifer, and Jackson (2008) assert, discursive approaches to organization studies can help organizations plan the types of training they offer organizational members, especially those in formal leadership positions. For these researchers, training should not only include how to communicate in compelling ways to key stakeholders, such as board members, but how to communicate in more mundane activities, such as in weekly team meetings where much of the work of the organization gets done (Vine et al., 2008).

This study will also contribute to the understanding of how organizations, in this case, an English language program, constitute themselves through communication. The constitutive

nature of communication has been studied extensively by many researchers in communication (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997, Boden, 1994; Cooren, 2000; Cooren, Taylor & Van Every, 2006; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Van Every, 2000; Van Every & Taylor, 1998; Weick, 1995). Further, by treating meetings as constitutive of organization, this study adds to the understanding that meetings are important communication events to study in their own right and that they are not merely used to transmit information.

My literature review expands on this view, which is foundational to my study. This study will also add to the understanding of how commonplace communication activities, such as weekly team meetings, are constitutive of this organization by connecting what is said in one interaction with another interaction episode that has happened in other meetings or conversations. This dissertation is about a particular team within an organization, which is part of a larger organization, which is also part of a much larger organization, the University. Individuals in the admin team may come and go, but the organization will persist until there is no longer a need to teach English to international students. Even if the Program ceases to exist, similar organizations will operate in the United States and around the world as long as English keeps its dominant status around the globe.

Research Questions

The Program, as stated above, does not exist in a vacuum. As such, it is imbricated by “metaconversations” (Putnam, 2013) that exist inside and outside of its walls. The director of the Program at the time of data collection, Lila, adhered to the philosophy that organizations thrive when organizational members are allowed to express their points of view freely and where the conditions for collaboration are made possible. As a result, organizational practices emphasized collaboration through teamwork. According to the literature on collaboration,

collaborative practices developed as a response to top-down approaches in the workplace (Appley & Winder, 1977). The discourse of collaboration includes communicative processes that downplay hierarchical roles and emphasize egalitarian ideals, such as the reaching of consensus. As Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant (2005) state, collaboration is a complex discursive endeavor where individuals are both participating in collaboration, and at the same time, part of an organization with clear hierarchies, which makes it problematic at times to reach the true promise of collaboration, as the Program sees it.

Within this framework, the purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate how the members of a small admin team in an English language program (the Program) negotiate discourses within team meetings both at the individual and collaborative levels. This broad research question includes these supporting questions:

1. How do politeness strategies such as mitigation help or hinder the work of this team in terms of how they have constructed “collaboration”?
2. How does authority/power manifest itself in the discourse of admin team members and how it is used within this overall collaborative framework?
3. How do materiality and discourse intersect and contribute to meaning making within a collaborative work environment?

The answers to these questions will add to the understanding of how the ideal of collaboration is constructed during meeting interaction and how this ideal is realized (or not) turn-by-turn.

Together, this way of communication by this team is constitutive of not only the admin team but the Program as a whole, as what transpires in admin team meetings often gets translated into policies or communicated via email or in face-to-face interactions. In addition, the answers to

these questions will help other English language programs in particular, but also other kinds of organizations to understand which discourse practices enhance collaboration.

Chapter Organization

In addition to this introduction, the chapters are organized as follows:

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, which includes relevant research studies in the area of organizational communication, beginning with the communication as constitutive of organization (CCO) perspective and the work of Cooren, Putnam, and Fairhurst (2015), Taylor and Robichaud (2004), Taylor and Van Every (2000, 2010), among many others. I also include an account of sensemaking and its relevance to organizational communication, as well as a review of the literature on organizational leadership, as my study looks at how team members enact their roles and their leadership in meetings. I provide an overview of how the concept of leadership has changed throughout time and how discursive leadership (Putnam, 2007) has emerged as a field of study. Since this dissertation looks closely at the discourse of meetings, I include relevant literature in this area beginning with Schwartzman's (1989) ethnographic study on meetings. I also review the work of researchers who have studied meetings using a communication lens.

Chapter 3 is where I describe the research site and how it operates within a joint venture model. I also describe the role of admin team members and the place where the meetings in this study take place. I also explore my own role in the study and how the construct of participant observer worked in my case.

In Chapter 4, I document the methodology of the study and include my approach to data collection, in addition to a description of the research site. I also discuss how the study is an

ethnography conducted in my place of work at the time of the study. In addition, I explain why I chose discourse analysis as the approach to data analysis.

In Chapter 5, I elaborate on the construct of collaboration and how it manifests itself in texts in the Program. I include an analysis of some key texts in the Program, including the Statement of Core Values and Our Philosophy on Teamwork and how these documents had a coordinating effect on the work of team members and the way they interacted and communicated with one another.

Chapter 6 is where I first offer an analysis of the meeting data to illustrate how the admin team uses strategies such as mitigation and indirectness to achieve goals and to advance individual and organizational agenda. My analysis of meeting interaction will show how team members favor the use of indirect language to advance their goals within a collaborative framework.

Chapter 7 is the second data chapter, and this is where I introduce the concept of materiality and how this has been largely ignored in organizational communication research. Materiality is a relatively new concept in organizational communication studies, and it refers to the non-social aspects of communication (technology, space, copy machines, etc.) and how they are part of the communication process. Materiality is relevant because for a very long time researchers have privileged the social and not paid enough attention to how the material has an impact in how people communicate. I explore the concepts of authority and power and how they present themselves along with materiality in meeting discourse.

Chapter 8 is the last chapter of this study, and it is where I write about the research findings of the study and consider the ways in which this project is meaningful to my work as a whole, and its broader implications to the areas of social interaction, sensemaking, collaboration,

and leadership. I also write about my own engagement with discourse analysis and how this has changed how I understand communication.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As a language and social interaction scholar, I explore how language in use, or discourse, makes our social reality material and consequential (Cooren, 2015). In this work, I argue that the language used by admin team members in their weekly meetings contributes to a worldview that they call collaboration. The term collaboration by itself has no real meaning; it is semantically empty and multifunctional. The meaning of collaboration is thus indexical and pragmatic, for it functions relationally in situ through interactions and, at the same time, by the way these interactions make their way into documents that become part of how the organization works. In order to explore how collaboration as a value in the Program gets acted on in admin team meetings, I outline the theoretical framework for this dissertation research as follows:

- I start by introducing how communication is constitutive of organization (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, 2000; Cooren, Taylor, & Van Every, 2006; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009; Robichaud & Cooren, 2013; Taylor & Van Every, 2000, 2010).
- I discuss the important concept of sensemaking, which is foundational in organizational communication studies, and how this concept fits within my study.
- I write about organizational leadership because this concept is embedded within the organization. Whether it is made explicit or not is inconsequential. Leadership is an idea that organizational members orient to during their day-to-day interactions.
- Finally, meetings are central to this study, as my data was collected during admin team meetings. Therefore, I include relevant literature on this area of research.

Communication and Organizations

Because I approach organizations and organizing from a discourse or language and social interaction perspective, my arguments draw from and are informed by the work of Bisel (2010), Cooren, (2000), Putnam & Fairhurst (2015), and Taylor & Van Every (2000), among many others, that communication is constitutive of organizations. It follows that, in an organization that values collaboration, and refers to it as a value in its written documents and where the notion of collaboration frames the communicative processes of its admin team members, the Program, as much as collaboration, are dialectically realized in communicative dynamics. I will present the main proponents of a constitutive view of communication, and how this view fits within my study. While a constitutive view of communication is one that aligns with the work I am doing, I take various ideas from several scholars within the communication as constitutive of organization (CCO) lens, as well as others, and apply them to my study. In the course of my graduate education, I reviewed Structuration Theory, Critical Theory, and Feminist Theory, and as I found my place as a scholar and started collecting data for this study, I took advantage of what Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, and Seybold (2001) call the “loose coupling” in organizational communication, where they argue that one does not need to engage in an exhaustive review of all the metatheories that exist. Rather, one should focus more on communication as a subject of study. As they put it, we need to avoid “constraining attempts at *capturing* organizational communication” (p. 103). This is what I have done as a communication scholar with this work.

Among the many definitions of what constitutes an organization, Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, and Robichaud’s (1996) is most useful to me. They state, “An organization... is a set of transactional relationships, mediated by interaction: people making requests of others, promising things, passing judgement on others’ performances, promoting and demoting, hiring and firing,

entering into contractual arrangements” (p. 231). This definition is appealing because of its emphasis on interaction. An organization would not exist without communicative processes that result in the production of texts such as policies, statements, and manuals. The existence of these texts by themselves does not mean much unless a certain action is taken. For example, an employee handbook may describe how to conduct a performance review, but it is not until the moment when these words are used to mobilize the actual act of conducting the performance review, which is mediated by interaction, that the words become impactful. Studying an organization in a particular moment in time is almost an impossibility because, as Taylor and Van Every (2000) state, organizations are living organisms that are constantly changing. However, they argue that by looking at the spaces in between text and communication, it is possible to capture what an organization was like at a specific moment. Collecting discourse data is one way to take a closer look at how an organization existed at a precise moment in time. The data I have captured from a year in the lives of admin team members in the Program show how the organization was constructed via their interactions and the documents produced from those interactions and others that took place outside of the meeting space.

How has the idea of communication evolved from one that is mainly tied to transmission to one that is constitutive? As Carey (1989) points out, the two views are not as dichotomous as we tend to assume, but are best understood as complementary. The understanding of communication as a process that is part of organizations, but that is considered separate, can be traced to Shannon (1948) and his theory on message exchange. This view of communication sees it as a linear process where ideas are transmitted from sender to receiver and assumes a common understanding of what has been communicated. This way of conceptualizing organizations is often referred to as the transmission theory (Taylor & Van Every, 2000), as it

treats communication as one more variable in an organization. Taking a closer look at organizational charts, it is possible to see the other variables within this transmission model: marketing, finance, enrollment, and others. Communication is considered a separate activity that is unrelated to the other units in the organization. In this theory, a message is sent from a person to another, and it is the responsibility of the receiver to decode the meaning of the message that the sender has sent. While this way of conceptualizing communication is simple and may even make sense on the surface, upon further analysis, it poses many problems, as it ignores the role that meaning plays in communication and does not take into account the different ways that a message may be interpreted depending on the different roles people play in an organization. This way of seeing organizations is very physical in the sense that organizations are seen as physical constructions made up of departments that have physical boundaries where communication flows in the form of a message neatly packed and sent from one channel to the next. Organizations in this exchange view are considered a priori constructions, which exist prior to any communicative processes (Putnam & Cheney, 1983). This approach to communication as transmission is influenced by positivism with its emphasis on what could be observed in a lab-like environment without the messiness of the real world. This view has left its mark in the field of organization studies and in the study of organizations in general.

Inspired by the linguistic turn in social sciences, communication scholars have challenged this limiting view of communication and have contended that communication is not merely one element of organizations and that organizations cannot be conceived as contained within four walls (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Taylor, et al., 1996). Rather, language and meaning have taken center stage and organizations have begun to be looked at from a social constructivist lens. Organizations, then, are not “objective facts” (Tompkins, 1984, p. 660), but rather they are

anchored in action and the interactions of their members. In fact, this revolutionary idea that organizations are “ultimately and accountably talked into being” (Heritage, 1985, p. 200) propelled discourse scholars such as Boden (1994) to investigate the conversations that take place at work and to conclude that organizations are made up of a series of conversations that are laminated (Boden, 1994) or intertwined, and that these very conversations are, in fact, constitutive of the organization. This lamination of conversations happens as speakers refer to previous conversations or texts that take place or exist outside of the immediate conversation (Taylor & Van Every, 2000).

The Communication as Constitutive of Organization Approach

While many scholars embrace the perspective that communication is constitutive of organizations, they all differ in how they approach it. One commonality among these scholars is that communication serves as a strong organizing force. This means that the words we use in organizations have the effect of constituting the organization (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009.) This organizing happens because all the memos, policies, email messages, handbooks, and other organizational documents come about as a result of conversations that take place in the organization. Through these documents, as well as through conversations, the organization reconstitutes itself every day; these texts do not stay at the local level but transcend the present moment by traveling across time and space (Taylor et al., 1996; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Smith (2005), in her superb book on the ethnography of organizations, writes about the “replicability of texts” (p. 166), which speaks to how texts (written, oral, visual) transcend the here to coordinate and lead people to action (Smith, 2005). This idea that texts replicate themselves can be seen in how, in the team meetings in this study, admin team members speak of what was said in a prior conversation or bring up a document or policy that exists in the

organization and by doing so, replicate the text in the present conversation. This action serves to coordinate the work of people and bring them to action. Smith (2001) says it beautifully:

It is the textual mediation of people's doing that enables large-scale organization and institutions to appear in the allochronic mode that transcends the immediate continuities of day to day activities among people in particular settings. For these organizations and for the social relations of other kinds such as those of discourse to exist extra-locally and to co-ordinate multiple local sites of people's everyday activities, the organized texts must be readable in the different settings in which they are read. (p. 174)

I will say much more about how texts mediate the activities of people in Chapter 5, but for now it is important to point out that in this work, texts are crucial in how people do their work and how they constitute their social worlds.

Scholars such as Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) take seriously the idea that "discourse is the very foundation upon which organizational life is built" (p. 5). This position takes inspiration from the work of Karl Weick (1995) and his idea that organizations are not static and that they should be conceived of as verbs and not nouns (organizing rather than organization) (Weick, 1995). As I see it, Weick meant that organizations have a flow; they are made up of processes that reflect change and movement. In the case of this work, the Program changed from being top down to being more collaborative. This was reflected in documents and in the way people worked and talked about their work. Central to this position is the belief that organizations are grounded in communicative processes and interaction (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015). It is in the communicative processes that we see organization emerging from one moment to the next. Tracing these processes shows how an organization becomes constituted and reconstituted like in the case of collaboration within the Program.

The work of Fairhurst and Putnam (2004), Taylor and Van Every (2000), and Weick (1995) is a precursor for that of scholars, who, while differing in how they investigate communication processes, agree that these processes are what make organizations. The work of the members of the Montreal School (Brummans, Cooren, Robichaud, & Taylor, 2014; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009; Robichaud & Cooren, 2013; Taylor & Van Every, 2000, 2010) fits within the grounded-in-action approach greatly influenced by ethnomethodology, which appeals to my own approach in this study because of its emphasis on everyday and commonplace practices, such as meetings. Ethnomethodology is concerned with finding out how people use their commonsense knowledge, even commonplace knowledge about the world, to maintain their social reality. This means that people, as they go about their lives, look for patterns that serve them to maintain a sense that social reality is stable (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1985). Garfinkel (1967) noted that people's understandings of their social realities are subject to change as people encounter different situations and different contexts. Ethnomethodology challenges the view that facts are solid, impervious to interpretation, and exist unproblematically out there in a perfectly sealed reality to which we all have access. Looking closely at what people say in interaction reveals that what is said is constructed by speakers themselves to mean something specific in a particular interaction. The ethnomethodology project is always ongoing and open to different interpretations depending on contextual cues. This is also true of team meetings where participants depend on their understanding of previous meetings and previous interactions as they negotiate their own participation and decide on actions to take. At the same time, this understanding is provisional, as the context and what takes place in situ will update this understanding. This provisional understanding gets updated moment by moment, as what organizational members say during interaction will update this understanding.

The central concepts of ethnomethodology can be found in the CCO approach to organizational communication, specifically the idea that people at work share and follow routines that make it possible for them to understand their work. These routines are intelligible to the members of a group because members share the same expectations. They have agreed on this understanding that is only true to the members of this group. There are three main schools within CCO (Schoeneborn et al., 2014), and I will briefly examine the first two before focusing at length on the Montreal School approach which is the one that aligns the most with my work. Proponents of these CCO approaches believe that communication is constitutive of organization. The three main orientations are: The Four-Flows model by McPhee and Zaug (2000), Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems (Luhmann, 1995), and the Montreal School of Organizational Communication (Ashcraft, et al., 2009; Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009).

The first CCO approach that I will review is the Four-Flows, espoused by McPhee and Zaug (2000), which is based on Giddens' structuration theory (Schoeneborn et. al., 2014). With structuration theory, interaction is crucial, as people orient to others in communication. The organization is conceived as a system of "rules and resources that organizational members employ in their social interactions" (McPhee & Iverson, 2009). The reliance on rules and processes aligns well with structuration theory, and these rules and processes mediate action, but also produce action (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015). Each flow in this model refers to a particular communication process. The first one is membership negotiation, which, as the name suggests, has to do with how people connect to one another and how they form relationships in organizations. The second one is organizational self-structuring, which is connected to rules and processes, as through the establishments of rules, boundaries emerge as to what can or cannot be

done, and in this way the organization becomes defined. The third one is activity coordination, as once relational boundaries are established, and processes and rules are developed, activities need to be coordinated in the organization to get work done. Activity coordination requires “discursive practices” (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015, p. 379) to coordinate the work among different organizational members. The final flow is called institutional positioning, which looks at how the organization is positioned within society and among other institutions. McPhee and Zaig (2000) emphasize that all four flows involve crosscurrents, which are not merely transmissional but are constitutive of organization, which is an idea that is present in all three CCO approaches.

The second CCO approach is Luhmann’s Theory of Social Systems (TSS) (Luhmann, 1995). For Luhmann, organizations are understood through communication events, and decisions are central to the communication systems. Decisions, though, are paradoxical, because to make a decision, other options have to be excluded. Nevertheless, it is this paradox that identifies organizations, as such decisions are necessary for organizations to continue. For TSS, organizations are constituted by communication, and are able to maintain through time by their ability to make decisions. This is where the idea of paradox comes in. Organizations make decisions every day. There are many possibilities to choose from, but organizations must decide on one course of action. The moment a decision is reached, the organization constitutes itself again. A direction has been chosen among many possible alternatives.

The third and perhaps the most well-known of the three schools of CCO thinking is the one espoused by the Montreal School of Organization Studies. This approach to CCO begins from the position that it is not necessary “to identify a starting point in the act of knowing” (Schoeneborn et al., p. 288). This is a crucial point because it means that in order to know an

organization, one has to engage with its practices. Through this engagement, the organization acts upon us the same way that we act upon the organization. For the Montreal School, communication is action, which means that it is not possible to communicate without acting in some way (Schoeneborn et. al., p. 291). One way to look at this is to consider the idea of being accountable to others. In communication, every act requires a response of some kind, whether verbal or not. For instance, conducting an employee's performance review requires a series of actions such as completing a self-assessment, meeting to review the self-assessment, and conducting the performance review. This idea of accountability is based on Garfinkel's (Heritage, 1985) idea that performing an action makes us accountable for it in conversation.

Another important tenet of the Montreal School is their understanding of how communication constitutes organization. Communication constitutes organization because through the act of communicating the organization reconstitutes itself and becomes a different organization, even if in subtle ways. In my research, the shift from a top down approach to management to a more collaborative and participatory model happens in interactions in meetings which then became textualized in policies and work processes. Through each interaction, the organization emerged in a new way. Of course, not every interaction in an organization is consequential. A lot depends on who is doing the interacting and how what is being said is acted on or not acted on by others who are listening. In other words, through the communication process, something that matters becomes a matter of concern. Matters of concern in communication are "what drive participants to defend or evaluate a position, account for or disalign from an action, or justify or oppose an objective" (Vasquez, Bencherki, Cooren, Sergi, 2017, p. 417). For the Montreal School, the organization is a network of practices and conversations, which means that organizations depend on a series of interactions in the forms of

conversations that connect them together (Brummans et al., 2014). This is a crucial point because it is through these “imbrications and embeddedness” (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 292) that organizing happens. In other words, something is said about the importance of collaboration during one interaction, which is then repeated in another conversation, which then gets translated into a document that establishes collaboration as a way of working for all.

For the organization to exist at all, it has to go beyond individual conversations, no matter how well interconnected. This happens through a communication dynamic called distanciation (Taylor et al., 1996). Within an organization, there are many separate interactions that happen every day. These experiences “must be mapped into a verbal representation that will furnish a composite image of the whole organization” (Brummans et al., 2014, p. 179). This verbal representation then becomes a “narrative that expresses the point of view of the organization *itself* as a single unity” (Brummans et al., 2014, p. 179). In other words, conversations that take place every day in organizations are often written down, and by writing them down, they become textualized and often become part of organizational practice. During conversation, we refer to these texts as if they were present, which is the practice of distanciation. People orient to the narrative of the organization in the form of processes and policies, and they act (or not) in alignment with them. Distanciation has to do with how the organization travels through time and space (Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004) when the individual conversations of the different members transform into one unified metacommunication (Robichaud et al., 2004). In the admin team meetings in my own study, it is possible to trace in discourse how people refer to practices that have been entextualized in manuals and codes of conduct. People develop practices based on these documents, which have a distancing effect, as practices become separated from the actual action of producing them. By doing this, these documents transcend time and space in the

organization and since the conversation is happening separate from the initial conversation, new interpretations become possible. This itself helps define the organization outside the physical walls where it resides, and the organization is able to act as a collective with some of its members able to speak on its behalf. Brummans et al. (2014) call this the “decontextualization of actual practices” (p. 179) because organizational members begin to orient to texts such as the employee handbook (or in this study, the faculty handbook), or the Collective Bargaining Agreement. This textualization causes a further distancing from the actual conversations that take place in organizations, and organization becomes reified, an object we refer to in everyday conversation.

However, as Brummans et al. (2014) remind us, the distancing and textualization processes are beneficial in that organizations can reach far and wide by disseminating documents that have the effect of standardizing practices. Standardization is of great benefit to organizations, as it is important for members to orient to a certain way of doing things, as this helps the organization survive and thrive over time. As in the case of the organization in this study, it is important for standard practices to be maintained, and if they are changed, for example, in the way teams work, it is crucial that this be communicated to organizational members.

How do organizations present themselves as a unified voice to the outside world? The organization is now in existence and has gone from conversations, to distancing, to textualization. It can now act as an entity representing its members, who can join or leave the organization, and still remain as a whole (Brummans et al., 2014). New members, through onboarding practices, become socialized into the new organization. The organization is now ready to act in the world of other similar organizations. Organizations need a human voice to

represent themselves into the larger world, and they do this through the voice of its members (Taylor & Van Every, 2010).

Finally, a central idea in the Montreal School is that of agency and who exercises it during interaction. Agency for researchers like Cooren (2006) and Putnam and Cooren (2004) is given to human and non-human actors. For Cooren (2004), for example, texts have agency and they do things (reminiscent of Austin, 1962) by their mere existence. Cooren (2004) gives the example of the use of post-it notes by a manager who then acts on what he wrote on the notes. The idea that agency can be ascribed to non-human actors is difficult to grasp at first, but relevant to a CCO orientation. Traditionally, agency has been reserved for human actors, and to consider that agency is in fact distributed among people and a copier machine or a technology, takes some time to understand. In Chapter 8, this idea of agency as a hybrid will help explain how collaboration for the Program, present in documents and policies, acts on the communication practices of the small admin team in this study.

As I have noted, my research interest is in how the value of collaboration becomes textualized into documents, such as the Statement of Core Values. Admin team members orient to collaboration in different ways by talking about their own collaborative initiatives and by acting in ways that signal collaboration. The concept of collaboration becomes reified and taken for granted in talk and text in the organization. I utilize the toolkit called discourse analysis (DA) to look closely at interactions that take place in admin team meetings. DA allows me to look closely at what is said or not said during admin team meetings and to trace how what is said is often mediated by texts (Kuhn, 2008). This mediation is important, as what has been mapped out into a text gives meaning to the work people do or even constrains what can be done.

In an admin team conversation, for example, we may refer to a policy in the faculty handbook, which is not physically present during the meeting. By evoking the policy, we are transcending issues of space and time and often committing to a future course of action as a result. By doing this, we are in fact enacting the organization at that moment. It is a conversation that continues as long as there is an organization. It is a recursive process of conversations that are converted into a narrative that is then converted into texts in the form of policies, announcements, or processes, which then are made present by organizational members. Smith (2005) calls this process “circuits of accountability” (p. 177). These circuits hold people accountable to the organization by coordinating the work they do (Smith, 2005). An action taken by an organizational member not to be accountable by an organizational text may have serious consequences such as important work not being performed or losing an important client. A text that describes team practices as democratic and based on consensus has a coordinating effect in the work of organizational members. Deviating from these practices can result in people mistrusting the organization or bringing up this deviation to their superiors.

What does all this mean for my study? The idea that communication is constitutive of organization informs this study in that meetings are events that emerge ‘on the fly,’ as it were. By studying these events, as they emerge, in situ, during interaction, it is possible to observe organization becoming moment by moment, in a way that is connected to what is happening during that particular interaction, but also as it is connected to a larger institutional context. As Smith (2005) asserts, “Institutions happen in everyday actualities; people produce them in the course of their everyday doings” (p. 113). In the discourse produced by admin team members in this study, it is possible to trace how this concept of collaboration becomes real for participants as evidenced in the way they work and the way they interact in meetings. It is also possible to

trace how meeting participants refer to documents that are not physically present, but that are made present through the reality of the organization. There is a constant going back and forth through conversations that become action: A decision is taken about something that then becomes a policy for the entire organization to follow. This is in fact how the organization -- the Program -- gets constituted as a metaconversation (Robichaud et al., 2004).

Organizational Sensemaking

An important framework in organizational communication is Weick's (1995) sensemaking heuristic which is widely used to study organizations in general and is particularly useful when studying any organization undergoing change.

For Weick (1995), sensemaking is best understood as a dynamic that organizational members engage in when something unusual or out of the ordinary happens. These occasions for sensemaking, as Weick (1995) called them, are ambiguity and uncertainty. When organizational routines are interrupted by something unusual, this interruption triggers ambiguity and uncertainty because people cannot rely on their usual maps to help them deal with the new event. For example, in Vaara's (2003) research on a post-acquisition integration decision-making in a Finnish furniture manufacturing company, post-integration efforts were marked with intense ambiguity and confusion when issues were interpreted differently by managers of the different units. Managers were also faced with different and often contradictory frames of reference, which made the sensemaking process even more challenging. The study demonstrates how sensemaking can become very difficult during post-mergers, as ambiguity and confusion can lead people to "overt politicization" (Vaara, 2003, p. 889) of integration issues, especially when

these issues are seen as politically important. This is not unlike what we experienced in the Program after the merger of the ELI and the private company.

Sensemaking is also about retrospection, which Weick (1995) called the “most distinguishing characteristic of sensemaking” (p. 24). As noted above, and against what is typically understood about organizations, strategic planning and decision-making in organizations are not clear-cut linear processes that happen in organized stages. Instead, it is a very messy process where retrospection plays an essential role. Sensemaking is retrospective because, as Weick (1995) points out, we are always looking back on the events that happened and reflecting on them (p. 23-26).

In the Program, important texts that guide the work we do are retrospective in nature in the sense that they produce a retrospective account about something that was discussed and made sense of in the past. For instance, program surveys, which are sent annually to faculty and students, are then analyzed and made sense of retrospectively. From the results, we take action and may institute change in the form of new practices or policies. For example, if the survey results indicate that faculty do not have enough say in decision-making, we may then create opportunities for more participation. This action is based on retrospectively analyzing the answers on the survey and using whatever is happening in the environment at the time to interpret the results and to decide what needs to happen.

When something unusual or out of the ordinary happens, we must first notice it and bracket it (Weick, 1995, p. 411) as something that is not common or usual. According to Weick (1995), the noticing and bracketing do not happen in a vacuum, as people use mental models that they have acquired from past experience to make sense of their present situations. For example, in the former ELI where I worked, when we first were told that we were going to be merged with

a private company, members of the organization noticed this as something highly unusual, and we tried to find ways to make sense of these new uncertain and ambiguous circumstances. Cues are also important in this process, as these are picked up from the environment and alert us that something different is taking place.

Weick's (1995) sensemaking heuristic represents a shift in how organizations had previously been studied. Instead of conceptualizing organizations as fixed entities based on steps and processes that follow one another in a clear succession, sensemaking makes it possible to see organizations as flow and movement (Weick, 1995). The quote by Weick, Cunniffe, and Obstfeld (2005), encapsulates this idea of flow and movement very well, "The language of sensemaking captures the reality of agency, flow, equivocality, transience, reaccomplishment, unfolding, and emergency, realities that are often obscured by the language of variables, nouns, quantities, and structures" (p. 410). In this quote, the emphasis is on ongoing activity and of continuous flow of experience. This also connects to the idea of sensemaking as organizing. As sensemaking is not fixed in time, as events take place, people make sense of them retrospectively and take action. This taking of action is what reconfigures the organization from the way it was before unexpected events occurred to what it is after sensemaking.

From all of this it becomes clear that action is central to the sensemaking framework, and after the regular flow of events is interrupted by something new or unusual, we first notice it, and possibly label it (Weick et al, 2005). People notice discrepant cues (Weick, 1995) and try to understand what is taking place. The next step, even though "step" is not the right word, as we are not talking about a linear process but rather a recursive and ongoing one, is to take action. By taking action, we learn more about the new situation and, therefore, engage in further sensemaking (Weick, 1988). Taking action helps us learn more about the situation by helping us

generate plausible explanations of what is taking place. Actions shape the environment for sensemaking. This is because the same actions that help people make sense of what is happening can also alter what people encounter and, consequently, change the very situation that prompted sensemaking in the first place. This is what I mean when I say that the organization is reconstituted through sensemaking.

This making sense of what is happening is what Weick (1995) calls interpretation. Once one notices a new and unusual situation, such as the one with the merger, we enter into the interpretation phase, which is when we try to explain our new experience discursively in an attempt to make sense of it. These narratives are “discursive accounts” (Cornelissen, 2012) that people produce to organize what is happening into a coherent account of events. In his study of corporate communication in six organizations, he looked at the sensemaking accounts of executives when presented with unusual situations and found that metaphors were used as a way to frame events, and to align themselves to what others expect of them, or when they sense disapproval.

This interpretation of events as they are unfolding is connected to the concept of plausibility (Weick, 1995). For Weick (1995), sensemaking is about what is plausible and not about what is accurate. In organizations, sometimes we have a lot of information that may be deemed sufficient and sometimes we have very little information on which to act. Most of the time, the information we have is incomplete, but nevertheless, we are able to base our decisions on past events and the actions others and we took during those events.

Situational factors play a role in sensemaking. An action that is plausible in a set of circumstances may make no sense at all when considered in another situation. In a way, it is about telling a story that is believable and that makes sense to the self and to others in the

organization. Weick et al. (2005) contend that even though sensemaking is about plausibility and not accuracy, academic theories privilege the idea that managers' accurate perception of events and their subsequent actions are what ensure success in organizations. However, success often depends on sensemaking and how a particular story is presented as plausible to stakeholders. The privileging of accuracy over plausibility is connected to the belief that management is a rational science that can be clearly measured in the form of steps to follow and precise outcomes to achieve (Weick et al., 2005). This is the legacy from positivistic and rational models of organizations.

Sensemaking, as Weick points out, is a social activity. People in organizations do not their work in isolation; they depend on one another for work tasks to get accomplished. Weick called these "nets of collective action" (1995, p. 3). These "nets" are dependent on established routines that involve different people, and when these routines fail, the social network also gets disrupted and people are confused, or simply do not know what to do next (Weick, 1995). A classic example of this is the study done by Weick (1993) where he analyzed the deadly fire at Mann Gulch, which resulted in the death of 16 firefighters. In this catastrophic event, the firefighters were confronted with a series of new and unusual situations: A new leader and a fire that was quickly surrounding them. Though their leader gave them the order to drop their tools to save their lives, they resorted to their usual routine, which was familiar and comfortable to them, which was to keep their tools with them at all cost. This failure to make sense of the new situation cost them their lives (Weick, 1993).

Organizational sensemaking differs from everyday sensemaking. This is a difference that Weick (1995) was careful to articulate, saying that sensemaking is organizational when "it takes the place of interlocking routines that are tied together in relatively formal nets of collective

action” (p. 110). Routines are important in this definition because organizations are connected to processes and practices that help constitute them (Weick, 1995). Routines are made of the actions of organizational members who repeat a series of actions or activities until something unusual happens to get them out of the routine.

The sensemaking literature is vast and explores different aspects of organizational life. Threats to organizational identity happen during events such as mergers or acquisitions that trigger a change in culture and organizational routines. Several studies have looked at how the arrival of a new director or CEO challenges the existing vision of the organization. For example, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) conducted an ethnographic study of a strategic change initiative initiated by a new university president at a large university. The central finding of the study was that both the president and his senior management team created a sense of need for a new direction by using metaphoric language and by problematizing the previous direction of the university.

Another study looked at identity threats in organizations was the one conducted by Ravasi and Schultz (2006), who investigated how environmental changes and changes in how the organization was perceived from the outside caused organizational members to question the organization’s identity. A strong organizational culture with its “collective history, organizational symbols, and consolidated practice” played a central role in helping organizational members make sense of the changes and allowed them to understand what the organization was about (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006, p. 455).

Narratives are also powerful sensemaking devices, especially in times of uncertainty and ambiguity (Boje, 1991; Weick, 1995), and there is a large body of research in this area. This is not surprising, as sensemaking is grounded in language and stories are powerful to convey a

sense of who we are and where we are going. The work of Brown, Stacey, and Nandhakumar (2008) is an example of this type of work. Their study looked at how sensemaking narratives are often not completely shared by organizational members, which in turn has an impact on coordinated action. For teams to work toward an integrated vision, they must have “sufficiently mutually reinforcing narratives of their and others’ task-related actions” (Brown et al., 2008, p. 1056). When this is not the case, like in this study, collegial working relationships suffer, as there are too many individual competing narratives (Brown et al., 2008).

Another example of narratives and sensemaking is the study conducted by Abolafia (2010) on the construction of collective narratives in a central bank. His study analyzes meeting data, which makes it especially relevant to my own work. He looked at committee meetings of the Federal Open Market, an elite policy-making group, and analyzed the sensemaking steps used by meeting participants and how it resulted in a shared narrative. By focusing on the narrative construction process and not on how a narrative may privilege one perspective at the expense of another, Abolafia (2010) traces a narrative construction model that is unique to the work of the Federal Reserve Bank, which is “constrained by a particular logic of action: appropriateness” (p. 363). This study sheds light on the limits to what makes a plausible narrative for the members of this group. This study also speaks to the CCO perspective because these narratives in the form of texts “are likely to be reproduced from meeting to meeting” (Abolafia, 2010, p. 363).

Another important area of sensemaking research has to do with narratives and metaphors. Cornelissen and Clark (2010) in their study of executives and new ventures show how analogies and metaphors are used to familiarize others about what is possible with a new initiative. Since a new venture has to do with the future, to help others imagine what is possible, executives use

metaphorical language to help create meaning. This is critical with a new venture, as success is not guaranteed, and it is necessary to convince potential financial supporters of what is possible (Cornelissen and Clark, 2010).

In all the research studies mentioned above, action is a critical element to sensemaking because in every unusual situation that was encountered, organizational members needed to find out first what was happening, and second, what they needed to do about it (Weick et al., 2005). During a crisis, action becomes critical, as people scramble to determine what needs to be done to restore a sense of order. Research conducted on temporary organizations is useful in helping understand the role of action and enactment in sensemaking (Bechky, 2006). A temporary organization is one that is established for a specific purpose for a specific period of time and that is based more on relationships than on hierarchy (Bechky, 2006). One example of this would be a film crew, as in the case of a study by Bechky (2006). In her study, she found that even though different roles in a film set are established and people understand their particular roles, this is not sufficient for people to perform their roles (Bechky, 2006). In practice, “these systems are (re)created through the interactions crew members have as they enact their roles on each set” (Bechky, 2006, p. 11). This enactment helps crew members make sense of their roles, and through this, their roles become renegotiated.

All these studies demonstrate that sensemaking is an important area of research in organizational communication and that it is concerned with making sense or giving meaning to organizational events (Weick, 1995). Furthermore, sensemaking is relevant to organizing, and this communication process is constitutive of organization. Weick et al. (2005) argue that “sensemaking and organizations constitute one another” (p. 410). Sensemaking is a social process grounded in language (Weick et al., 2005) and when something unusual happens in an

organization that interrupts the regular flux of events, depending on the event, organizational members may engage in sensemaking. It is through this very sensemaking that the organization is constituted and reconstituted by the very activity of sensemaking. As Taylor and Robichaud (2004) assert, “conversation is where organizing occurs” (p. 397). It is through the many sensemaking conversations that organizational members engage in that the organization constitutes itself repeatedly. They argue:

Sensemaking, in contrast, invokes language, as members call forth knowledge of previous events through recollections and understandings of an appropriate response, given the situation. They use language to name events and to influence each other as they act; but they also use it to stand back from it and understand it. They construct texts, in other words, and these texts, in turn, become an environment for future conversation. (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004, p. 397).

In the case of the small admin team meetings in the Program, this process is evidenced in how, during these meetings, we engage in the retrospective process of sensemaking by referring to what was said in past conversation or by referring to an existing text. Our meetings are not about making sense of a crisis as it unfolds, or retrospectively making sense of an unusual event, but rather, they are about the moment-to-moment sensemaking of events that are more mundane and require “practical deliberation” (Bolander & Sandberg, 2013). As the admin team talks about issues they are experiencing, they use information they have at hand to help them with the sensemaking process. Sensemaking is then both retrospective and moment-to-moment. During admin team meetings, by working through a problem, or by co-creating a policy, we engage in a discursive dance between the information we have at hand and what actions we need to take.

Organizational Leadership

Even though the focus of this work is not leadership, the fact that the members of this admin team play leadership roles in the Program and within the admin team itself makes it important to provide a review of relevant literature on organizational leadership. In addition, the concept of leadership is one that is embedded in our collective understanding of organizational life. People orient to the idea of leadership in their lives; it is present in politics, in education, and of course, in organizations.

Leadership is a pervasive concept in our culture. This is a term that we hear often in the news when referring to people in charge of organizations and even countries. It is common to hear about a failure of leadership or the exercise of extraordinary leadership in the face of difficult events. While I write this section of this work, Hurricane Maria has devastated Puerto Rico. The Mayor of San Juan has emerged as a strong leader during a time of great uncertainty and chaos, while the US President is being portrayed as someone who is failing to provide leadership during these difficult times.

But what exactly is leadership? Following Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014), there is no one definition of leadership that applies to every situation. Leadership is a concept that is open to interpretation, but one that is connected to language and power (Fairhurst, 2007). Fairhurst (2007), in her discursive approach to leadership, favors this definition: “Leadership is exercised when ideas expressed in talk or action are recognized by others as capable of progressing tasks or problems which are important to them” (p. 6). This definition is useful because it does not connect leadership to a particular organizational role and it emphasizes the role of language, as well as that of action in the accomplishment of leadership. Furthermore, it also recognizes the role that others have in leadership. For leadership to happen, others have to orient to it and have

to take action as a result of this orientation. Leadership has to do with situated action; it is negotiated moment by moment in interaction.

The concept of leadership has been with us since ancient times (Grint, 2011). For example, a text written by Lao Tzu (400-320 BC) in ancient China provides instructors guidance as to how to lead (Grint, 2011). The concept of leadership has not remained static and has evolved throughout time. Grint (2011) writes that major shifts in the understanding of this concept coincide with societal and political changes. In the later part of the nineteenth century, the prevailing leadership model was “masculine, heroic, individualistic and normative in orientation and nature” (Grint, 2011, p. 8). This view of leadership changed as industries developed and the need for administrators to manage processes became imminent. Models of leadership have a tendency to shift from normative to rational, and these changes are a result of political and economic transformations (Grint, 2011). Normative models of leadership are the ones that prevailed in the second half of the 19th century with an emphasis on a specific behavior, in this case that of the individual heroic leader who was invariably masculine (Grint, 2011). Rational models are those that prevailed in the first half of the 20th century with Taylor’s Scientific Management and his emphasis on control (Grint, 2011).

This going back and forth from normative to rational models of leadership continued through time. For example, Grint (2011) reminds us that in the 1950s, we see the emergence of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943), which is a scientific approach very much aligned with individualism in the US. The shift continued in the 1970s and 1980s when a lot of emphasis was placed on leaders and corporate cultures, a return to the normative model where a lot of faith was placed on leaders to turn around companies. During this period, books on the topic of leadership visions and emotional intelligence were published. Grint (2011) points out that the 1990s

brought back an emphasis on measurement, benchmarks and targets, while in the 2000s, there is a shift toward more distributed models of leadership where decision-making is shared among several people. This qualitative study falls within this framework where concepts like collaboration, flat organizational structures, and shared leadership are more common.

The study of leadership can be approached from different perspectives. Parry and Bryman (2006) provide us with an overview of how the traits and behaviors of people in leadership positions have changed over 75 years. In the 1940s, the focus was on unveiling the personality traits that made a person a great leader. A person was born with certain fixed traits that made them great leaders, and these traits could not be acquired or learned. From a focus on traits, research shifted to a focus on behaviors. The two main behaviors identified were concern for others, as well as providing structure to subordinates (Parry & Bryman, 2006). In the 1960s, the focus of research changed once again to what was called the contingency approach, which took into consideration situational factors. The idea was that if it is not possible to change someone's personality, it is possible to control situational factors.

From here, we enter the 1980s, with what Parry and Bryman (2006) call new leadership. New leadership encompasses an approach to leadership where the leader establishes a vision and values of the organization. Some examples of new leadership are transformational leadership, visionary leadership, and charismatic leadership (Parry & Bryman, 2006). The focus of these approaches to leadership is that the leader, simply because of his or her position in the organization, carries the sole responsibility of making meaning for everyone else (Parry & Bryman, 2006).

Leadership research has been conducted largely following a positivistic lens (Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber, 2009) where the traits and behaviors of leaders are researched as if they

were fixed objects largely independent of context and environmental factors. Avolio et al. (2009), in their extensive review of recent leadership literature, point out that leadership research has been dominated by the use of quantitative research methods, most often the questionnaire. Bryman (2011) lists three questionnaires that have been extensively used when studying leadership: the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), the Least Preferred Co-Worker (LPC), and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. While these instruments have been widely used, they also have limitations. Bryman (2011) points out that one well-known limitation of questionnaires is that respondents will answer questions about a leader style based on what they know about the leader and not based on the actual behavior of the leader. This means that if the leader is known to be unfair, she will be judged based on this, regardless of whether the questionnaire asks about her collaborative abilities. This over reliance on one single way of obtaining data on leadership limits the evaluation of this research.

With the advent of the linguistic turn in the social sciences (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) and its renewed focus on discourse as social action, researchers began asking what role language use plays in organizations. Instead of thinking of language as a simple means to transmit information, language began to be seen as a “powerful shaping force in organizations” (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, p. 1127) and no longer a simple mirror of social reality. Researchers interested in language as an important shaping force in organizations (Fairhurst, 2007; Taylor & Van Every, 2000; Weick, 1995) began questioning the traditional research methods employed to study leadership with their almost exclusive emphasis on what happened inside the heads of leaders and followers without paying enough attention to language and communication and their role in constituting organization. Instead of focusing on leaders and their followers, the focus of research became discourse and communication.

This approach to the study of leadership, which focuses on language in use, is decidedly social constructivist, which is the opposite of the positivistic approaches that looked at variables in experiments or the answers to a questionnaire. Studies that took a meaning- or language-centered approach took center stage. These studies consider leadership from a different vantage point and emphasize relational, leadership and communication stances (Fairhurst, 2011).

Discursive Approaches to Leadership

Fairhurst (2007) introduced the concept of discursive leadership in reaction to leadership psychology with its emphasis on mental processes and cognition. Discursive leadership is about language and interaction with others and it is not about special characteristics or traits that only belong to certain individuals. The focus of discursive leadership is on how leadership is accomplished through language by looking closely at discourse. A discursive perspective starts from the premise that organizations are discursive constructions (Fairhurst and Putnam, 2004) that are permanently in a state of 'becoming' (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), or organizing through language. Discursive leadership scholars pay attention to what discourse (or communication, terms which I use interchangeably in my study) is actually doing to make leadership happen. For instance, we can follow the trajectory of a text (a policy) and how this text travels in time and appears in a conversation in a meeting and how different organizational members use strategies to influence decisions in a meeting by referring to a particular text. Discursive approaches to leadership often look at situated interactions and do so by using approaches such as discourse analysis, interactional analysis, speech act analysis, critical discourse analysis, and narrative studies to name a few. I will review some representative studies within the discursive approach to leadership.

Meetings are a prime site for the enactment of conflict. Holmes and Marra (2004) show how effective leaders manage conflict by using different discourse strategies, such as avoidance, diversion, or negotiation. The use of these strategies is relevant, but what makes a leader effective is that others in the interaction agree or follow the leader's cues to achieve closure. For these authors, an effective leader is one who is skillful in the use of linguistic resources in order to avoid and manage conflict (Holmes & Marra, 2004). One such strategy is the use of expressions like "getting back to the agenda" to manage deviations from the topic that can potentially lead to disagreements or contentious discussions.

When leaders "do" leadership, they use key discursive resources. Clifton (2006) identified some of these key discursive resources used by people at work to "do" leadership by investigating how formulations are made in meetings. Formulations serve to define or summarize what has been negotiated in a specific turn of talk. They are an important resource when doing leadership because if we take the view that leadership is not accomplished by one individual, but rather, it is a co-constructed process, then whatever was said during a turn would have been co-constructed. As a result, it becomes difficult for others to challenge a formulation when it was a joint accomplishment. Clifton (2006) states that formulations serve to establish a particular state of affairs and to fix reality, and his study gives us several examples of how to do this. For instance, agreement is one expected response in the next turn following a formulation, but at the same time, challenges to a formulation may occur, and when that happens, the person making the challenge must provide an explanation or account for the challenge.

The discursive practices of leadership have been studied by Holmes and Marra (2004), who have challenged the view that leadership is a solo performance. Instead, anyone can emerge as a leader depending on the discursive strategies and resources they use in an interaction

(Clifton, 2012). The effective use of these strategic resources will largely determine whose point of view is advanced and what decisions are made. However, this is not to say that the role someone has in an organization is unimportant. For example, a supervisor or director can mobilize an idea or claim knowledge that others do not share, thus materializing (or making matter) something that was not previously attended to by others. This notion, which some discourse analysts discuss in terms of dislocation, allows the speaker to bring up in conversation ideas or concepts that happened in a different conversation and make them part of the dynamic of conversation. That is, each time we speak, we are able to bring into interaction matters that are not situated (as conversation analysts would have it) but that call upon multiple contexts working at once.

People in leadership positions typically assign tasks to others to complete. Svennevig (2008) adds to the discussion of leadership as a social practice by reminding us that when researching leadership, a similar action looks very different in different situations with different leaders. Through meeting data, Svennevig (2008) shows how tasks are assigned in very different ways by two different managers, and that it is important to consider the task at hand and the relationship among participants. In one example, the manager downplays his authority by using discourse strategies such as the use of formulations that serve as requests for commitment. In contrast, in another example, the manager uses a very different approach to assigning a task by being much more direct.

Further, Svennevig and Djordjilovic (2015) also investigate how meeting participants account for the right to assign a task. The assignment of tasks is a type of directive, as one person is telling another to do something. In their analysis of the data, the researchers show that an account, or explanation, accompanies the assignment of a task to a colleague when the task is

not something routinely done in the organization, when it is not clear who is responsible for the task, or when the person assigning the task may not have the right to do so (Svennevig & Djordjilovic, 2015). For instance, asking a manager to take action on something may be difficult if one does not have the institutional authority to do so; the person assigning the task can make a “strategic claim of necessity” (Svennevig & Djordjilovic, 2015, p. 103) that cannot easily be rejected. In addition, there are resources that can be used to strengthen the validity of a claim. For example, one can account for one’s entitlement to assign a task by claiming that others on the team feel the same way. This study demonstrates that leadership is not a fixed trait or quality that is owned by certain individuals (Svennevig & Djordjilovic, 2015). Members of a team can use discourse strategies and resources to have their requests heard and to influence the course of action in an organization.

Svennevig (2011) writes about how managers perform their leadership styles when conducting feedback meetings with their supervisees. Leadership is a social activity that is evidenced by the stylistic choices and linguistic strategies deployed by these managers (Svennevig, 2011). While all managers perform activities aligned to their position and authority in the organization, there is variation in how they accomplish their roles. One manager may display affiliation by invoking the mutual responsibilities of the team. Another may emphasize the institutional responsibilities and the organizational roles of meeting members by displaying his or her knowledge and expertise, and by giving clear directions as to next steps. This study reminds us that “professional identity and interpersonal relations are established by observable practices of speaking and interacting” (Svennevig, 2011, p. 36) and that identities are not a given or a starting point in interaction. Leaders create their identities one interaction at a time by the specific language they use, and by how they respond to others during an interaction.

Leadership and sensemaking has also been studied from a discursive perspective. Larsson and Lundholm (2013) studied the organizing properties of leadership, in particular the role of sensemaking, closures, and identities. When performing closures, the authors found that leadership is enacted not only when closure is achieved, but also when it is prevented from happening (Larsson & Lundholm, 2013). A person may resist achieving closure, and by doing so, new alternatives for exploration are brought up. Through this resistance to closure, sensemaking is also achieved, and this can be seen in the detailed elaboration that is done through turn-taking (Larsson & Lundholm, 2013). The study also highlights the persuasive work that is accomplished through sensemaking (Larsson & Lundholm, 2013).

Because discursive approaches to leadership have to do with social interaction, it is not surprising that leadership has also been studied through relational approaches. Studies that consider leadership a relational process reject the notion that leadership is based on mental representations and models (Uhl-Bien, 2006), which is very much in line with discursive leadership. Uhl-Bien (2006) considers leadership a relational process and not the property of one individual. She identifies relational leadership as “a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e. evolving social order) and change (e.g. new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviors, and ideologies) are constructed and produced” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 655). As she points out, leadership is not restricted to hierarchical roles, but also includes the relevance of context in situated interaction.

Ospina and Foldy (2010) investigate relational practices in leadership within 18 social change organizations that had been the recipients of a leadership award. Through the analysis of narratives from organizational members, the researcher identified relational leadership practices. From there, they analyzed the stories and identified leadership practices within these

organizations: Prompting cognitive shifts, naming and shaping identity, engaging dialogue about difference, creating equitable governance mechanisms, and weaving multiple worlds together through interpersonal relationships (Ospina & Foldy, 2010). The successful deployment of these relational practices brings together supporters and encourages the forming of alliances. As Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien (2012) point out, a relational approach to leadership is not about traits or behaviors, but about social interaction. It is in the fabric of relationships, which are created and recreated one turn at a time, that leadership is enabled.

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) take a different approach from others who have studied relational leadership by focusing on the role of a newly appointed Federal Security Director (FSD) within the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) after 9/11. Their approach to their research was different from others who have studied relational leadership in that they did not focus on leaders as individuals who possess extraordinary qualities. Instead, their analysis emphasizes the relationships among people and the details of conversations. In fact, they identified expressions that they considered important and that described a way of being with others in conversation (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011).

In alignment with the view that leadership can be shared in an organization, Vine et al. (2008) looked at the concept of co-leadership. The idea behind co-leadership is that one person cannot effectively oversee and exert influence over all aspects of an organization, and that two leaders complementing each other's leadership style is possible. Vine et al. (2008) use interactional sociolinguistics to study two behaviors typical of leaders: task allocation and task maintenance, but how this happens in practice depends on the context. Examples of task allocation are planning, making sure the work is distributed, making sure that policies are in place, and setting high standards. Maintenance behaviors include the relational aspect of work,

such as building trust, asking about people's personal lives, and expressing concern for feelings (Vine et al., 2008). Once again, the importance of context when analyzing leadership is brought to the forefront. Leaders in this study oriented themselves to different aspects of the context and interaction, and in so doing so, perform leadership (Vine et al., 2008).

Researchers who subscribe to the CCO view of communication have also conducted studies of leadership. Fairhurst, Cooren, and Cahill (2002) studied the language of contradiction during downsizing by analyzing the accounts of different actors inside the organization. Their study contributes to the understanding of leadership in organizations by demonstrating how different members of the organization use discourse to advance different agendas.

Brummans, Hwang, and Cheong (2013) also took the approach of communication as constitutive of organization in their study of leadership within a Buddhist organization. Their study shows how within a spiritual organization, the leader invokes teachings and concepts from a Dharma master into her interactions with followers, which has the effect of continuously constructing a view that fixation on the self is detrimental to the organization (Brummans et al., 2013). In addition, their study adds to the understanding of organizational authority through the concept of "thirdness" (p. 20). They write, "A revered leader embodies the organization's thirdness and thus serves as a continuous point of reference that guides the sensemaking of those who enact the organization" (p. 20). It is through this careful enactment of spiritual guidance that the leader constructs the organization and its followers are able to make sense of it.

In this section, I have outlined some of the ways in which leadership has been conceptualized by providing a brief account of how leadership has evolved through time. In addition, I have identified research studies conducted following discursive approaches to leadership, including relational approaches where communication plays a strong constitutive

force. I pointed out earlier that the linguistic turn created space for looking at organization from the point of view of language, and not just as an important element within organizations, but as constitutive of what happens in these organizations (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000).

Meetings and Organizations

Countless workplace jokes tell us that an inordinate amount of time is spent by organizational members in meetings. This bit of popular wisdom is supported by research. According to Romano and Nunamaker (2001), senior managers spend up to 80 percent of their working hours attending meetings. Meetings, then, are important events where the fabric of organization is made and remade. As meetings are the focal point of my study, in this section I will provide a review of relevant research on meetings from Schwartzman's (1989) influential work to studies connected to organizational communication.

In her widely cited book, *The Meeting: Gatherings in Organizations and Communities*, Schwartzman (1989) argues that meetings are a bona fide topic of research and should be studied by themselves and not viewed simply as context. In her ethnographic study, she focuses on interaction during meetings by using Dell Hymes' SPEAKING framework (1972, 1974). The notion of speech community and how language is used within the members of that community is central in Hymes' framework. By using this framework, Schwartzman attends to members' practices and how the social order is enacted by those sharing the same discursive rules and rituals. This allowed her to pay attention to local practices and the social order as they emerge in speaking. For Schwartzman (1989), meetings can be understood following a framework that allows the researchers to categorize what happens in meetings into key relationships, and

meetings are central to organizations because they “maintain the organization as an entity” (p. 86).

Schwartzman’s (1989) research highlighted the different types of meeting formats, including spontaneous vs. scheduled, and collaborative vs. less collaborative. This diversity means that meetings have three distinct functions. First, there is the sensemaking function, which allows participants to create and recreate the social order. Second, social and validating functions allow participants to interpret and evaluate their existing social relationships. Third, meetings have a transformative function, as they can change participants’ existing social systems. Meetings at Midwest Community, the site for Schwartzman’s (1989) research, were of great importance, to the point that people referred back to events that happened at meetings.

Schwartzman’s (1989) approach to the study of meetings as speech events allows the researchers to focus on the work that is being accomplished. This means that while the topic of a meeting is important, what takes place during meeting interaction is at least as important. Though meetings may be routine happenings in organizations, the work that takes place in meetings impacts the lives of organizational members. For example, a decision can be made as to the number of faculty to hire in a particular semester. This is consequential, as it could mean that more teachers need to be recruited or that some teachers may not be offered employment.

In her ethnography of communication in a non-profit organization, Milburn (2009) reminds us that meetings are relevant to organizational life because through meetings, organizational members “come together to describe work tasks and talk the organization into being” (p. 37). Though countless workplace jokes tell us that not much is accomplished during those hours spent attending meetings, this view reflects a very limited understanding of the role of meetings in organizational life. A great amount of empirical research has been conducted in

the area of meetings as important interactional accomplishments (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009; Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Barnes, 2007; Boden, 1994). In fact, meetings are “the interaction order of management, the occasioned expression of management in-action, that very social action through which institutions produce and reproduce themselves” (Boden, 1994, p. 81). Studying what takes place in meetings makes sense, as this is where the core of organizational activity takes place.

But what constitutes a meeting? In the introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Business Communication*, Asmuß and Svennevig (2009) explain that “meetings as complex social events can be understood as an interactional joint achievement of all involved participants” (p. 3). It is through the communicative actions of meeting participants that tasks get assigned, roles get created and re-created, leadership is performed, and the general day-to-day of an organization is accomplished. Meetings, then, are important interactional events. I return to Schwartzman (1989), who defines meetings as:

A communicative event involving three or more people who agree to assemble for a purpose ostensibly related to the functioning of an organization or a group, for example, to exchange ideas or opinions, to solve a problem, to make a decision or negotiate an agreement, to develop policy and procedures, to formulate recommendations, and so forth. A meeting is characterized by multiparty talk that is episodic in nature, and participants either develop or use specific conventions [...] for regulating this talk. (p.7)

This definition is useful for the purpose of this qualitative study, as it narrows what can constitute a meeting and what sorts of activities take place within its framework. One salient characteristic of meetings is that they have a purpose, a point, or a reason for being. Another

characteristic in this definition is that meetings involve several parties, at a minimum three people.

If asked what constitutes a meeting, most people who are members of an organization would not have difficulty stating some of the most common characteristics. For instance, the level of formality varies widely depending on the type of meeting. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) note that on one end of the spectrum, formal meetings are pre-arranged, usually by someone in a senior position. They often involve an agenda generated ahead of time, and there is a clear expectation of attendance. At the other end of the spectrum, there are less formal meetings, which can happen by chance, in a hallway or in a break room.

In formal meetings, the role of the agenda is consequential because as Asmuß and Svennevig (2009) note, this document often guides what can be discussed in the meeting, and it has an organizing effect, as participants often invoke the agenda during meetings to understand when they can introduce a topic or when it is okay to deviate from it. The agenda, as Svennevig (2012) states, plays a constitutive role, as it limits what can be talked about, and serves as a resource for action.

In addition, minutes are often produced during meetings and are saved for later reference. These minutes are a useful resource for intertextual analysis (Bakhtin, 1986), as what takes place during meetings is transformed into texts (textualization), and these texts, in turn, are in constant dialogue with what happens after and in subsequent meetings. For example, in the data that is the focus of this work, admin team members often refer to documents that have been created in other meetings, which bring those documents to life across time and space. Following a CCO perspective, meeting minutes are also constitutive of organizations, as they may become part of future processes or part of manuals or handbooks.

Beyond an agenda and meeting notes, one important characteristic of formal meetings is the presence of a chair, who, depending on the organization, performs specific activities, such as controlling openings and closings, introducing agenda items, managing turns, and ensuring that participants' conduct is appropriate (Angouri & Marra, 2010). Depending on the type of organization or meeting, the role of the chair will be different. Meeting chairs play very dynamic roles: they may serve to control the meeting while at the same time participating in it (Angouri & Marra, 2010). Meetings, then, are sites where leadership is enacted.

The role of the chairperson is one that may be difficult to enact, depending on the type of meeting. Pomerantz and Denvir (2007) explore role enactment in meeting. Their study demonstrated that playing that role of chairperson in a meeting is an interactional accomplishment and one that has to be enacted carefully. As their analysis suggests, different chairs have different styles, and chairpersons adapt their style to the particular organizational setting and to what takes place during the meeting (Pomerantz & Denvir, 2007). In the case of their study, the chairperson used strategies to facilitate and to show deference to others in the meeting. The chairperson was not only aware of the procedures involved in running a meeting, but he also showed great skills in managing the interactional demands of the meeting. The role of a chair is one that can be challenging, as it requires balancing the needs of participants with organizational needs.

Meetings also have specific situational characteristics (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009). They usually take place in a space that is ideated for them, with a meeting table spatially signifying the relations between participants, a whiteboard, phones for communication with others not physically present at the meeting, and possibly a computer. Participants often come to meetings prepared with something to write on, as well as a pen or paper (or a laptop or tablet).

While meetings vary in their level of formality, I define meetings as formal events that are arranged ahead of time and typically involve an agenda distributed beforehand. This is not to say that other types of meetings are not important, but for the purpose of this dissertation, I will only focus on formal meetings.

Meetings can also serve as the “stage” for the enactment of organizational identities (Putnam & Fairhurst, 2001), as participants perform their organizational roles and leaders carry out their interactional styles. In the meetings I have attended, a leader with a more collaborative style is likely to invite the participation of others when making decisions. In contrast, a more authoritarian leader may simply tell others what tasks to accomplish without asking for input. To make visible what takes place during meetings, and to understand fully what these styles involve, it is important to pay attention to the micro-practices participants employ. These micro-practices orient us to what participants themselves believe is important in their interactions, and this very act indexes that this is something that the analyst must attend to more carefully (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011). In Schwartzman’s (1989) study, it was important for Midwest Community to present itself as an alternative organization, so meetings gave it the opportunity to enact this very identity.

While the potential for conflict during meetings exists, research shows that there is a clear bias for consensus in meetings (Angouri & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011; Wodak, Kwon, & Clarke, 2011). In the study by Angouri and Bargiela-Chiappini (2011), they demonstrated that even when discussing problems, a typical activity during meetings, it is done in a way that is facilitative and that builds agreement among the members of the team. Meetings also offer a space to study discursive strategies, such as humor and small talk. Holmes (2000); Burns, Holmes, and Marra (2001); and Holmes and Stubbe (2003) have given extensive attention to

how humor and small talk function as communicative practices in meetings. Gender is central in their work, and their studies have shown that when more women are present in a meeting, the use of humor is more common. However, when women lead a meeting made up of mostly men, the use of humor and small talk declines (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003).

With globalization and increased interconnectedness, it becomes important to understand the role of culture when studying meetings. Sprain and Boromisza-Habashi (2012) take a cultural approach to understanding local practices in organizations. In their ethnographic vignette, they look at one meeting episode in Nicaragua where multiple discursive problems arise as a result of the meeting facilitator not understanding local norms when conducting meetings. They followed Schwartzman's (1989) ethnographic work on meetings where she drew on Hymes' (1972, 1974) ethnography of communication framework and her identification of cross-cultural patterns. Of interest in their study is that the accomplishment of egalitarianism in meetings goes beyond categorizing a group as egalitarian or hierarchical, and that whether a particular social order is achieved depends on the use of cultural resources. Their findings are very relevant for researchers working outside of western cultural patterns.

Beyond meeting characteristics and types of meetings, Tracy and Dimock (2004), in their article on meetings as discursive sites, foreground how meetings accomplish work that goes beyond the ubiquitous activities of decision-making and information sharing. Relevant to my research on team meetings, these authors state, "meetings are the arena in which organizational and community groups constitute who they are" (p. 133). Meetings provide a space for organizations to manifest themselves and for their values to become visible, as well as contested (Tracy & Dimmock, 2004). The meeting data for my study show that organizational members were not only finding solutions to problems but were debating the values of the organization.

The Program stated that collaboration was valued, and in meetings, it needed to demonstrate a commitment to this value by the very way that meetings were conducted. In examining the relationship between spoken and written discourse, and the chaining of texts, I note how organizations are constituted in these relationships. In meetings, participants mention documents that are not part of the current meeting, but which are relevant to the conversation.

As Cooren et al. (2006) assert, texts have agency; their acts on speakers are consequential to the evolution of an interaction. In my own meeting data, participants refer to established policies or procedures as if they were present in the meeting and ascribe to these documents the agency to act for themselves. In her *Institutional Ethnography*, Smith (2005) notes how speakers create conversational slots from documents to “speak” and wait for forms, memos, and other documents to “take their turn,” thus activating texts as non-human speakers. In his article on how texts do things in organizational settings, Cooren (2004) notes how memos, contracts, newsletters, and other official and unofficial organizational documents are, in fact, able to perform speech acts: they command, forbid, ask, or force others to do certain actions.

Meetings, then, are not only central to the work of organizations, but as research sites, they offer researchers a close look at mundane workplace activities. Harvey Sacks (1995) was the first to argue for studies that look closely at how people actually talk about work in a way that is available to all to see and not only the analyst. Llewelyn (2008) makes a case for the need for studies “of real-time workplace activity as site for the reproduction of workplace logics and arrangements” (p. 764). With this in mind, my goal in this study of team meetings is to demonstrate, through the analysis of episodes of work, how admin team members orient to the elusive concept of collaboration as something important for the admin team and the Program,

and how they do so through the use of discourse strategies to advance their individual and common goals.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE RESEARCH SITE

This chapter is about the English language program (the Program) as I experienced it during a period of reorganization. I begin my account by describing how the Program evolved over time and how it became the working environment that I inhabited. I illustrate the physical space of the research site including how offices are allocated and where classes take place. Then I offer my account of the Program's every day participants, admin team members and their roles, including mine. Finally, I will examine our meetings, including the meeting room, how the agenda is structured, and the dynamic of collaboration which I interpret in my analytical chapters. I will also account for how the Program changed over time and how I experienced it during the time of this research, which is important because a sense of place is also part of the interaction, as it can enable and constrain what people say.

The Program

It is common for many American universities to have an English language program that offers English language instruction to students who are academically bound. The University had an English language program housed in the College of Arts and Sciences, and it served, on average, 700 students a year. As English has increasingly become a lingua franca (Firth, 2009; Canagarajah, 2007), the market for international students has become very competitive. Universities are pressured to increase their cash flow and must find ways to increase their sources of income; one such source is the recruitment of international students who will first study English and then become students in an undergraduate or graduate program. In addition,

the University's vision statement states that it will seek out partnerships with the goal of making the University more globally integrated. To accomplish this goal, the University where the English language program was housed entered into a joint venture with a foreign company (the Corporation) with the goal of increasing the number of international students. This joint venture merged the existing English language program with the Corporation. The English language program became an entity within the joint venture that I have called the Program. In this joint venture (JV), the University (via the Program) maintains control of academic programs, and the company provides marketing and recruitment services to the University. This relationship is depicted in Figure 3.1.

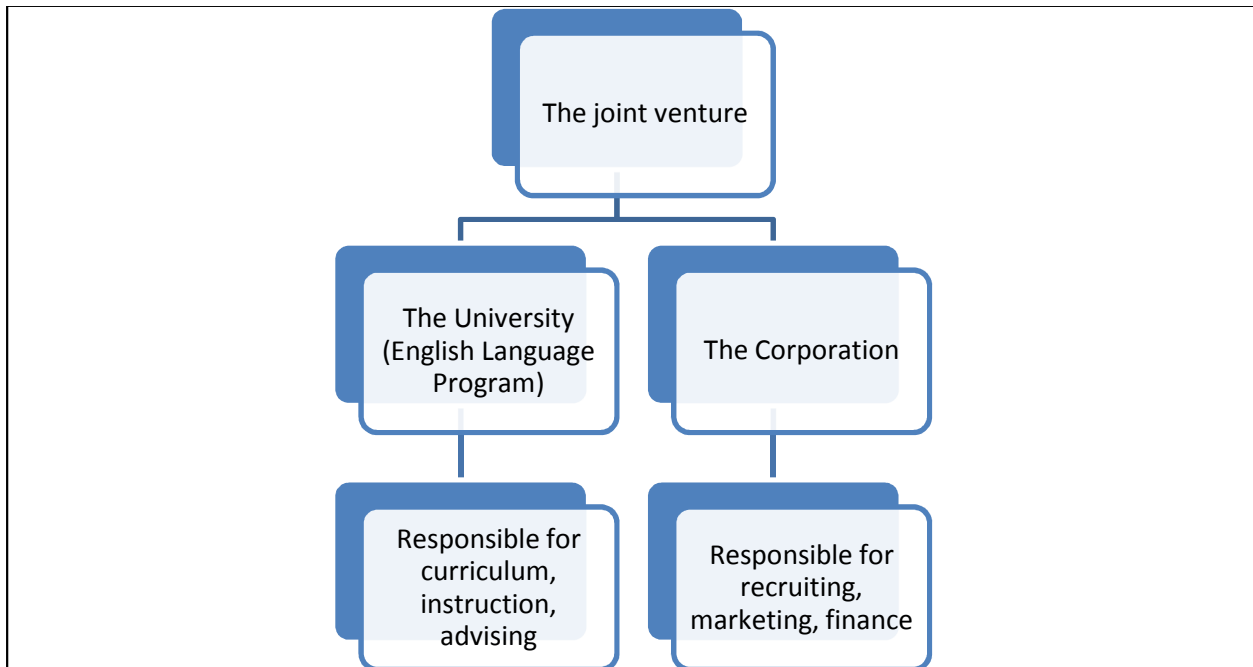


Figure 3.1. The structure of the Joint Venture. This figure depicts the entities involved in the joint venture and their distinct responsibilities.

This new model brought changes as to how work was conducted. In the former ELI, we were responsible for all aspects of the operation of the program. We designed and distributed our own marketing materials, maintained our website, attended recruitment trips, admitted

students to the program, hired and trained teachers, wrote and delivered curriculum, and made promotion decisions. With the new JV, things changed considerably. The Corporation had responsibility for the business aspect of the operation from marketing, recruitment, admission, and finance. It also had a unit responsible for student services including housing, wellness, and student activities. The academic side, or the Program, was responsible for academic operations including student placement and promotion, faculty hiring and training, and curriculum design and management. In this new organizational reality, the Program designs and delivers academic English lessons to its students to equip them with the critical thinking and linguistic skills so that they may attend a university in the United States.

All these changes resulted in a momentous transformation as to the way the members of the former ELI conceived of themselves. Not only did work responsibilities shift, but also professional identities transformed. For instance, I went from managing admissions and marketing to managing student services for the business side of the operation. This move by the University to merge both organizations did not happen in isolation. Official university documents speak of a change in how the University saw itself in the world. For instance, the University stated in its mission and vision statements its desire to increase global engagement and outreach through partnerships. In addition, this move toward a joint venture model with both public and private investment did not happen exclusively to us. Instead, our new reality was the result of changes taking place in higher education around the globe. With increased globalization, universities have moved to improve their capacity by internationalizing their campuses. As Altbach and Knight (2007) assert, “current thinking sees international higher education as a commodity freely traded and sees higher education as a private good.” One way to increase capacity in times of budget constraints is to form alliances with private providers.

These public-private partnerships on university campuses are increasingly common. At the time of writing this, there are at least five companies that have partnered with colleges and universities in the U.S. with the goal of increasing the number of international students on campus by offering them academic English language support and entrance to a program of study.

The Physical Environment

The concept of place is connected to “the particular experience of a person in a particular setting” (Najafi & Shariff, 2011, p. 1). It is important to keep this in mind as I describe the physical environment where the Program existed at the time of the study. Describing the building where the Program was housed is relevant because the members of the Program interacted with this space on a daily basis. While meetings took place in a designated space, the overall physical space had changed. The sense of the new organization was also revealed in how the space was organized. The new space showed in its new configuration that the organization had changed and that we were experiencing a new organization. How space is organized is part of the materiality of organizations, which is made to matter, as it has a real effect on how people meet, teach, talk, and work. As Cooren (2015) asserts, this is about the “relational character of any existence” (p. 12), regardless of what we are speaking about. This new space made possible a way of working and made impossible other ways.

The JV building is centrally located within the University’s main campus, housed in a building that has been renovated to provide services and instruction to international students. A visitor approaching the building would see the JV’s name. The name of the JV is a combination of the Corporation’s name and the University’s name. The colors of the sign are the colors of the University. The space outside the building entrance has a small garden with a trellis covered by jasmine plants. There are metal benches under the trellis which encourage students, faculty, and

visitors to linger. On a typical day, students sit under the trellis, reading, talking, or working on their computers. It is common to see faculty and students interacting there.

Upon entering the building, one first notices the colorful walls painted in bright orange, yellow, and purple. There is a large, light yellow wall with the word “Welcome” printed in white. The lobby is inviting and spacious, and features colorful modern chairs in purple, green, and orange. Right in front of the welcome desk, on the ceiling, there are rows of flags from countries around the world. This adds to the sense of place, as it connotes a feeling of camaraderie among people from different parts of the world. It is common to see first-time visitors looking up trying to locate their flags and then hear them giggle excitedly when they have been successful. There are computer stations in the reception area where students can often be seen checking their email or their attendance records. The lobby area is open and welcoming, and two female staff members greet visitors and help students with questions about upcoming appointments with advisors, for example. There is always a tremendous amount of activity in the lobby, which also serves as a central meeting point for students taking classes in the Program. In addition to business activities connected to going to school at the JV, recreational activities also take place in the lobby. Students can be seen participating in conversation groups, which are guided by student leaders. The lobby is also a location where other cultural and recreational activities take place. Sound is also relevant to the sense of place in the building. It is a normal occurrence to overhear students and visitors speaking in their first languages in the lobby. The sounds of English as a lingua franca with its different accents can also be heard as instructors, students, and staff mingle and interact.

The JV’s offices are divided into two sections: the business offices and the academic offices. The business offices are located to the right of the building, and include services such as

housing, wellness, finance, student support, and immigration. To the left of the building are the academic offices. The offices of the admin team are located there, with individual offices for academic advisors, the Program director, the Program assistant, and shared offices for coordinators. The area shared by the admin team is small, and the offices are very close to one another. This facilitates interaction among the members of the admin team, and it is not unusual for conversations to start in the hallway and move into one of the offices. There are also two faculty offices in this area with space for six faculty members each. In the Program, faculty members do not have individual offices; instead, they have individual desks equipped with computers in a shared office space. Because of intensified recruitment efforts, the JV has seen a tremendous increase in the number of international students. This has resulted in the need to hire additional instructors to teach these students. As the space is limited in the JV, additional faculty office spaces have been established in two other buildings on campus.

Program Organization

I collected discourse data, both verbal and written, in a series of 36 admin team meetings that took place in the Program. The Program is in itself an organization that operates within a public-private partnership framework. I will highlight how the Program is configured as well as who the members of the admin team are and how they work together.

The Program consists of three distinct smaller programs, each with its own curriculum and student body. One of the programs offers academic English classes and has six levels of instruction. In this program, students attend classes for 18 hours a week and take a combination of courses that prepare them to think critically in English both orally and in writing. The curriculum also includes the teaching of skills and strategies in addition to the teaching of language. The curriculum is content-based, which means that students are not only taught

subjects like grammar, but they learn academic content in each of the subjects they take.

Students in the academic English program can the bridge program if they are able to meet entry requirements and if they successfully complete level four if they are undergraduate students and level five if they are graduate students. The second program offers two courses, both of which are part of a bridge program at the University. In this bridge program, students take both English language courses while at the same time taking courses in their undergraduate or graduate programs. Students at the undergraduate and graduate levels take these courses. The curriculum consists of activities to help students improve their academic writing and speaking skills. The smallest program offers three levels of English courses to students whose goal is to improve their English for other non-academic purposes. Students in this program sometimes transfer to the academic English program. The Program designs and delivers the curriculum, recruits, hires, and trains instructors, and manages student testing and promotion for all of these English language programs.

Students from all over the world join these programs under a student visa category called F-1. To gain admission into any of the programs, students provide documents to the immigration office at the University. These documents include:

1. Detailed transcripts from high school or from college. These documents must be official, meaning that they must come sealed and signed by the issuing institution.
2. A completed application for admission.
3. Financial documents demonstrating that the students can support themselves while in the United States without working. The amount students must show is different depending on the program. Students can provide a bank letter from family members or sometimes a scholarship letter from a sponsoring agency.

Once all documents are received and students are deemed admissible, the I-20 is issued and the students can present this document at the nearest US consulate or embassy in their home country to obtain a student visa. This is the process that most students in the Program go through before they arrive.

JV students attend classes across campus. The majority of the classes are located in the JV building (where there are dedicated classrooms) and in two other buildings on campus. The JV pays the University for classroom space outside of the JV building. Classes in the Program are small and are capped at 18 students, although the average number of students is often 15, as second language acquisition benefits from interaction between students and the teacher, and smaller class sizes may facilitate this. All classrooms are equipped with whiteboards, a computer, an overhead projector, a document projector, and a large screen TV. Classrooms in the JV building are painted in bright colors like purple, blue, green, and orange. Classrooms in the two other buildings are painted in a cream color just like the other classrooms at the University. Classroom furniture includes movable chairs and desks to make it easy for instructors to rearrange the room for group work.

At the time of the study, the admin team, depicted in Table 3.1, was comprised of 10 people. Admin team members have worked in international education for many years and have extensive experience with the management of English language programs. Team members bring a variety of experience and backgrounds in international education. With many having lived abroad and some having been born abroad. All are considered knowledgeable in their areas of responsibility. The admin team itself is international and culturally diverse. Some members are originally from the UK, Russia and the Ukraine, and I am originally from Panama. While English is the language spoken during these meetings, the influence of other languages and other

ways of seeing is evident during interaction. Experiences working abroad also influence how admin team members approach the solution of problems or reaching a decision. The very idea of collaboration and shared decision-making, even though emphasized in documents and work practices is not necessarily embraced by all. Not every admin team member prefers this way of working and some at times would prefer a more top down approach. This could be explained by their own past experiences in other workplaces, but it could also have a cultural explanation. The idea of working together to reach decisions and getting feedback on our work is a western concept which has evolved over time. Not all admin team members might have been used to this way of working, and while they had to adapt to it, they may not have necessarily embraced it. Collaboration also involves indirections, as it puts the burden on the hearer to understand what is really being said. In addition, the admin team in this study is cross-cultural and each person brings their own expectations as to what working together means. Not every culture perceives politeness in the same way, for example. In fact, the theory that indirectness in discourse signals politeness has been criticized as ethnocentric, as it does not account for how indirectness work across cultures (Eelen, 2014). Nevertheless, as Eelen (2014) has argued, culture as a concept needs to be defined more fully or studied empirically for it to be valid when accounting for politeness.

The admin team works together by frequently interacting with one another face-to-face or via email in order to get feedback on processes being developed, or to ask for help with a project. There is often a lot of back and forth before a decision is reached, and this often happens in admin team meetings. In these team meetings, for example, deciding what changes to make to a policy that affects the teachers will be discussed by all members of the admin team. While there is a clear hierarchy in the admin team, members interact in the organization and in the meetings

by using each other's first names, and by openly questioning decisions with which they do not agree. A lot of time is spent in admin team meetings developing new policies that will be shared with the faculty, collaborating on the planning of an event, or putting together a future agenda. The director, Lila, has worked diligently to establish and maintain a collaborative culture where reaching consensus, or at least a shared perspective, is of great importance. This emphasis on collaborative processes can be seen in documents such as the Statement of Core Values and in work practices. For instance, faculty are invited to work on curriculum projects and are asked for their opinion on work processes. There are working groups that are formed to work on solutions to issues affecting the Program. There is a concerted effort to ask organizational members their opinion via surveys and questionnaires. These activities and interactions happen within this framework of collaboration.

Organizational roles are relevant in understanding how a team works, and they influence how people interact in meetings. Milburn (2009) in her ethnography of communication of a non-profit organization, writes about membership in meetings and how people enact their roles based on what it means to be "an organizational participant" (p. 55). The way people talk and interact in meetings indexes that they are in the organization: how they see themselves and how others see them. It follows that an account of the different roles the admin team members in this study play is relevant to understanding their interactions. I will also include my personal observations as to the personal characteristics of admin team members and the varied nature of their relationships.

Table 3.1

Admin Team Members and Their Roles

Admin Team Member Name	Role
Lila	Program Director
Elisse	Coordinator
Nina	Coordinator
Joan	Coordinator
Trent	Coordinator
Rory	Coordinator
Ari	Coordinator
Miles	Advisor
Gabrielle	Advisor
Oriel	Academic Specialist

Note. Admin team member names were changed for this study.

First, we have Lila, who is the admin team leader and the director. Her role in the Program is to set goals for the Program as a whole, to interact with members of the JV, and to help the members of her admin team meet their goals by providing guidance and making resources available. I describe Lila as a very driven person who is very committed to creating a good working environment for the members of the Program. At the time of the study, she was enrolled in a Ph.D. program in higher education administration. As part of this program, she was taking MBA courses, which exposed her to ideas about team work, collaborative decision-making, and the like. The influence of these ideas can be seen in the way she organized how we

worked. She was the one who introduced the concept of creative teams, which was a new way of working for the Program. Creative teams were groups of faculty and administrators who worked together to find creative solutions to issues. For example, there were creative teams that focused on the curriculum for a class in a level. They worked together with specific goals and came up with recommendations for improving student learning outcomes. Lila is also very hardworking to the point that she often works late almost every day. She also works on weekends. Her style of communication is approachable and friendly, and she makes people feel at ease when they talk to her. In meetings, she takes a lot of time framing issues, which is at times exasperating. I often wonder why she is not more direct when presenting ideas. It often seems that we take a lot of time talking about things that can easily be solved in a matter of minutes. Her personal relations with members of her admin team are cordial, but not everyone on the admin team likes her way of leading. There is some tension with some admin team members who feel that Lila has a tendency to micromanage their work. This is not unwarranted, as Lila has a tendency to keep tabs on the work of admin team members. Some admin team members welcome this while others do not respond well to it. Lila and I are good friends and work well together.

Trent, Elisse, Rory, Nina, and Joan are coordinators who work with curriculum and faculty in their respective programs. Their job is to ensure that the curriculum is updated, to seek feedback from faculty as to the curriculum, and to hold meetings with faculty in their programs about curriculum matters. Trent is quiet and soft-spoken. He wants to reach consensus in meetings and avoids confrontation. He can be convinced of an opposing position if presented with enough information. Trent is friendly and has good working relations with other admin team members.

Rory is a coordinator who works with the curriculum of the English courses in the bridge program. Rory is very friendly and approachable and is known for the great work she has done developing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses and for organizing materials and making them accessible to the faculty. Rory and I have become very close at work, and we interact both in and out of work. I also know that at the time of the study, she was growing increasingly frustrated with Lila's management style. For Rory, it seems that Lila is overly involved in her work, not allowing her to use her significant experience in finding solutions to issues.

Elisse is a coordinator who works with the curriculum, students, and faculty in the smallest of the three programs. The curriculum is designed in four-week increments, and students can join this program for four weeks or stay as long as two years. Elisse is quiet and while she does not speak much during meetings, when she does, it is because something that is being discussed relates directly to the work she does. She then speaks passionately, which speaks to how much she is devoted to the work she does. It is true, too, that at times, Elisse can lose her temper in meetings. This does not happen often, but it is part of her persona. She is quiet and keeps a lot inside. At the time of this research, Elisse and I were beginning our friendship, which has continued to this day.

Nina works with Trent as one of the coordinators. Her job is not connected to curriculum, but instead she communicates with teachers about program policies that affect students. She is a hard worker, and while she is quiet, she is not afraid to speak up in meetings and to show us a different way of looking at an issue.

Joan is the newest member of the admin team. She was an instructor in the Program and has always been interested in program administration. Once a new coordinator position became

available, Joan applied for it and got the job. Joan's job is to work alongside Elisse in the short-term program. She mostly works with teachers providing guidance and training. As a newcomer, Joan brings a different perspective to meetings, but she is also a bit of an outsider who had not created strong alliances with other admin team members. I often find myself disagreeing with Joan in admin team meetings, and it often feels a bit like a tug of war. It has often appeared to me that she takes the stance of a faculty member without considering the point of view of the admin team, but this is something that changed over time.

The advisors who work with students in all programs are Miles and Gabrielle, and they are supervised by me in my role with faculty and because of my previous experience as the academic advisor for the Program. Miles was hired first and is the most experienced of the two advisors. He brings a wealth of experience working with international students due to his previous work as a teacher in the Middle East and Japan. Miles is very personable and has a reputation for "telling it as it is" but in a way that does not feel threatening. He is very sociable and often has inside information as to things that are going on in other units.

Gabrielle was hired a little bit after Miles. While she does not have a lot of experience advising, she brings an awareness and sensitivity to international student issues that we did not have before. Her background in sociology brings an interesting perspective when advising. She is the admin team member that talks the least during meetings. This is probably because in many of the meetings, we discuss topics not directly connected to advising. Also, she defers a lot to Miles, who has a broader understanding of the work of the Program.

Finally, we have Oriel, who is the longest-serving member of the admin team. She started in the first English language program at the University, which was established in 1978 as part of the M.A. in Applied Linguistics. Oriel's role is to keep up with student databases, create

class lists, ensure we have adequate classroom space, and enroll students. She provides a lot of support to all in the admin team. In addition, she is the keeper of our institutional membership and often tells stories as to how we used to do things, or about former directors and their way of leading. She also keeps photos from past events, which provide a great visual way to look at the past.

My own role in the Program at the time of the study was to work with faculty and to supervise advisors. I am the second longest serving member in the Program and was a part of the former ELI. Due to this, and the close relationships I have developed with many in the team, I am a well-respected team member. Other team members trust me and they often consult with me when making decisions, and see me as someone with a lot of practical experience. During the data collection process, people were not very curious about the process itself, and very seldom did someone ask me about the data or the process besides from time to time asking me how far along I was with the process.

Institutional Membership

The Program is an organization that exists as part of a larger institutional network of similar programs not only in the US but in other English-speaking countries. As part of this larger universe, it operates within a broader institutional framework. The Program is accredited by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), which is an independent accrediting body which accredits English language programs in the US and around the world. At the time of the merger, our accreditation was put on suspension, as CEA did not know how to deal with an English language program that existed within a public-private partnership model. We were allowed to keep our accreditation with additional reporting requirements.

In addition, the Program encourages its faculty and staff to become members of the TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) organization. This is the largest professional organization in the field of English language teaching. To encourage membership, the Program reimburses faculty and administrators their membership fees each year. Lila also offers a TESOL proposal submission workshop each year to provide guidance to faculty as to how to submit a successful proposal. This has been very successful and has resulted in a large number of our faculty presenting at the TESOL annual conference.

The Meetings

I attended, participated and audio recorded 36 meetings for one year beginning in the spring of 2014. It feels strange to describe a room that is so familiar to me. Most of the furniture and artifacts in the room I hardly ever paid any attention to, except when I needed to use them for something. Still, I want to provide the reader with a sense of the room as I experienced it in terms of resources for this work.

The meeting room is located on the academic side of the building at the end of a narrow corridor. The corridor is lined up with different offices of staff from the academic side of the JV. It is possible to overhear conversations going on in the various offices as one walks by. The corridor is well-lit with bright white lights. There is no natural light coming from outside. As I enter the meeting room, the first thing I notice is the brightness from the big windows on the right side of the room. The room overlooks the area outside the main entrance where there is a trellis with jasmine as well as green metal benches for sitting. The room is not spacious, but because of the bright light coming from the windows, it appears more spacious than it is in reality. Most of the space in the room is taken up by a long boat shaped conference room table located in the middle of the room that can sit up to 11 people. There are extra chairs on one side

of the room in case more people are in attendance. The table is sturdy with a shiny surface with a phone in the middle of the table for phone conferences. There are also a mouse and a computer keyboard to access the Internet or our internal documents. There is a large TV screen at the end of the room to the right. On the left side of the room, upon entering, there is a mobile whiteboard that can be wheeled in and out of the room as needed. The room is carpeted in the same color carpet as the rest of the building. The carpet is dark blue with square panels.

The room has a good energy to it, so I feel comfortable in this room. This is probably because of all the natural light that comes through those windows. It is also because I can see students, faculty, and others outside doing different things. It is like we are inside looking out at the world. The room also feels like a place where serious work is done. The effect of the intentional conference table helps to give it this feel. The room is one of the few dedicated meeting space rooms in the building. It is used a lot by members of the JV for interviews, internal meetings, and for meetings mediated by technology such as Skype.

Meetings take place weekly on Wednesdays, except when they are postponed due to travel or other circumstances, at a set time. The day of the week is the same throughout each semester, and the specific dates were placed on the shared Outlook calendar that the admin team uses. Before each meeting, the director, Lila, who also serves as chairperson in every meeting, sends out an email to admin team members requesting topics for discussion. While feedback is sought out, it is Lila who constructs the agenda, deciding which items appear first, and often, how much time is allocated to each item. Not all suggestions make it on the agenda, as Lila may suggest leaving a topic for a later meeting. Once it is created, Lila sends out the agenda before each meeting. Let's now take a look at figure 3.2, which shows a typical agenda for admin team meetings.

The agenda is structured by topic and the time allocated to each item. Lila presides over every meeting and controls the flow of the agenda. Announcements come first, and this is where Lila makes announcements of important events coming up such as a new initiative that we need to know about. Anyone at the meeting can ask questions about the announcements and this typically happens. The next item on this agenda is the advising team (Gabrielle and Miles), who have been allocated thirty minutes to give us information as to what is happening in their area, including the number of students on probation, special plans for advising students in the higher levels (levels 5 and 6), and more. The next topic on the agenda is what we call the “parking lot.” This is the area where we place items that come up during meetings but that we do not get to discuss because they are not connected to the topics on the agenda. This way we do not forget about these items and we can discuss them in a future meeting.

Program Admin Team Meeting Agenda	
1:00-2:30 PM	
<u>Announcements</u>	
<u>Advising Team</u> (30 minutes)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First week of (program name) and advising • Any major issues • Probation stats • Plans for level 5 and 6 advising • In the works for advising 	
<u>Parking Lot Topics</u> (1 hour)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grading issues • Enrollment data • How to handle the goal setting process? How does this fit into our PDPR process? Each team will think about it. Lila will bring a copy of past year program goals and a draft suggestion for new goals. 	

Figure 3.2. Sample admin team meeting agenda. This figure depicts a typical admin team meeting agenda consisting of announcements and topics, with the amount of time to be spent on each topic noted.

The agenda is an important document that is acknowledged by all admin team members, and it is often referred to during meetings. It is possible to deviate from the topics on the agenda,

but invariably, Lila or someone else in the meeting would bring attention to the actual point of discussion. In essence, the agenda has a strong organizing effect during meetings. We are accountable to it before and during meetings by allowing certain topics and constraining others. To deviate from the agenda would require providing an account as to why this change is needed. It will also have to be sanctioned by others, in particular by Lila. During meetings, a designated note taker takes notes and posts the notes in a folder on the shared drive where they can be accessed by anyone on the admin team. These notes are used later on when preparing the agenda for the next meeting.

At the appointed meeting time, admin team members begin arriving in the meeting room. Most people come to the meeting a few minutes before the meeting starts and others arrive right at the start of the meeting. Most people take their usual spots around the table with Nina, Rory, Elisse, and Joan on the right side of the table. I usually sit on the left side of the table in the first chair next to Nina, who is at the head of the table. Trent, Gabrielle, Miles, and Oriel sit on the left side of the room with me.

An hour and a half is allocated for meetings, but most meetings go over the allocated time. From my observations this happens because topics take a very long time to introduce. Lila frames topics very carefully and her turns are almost always the longest. In addition, discussion is encouraged, so there are plenty of questions or overlaps, so a topic that could have normally been introduced and discussed in 20 minutes may take a whole hour to discuss. To address this, each team member takes turns keeping track of time in meetings. This has helped a little, but we continue to run over the time.

An observer looking into our meetings will notice that there is a lot of talk going on. Participants are not very shy about speaking up, and even though not everyone participates at the

same level in every meeting, people appear comfortable to speak their minds. Often, side conversations get started, and there are lots of overlaps and interruptions while people are talking. From my vantage point, these interruptions are not as a demonstration of aggressiveness; rather, it was the way this team participates in meetings. This is an interpretation on my part that at this point is not corroborated by my analysis. This is also a tension between having participant knowledge in my role as an analyst. These roles do not exist separately in practice, as this very observation demonstrates. As to how I experience these meetings, I see them as opportunities to influence decisions in the Program. I also experience them as positive events. I look forward to these meetings, as there is a feeling of camaraderie and friendship. I enjoy the exchange of ideas and how we challenge each other, even if indirectly.

As Dorothy Smith notes in her *Institutional Ethnography* (2005), the agenda also speaks. It not only enables and constrains what can be discussed at the meetings, rendering other talk accountable, but is literally, as Smith argues, given its own turns in the conversation where meeting participants must be silent so that the agenda can “say” something. The first thing I noticed on this document is that all activities are organized by topics and with time limits. For example, the advising team has 30 minutes to discuss their topics. The agenda speaks as an entity, or author, that establishes the flow of events in the meeting and, in turn, the topics that it speaks about become matters of concern (Latour, 2004), objects materialized outside of meeting conversations that exist, as such, whether they are brought up or not.

In practice, unexpected topics of conversation arise, and sometimes they are picked up by others in the meeting, but sometimes they are placed under “parking lot topics.” These are topics that were not covered during the time allotted at our previous meeting, or they came up and were placed as topics of discussion for a following meeting. The agenda acts as an agent in the

meeting because it signals to team members what has priority in the meeting, and, as such, it authorizes which topics can be discussed, requiring a response from participants, in ongoing “text-reader conversations” (Smith, 2005, p. 228).

This chapter presented the JV, and within this, the Program as I experienced it and interpreted it at the time of this research study. I have provided a description of the physical space including what the JV building looks like, the meeting room, and the meetings that happened inside every week. I also gave a description of the roles of each admin team member and how they typically participated in meetings. In Chapter 4 that follows, I account for my methodological approach, the data collection process, and my own role(s) as participant and observer, which, in turn authorized this very account of the Program.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND MY ROLE IN STUDY

“She” is not so much a subject position or an agent in hot pursuit of something definitive as point of contact; instead, she gazes imagines, senses, takes on, performs, and asserts not a flat and finished truth but some possibilities (and threats) that have come into view in the effort to become attuned to what a particular scene might offer.

Kathleen Stewart in *Ordinary Affects* (2007)

This chapter is divided in two sections. In the first section I write about the methodology and the data collection process. I also write about my approach to knowledge construction. In the second section of this chapter, I write about my role in the study and the challenges I encountered as a member of the organization I was studying and my role as participant and observer.

Part I. Methodology

In this study I analyze written data collected during weekly admin team meetings in the Program. Written discourse are in the form of documents produced in the Program. In my analysis, I ask relevant questions of the data such as, “What are team members paying attention to during this interaction?” “What texts are they bringing up in the conversation?” “What discourse strategies are they using to advance their goals?”

To answer these questions, I use the toolkit called discourse analysis (DA). Tracy and Mirivel (2009) assert that “at its simplest, DA involves recording interaction, transcribing

the tape; repeated study of the tape; formulating claims about the conversational moves, structures, and strategies demonstrated in the interaction; and then building an argument with transcript excerpts that are analyzed” (p. 153). DA is a qualitative methodology that analyzes both spoken and written discourse and the linkages between them. This approach is useful because looking at an organizational chart does not provide an accurate picture of what takes place in situated and dislocated interaction, or of how the relationships shown work in practice. I use the word situated because in an interaction we bring up topics that are relevant to the very moment when the interaction is taking place. It is also dislocated because during an interaction, speakers refer to what has occurred in previous conversations or bring up texts that are not present at the moment of speaking.

In their practical exegesis of DA as a toolbox for examining spoken discourse, Stubbe, et al. (2003) examine a workplace interaction from multiple perspectives that fall under the umbrella of discourse analysis (from Critical Discourse Analysis to Interactional Sociolinguistics). In doing this, they argue that each analysis (and, indeed, that the point of doing DA is its versatility and multiplicity) will have a different focus and foreground something different. In sum, there is no one definitive analysis of a conversation, and while each analysis will have some things in common, each analysis will be based on the analyst making and having to support different claims. The first step in DA is to audio record (or videotape) spoken data and create a transcript that is used for analysis. DA also includes the analysis of textual data in the form of written documents. DA is an interpretive framework (Tracy, 2008) in that “it conceives meanings as socially constructed” (p. 734). This is an important distinction, as DA is very different from studies of language that take a theoretical approach. An approach that is based on socially constructed meanings is about what participants themselves negotiate and

make relevant through their talk. As a researcher, I stay close to the data and base my interpretations on the data that I have at hand. Tracy (2008) points out that discourse analysts in communication show a preference for oral texts. However, while most of my data are verbal, I follow Taylor and Van Every (2010) and Taylor et al. (1996), in that texts are important in understanding the role that discourse plays in constituting our social reality, as verbal interaction is often translated into written documents and later referred to in conversation. The focus of any DA is on what discourse is doing (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004) and not on descriptions of processes or accounts of how reality is represented.

By analyzing what people say in interaction, I argue that it is possible to gain an understanding of how organizations are constructed and “talked into being” (Boden, 1994, p. 91). A discursive perspective makes it possible to examine collaboration, politeness, and power relations as they actually happen, as an in the moment, turn-by-turn, emergent, and anticipatory dynamic. A focus on discourse, for example, makes clear that valuing collaboration is not just a matter of stating this on a statement of core values, but rather, it shows itself throughout the organization and its practices, and it is accomplished both synchronically and diachronically, in situ as well as intertextually. In a program that favors collaborative practices, it follows that this way of understanding how work should happen will have an organizing effect on how team members talk and how they do their work. This will be manifested in how they ask for help, reach decisions, or problem solve. As Chia (2000) argues, “discourse is what constitutes our social world and, therefore, organizational analysis is intrinsically discourse analysis” (p. 517). I do not claim that a discourse approach explains everything there is to say about a particular world. Rather, discourse is a very strong organizing form that mediates our understanding of our reality. There are material realities that we must contend with, and they are also relevant. As

Cooren (2015) argues, the material world interplays with the world of communication, and they both matter. Cooren (2015) is referring to the artificial divide between what is socially constructed in interaction and the material world of objects. When communicating, we constantly bring to life objects that have a physical reality outside of communication (grade reports, polices, etc.) and we co-orient to them. Regardless of these material realities, discourse as a shaping force that is central to organizing processes deserves a central place in any analysis of organization. This work will analyze how what is taking place in meetings is mediated not only by language but by the intersection of language and materiality (e.g. technologies).

I will illustrate how I use DA to analyze discourse with the following example from my data. Excerpt 4.1 is from a meeting in fall 2014 where the admin team was discussing a process that is used to code students who are at risk due to attendance or other issues.

Excerpt 4.1:

- 49 L: Then we get into like “Oh now you’re on the alert system” “Now you’re
50 getting attendance letters” er “Now you’re getting ((texted)) from advisors
51 on you know you’re on probation” and it kinda you know they’re
52 they’re kinda like “Sure whatever you know because I’m going next my
53 next program”
- 54 M: Can you have that put on those ahm (1.0) the letter that the student that the
55 student receives↑
- 67 L: with the student and when she’s com-completed that process meaning she
68 knows they’re transferred they’re going home=
- 69 A: =Mm-hm
- 70 L: We get that message back and then we co-officially code them

71 S?: Right
72 L: as asked to leave ahm so: (1.0) what that (.) means is (.) ahm when we
73 start that chain of emails at the point of it's already been decided you
74 know like yes now (.5) we've talked to you in advising and we know (.5)
75 there's no other mitigating circumstance or no other arrangements so the
76 next step is you need to go see immigration↑

In this example, the director, Lila (L) is discussing an issue that comes up when students in one program are placed on attendance or another type of probation but at the end it is not consequential, as the student is leaving the program. Lila and Miles (M), one of the advisors, are trying to make sense of the process. Lila is the one taking the lead explaining how the process works (lines 49-53) and does so by invoking the voice of the organization as if she were talking to the student, as if the student were present there in the meeting. She does this by stating what the official messages the student receive state. This is about a process that must be followed and not something that she has decided herself. While I have not analyzed this example in detail, it illustrates what Cooren (2012) is referring to when he says that during the act of communication, people invoke ideas, concepts, and even institutions, and in essence, they speak for them or through them. She then makes the student present in the conversation by using reported speech. By doing this, Lila is playing the role of director by taking the lead in the discussion, but this conversation is also about Lila and Miles constructing a process that will go beyond their conversation, and that ultimately will serve to constitute the organization. By taking part in this conversation, Lila and Miles are taking part in the metaconversation that is the organization.

I also made choices as to the level of transcript notation. These choices are consequential to the analysis, and as Jenks (2011) argues, they are “made according to academic and personal

interests and biases” (p. 11). I chose what is called an “open transcript,” (Jenks, 2011, p. 12) which means that I attempted to capture what took place in the original interaction as much as possible. This does not mean that when conducting the analysis I noted everything that was transcribed, but since I did not know a priori what my research questions would be, I chose to include as much transcript notation as possible to allow myself the freedom to focus on whatever became important at the time of the analysis. There is a lot of variability when transcribing data, and different researchers will make different choices depending on their theoretical orientations and research agendas.

I have been using the terms communication and discourse in my writing interchangeably. I use both terms in my study to mean language in use in interaction, and not simply general communication processes such as how a department or unit in an organization conceives of sending information to organizational members. At this point, it will be useful to distinguish between the terms discourse with a small ‘d’ and Discourse with a big ‘D’ (Gee, 2015). My study is concerned with small ‘d’ discourse, which refers to language in use. As Putnam (2007) observes, small ‘d’ discourse focuses on “the study of talk and text in social practices” (p. 6) where the analyst is concerned with what interactants are accomplishing in situated interaction. It is small ‘d’ because attention is paid to what is taking place at a specific point in time in a specific context. Discourse with a big ‘D’, on the other hand, refers to larger systems of ideas that are “historically situated” (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 8) and reside beyond what can be found in small ‘d’ discourse. Fairhurst (2007) observes that big ‘D’ discourse is about patterns of talk that have been established through time and that become established in the way the world is organized in social practices. Although my study is about ‘d’ discourse, I am cognizant that whatever emerges in interaction is connected to big ‘D’ discourse, which is historically situated

and which influences what we talk about and how we talk in team meetings. Gee (2015) makes this distinction by saying that little ‘d’ discourse is about “any stretch of language in use” (p. 2) and that big ‘D’ discourse is about what human beings acquire by means of entering into this world. In my case, I was socialized in Panama and acquired a “distinctive way of being” a Panamanian by way of big “D” discourse. The way I interact in meetings with my admin team members is about small ‘d’ discourse, which has to do with language as locally produced in a specific setting.

Any discourse cannot be separated from the people that use it. The work of Klaus Krippendorff (2011) is informative in this regard. A particular discourse only makes sense within the community where it is used, as community members “(re)produce, (re)search, (re)analyze, and (re)articulate or (re)use the artifacts they are constructing in their own terms” (Krippendorff, 2011, p. 5). In other words, organizational members coordinate their work around what matters to them in the form of oral and written discourse. It is through this coordination that an organization is written and rewritten. It is through the coordination of talk, texts, and material objects that what is said in meetings, conversations, emails, etc. that the organization is maintained throughout time and space. Without this agreement among organizational members, it would not be possible for an organization to exist.

Discourse Analysis as Fieldwork Based

As this dissertation is based on ethnographic fieldwork, it becomes relevant to consider the fit between a discourse analysis and an ethnography. How does a field become a field? The field is not something that existed a priori before I began this study; the field was something I delineated for the purpose of my study. The meetings were taking place before I ever brought an audio recorder to the meeting room, but the field as such did not exist until I made the decision to

conduct my fieldwork in the meeting room where the admin team was holding weekly meetings. In other words, there would not be discourse data without identifying the field and conducting field work, which in my case, is precisely the collecting of discourse data.

As an ethnographer, I follow Smith's (2005) stance when conducting an ethnography. She argues, "An institutional ethnography takes the everyday world as an unfinished arena of discovery in which the lines of social relations are present to be explored beyond it" (2005, p. 39). I also take her advice and start from my own personal experience in the organization. I could not do anything else, as I was both a participant and an observer. I will say much more about this duality later on in this chapter when I address my own role within my study.

Using audio recordings as part of an ethnography, in alignment with ethnomethodology, allowed me to conduct a fine-grained analysis of interactions in the organizational life of research participants. I participated in meetings, audio recorded meeting interactions, observed interactions among meetings participants, and as Smith says, I began my inquiry as "a knower who is actually located: she is active; she is at work; she is connected with particular other people in various ways" (1992, p. 91). This approach takes into account the context where the interaction is happening, which comes in the form of the relationships that exist in a particular team, the types of behaviors that are considered acceptable for a particular team, and the power relations that are present, among others. Sarangi (2007) calls for discourse researchers to become 'mini-ethnographers' as a form of socialization (p. 581). In his view, this is the only way to arrive at some sort of "ecological validity" (p. 581), which means that as researcher, it is my responsibility to get as close as possible to the experience of the participants in my study including my own. Including an interpretation of what the context is saying of the organizational experience of participants is necessary, as a fine-grained analysis can say only so much about an

interaction. Understanding the professional context of participants and what that context is indexing to will enrich my analysis.

Following Smith (2005), this organizational ethnography starts in "the local actualities of the everyday world, with the concerns and perspectives of people located distinctively in the institutional process" (p.34). It was difficult, just as Smith (2005) points out, to delineate exactly what I was investigating from the beginning of the research process. The questions changed as I delved more and more into the meeting interactions, and what was there in clear sight became apparent. In addition, just as Smith (2005) states, my starting point is not a specific problem, but rather I begin with the everyday experiences of people during team meetings and note what they orient to as important to them. Even though the point of departure is the everyday experiences of people in this particular admin team at a particular point in time, the findings are not limited to this admin team and this organization. Instead, whatever takes place in admin team meetings for the Program indexes to a larger institutional framework that transcends the meetings themselves. As unique as this particular Program is, it is representative of a universe of similar programs that exist in the United States with similar student bodies and similar concerns regarding curriculum needs, enrollment, faculty affairs, and many others. The local discourse of a particular team transcends the walls of the meeting space as it connects with a larger discourse of similar organizations around the world. In fact, these discourses are coordinated across time and space, through statements and other texts that are part of how these organizations are positioned around the world.

As an ethnographic work on language and communication, my approach, then, is to look at this language and to understand what people in a particular setting make of this language. As Blommaert and Dong (2010) state, the study of language is not separate from the study of

society. What people do with language is connected to the social world they inhabit. In other words, language is not something that is out there separate from its users and their context. Here I am quoting Blommaert and Dong (2010) because their words exemplify my exact feelings about language in use. “Lifting single instances of talk to a level of relevance far higher than just the event. They become indexical of patterns and developments of wider scope and significance” (p. 10). Here again, the local becomes translocal, as the significance of an utterance may influence the organization beyond the moment when it was uttered.

The Relevance of Texts

When one reads organizational documents, such as memoranda, emails, mission statements, or annual reports, it becomes clear that organizations “do” things by the mere fact of their existence. For instance, organizations make claims, reach decisions, and make announcements (Taylor & Cooren, 1997), and we know these things are being “done” because we experience the results as material actions. We see, for example, that a claim that a language program values collaboration and encourages practices such as teamwork and shared decision-making takes on a life of its own, exerting an immediate impact on how meetings are run, on how much input the administration seeks from faculty and others, and even on the training and professional learning opportunities offered to the faculty.

As part of a chain of talking and writing (Bazerman, 2004), written texts play a central role in my study as well. I believe that organizations are constituted through communication, and this communication is very often encoded in textual form. A conversation that happens in a hallway, for example, depending on who is taking part in this conversation, can turn into a memo, which, in turn, can become a company policy. Organizations are made up of mission statements, core value statements, employee policies, code of conduct manuals, and many other

documents that are in the form of texts. All of these documents originate from oral interactions, and as Spee and Jarzabkowski (2011) assert, “Texts are both the medium and the product of a communicative process” (p. 1219). In fact, what happens in the construction of a text is the result of a process called co-orientation (Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2011), which allows us to trace back the construction of a document to multiple conversations. A conversation indexes other conversations that took place in other locales, sometimes separated by long distances. For instance, a policy in the Program may have to do with a conversation that took place at the company’s headquarters in another city or country. The idea of big “D” discourse comes into play as localized interactions are very much connected to larger historical and social discourses that happen outside the confines of the Program. One that comes to mind is how globalization has helped English become the dominant language for business and education. English is a lingua franca, and as such has been commodified and it is seen as something of great value to people around the world. It becomes possible to see that entire educational systems incorporate the teaching of English in their curricula, and that governments make efforts to train teachers so that they can impart instruction in English.

At this point, I will introduce the idea of the recursivity of language (Robichaud et al., 2004). The recursivity of language is central to the idea of organizing because what is said in one conversation is then referred to in another conversation. It is through this recursivity that organizational members understand the narrative of the organization. Robichaud et al. (2004) call this ‘the metaconversation’ (p. 624) because this is the agreed upon language and common understanding that allows organizational members to talk about what is happening in their work lives. One can see the importance of this metaconversation when new people are onboarded into a new organization. New organizational members need time to understand how things are done:

who talks to whom about what, which topics are ok to bring up and which are not, and how members talk about different things. This metaconversation gets translated into documents such as mission statements, policies, procedures, and presentations. These documents make possible a common narrative for organizational members to talk about the organization and their roles within it. This is what McPhee and Iverson (2013) call "activity coordination" (p. 117), which is precisely what is observed in meeting interaction. This coordination of activity is what allows team members to participate in work activities and to make sense of the multiple conversations they take part in. To use an example from the Program, new faculty participate in required onboarding activities which include a new faculty orientation where they learn about our core values, our teaching approach as well as policies and procedures. They also observe other instructors teach in the Program to become familiar with how teaching is done in the Program. They talk with others who guide them through how to make a request for supplies, for example. It is through this social process mediated by conversations and texts that new members learn how things are done in the Program.

The link between conversation and texts is crucial in an organization. Talk often becomes encoded into texts, which is of great importance because it allows what was said to be memorialized in writing to be referred to later. This process allows the text to become distanced (Brummans et al., 2014) from the moment it was produced, and it can be accessed by others at any time. For instance, this very morning when I checked my work email, an instructor asked me about the application of the sick leave policy and referred to our handbook. The handbook is a document that serves to coordinate our work. While not present at the moment of the email, it was referred to as something that matters and as something that we would both understand. Once the text becomes decontextualized (Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011)

from the moment when it was produced, it enters our consciousness by the act of talking about it. This process allows for multiple interpretations of a text as it gets reconstructed through interaction.

The role of texts is exemplified in the Program through a variety of documents. The Statement of Core Values is a key example. This document is made up of three core values, which were co-created during a summer retreat with the faculty and administrators in the Program through small group activities encouraging the exchange of ideas. Core value number two is depicted in Figure 4.1 as an example. Looking closely at bullet two, I notice an emphasis on open communication, which involves activities such as asking for feedback on policies and the importance of seeking different perspectives, both of which are hallmarks of collaborative environments. In the Program, this value is manifested in work practices such as working groups and creative teams, which are teams of faculty and administrators who work together to find solutions to an issue or to establish a new policy based on a perceived need. Bullet three also refers to collaborative practices at work because it is about seeking and giving feedback. Work practices in the Program demonstrate how this value is put into effect on a daily basis. In admin team meetings, for instance, admin team members are encouraged to bring ideas they are working on for discussion or to problem solve together. The Program seeks feedback from its members in the form of surveys where we elicit feedback on the work environment, policies, curriculum, and much more. Finally, bullet four mentions explicitly the phrase “we embrace a collaborative community,” which sums up how the Program positions itself in the organization. This positioning is consequential, as this is how the Program presents itself to its stakeholders: students, faculty, administrators, the JV, and the larger university community.



Fostering community and open communication among students, faculty and staff

- We value a diverse community and foster respect among all members.
- Our communication is honest and we create spaces for all opinions to be expressed.
- We use multiple ways to seek and give feedback.
- We embrace a collaborative community that nurtures personal and professional goals of all stakeholders.

Figure 4.1. Sample core value. This figure depicts one of three core values that make up the Statement of Core Values created by faculty and administrators of the Program.

In addition, the admin team co-created a document called *Our Philosophy on Teamwork*, which states how the admin team should conduct itself both when together and when working with others outside of the admin team. Both documents are featured in the handbook, available to both faculty and staff. Looking closely at these documents, the value of collaboration as understood by this team is evident. I will say more about both of these documents in Chapter 5. For now, it suffices to say that the coordinating effect of these documents can be seen in work practices, such as the approach to working with the curriculum through creative teams and working groups. This way of working allows instructors to work alongside coordinators to construct the curriculum for the Program. This collaborative idea is manifested in many other ways as well. In faculty meetings, for example, faculty are encouraged to give feedback on policies and other documents, and their ideas are often incorporated into the final documents. There is a clear preference for requesting feedback, and this happens at all levels in the Program. While this is not a study of how documents get constructed from conversations, these two examples allow us to see how coordination and co-orientation work in practice. In admin team meetings, co-orientation is present because we coordinate the work we do around this idea of collaboration, as evidenced in these two texts.

Approach to Knowledge Construction

As explained in previous chapters, as a language and social interaction scholar who is interested in how communication constitutes organization, I focus on meeting interaction to understand how people in this small admin team participate in meetings under what they understand as collaboration, and how this participation is done discursively in spoken and written discourse. The empirical data that I use is discourse in the form of verbal interaction and written texts. I analyze the data with a tool called discourse analysis. My approach to my research is interpretive in that I follow the communication process as found in sequences of talk, and from this, I build an understanding of the communicative world of the participants. An interpretive approach to the study of discourse is about locating meaning in language in use; it is not concerned with representation (Heracleous, 2004). This is an important distinction because the analysis is about the meaning the participants are constructing. DA is “more than a focus on language and its usage in organizations, as it highlights the ways in which language constructs organizational reality, rather than reflecting it” (Hardy et al., 2005, p. 59). This means that by looking closely at an organization’s micro practices as they manifest themselves through discourse strategies to problem solve, lead others, or to assign work, it is possible to see how a particular social order is maintained. By social order, I mean how we live our lives by following a script that is unwritten, but that can be seen in how we talk to one another and in how we go about our daily lives.

Interpretation, rather than representation, means, for example, that when a meeting participant asks a question to their supervisor, this question is not simply representing that the speaker does not know something, although this may also be true; the question is doing something in that particular interaction. It is the job of the analyst to come up with a valid

interpretation of what that question is doing for the speakers. This is what I mean by interpretation. While it is possible for different researchers to interpret the data in different ways, the data do not support unlimited interpretations (Heracleous, 2004). It is possible to generalize from the data and come up with an interpretation of the world that is valid for a particular group of people at a particular point in time. By this I mean that the data say something about the interactions of a particular group of people in an organizational setting that is influenced by organizational constraints and opportunities. For my analysis to be valid, I need to consider what the Program values and what discourses are dominant for the Program, as these will influence how the admin team approaches its work.

Collecting and Analyzing Meeting Data

In conducting this ethnographic work through discourse analysis, I was both a participant and an observer in these meetings, and as an organizational member, I attended all 36 meetings. Since I am a member of the Program and of this admin team, this was not difficult to do, as access for me was guaranteed. I started by requesting access to the JV by writing a letter to both the JV director as well as the Program director. This permission was granted. However, Lila, who was the Program director at that time, wanted to make sure that I did not include sensitive information in my transcripts. Initially, as I transcribed data, I would show the transcripts to Lila, who would let me know if anything needed to be redacted. As I learned what data she considered too sensitive, I knew what to transcribe as the project went on.

Once I obtained permission to audio record admin team meetings, I proceeded to write an Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal for the study. I wanted to start collecting data as soon as possible, even though I did not know a priori what the specific focus of my study would be. I knew that meetings were going to be central to this study, but other than that, I did not know

what I was going to find. I prepared an IRB application, submitted it, and obtained expedited approval to begin the data collection process. Since members of the admin team are my co-workers, I was careful about how I explained my project to them. To ensure that they were comfortable with the project, I explained to them that:

1. All names would be changed to preserve their anonymity.
2. All meeting transcription data would be first presented to the Program director for approval.

If any information contained in the transcripts was considered sensitive by the director of the program, I would not include it, and the data would be redacted.

3. If at any time my co-workers felt that they did not want to participate in the study, they could let me know. I simply would redact their data from the transcript. This has been done by other researchers, such as Janet Holmes and her colleagues at the Language in the Workplace Project at the University of Wellington in New Zealand.

Before each meeting that I audio-recorded, I sent an email message to the admin team indicating my intention to do so. I would then bring informed consent forms for each member to sign before the meeting commenced. I also made myself available to anyone on the admin team for questions. From time to time, they would ask me what I was noticing, and I would explain what discourse analysis does, and how it renders analyzable what may be hidden in plain sight. I started audio-recording meetings shortly after the IRB application was approved. This happened in the summer of 2014, and I had permission from the Program to collect data for one year.

Selecting Interactions for Analysis

After IRB approval, I started the process of audio recording meetings. In total, I audio-recorded 15 meetings, with each meeting lasting, on average, one and a half to two hours. I did

not record all meetings, and the decision to record a meeting depended often on the time in the semester. The work in an academic program is cyclical, and there are topics that traditionally come up at certain times in the semester. For instance, meetings prior to the beginning of the semester are devoted to planning what will take place during the semester and result in a discussion of many topics that I believed could be of interest to me as a researcher. For example, there would be discussion of hiring needs, and about the placement of students. This is not to say that other meetings were unimportant, but I tried to be strategic, as I knew I would have to do extensive work transcribing several hours of meetings. Of these 15 meetings, I selected 11 meetings for analysis because these meetings provided me with enough examples of interaction by all members of the admin team. In addition to spoken discourse, I have also kept notes of my observations during these meetings. These notes serve as supplemental information that may explain a particular interaction, or what was taking place in the organization at a specific moment in time. For instance, I would note if we were experiencing a sudden increase in the number of students, or if there was some particular tension in the admin team. I will also analyze written documents such as meeting minutes, and institutional documents such as statements of core values and teamwork statements.

Table 4.1 shows the meetings that I selected for this study. The types of interactions represent the typical discussions admin team members are engaged in throughout the year. These meetings are mundane occurrences in the sense that they take place on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and topics discussed are topics that pertain to the day-to-day operation of the Program. Topics commonly discussed at these meetings are curriculum updates, planning for a new semester, changes to policies, concerns brought up by faculty members or by students, new processes, and updates across the JV. The topics discussed are connected to the time of the

semester in which the meetings take place. At the beginning of the semester, the admin team discusses agenda items for faculty meetings, items to include on the semester calendar, teaching schedules, and new policies. In the middle of the semester, topics shift to the types of activities happening mid-semester such as midterm grades, students who are on probation, professional development activities happening at the time, and enrollment for the following semester. At the end of the semester, the admin team is typically engaged in interactions related to activities that bring the current semester to a close.

When selecting data for analysis, I included meeting data from all semesters to show the range of interactions and topics for this admin team. Since I am particularly interested in how collaboration manifests itself in how admin team members talk about their work, I was careful to select meeting data where the admin team was working on making decisions or problem-solving. Fortunately, the great majority of the meetings included at least one episode of each.

Furthermore, I chose to include larger sequences of talk instead of smaller sequences of talk. I did this because this allowed me to pay attention to the context of a conversation. My approach to context combines features of conversation analysis (CA) and ethnographies. For CA practitioners, context emerges through the dynamics of the interaction (Heritage, 1997; Schegloff 1992), and it is made relevant by interactants themselves. Schegloff (2000) talks about granularity, which is the level of detail the analyst engages in when analyzing a sequence of talk. Participants in a conversation will orient to contextual aspects, such as institutional rules, etc. within the conversation itself. However, I do not believe this to be enough when analyzing discourse. I also align with ethnographers (Atkinson, Okada, & Talmy, 2011) on the importance of considering important information about the organization itself, including its values, as well as relational aspects among participants to name but two. Both what emerges during the interaction

and the social conditions of the site one is researching are important during the analysis of discourse.

Table 4.1

Meetings Included in the Study and Their Foci

Meeting Date	Main focus of meeting
September 2014	Copier codes for the JV
September 2014	Planning for beginning of the semester
October 2014	Transcripts and special reporting requirements
November 2014	“What’s driving my work?”
November 2014	Student Evaluation of Instruction
December 2014	Coordinators and advisors handling complaints
January 2015	Level changes, outcomes-based grading, faculty search
March 2015	AE to GE issues
March 2015	Annual survey, 360 survey
April 2015	Creative teams’ requirements for participation; enrollment verification for students
April 2015	Deciding when to have meetings and events on calendar, student award ceremony, system of letter requests from students

Note. AE = Academic English, GE = General English.

I was careful to select for analysis a variety of examples, and not only those that appeared complex or unique. For instance, the data suggest that Lila, the admin team’s leader,

almost always had the longest turns in most of the meetings recorded, and that she tended to elaborate and provide background information before bringing up issues for discussion. I analyzed the data according to my study's concern with how collaboration is embedded in the way team members negotiate discourse within this framework. More specifically, I look at how politeness discourse is used to advance or hinder collaboration, and how power is manifested in the discourse of team members within the ideal of collaboration.

The first step when analyzing data was to listen to the audio recordings. I started to notice some patterns, including the use of politeness discourse and the length of turns of different admin team members. This gave me an initial idea of what was of interest in the data collected. After this first step, I engaged in transcribing the data. I did not want to note everything in the transcript, so I made some choices. I chose to include the stress of words, overlaps, and interruptions. I also made choices as to what sections of the meetings to transcribe and focused on decision-making episodes and problem-solving activities. The reason for this choice is that it would have been too time-consuming to transcribe all the meeting data.

Initially, I did the transcripts myself, but found that with my work schedule, this was not possible. I engaged the services of a good friend and colleague from the Ph.D. program versed in discourse analysis, and this way, I produced the transcripts. Once I had the transcripts of the meetings, I engaged in looking at how the value of collaboration was manifested in the meeting discourse of the admin team. After reading and re-reading the transcripts, some important ideas emerged as relevant. For example, a lot of time was devoted in meetings to discussing problems or making strategic plans in a collaborative manner. Once something that happened during the meetings became salient, I asked myself what this was saying about the admin team. These observations led to claims about how the admin team worked. One example of something that

became salient about the interactions of the admin team was its preference for consensus and their use of polite discourse. These observations helped in my analysis of the data and assisted me in connecting the dots between what the organization valued, as found in texts, and how the admin team approached their conversations during meetings. I will expand on these ideas in chapters six and seven when I present analysis of the data.

Part II. My Role as Participant Observer

My study is an “at home ethnography,” because my research takes place in a location to which I have “natural access” (Alvesson, 2009, p. 159). I am first a participant in the day-to-day activities of the organization and have access to the organization and knowledge of how members talk about their work. In this setting, I am not an outside researcher whose only focus is the study of the organization and its social practices. As Alvesson (2009) notes, I will always be a participant first and an observer second. The idea that it is possible to separate completely the roles of participant and observer when conducting research observations is problematic. The moment a researcher enters a site to conduct observations and record data, the observer becomes a participant, as any act of observation is an act of participation. As Naples (2003) asserts, the divide between insider/outsider in research is an artificial one. During the course of this study I found myself being both, with my standpoint shifting. I was an insider when I recognized my membership within the admin team, but I also felt like an outsider, which I am sure others in the admin team also felt when we were constructed as others when we were not privy to information that had been discussed away from our meeting space. This insider/outsider duality is one that does not exist, as the boundaries are continually shifting. In fact, as I write these words, I recognize that I am an active participant in the construction of the accounts and interpretations I write.

Alvesson (2009) also points out that there are clear advantages to conducting research at home. One of them, as mentioned earlier, is access to the site and its resources. Admin team members know me and are comfortable with me being around them. It was not possible for me to break away from my role and to put on the hat of researcher during data collection. Yes, I was present in the room with an audio recorder, but I was also enacting my role of team member. There was also the relational aspect of the situation. I have known the members of this team for many years and have worked alongside many of them since the days of the former ELI. In fact, several were my friends (and currently are) at the time of the study. The challenge comes precisely because of this familiarity. Since I know how this team works together and I understand the nuances of how we communicate, the danger is in not being able to “see” what is being said or what is meant. It is not easy to achieve the necessary distance to be able to notice what is very familiar to me, and in the process, I may lose sight of important research findings. In addition, there were political aspects to take into consideration. The members of the admin team are my colleagues, some are friends, and I may worry about portraying someone in a less-than-flattering light. Loyalty to the organization may lead me to play it safe at times. For instance, there were times when I felt constrained by the data. I felt that I could not be as open as I wanted to be when writing about the organization, as I would be risking my own role within it. I did not like how this felt, and as I kept on conducting research, I became more comfortable with my role as member and researcher.

One of the most important goals for this study is to generate practical knowledge that can be used by the Program to improve the working lives of its members. Throughout my analysis I have kept this goal in mind, as I want my results to improve our practices. This helped me frame my role not as the one who knows and my colleagues as the ones to be known, but rather, I saw

myself as someone that was helping generate useful knowledge that could be applied for everyone's benefit. As Barge (2001) argues, "Viewing practical theory as transformation involves assessing the consequences of the theory on the lived experiences of the parties involved" (p. 9). This framing of my role was helpful in not creating artificial separations between my role and the roles of my colleagues.

In fact, it was the period of intense change that we experienced when we merged into a new organizational model that prompted me to embark on this work. I understood the organization from my own experiences as an organizational member, and without positioning myself as the expert, I believed I could contribute to the understanding of how the Program has constituted itself. This fact both facilitates and makes the analysis more difficult. On one hand, I have knowledge of the social world that admin team members inhabit, as I am also part of this social world. I know, for instance, the blurred boundaries contained in institutional roles. A person's title or position in the hierarchy only tells part of the story. People have rights within the organization based on their years working within the organization.

As I continued with this research, I made the decision not to conduct interviews of admin team members. Interviews are an important part of ethnography, and I chose only to do a discursive analysis of the data and to use my understanding of the organizational context to aid me in my analysis. This opens my research up to be contested or problematized by my own team members. This decision of not conducting interviews is based in part on the views of Blommaert and Dong (2010) when they argue that "people are not cultural or linguistic catalogues, and most of what we see as their cultural and social behavior is performed without reflecting" (p. 3). This helped me make the choice to stay close to the data, and concluded, "Asking is indeed very often the worst possible way of trying to find out" (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 3). I decided to stay

as close to the data as possible and base my interpretations on both oral and textual and my contextual understanding. The work that I have conducted for this dissertation represents my understanding of the Program as I experienced it, and how organizations can be understood by analyzing how people construct the worlds they inhabit through discourse.

In the following chapter I analyze how the concept of collaboration is made sense of and practiced by admin team members. I will analyze some important texts in the Program and will explain how they serve to coordinate the work of the admin team.

CHAPTER FIVE:

COLLABORATION: A CONSTITUTIVE FORCE IN THE ORGANIZATION

In this chapter I explain the concept of collaboration as it is understood by admin team members in the Program and how this understanding is made visible in the way the admin team works. I will start by explaining how communication studies understands collaboration. I will then outline how the admin team practices collaboration in their everyday communicative work (c.f. Kuhn, Ashcraft, & Cooren, 2017), with a particular focus on the organizing role played by two key texts: The Statement of Core Values and the Philosophy on Teamwork document. I argue that these two documents have organizing effects on how the admin team communicates in meetings and in how they perform their roles.

Collaboration in Communication Studies

Collaboration as a concept that is materialized in discourse (Cooren, 2015) does not have an existence outside the discourse community that uses this term. The concept has a particular significance only to the members of the discourse community that use and understand the term in a way that is relevant to them. A key premise is that the discourse of collaboration – its terms, the strategies (or work) it requires to enact it, its registers, and all of what allows it to organize spoken discourse and enact organization is essentially visible to participants as well as the analyst. This does not mean that participants are discourse analysts or should be (!), but simply that, in order to be performed in communication, “collaboration” is not hidden behind language, but always *noticed but unseen* (Garfinkel, 1967). For example, schools may use the term to describe the ideal learning situation in a classroom; it is also used in politics to describe what is

needed to find solutions to difficult problems. The concept is also a shell term (Smith, 2001) that is devoid of real meaning, often used to describe the ideal organization, one where people are aligned behind common goals, and ideas are exchanged freely. While the term has become so common that it may be difficult to locate its meaning, Heath and Frey (2004) posit that collaboration “is a necessity for groups, organizations, and institutions to work together collaboratively to confront complex issues” (p. 180).

The idea of working together as a team toward finding solutions to problems and making decisions is associated with a rejection of autocratic styles of management and a move toward democratic leadership. In organizations that value democratic leadership styles, there is a reliance on group decision-making and shared authority. This shift to more democratic workspaces gave organizational members a say in the workings of an organization, and as a result, organizations made efforts to provide more open space where diverse opinions were appreciated. Organizations evolved from the rigid principles of Taylor’s scientific management, with its emphasis on specialization and reliance on hierarchy, to flatter structures that give employees more opportunities to express their opinions and participate. These changes in leadership style created room for research on followers as important elements in the leadership dynamic (Collinson, 2006) with followers conceptualized as empowered and influential.

According to Koschmann (2016a), collaboration is a "hallmark of contemporary organizing" (2016a, p. 409). As such, studying collaboration as it constitutes itself in communication is relevant because collaboration "magnifies issues of trust, identity, power relations, network configurations, boundary spanning, agency and authority, negotiation and other key aspects of human interaction” (Koschmann, 2016a, p. 409). While organizational members orient to the idea of collaboration, it is important to remember that it is a construct

maintained by members and by the analyst. Nevertheless, collaboration is worthy of investigation, and by training our lens on collaboration, we will be able to better understand how organization can be constituted.

Since I argue that communication is constitutive of organization, how admin team members engage with each other in meetings contributes to the constitution of the Program. I also posit that collaboration as a value organizes the way admin team members work and talk to one another in meetings. As such, it is a form of sensemaking, as admin team members, organized by this idea that working collaboratively is important, make sense of their working lives through communicative processes. This way of working can have positive effects for the admin team, but it may also be limiting.

Researching Collaboration

Collaboration is not something static, but rather its meaning depends on what individuals engaged in collaboration understand it to be. Collaboration has been widely studied across disciplines (Walker & Stohl, 2012). However, the approach that researchers typically take relinquishes collaboration to a mere variable that is transmitted via communication processes. Instead, looking at collaboration through a discursive lens clarifies how communication about collaboration helps constitute an organization.

Collaboration research has placed a lot of emphasis on interorganizational collaboration (IOC), which is connected to how partnerships are formed among different stakeholders in different organizations to accomplish shared outcomes (Gray, 1989). For example, Austin (2000) studied cross-sector partnerships between business and non-profit organizations. Cooper and Shumate (2012) focused on the difference between collaboration that emerges at the grassroots level and collaboration which is mandated and how this affects outcomes.

Additionally, Walker and Stohl (2012) studied the variables that make possible the formation of temporary collaborative networks. While research on IOC is useful and many of the features present in this type of collaboration are also present in other types of collaborative arrangements, my study looks at collaboration at the group or team level. While the members of the admin team are members of the Program, they all have different roles within the Program and the success of their work is dependent on their working together with others in the admin team.

Since how collaboration happens in practice will vary among different organizations, most members of organizations would not have difficulty describing the activities that make an activity collaborative. Heath and Frey (2004) provide an excellent overview of collaboration. Their focus is primarily on community collaboration, but they provide important insights on how collaboration has been defined by scholars. They pose that collaboration has some key elements, including a shared goal, member interdependence, equal input of participants, and shared decision-making. All of these have at their core communication as a central tenet. This is evident in the Program, as well as in how the admin team works. For instance, admin team members and faculty were asked for their input on how they were going to be evaluated. Another example is the Program's practice of sending out a survey to faculty and staff with questions about the work environment, curriculum, annual performance reviews, and facilities. Many of the questions are open-ended, allowing members to write in their answers.

Collaboration is often viewed and analyzed as a positive and transparent construct in organizations and conveys the idea of people working together, often across time and space, to achieve a common goal. However, what happens when collaboration does not work, and the results are detrimental? Bartesaghi's (2015a) study about the failure of coordination during Hurricane Katrina is illustrative. Her argument is that the term coordination assumes different

meanings depending on its discursive context and metapragmatic function, or who was using it and for what purpose. Her empirical analysis shows that these different meanings had disastrous effects for the victims of this disaster. Another study that looks at the failure of coordination, is the one by Koschmann (2016b) on civil society organizing. Through the communicative lens of co-orientation, the author examined taskforces, which bring together individuals from government, experts, and the public. While the goal of the collaborations in this study was for change to happen, the results indicated something different. What was produced was a list of topics discussed and potential courses of action, but beyond what was on paper, nothing concrete happened. Through the lens of co-orientation, the study demonstrates that there was no evidence of “generative knowledge production, identity formation, and collective agency” (2016, p. 418). The entire series of meetings resulted in a report that simply aggregated participants’ ideas but did not generate anything actionable. This study shows that collaboration can be a shell term (Smith, 2001) that can mean many different things without accomplishing anything concrete.

Yet collaboration can be a strong organizing force for organizational members. In Lawrence, Hardy, and Phillips (2002), the authors focus on interorganizational collaboration by one organization and how it can be a source of change in the institutional field. Their analysis demonstrates that collaboration efforts can result in the “construction of new institutions” (p. 286) by producing new practices and ways of working that go beyond the initial collaboration. Depending on the level of collaboration, from low to high, the level of embeddedness changes, resulting in low or high institution creation. In other words, not all collaboration efforts are equal, and some may have lasting effects, while others can be fleeting.

It is worth mentioning again that the constitutive model of communication espoused by the members of the Montreal School among others emphasize the process of co-orientation,

which they define as a process of alignment to common objectives. Co-orientation matters in work environments that align behind collaborative practices as people co-orient when they collaborate through an ongoing dialectic of conversations and texts (see Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Texts and conversations operate recursively so that during collaboration episodes, participants, through conversations, form self-organizing loops. The work of Koschmann, Kuhn, and Pfarrer (2012) is a good example of how co-orientation works. Two or more people align in connection to a common objective, and this alignment can be seen through a series of conversations and interconnected texts. Of interest is how conversation participants insert texts during a conversation and these texts take a life of their own. This new text becomes then reified, participants refer to it in future conversations, and it becomes embedded into practice. In their study, the new text is the cross-sector partnership that emerges in the communicative process. A framework that uses a co-orientation approach is useful in finding out the value of cross-sector partnerships and can help locate its collective and textual agency.

Taking all the above into consideration, I define collaboration as the material discursive practice of working toward a shared goal where participants make use of discursive resources to reach decisions or to solve problems; in turn, these decisions are highly consequential to the lives of participants and the future of their work in the organization. As a discursive practice, collaboration emphasizes participation, interdependence, representation, cooperation, nonhierarchical relationships, and mutual accountability (Heath & Frey, 2004). The written documents that the Program has produced and published emphasize these elements. Following Hardy et al. (2005), I study collaboration by looking at conversations among participants as well as other discourses related to those conversations. For these authors, the benefits of such an approach are many, but in particular “it highlights the processual and temporal aspects of

collaboration, thus allowing us to view collaboration as a social accomplishment that occurs in an iterative fashion over time” (p. 3). In the case of meetings, paying close attention to how team members talk about their work, and how the way they talk is also influenced by organizational discourses (core values, for example), sheds light on the communicative processes for this admin team.

An organization that sees itself as collaborative understands and performs works differently from an organization that does not emphasize collaboration. In essence, this type of organization places a lot of energy in creating spaces for the exchange of ideas, which means that conversations are at the core of the work they do. The way authority happens is also different for these organizations. While a clear hierarchy stills exists, there is less emphasis on legitimate authority (who the boss is) and more attention is paid to communicative processes. The way in which disagreements and conflict are addressed is also different in a collaborative organization. Problems may not be brought up to upper management for a decision; instead, stakeholders are expected to work together to discuss what is affecting them and come up with possible alternatives (Jordan & Troch, 2004). It is through an analysis of the dynamics of communicating that it becomes possible to see whose idea emerges on top or is ratified (or matters most) during discussion. Collaboration becomes a frame for sensemaking, as people make use of collaborative spaces, such as meetings, to “make sense of their actions” (Rice, 2018, p. 23). In the case of the admin team meetings in this study, meetings themselves served as a way for members “to foreground their cooperation as a group and background individual actions by fitting these actions into the broader frame” (Rice, 2008, p. 23). In meetings, during discussion of processes or while sharing highlights of each other’s work, admin team members

made sense of how their work fit in within the Program's greater narrative and how their actions fit in within the work of others on the admin team.

The Statement of Core Values

As mentioned earlier, a change in management in the Program resulted in a noticeable way of working for all members in the Program. Lila, the director of the Program, was interested in creating more opportunities for people to work in teams to solve problems. The way the Program reached decisions also changed with increased opportunities for giving feedback before making decisions. The way in which the Program established goals also changed. These were no longer established from above with little communication to others in the organization. Instead, goals were established by asking for feedback about what should be the priorities for both teams and the Program. These changes did not happen in a vacuum, as they are part of an overall shift in management toward approaches such as distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002) and the democratic organization (Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011). The point here is that this organizational change resulted in a different way of working that was based on communicative process and collaboration.

One example of this change in our way of working took place very soon after Lila became director. Lila decided to hold a faculty and staff retreat which took place in a park outside of the University. At this retreat, participants were asked to sit together at picnic tables to brainstorm and come up with statements that reflected what they valued in the Program. Chart paper was distributed at the different tables and colorful markers were also available. Groups came up with similar ideas such as respect for the ideas of others and participation in decision making. From these and other conversations, a text emerged that we called the Statement of Core Values. Texts such as mission and vision statements, and in this case, core values, are

important organizational tools that are used to organize members behind a particular worldview. Organizing behind a coherent mission or vision can result in greater levels of satisfaction and commitment and even stronger financial performance (Kopaneva, 2015). Core value statements play a similar role in organizations. Organizational texts such as mission statements and core values can have a positive effect in organizations by helping maintain organizational culture by providing a unifying message for organizational members to identify with (Gioia, Price, Hamilton & Thomas, 2010). On the other hand, these texts serve to define behaviors and expectations for individuals in an organization and can serve to exert control on organizational members. For the members of the Program, the Statement of Core Values served to define preferred ways to behave. People began to speak in terms of our core values, and they were included as part of a new evaluation process for both faculty and staff. Program members were expected to demonstrate how they had acted in accordance to the core values. There was a concerted effort on the part of Lila to make the core values visible during meetings, and new faculty onboarded into the Program received a copy of the Statement of Core Values and were asked to reflect how they could contribute to maintaining them in their work.

After its initial introduction, this text became embedded within organizational conversations and its practices. As Hardy et al. (2005) argue, a conversation is “a set of texts that are produced as part of an interaction between two or more people and that are linked together both temporally and rhetorically” (p. 60). These core values became laminated in conversations (Boden, 1994), as organizational members would refer to these core values in their daily interactions with others. All these conversations happening at different conversation sites had the effect of bringing the organization together as a whole through the construction of a common text. In other words, organizational members now had a common narrative from which

to speak as a collective. Everyone in the Program understood what core values meant, and no explanation was necessary. A new practice termed “kudos” was designed to encourage employees to behave in alignment with the core values. For instance, faculty or staff who were seen as practicing the core values were often sent a “kudos” email message by a supervisor congratulating them for being diligent in observing and putting into practice these values in their work. “Kudos” were not only sent by supervisors; they could be sent from one peer to another. This solidified the idea that leadership could be practiced by all in the organization and not only by those at the top. In addition, faculty would use the core values strategically, either to advance their points or to be seen in a more positive light by others, as bringing up the core values showed that the faculty member was explicitly thinking about them. For example, an instructor would send an email to a supervisor making a request connecting the importance for granting the request to one of the core values. This text was also mentioned in job postings for faculty and staff and included in appointment letters. Figure 5.1 shows the Statement of Core Values, which I introduced first in Chapter 4.

Documents such as organizational core values are not ideologically neutral. Similar to mission or visions statements, core values are established by organizations to accountably tie employees behind concepts and actions that the organization deems important to reach its goals. A statement of core values is a text that helps coordinate the work of the organization behind a way of being and working. As Kopaneva (2015) argues, these texts allow the organization to present itself with human-like qualities. In the Program’s Statement of Core Values, for example, there are directives such as “treat others with respect and trust” and the use of the pronoun “we,” which index inclusivity and shared responsibility. “We” includes all in the organization and serves to include only those members who abide by these values; those who do

not are deemed troublesome or problematic. This “we” excludes those who do not abide by these values who may face consequences such as not getting a promotion or even not remaining part of the organization.




	Acting with integrity and responsibility toward students, faculty and staff
	Fostering community and open communication among students, faculty and staff
	Recognizing and supporting excellence, growth and innovation in English Language teaching and learning

Figure 5.1. Statement of Core Values. This figure depicts the Statement of Core Values, which consists of three core values that were co-constructed by members of the Program.

While not neutral, these core values make explicit what the Program values and wants to see in its members. There is also an element of accountability, as individuals will notice when they are behaving in accordance with the core values as well as when they or others are not. The statement also includes words like “embrace” and “nurture,” which imply images of motherhood and caring.

How the Statement of Core Values Encourages Collaboration

The first thing I notice when looking at this document is that each individual value begins with a noun verb (a noun that looks like a verb and ends in “ing”). This has the effect of making the document sound like a call to action. There is action in each value: acting, fostering, and recognizing. The document leaves no doubt that it is meant to be acted on in practice. It also has the effect of making a statement appear agentless, as it is not possible to tell who is doing the action. I also notice the use of the pronoun “we” throughout the document. This “we” is inclusive and conveys shared ownership of the values and the behaviors that demonstrate these values. The “we” signals that the core values belong to all in the Program, and that their enactment is everyone’s responsibility. There are examples of the adverse consequences when employees act outside the core values of the organization. For instance, Google fired an engineer who spoke publicly against a policy regarding women engineers (Wakabayashi, 2017).

There are some key ideas where the value of collaboration is implied. As mentioned earlier, collaboration emphasizes shared decision-making toward a common goal, equal participation, and non-hierarchical relationships. For instance, core value two states that the Program values honest communication and that spaces are provided for the expression of diverse points of view. It also states that the Program uses different ways to give and seek feedback. Being open to feedback from different organizational members is a hallmark of a collaborative

work environment that aspires to be less top down and more inclusive. Open communication, as well as giving and seeking feedback are interconnected and are evident in the way the Program operates. For example, the Program established procedures to ask for feedback and to act on this feedback. One example is the Faculty Forum, which was explicitly created to give faculty a space to voice their opinions and to give feedback about organizational issues. Several change initiatives started at the Faculty Forum, including a new subbing policy that emerged from these meetings. The Faculty Forum, in particular, is an example of core value two where it states, “We embrace a collaborative community.” In practice, this is evidenced by an emphasis on working together as part of working groups or creative teams to come up with policies or processes. Core value three also alludes to collaboration when it states, “We provide adequate time and work spaces to exchange ideas.” Collaboration, then, is something that requires certain resources to be made available to members. It is not a natural state of being; rather, it requires that the organization provide a certain infrastructure in the form of workspaces. In the Program, meeting space in the form of classrooms is made available for members to meet, which facilitates the accomplishment of collaboration. As mentioned earlier, a different way of working with one another became evident in the Program. Even faculty meetings that are typically top-down affairs with the agenda set in advance with little opportunity for input were conducted differently. Announcements were sent ahead of time with the agenda and time was given for discussion of announcements and for sensemaking during meetings. Meetings included activities where faculty made sense of new policies with one another. Faculty also used this space to ask questions or to raise concerns about issues in their classes or with their students.

The Statement of Core Values features prominently in the Program’s Faculty and Staff Handbook, and it is included as part of onboarding activities of new faculty and staff. The most

salient work practices in the Program, which are directly connected to collaboration, are illustrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Collaborative Work Practices of the Program

Type of Group/Team	Definition
Working Group	Teams of faculty and admin members who work together on policies, curriculum, or to develop new processes.
Creative Team	Teams of faculty and admin members who work on finding creative solutions to issues in the Program.
Faculty Forum	A democratic space for faculty to bring up issues and solutions to

One example of how core values made their way into key practices in the Program. For example, the faculty promotion guidelines include the statement, “The candidate consistently demonstrates professional behaviors that represent the mission and core values of the JV and the Program.” This statement serves to prescribe a way of being and behaving in the Program that, if not followed, can potentially result in not obtaining a promotion. In some ways, the idea of collaboration as it is expressed in this document can be manipulative in the sense that members of the Program who do not subscribe to the views presented may experience negative consequences.

The Philosophy on Teamwork

In addition to the Statement of Core Values, another text where the value of collaboration is at the forefront is the Philosophy on Teamwork document, which specifies how the admin team works together and with others in the Program. This document is also visible to all who have access to the Program's Faculty and Staff Handbook and is depicted in Figure 5.2. This visibility is important, as it makes a statement about how the admin team works for all to see.

An analysis of this text shows how human and textual agency interact. This text was created with input from the admin team as to how they wanted to work together. The text itself, while an inanimate object, has agency because it directs members to act in certain ways at work. Cooren (2004) argues that textual agency cannot take place without human intervention. The text exerts authority because it directs members to act in a certain way. The document is divided into four areas: meeting preparation, how we treat each other, decision-making, and how to complete work. This document is future-oriented in the sense that it anticipates a way of working that has yet to happen. Lila, after all, is the new director, and in her new role she wants to establish how the admin team should work together.

Looking at this document through the use of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1970), further developed by Cooren (2001) and Fairhurst (2007), which looks at language as action, I will show how this document directs admin team members to act in specific ways. The Philosophy on Teamwork document is a list of behaviors that propose a way of acting. Each statement is also an illocutionary act because it communicates an intention for admin team members to behave within the institutional order the document is establishing.

Our Philosophy on Teamwork

We will hold ourselves accountable to our teamwork philosophy in administrative and program meetings and in working with others.

For meeting preparation

- Meetings are co- created by the team; all members have input for agenda items.
- The agenda will be e-mailed to the team before the meeting date. (The team needs to bring their agenda to the meeting - paper or electronic version).
- We should have meetings that start and end on time and we are expected to be here when the meeting starts.
- Meetings should be structured, organized and have a clear agenda.
- Meeting notes should include a list of actions and decisions, which should be made public as soon as possible.

For how we treat each other

- We all bring distinct strengths and perspectives to the team, and our strength comes from the respectful acknowledgement of diverse points of view.
- We listen to each other and speak with respect.
- We believe in having each other's back.
 - We don't make assumptions about other members of the team. When in doubt, we ask questions to know the facts.
 - We do not talk disrespectfully or negatively about team activities.

For decision-making and participation

- We believe in creating knowledge together and in participating in decision making as a group.
- We will give thoughtful feedback to our teammates in ways that are respectful, honest, detailed, and courteous.
- We expect disagreements but we work towards resolution, consensus and/ or compromise while maintaining our unity.
- We support team decisions and don't undermine group decisions.

For how we complete our work

- We ask for help when we need it and we welcome the opportunity to help others.
- Team members will complete assignments on time or communicate new deadlines or get help with setbacks.
- We value quality in what we do and we take the time needed to thoroughly complete projects and tasks.
- We believe more can be accomplished by active participation in the team than by individuals alone.

Team Goal: We work to support the mission & values, teaching philosophies, study programs and professional development of the English Language Program through a continuous process of innovation and improvement for the benefit of students, faculty and staff.

Figure 5.2. Our Philosophy on Teamwork. This figure depicts the teamwork philosophy document, which was created by and for the admin team.

The first set of speech acts in the document is about meeting preparation. The first sentence directs admin team members to co-create an agenda and directs members to give input in its creation. In Speech Act Theory, these statements are called directives. Directives are defined as “attempts by the speakers to get the hearer to do something” (Searle, 1976, p. 11). Some examples of directives are requests, questions, warnings, suggestions, and advice, and they can go from weak to strong. All other three statements include the modal “should,” which are high-commitment verbs (Logemann, Piekkari, & Cornelissen, 2018). These high-commitment verbs have the effect of calling for action. They are also coupled with the use of the inclusive pronoun “we” to create a sense of solidarity and common purpose. As the agenda cannot write itself, it requires someone to write it and distribute it. In the case of this team, Lila would send

an email to all admin team members before a meeting and ask for agenda items. She also exercised control as to which items to include and which ones to leave out.

The second set of speech acts in the document is about how we treat each other. The first three statements frame a way of relating to one another. In Speech Act Theory, they are called "assertives" (Searle, 1976), which are statements that "commit[s] the speaker (in varying degrees) to the truth of the expressed proposition" (Searle, 1986, p. 219). For example, the third point says, "We believe in having each other's backs." This statement sets an intention for the admin team: Members reading this know that this is an expectation for them, and that they should be loyal to each other. The two bullets underneath the three directives written in the negative. They specify behaviors that should not happen and direct admin team members to not do things that perhaps they might do otherwise. The use of the negative is important because only in one other section of the document is there a statement in the negative. These behaviors were considered to be important enough to separate from the other three for emphasis. The use of the negative indicates that making assumptions and lack of respect were concerns for this admin team.

The third set of speech acts is about decision-making and participation. The first bullet point states, "We believe in creating knowledge together and in participating in decision-making as a group." Here, the emphasis is on the group as primary, which directs the admin team to perform this core activity with one another. Of interest is the use of the verb "believe," which is a mental verb about a mind state. This way of working was on display in almost all admin team meetings in which I participated. Members brought in drafts of policies for feedback or reviewed work processes as a group.

The text directs members to give feedback to one another, but this feedback has to be of a certain kind. The words used are “respectful, honest, detailed, and courteous,” which seriously delimits the way the members can talk to one another. This document provides careful instruction as to how to behave in the case of disagreement. While disagreements are expected, it is explicit about how these disagreements are to be handled. There must be consensus and/or compromise, which has an influence on the communication practices within the admin team. The fourth bullet directs admin team members to support decisions made by the admin team. This is connected to the second set of speech acts where the admin team was directed to “have each other’s backs.” Here again we see the use of the negative injunction “don’t” where admin team members are directed to not engage in a behavior. It is a strong directive that functions as a command. The choice of verb is important. The verb used is “undermine,” which is a strong verb that has severe negative connotations, and it is obvious that the admin team had some concerns in this regard. The use of the pronoun “we” is included at the beginning of each statement, which indexes inclusivity and unity.

The fourth and final set of speech acts is about how the admin team completes their work. There is emphasis on complete work on time and asking for help when needed. The last bullet point directs admin team members to work together and places the admin team as primary.

The concept of collaboration is embedded throughout this document. Collaborative work environments are based on trust, and when there is trust, different viewpoints emerge and are considered during discussions. The text authorizes a way of working and behaving and directs admin team members as to how to speak, even when not in the presence of other members of the admin team. Admin team members should always talk about the work of the admin team in a respectful and positive manner. As Bartesaghi (2015a) asserts, coordination/collaboration is

accomplished by means of an authoritative speaker. It is in reality a top down process that must be secured by means of a text that authorizes certain behaviors and excludes others. This is not to say that this is what happens in reality; organizational members can resist efforts by organizations to control their actions. However, authoritative texts (Kuhn, 2008) can be invoked by managers and others in the organization when someone is not acting in the prescribed way. An authoritative text is powerful because it is a map as to how members of an organization should act. In fact, as Benoit-Barné and Cooren (2009) remind us, a manager can use the authority of a document to influence the behaviors of employees, while at the same time separating herself from the originator of the document. These researchers call this “presentification” (2009, p. 25), which, simply stated, means that a document can be used strategically to act as if it were present during a conversation. It gives agency to a document as if it were a human actor and separates the messenger, as it were, from what the document is prescribing. One example of this in the Program is when emails are sent to organizational members congratulating them from their behaviors when they act in accordance to the Program’s core values.

Both the Statement of Core Values and the Philosophy on Teamwork document were central in how the admin team worked, as these documents made it difficult for the admin team members to work in a different way. This is not to say that all admin team members enjoyed these more collaborative practices. Some admin team members preferred to work more independently, but Lila would constantly push for more collaboration and for the importance of including the perspectives of others when making decisions. This was particularly the case with the curriculum, which in many ways makes sense, as the curriculum is the centerpiece of an

educational institution. All other work revolves around it, from professional development to hiring and recruitment.

At times, collaboration meant that the admin team was spinning its wheels and results were not visible beyond working together in groups. For instance, the emphasis on collaborating with teachers meant that working groups and creative teams were established. Often, not enough attention was paid to the establishment of the goal of the group, which meant that the teams spent a lot of time talking, but without a clear purpose, and the result of the collaborative work was not fruitful. Within admin team meetings themselves, the emphasis on collaboration, while mostly positive, meant that at times the group spent valuable time talking about issues that could have been resolved in less time by the responsible individual. While the way the admin team worked changed, admin team members still relied on Lila to make final decisions. Often, decisions that could have been made by the units themselves were instead made ultimately by Lila, which went against the idea of flat structures where teams are responsible for the decisions made and have great latitude when it comes to the projects they are working on.

As textual agents, these documents have the ability to exert influence from a distance; even when not present, they influence how admin team members go about their work and how they conduct themselves in front of others (Cooren, 2004; Cooren, 2006). In Chapter 6, the analysis of meeting discourse will show if in practice these documents coordinated and organized how admin team members talked in meetings, and how team members favored the use of polite and indirect language under this collaborative framework.

CHAPTER SIX:

TWO WAYS OF DOING COLLABORATION: MITIGATION AND INDIRECTNESS

In Chapter 5, I introduced two key texts in the Program that coordinate the work of admin team members by specifying ways of working. These documents serve to frame how work is performed in the Program and in particular, how admin team members are to conduct themselves when interacting with one another. In this chapter, by way of Boden's (1994) concept of lamination and of imbrication, I analyze data excerpts from meetings to demonstrate how admin team members favor indirect discourse strategies in decision-making episodes. This way of interacting in meetings is connected to the Statement of Core Values and the Philosophy on Teamwork, which were introduced in the previous chapter.

For this chapter, I am using meeting data from several meetings where the admin team is engaged in decision-making. Making decisions is a typical activity that takes place during work meetings. Wasson (2016) argues that in decision-making episodes, several people participate with the goal of reaching consensus. Reaching consensus is part of the Philosophy on Teamwork, and it is listed under the section on reaching decisions. To determine how decision-making happens, I have included longer episodes because decision-making episodes are seldom linear; they happen in layers and include several turns. This is in alignment with Boden's (1994) idea of lamination, which she borrowed from Goffman (1974). The idea behind lamination is that conversations in organizations are not just localized but that they transcend the present moment by connecting to other conversations. In other words, conversations are always interconnected, and one conversation builds upon another, hence the idea of layers. Boden

(1994) argues that organizational members are continuously paying attention to what is happening at the moment, but at the same time, they must remain attentive to the “big picture” (p. 137). This “big picture” refers to the organization itself, which is being constituted and reconstituted through many conversations. In the following sections I will introduce examples to argue how the members of this team show a preference for indirectness in their discourse to meet their interactional goals.

Politeness through Ambiguity and Indirectness

Meeting: Special reporting requirements.

The first excerpt is from a decision-making episode during a meeting where admin team members are engaged in a discussion of special reporting requirements that a sponsoring agency is requesting the Program prepare and deliver. In the Program, students in the academic English program receive two types of grade reports: one at midterm and one at the end of the semester. These reports include information on attendance and grades and any probationary status the students may have. During time I was collecting data, a good number of our students were sponsored by this particular sponsoring body in Saudi Arabia. At times, these sponsoring agencies request special reports that include information not typically included on the standard reports all students receive. Below we will join a long discussion where Lila, Gabrielle, and Miles are discussing the suitability of providing these special reports. We join this meeting at the beginning when Lila is deciding which item on the agenda to discuss first.

Excerpt 6.1:

- 1 L: Ahm: (1.0) do we wanna start with that one↑ reporting requests↑ (1.0) OK
2 so:: (1.5) what has come is that we (.5) are gonna have (.5) or we already
3 have (3.0) five students (1.0) who are part (.) are funded sponsored by

4 the minis-Ministry of the Interior in Saudi Arabia (.) they actually have
5 specific reporting requirements that they want us to complete for these
6 students (.) we just became aware of that (.5) the advisor has been
7 contacted and has informed us that it is not enough to just send midterm
8 grade and final grades (.) that's not what they're looking for (.) and so:
9 their response was if we're not able to provide it then they probably will
10 not send us these students in the future (.5) my question is do we want to
11 (.) provide this↑ or: tell them no (.) but we an-if we say no we'll lose
12 students (.) ahm this is exactly the report that they want and so it would be
13 taking this report getting information: (.5) to ((be determined how)) and
14 putting it in FileMaker or another format to d-be determined how and we
15 would know for those students we would have to fill this out (.5) every
16 month

Lila, as the chair of the meeting and the director of the Program, starts the turn by describing at length the request from the sponsoring agency. I first notice that Lila begins her turn in line 1 by asking the admin team a question, after which nobody responds, and when no one is forthcoming, she speaks again. This is of interest, as it appears that she wants the admin team to help her decide, but I interpret this as Lila's way of introducing the item she wants to discuss first in a way that shows solidarity or attention to the wants of the admin team.

In lines 9-10, Lila specifically states that providing this report is non-negotiable; not providing it will result in not having this particular group of students. In line 10, Lila asks the group two questions: "Do we want to provide this or tell them no?" The type of question itself is interesting. The first part serves to open up the discussion, but the second part of the question

serves to close it. The effect of asking this question is that there are only two options available provided by Lila: either provide the report or not. This is not the type of question that invites discussion or shared problem-solving. At first glance, it appears like an open question, but at this point in the conversation, it serves to suggest to the admin team a preferred response. This question is what Holmes and Chiles (2010) call a control device. It controls the options available to respondents by limiting the choices to yes or no. Also, let's not forget Lila's position in the organization. She holds a position of power, and in her role, she is exercising this power by posing a question that really does not need to be asked. In fact, she goes ahead and provides the admin team with the consequences of not providing the report. The consequences are negative for the Program and include not getting students from this sponsoring agency. Lila asks this question of the admin team as a way to show that she is acting collaborative by way of valuing their input. The Program serves, and in many ways depends on these sponsored students, so there should not be a debate as to whether we should provide this type of report. Interestingly, even in an environment that has a preference for collaboration (e.g. shared decision-making) we see in this example how Lila's authority is present. Her question is not really a question which helps her control the responses she gets from the team. She is the one introducing the issue for discussion and sets its parameters. She is the one who shares information that is not known by the admin team.

In order to appreciate what is involved in executing collaboration, let's take a look at Lila's extended turn. Lila uses the pronoun "we" a total of nine times. In line 1, she uses this pronoun for the first time by asking a question to the group, "Do we wanna start with that one?" referring to the special report request. This "we" is about being inclusive and demonstrating solidarity, even if it is understood by all that it is not a real question. In line 6, Lila uses a "we"

that does not include everyone present at the meeting. Who this “we” is it’s not clear, but it certainly does not include Gabrielle and Miles, as they are hearing about this special report for the first time. This “we” indexes access to information that first reaches Lila before it reaches anyone else. In lines 9, 10, 11, 14, and 15, Lila’s “we” usage also is about demonstrating inclusivity and unity: regardless of who has to do the task for preparing the report, this “we” is about all of us on the admin team and not providing the report will have consequences for the Program.

In order to understand the concept of politeness and how it is used by this team, I draw from Brown’s and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness theory, which is based on Goffman’s (1967) notion of face and facework and the strategies that speakers use to maintain face in communication. Indirectness features heavily in their theory, as speakers are more or less indirect depending on the degree of imposition they place on their interlocutors. Face, as introduced by Goffman and used by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), is maintained in interaction, which means that it is through communication that one is able to maintain or lose face or help others maintain or lose theirs. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), maintaining face in interaction can be achieved by deploying five politeness strategies, which are organized by indirectness, from more indirect to less indirect. Goffman (1967, p. 5) states that face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” In this definition, face is not static; rather, it is highly dynamic and is maintained in interaction, and it hugely depends on how others respond to our own efforts to maintain it. It is possible to threaten someone’s face by not paying attention to their face needs. A face threatening act (FTA) is an act that puts an imposition on the addressee. For example, making a request could be considered an FTA because it imposed on the addressee

the need to respond in some way. There are other potential FTAs in interaction, such as ordering, proposing, asking, and even giving someone a compliment.

In this excerpt, Lila is using indirectness as a strategy to make her point. Her being indirect happens because she could simply state that the Program needs to provide this report because one of our biggest sponsors of students has requested it. Instead, she launches into a lengthy introduction of why we need the report and what the report might include. While indirectness has traditionally been considered a trademark of politeness (Grice, 1975; Searle, 1975) indirectness should not be uncritically considered polite in all instances. The speaking practices of the admin team, the roles of admin team members, and the actual context of the meeting must be taken into consideration. As Locher (2006) argues, speakers “adapt the relational work they do to what they have constructed in prior interaction as appropriate behavior” (p.250). The concept of relational work is important to my work, as politeness strategies such as mitigation are used to maintain relationships, and this maintenance happens through language. For this admin team, indirectness is a form of politeness and a way of paying attention to the face needs of other admin team members. In addition, like in this case, it is a strategy to demonstrate openness of ideas, even if the result will be that we provide the requested reports. In a work environment that is communicatively constituted by and organized through the notion of collaboration, it is crucial to maintain a perception of openness to the ideas of others in the team. It would be hard, for example, to maintain a collaborative working environment in interaction by performing an FTA. A collaborative work environment gives the illusion of symmetry, even though relationships of power are maintained through interaction, even if they are not as obvious.

In the following excerpts, we see how the conversation about special reporting requirements unfolds. In excerpt 6.2, Lila's proposal is met with resistance from the advisors, Miles and Gabrielle. We join the conversation at the moment when Lila is explaining to Gabrielle and Miles what the special report needs to include.

Excerpt 6.2:

- 30 L: ahm (.5) their organization the Ministry of Interior [another speaker clears
31 throat] ahm but they basically want reading skill writing skill speaking
32 skill listening skill and then on a scale you know how are they do[ing
33 G: [Wow::
34 L: and then they h[ave others
35 M: [so basically the way we grade=
36 G: =Personal and general app[earance
37 L: [Yep (.) exactly and then ahm (.5) so the first
38 set is just like general skills (1.0) progress of English speaking reading
39 writing and then the next set is more about their i-i-working with others so
40 ability to communicate in a positive way ability to work with a team
41 discussion and opinion and homework (.) then you have personal and
42 general appearance timeliness of lectures meaning like are they are they
43 ahm (2.5)
44 A: Attendance
45 L: Yeah (.) basically ahm (.5) the desire to learn (.) and the obli-are they
46 fulfilling university oblig[at]ions
47 A: [((Mention that))

- 48 N: I don't=
49 M: =But those things aren't even requirements from us
50 L: Exactly
51 M: So we don't ask our students to come dressed like businessmen so:=
52 G: =Yeah: I don't wanna evaluate that

Lila considerably mitigates their initial disagreement by employing hedging (lines 31, 38, and 45). Mitigation is a facilitative strategy that helps speakers to participate in an interaction without either one having to give up their position (Schneider, 2010). Schneider (2010, p. 255) argues that mitigation expressions “serve as fine-tuning devices that achieve a compromise between what the speaker wants to say and what the interlocutor is willing to accept.” Mitigation strategies are important because they help maintain relationships by being attentive to the face needs of interactants. Lila could say that we must provide the report, as it serves a need of the Program. However, she chooses not to do this, and instead engages in interactional work to explain the need to provide this report.

In excerpt 6.1, Lila asked if we were going to proceed with providing this special report to the sponsoring agency. In excerpt 6.2, it becomes clear that the issue has already been decided, as Lila proceeds with explaining what is required in this special report. The academic advisors, Gabrielle and Miles, who will be the ones responsible for either preparing the reports or managing how the information is obtained, express resistance as to the type of information that would need to be provided. There are several overlaps in this example. In line 33 Gabrielle's speech overlaps with Lila's when she expresses surprise to the amount of information they will need to provide. Gabrielle's action did not interrupt Lila's flow as she continues to hold the floor. In line 35, Miles speech overlaps with Lila's as he makes the point that the Ministry wants academic information.

Gabrielle also interjects in line 36 by aligning with Miles and adding that information about appearance has also been requested. Some contextual knowledge is important to this analysis. Miles interrupted Lila, who is the director of the Program. As I mentioned earlier, the roles people play in an organization, as well as their histories, are important when understanding what is happening in a particular interaction. As Sifianou (2012) explains, “interlocutors share the knowledge of specific interactional norms.” In this case, Miles is not allowing Lila to finish her account, but this is not uncommon in this team, and Miles is enacting something that this team values, which is in engaging in an open discussion of policies and procedures in meetings. After all, this openness to ideas is one of the Program’s core values. These moves by Miles and Gabrielle indicate their opposition to what this special report will contain. The overlaps serve to establish both Miles and Gabrielle’s right to speak, even if it means opposing Lila. This opposition says something about the role of advisors in the Program.

Both Miles and Gabrielle are taking a stance as to what advisors are supposed to do in the Program. Advisors should not be providing information about how students dress in class, for example. The advisors are trying to set limits with Lila as to what their roles should be. A lot more than a decision to provide the special reports is at stake here; in fact, the organization is being reconstituted through this conversation in the sense that if Lila prevails, a new process will be established for advisors.

The conversation continues with Lila providing a token of agreement in line 37, “Yep,” which helps her regain the floor. She is showing affiliation, but not real alignment with Gabrielle. This helps Lila continue with her argument. She provides what she believes should be included in this report. She is aware that she needs the support of both Gabrielle and Miles, so she is careful in how she makes her appeal. She does not directly say to them that they need

to provide this report, but at the end they were asked to provide it which is what happened in practice.

Lila has an interactional goal to achieve, which is to get Miles' and Gabrielle's compliance, but at the same time she understands that simple compliance is counterproductive and against what the admin team and the Program state is important. In fact, Lila goes to great lengths to mitigate the FTA, which is the additional work that the advisors will have to complete. For example, in line 38, she says "just" to qualify the types of skills to be included in the report. "Just" serves as a hedge minimizer and its use lessens the magnitude of the request. On the other hand, Miles and Gabrielle are also performing their roles within a collaborative environment, and they feel comfortable expressing their disagreement even if they do not do so in a strong way. By this I mean that they are not openly saying that they do not want to provide the report. Rather, they are being subtler about it, which aligns well with the interactional style of this team.

In line 49, Miles shows his disagreement with what is being requested by emphasizing that these requirements do not include information that advisors would normally have. Lila agrees with him in line 50 and Miles continues to emphasize that the information requested is unreasonable and advisors would not be able to assess things like how a student comes dressed to class. In line 52, Gabrielle latches onto Miles' statement and aligns with Miles by adding that appearance is something that an advisor should not evaluate. Up to this point in this decision-making episode, consensus has not been reached as to what to do. Lila has not accomplished her goal of obtaining buy in from the advisors.

The discussion continues in excerpt 6.3 with Lila attempting to bring resolution to the issue of the special reports.

Excerpt 6.3:

- 56 L: Well it be us figuring out do we want to do this or not because it-it (.5) on
57 the one hand it's it's not a huge thing (.5) OK↑
- 58 M: No=
- 59 L: =You could just (1.5) reproduce that just send it out to teachers and have a
60 check and we just tally the checks and make one and send it out (1.0) ahm
61 [we don't need ta
- 62 M: [Or we could just ((go)) straightforward
- 63 L: Yeah I mean (1.5) ((laughter)) exactly: you know it's meeting a
64 requirement
- 65 M: Right right
- 66 L: So: and it's done MONTHLY so I think that one of the things there is is
67 just ahm they would wanna be looking for any dramatic changes [another
68 speaker clear throat]
- 69 so: ahm I look at from a teacher point of view: (1.0) I can pretty much
70 answer those questions I think the policy one:: the last block was more
71 like programmatic ahm firs-which a teacher wouldn't have to fill out ahm
72 but it could be something where: (.5) we just send the top part to the
72 teachers and just say, "Hey (.) check these for this student"
- 73 and then we tally and then the next pieces could be just done by the
74 program coordinator "yeah yeah yeah" "yeah yeah yeah" you just have to
75 remember what you put last month

Lila continues to build her case for the need to provide the special report, but her strategy shifts, as she must carefully manage the resistance from the advisors. Even though Lila started the discussion by stating that the admin team needed to decide if a report needed to be prepared or not for the Ministry of the Interior, she finally makes her stance clear. She knows that this is a report that will have to be written, so she changes her strategy a little and becomes more direct. In line 56, we first notice the shift with Lila's use of the discourse marker "well," which signals a shift in context (Jucker, 1993) and sends the message that assumptions should be reconsidered in order to establish common ground. Aijmer (2013) defines discourse markers as metalinguistic indicators that play different functions in discourse. For example, they can indicate the introduction of a new topic, or alignment with an interlocutor, or the uptake of an idea. Lila again brings her proposal up for consideration and now she repeats the question she asked at the beginning (line 56), "do we want to do this or not?" but this time she qualifies this question by stating that "it's not a huge thing." Even though the grammatical construction she uses is that of a question, it is not a real question that requires a response from the admin team. The question acts as a control device, and as Holmes and Chiles (2010) argue, it is important to consider the pragmatic function of questions and to consider the context in which they take place. Lila's argument has evolved throughout these three examples; she has gone from being more indirect and ambiguous to more direct in her attempt to meet her goal. The question is a control device because it is impossible to ignore.

Lila also stresses the adjective "huge," which serves to negate the amount of work that the advisors will have to do and indicates her understanding of the task. She is now giving her opinion as to how generating this report will not be difficult to do, which signals that she does want the advisors to agree with preparing the report. By doing this, she regains control of the

conversation. She continues to use the pronoun “we,” which signals solidarity and inclusivity; whatever is decided is what the admin team wants to do. In line 58, Miles appears to disagree with Lila by saying “no,” but he is not allowed to finish, as Lila latches onto his response in line 59 and continues to explain why it will not be a difficult thing to do for the advisors. She uses the mitigating word “just” twice in lines 59 and 60, again emphasizing how simple the process is, as well as the modal “could.” Lila switches from the pronoun “we” to “you,” which for the first time transfers the responsibility of the reports to the advisors. She then switches to “we” in line 60 to emphasize the collaborative aspect of the process. In line 62, Miles interjects, overlapping with Lila, and provides an option of his own, “we can just go straightforward,” to which Lila agrees in line 63. Lila’s strategy has been successful, as we first notice that Miles is cooperating with her in creating a process. There is a significant pause, followed by laughter, and then Lila says, “Exactly,” agreeing with Miles, and goes on to say that the whole thing is simply meeting a requirement, which is not to be considered a big deal by the advisors.

In line 65, Miles agrees with Lila and it becomes clear that he has been persuaded to see things her way. It looks as though all the interactional work Lila has put forth is paying off.

The conversation moves to how the process will actually work in practice. Gabrielle has not said much during this part of the conversation. Miles has been in the Program longer than Gabrielle, and due to his senior status, has the most authority to speak about the issue. In addition, Miles was also an international educator and has similar educational credentials to others on the admin team. As Cooren (2015) points out, when people speak in meetings, they do so from a position of authority. In the case of Miles, his authority comes from being the most experienced advisor on the admin team, as well as his more elevated position due to his knowledge and experience base. Gabrielle is giving Miles space to speak for the advisors, which

includes her, the newest member of the admin team. She will find ways to make her perspective heard later during this meeting.

These three excerpts show how decisions are typically made by this team. In a collaborative work environment, bottom-up approaches are preferred to top-down ones. In this case, interactions give the appearance of shared decision-making, even if the outcome has already been decided. Lila is still the one who controlled most of the episode; nevertheless, she understood that simply directing Miles and Gabrielle to prepare the reports would result in compliance, but crucially, sensemaking would not happen and Lila would lose credibility with the admin team by not putting into effect the core values of the Program. Lila presented something in the form of a question, discussion followed, a course of action was established, and the admin team has reached a decision. The decision reached was not a decision in the sense that the outcome was known by Lila, but for this team, it was important to enact the discourse of collaboration. As Huisman (2001) notes, and as can be seen in the examples provided, a decision is “the product of an interactional process in which participants jointly construct the formulation of states of affairs” (p. 75). As this example shows, collaboration, too, can be coercive. Lila understood from the very beginning that the special report needed to be produced. This was not negotiable as we depended on these students. In fact, producing the report is part of what we do as a Program. Nevertheless, she engaged in a back and forth with the members of the team and performed what we understood as collaboration. This interactional work was not necessary, but became necessary for Lila to maintain the metaconversation that we all understood. We all participated in it, and we all maintained it. This analysis also demonstrates how organization is constituted and re-constituted through the exchanges. A new process to produce a report that did not exist before emerged out of these exchanges. In addition, the

advisors now have a new task to do as part of their jobs, and their roles have been expanded through this conversation.

Meeting: Sharing at-risk student information with instructors.

The next meeting excerpts are from a meeting that took place in March 2015. This meeting took place a month or so before the spring semester came to an end. At this time of the semester, the admin team is normally engaged in conversations about students who may be at risk for not passing a particular class. In this meeting, the coordinator for the bridge English courses, Rory, brings up an issue she is experiencing in her role: How much information is reasonable to share with a bridge program instructor about a student who may be at risk of failing the semester. The data will show how others in the admin team use politeness strategies, such as indirectness, to make suggestions as to how Rory should proceed. I have included several excerpts of this part of the meeting to illustrate the many turns devoted to the discussion of this topic. This excerpt is relevant, as we see an admin team member (not Lila) using politeness strategies to advance her agenda. We join the meeting at the moment when Rory first brings up the issue for discussion.

Excerpt 6.4:

- 5 R: No: it was the fact that ahm (1.5) you know a lot of EAP instructors will
6 email me: about a s-I m[ean they don't really email (1.5) okay they'll
7 A: [Mm
8 R: they'll come and talk to me about this student who's doing this and that
9 and they wonder what they should do about em n (.5) do you think (.) this
10 student is
11 A: (())

12 R: attending their other classes or whatever you know so sometimes I I'll
13 look in: (.5) ahm GradesFirst and almost inevitably the student is at-risk
14 marked at-risk and so: (.5) I thought (.) would it be: (.) okay for EAP
15 instructors to have access to that information (.5) somehow like they do: in
16 (.) the other programs or at least in AE °I don't I've never taught in AE°

In this excerpt, Rory is making the case for sharing more information with her instructors who teach EAP. EAP classes are part of the bridge program offered by the University. The situation is complex because, while the Program is in charge of the curriculum and its delivery, the bridge program is managed by a different academic unit within the JV. Students in the bridge program have different advisors than the ones who work with students in the Program. The organization of academic units under the JV is complex. There is communication between them, but decision-making power resides with each unit. Furthermore, these students are university students, and they must follow university policies more closely than students in Academic English, for instance. Students in the other programs also follow university policies, but because they are considered novices in the university system, rules are not as rigorous as for students in the bridge program who take university courses. As a result of teachers' inquiring about students in their classes, Rory looks into GradesFirst (a database) and notices the student's at-risk status (line 13), which she is justified to do to assist her in understanding what EAP teachers are experiencing.

In line 5, Rory begins her argument by being vague and indirect. Notice her use of the expression "a lot of EAP instructors," which serves the dual purpose of being vague, while at the same time emphasizing that several of the instructors have reached out to her. She also invokes the presence of EAP instructors who have emailed her. This is important, as she wants to bring

the issue up not as a personal one, but as something that matters to members of the organization, in this case, the faculty. In line 8, Rory self corrects to say that these instructors have actually met with her in person. This helps her intensify the importance of this issue: an email is not sufficient; EAP instructors have approached her in person. This has the effect of creating a sense of urgency. Instructors considered the issue important enough to come see her in her office. In lines 8 to 12, Rory is again vague and indirect and refers again to the same group of instructors she invoked earlier. In lines 12 to 16, it becomes clear as to why Rory has used the voice of the instructors in her account. She was compelled to provide the admin team with a reason as to why she was looking in GradesFirst for student information. At this point, a little bit of context might be useful. Rory's role in the Program is that of coordinator. In her role, she works with EAP teachers on curriculum issues, and provides them resources for their courses. Student issues are not under her area of responsibility, but instructors often approach her with student concerns. Notice how in line 12, Rory uses the word "sometimes" to indicate that checking GradesFirst is something she does very sporadically, which is an important point to make in this context. Rory starts using hedging and mitigating language (line 14) by saying "I thought it would be ok for teachers," which in this team is a strong practice when presenting new ideas to the group. As the admin team's working philosophy states, this team is encouraged to reach consensus and to make decisions as a team.

The meeting data suggest that admin team members typically present new ideas or proposals for change using indirect language. For a team that values collaboration, it is important to work at maintaining good relationships with team members. Chang (1999) reminds us that being indirect can help us maintain an "indeterminate linguistic space," which helps the speaker express her point of view and at the same time maintain important relationships. Her use

of the modal 'would' is a politeness strategy that contrasts with how much more direct she was when explaining why teachers come to her in the first place. In lines 15 to 16, Rory points to what happens in other programs and why teachers in the bridge program should also benefit from the same access. However, she is careful in how she makes this appeal and she minimizes how much she knows about practices in AE by saying that she does not have first-hand knowledge, as she has not taught in this program. Here I notice that Rory is being careful of her relational goals, as two other members of the admin team, Trent and Nina, work with AE teachers, and she could possibly be met with opposition from them. Therefore, Rory is being both direct when bringing the issue to the attention of the team and indirect when advocating for more access for her teachers. In excerpt 6.5 Rory continues to make her case for information access for her instructors.

Excerpt 6.5:

- 22 R: So the instructors know when a student when student has had issues in the
23 past and but THEN: (1.0) if they can't (.5) if we can't give that
24 information to EAP instructors should we also be reconsidering giving that
25 information to other instructors for the same reason °why we can't do it in
26 the EAP
- 27 L: I'm not sure why that wouldn't be the case because: (1.0) why they
28 wouldn't and maybe that's a Grades First question that we have to find out
29 because=
- 30 A: =Mm-hm
- 31 L: the instructors at USF don't have any m-privileges that EAP instructors

32 have

33 R: Right

Rory is arguing for equity, as if it is possible for teachers in one program to have access to this information then teachers in her program should also have access to this information. Rory continues to make her argument in favor of giving EAP teachers access to information that other teachers in other programs have. She starts by being more direct (line 23) when she argues that “if they can’t,” with “they” referring to EAP teachers, she then switches pronouns to “we,” as if it is a question of access - it is the Program, the “we,” who should be giving them this access. The argument here is about being fair to all instructors regarding access. She then switches to more mitigating language. Notice how Rory fluctuates from being direct and indirect, but when being direct, it is not really about her personally, but it is about the need of others, in this case, the teachers. The pauses in line 23 are interesting. There is a longer pause after Rory emphasizes the word ‘then,’ and another shorter one when she stresses the word ‘can’t.’ These pauses indicate that Rory is trying to find the right words; she is struggling to make her argument, and she wants to make it in the best terms possible. In lines 24 and 25, Rory uses a question, "should we also be reconsidering giving that information to other instructors for the same reason?" While Rory chose to ask a question to others, I argue that her question is not a way for her to get additional information. Instead, this question is an acceptable, and polite way for her to challenge the status-quo, or the way things are done in the Program. This question also opens space for the participation of others in the meeting. She uses the modal “should,” which signals openness to the opinions of others. Her use of the pronoun 'we' to underscore that it is not only about what she wants, but about what everyone present at the meeting should also be considering. It is a question of equity.

Even though the teachers are not present at the meeting, Rory is making their presence known in the meeting space and time by what Benoit-Barné and Cooren (2009) call “presentification” (p. 10). With presentification, a speaker can bring someone or something not present into an interaction and speak on their behalf. Benoit-Barné and Cooren assert that by doing this, the speaker is realizing their authority by “positioning herself as a person who is implicitly authorized to speak about these specific purposes” (p.10). In this case, Rory, due to her role in the Program, can convincingly bring EAP teachers into the conversation. Nobody else present can bring EAP teachers into the conversation in the same way that Rory can. Also, nobody can question her knowledge of what the teachers have told her. Rory also asserts herself in another powerful way during this part of the meeting. While her role in the admin team is equal to that of the other two coordinators, her question is a way for her to bring the issue forward so that a decision can be made.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003) argue that being mindful about politeness comes more into play when asking a question or making a request upwards. While anyone in the admin team could have answered the question, notice that it was Lila, the admin team's supervisor, who answered in the next turn. While in line 27, she agrees that it should not be any different for instructors in AE and EAP, her response includes several mitigating phrases. Lila begins her response by claiming insufficient knowledge and by using the negative modal “wouldn’t,” which in this case shows uncertainty on her part. She also separates herself from the responsibility of knowing the answer, and in line 28, passes the responsibility to a database program called GradesFirst that advisors use. Instead of giving a reason for EAP instructors not having access, Lila provides a possible institutional reason: Lack of access may have to do with the software program we use. Lila continues to explain how other instructors at the University would not

have access to this type of information, and by doing so, introduces an institutional practice at the University that the Program should also be following. It is becoming clear that the reason EAP instructors do not have access to information in GradesFirst has nothing to do with the software itself. It has to do with the levels of access that university instructors have. Up to now, Rory has not been able to persuade Lila that access to the information is warranted in her case of EAP instructors. In the excerpts 6.6 and 6.7, other admin team members contribute to the discussion, using strategies to either advance their own points of view or align to help others advance theirs.

Excerpt 6.6:

- 109 J: So it's interesting to think why do AE and I don't know if it's on GE (1.0)
110 if the student's on probation I don't know but why why do other
111 teachers=
112 R: =Exactly
113 J: need to know or know (.5) cause that's that's an interesting point

The discussion turns into a matter as to who has the right to have access to information. Notice how Joan is being strategic in line 109 and even though she is using the question word “why”, in reality she is not asking a question. Instead, she is not aligning with what Rory has stated previously. In fact, she is neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and by doing so, she is opening the topic for further discussion (Beach & Metzger, 1997). Her statement also serves to control, in a very polite and indirect way, where the discussion is going. She is questioning the current practices in the Program, where teachers in one program get one type of information, while teachers in another program do not have the same benefit. Notice how Joan, in line 109, questions the way things are by using a very indirect expression “it's very interesting to think,”

which serves to open up space for Rory to continue to make her case. The question is not one that serves to ask for additional knowledge or confirmation. Joan can afford to be indirect, as this is not an issue she is bringing up herself. Haugh (2015) asserts that indirectness has a lot to do with Grice's (1975) concept of conversational implicature, which makes a lot sense. Joan is both taking a stance and not taking a stance by being open-ended. She is not risking much interactionally, and at the same time, by aligning with Rory, she helps position her in a more powerful light. In line 110, Joan claims to have insufficient knowledge as to the reason for this, but her "I don't know" is not about insufficient knowledge (Beach & Metzger, 1997). It serves to challenge the status quo and allows Rory to take the next turn. Rory latches on to Joan's utterance, and Joan provides additional support in line 113. Joan is being indirect in her disagreement with the way things work, which is a typical way for this team to disagree with one another or to align with other members of the admin team. By doing this, Joan supports Rory in her mission to change a policy, and at the same time, she is being indirect when challenging the way things are; indirectness helps her support Rory, while at the same time allowing her to remain noncommittal. It is important to consider Rory and Joan's relationship. Rory and Joan have similar positions in the Program. They are both coordinators, and they work as peers of equal status. It is important for Joan to be supportive of her peer, while at the same time challenging a policy that may not be equitable. Let's look at excerpt 6.7 where Rory's continues to make her case for access to information for her instructors.

Excerpt 6.7:

146 R: It's just that people have questions as teachers they they're concerned
147 about their students that they wonder: is there something going on with
148 this student:↑ Is the student [just a slacker↑

(lines omitted)

- 155 L: But isn't that handled through advising↑ Cause that's the same thing here
156 like if you notice a student is having a problem and we do wanna help
157 them at-risk they're getting advising they're being pulled in for meetings
158 this student like do you know that you have this condition↑ Do you know
159 that you need to be careful with your grades↑ or this is gonna happen
- 160 R: It kind of is but you know=
161 L: =And can't doesn't the teacher go to the (.) advisors↑ [n to say: wha-
162 R: [It's a little bit (.5)

Rory uses mitigation and indirectness to argue in favor of changing the policy. In line 146, Rory mentions “people,” which refers to the teachers in her program. By bringing them into the conversation she is speaking on their behalf, but also, she is making them present in the conversation (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008). As Cooren et al. (2008) assert, people, in this case Rory, is making present the teachers (co-actants) to others in the meeting. This strategy also serves to take attention from Rory and put it on the teachers. The teachers, after all, have a legitimate concern about the performance of their students. Rory is also positioning herself as someone who can speak on behalf of the teachers, as she works with them and knows their needs. In line 147, she gets inside what these teachers might be thinking by using the verb “wonder,” which indicates their possible mental state. Rory speaks on their behalf by stating what they may be saying and thinking. Notice, too, how Rory uses a mitigating expression, “just,” to make the point that what she is asking is logical and not something that should be so hard to do. Lila resists Rory’s claim in line 155 by asking a question that, while polite, it points to the argument she favors. Questions in discourse can serve many

purposes, one of which is to establish conditions that are designed to obtain a particular response (Heritage, 2002; Schiffrin, 1987). With her question, Lila then points to the process followed by advisors in AE. The correct process is for advisors to be involved by alerting them of what is happening. The same process should happen in the bridge program. Lila's question challenges Rory's need to give her teachers access to at-risk information.

To strengthen her point even further, Lila refers to how the process ideally works and how advisors in AE normally handle issues about academic performance with particular students (lines 157-159). Lila also introduces the voices of AE teachers as they speak to advisors and bring their concerns to them. She is making them present in the meeting by speaking for them. Both Miles and Gabrielle are present in the meeting, but they are not asked to share what they do in such cases. By alluding to a process that is already in place in one program, which appears to be working, Lila can be reasonably certain that she will not be met with opposition by Rory or others in the meeting. In line 160, Rory reluctantly agrees with Lila, but is about to explain how it is different when Lila latches on to her response in line 161 to ask another question that serves as a challenge to Rory's position that teachers need more access to academic performance information. Lila contends that the access exists through the advisors, and she does this by using strategic questions that have nothing to do with lack of knowledge. In the following excerpt, others in the admin team offer options to Rory to find a solution to the issue.

Excerpt 6.8:

195 M: But you have access to that information (.) right↑=

196 L: =Yeah

197 R: Right

198 M: If they're at-risk

- 199 R: Right
- 200 M: Can you (.5) make that decision on your own to share that with [your EAP
- 201 R: [I know
- 202 M: teachers↑
- 203 R: I guess that's part of the question too eh can I share that information↑
- 204 L: I think (.5) ahm (2.5) I think you would need to talk to the Pathway
- 205 program

In excerpt 6.8, Miles also uses questions to point to the resolution to the issues as he sees it. Miles, in an attempt to find a suitable solution, points out the fact that Rory already has the information her teachers need, and she can decide to make it available to them. In line 195, Miles uses a question for which he probably has the answer. His question serves to move the conversation along toward a resolution. What Miles is doing with his question is what Ford (2010) calls “shifting the dynamic of participation” (p. 216). He is acknowledging Rory and providing her with an opportunity to take the floor. Miles is now switching the focus from the advisors to Rory, who is the coordinator. In this way, Miles is influencing the outcome, but he does so in an indirect manner. It is indirect because he is not telling her to give the instructors the information she already has in her possession. Instead, he is asking a question for her to come up with this answer. In line 200, Miles asks Rory a very direct question about her agency. By doing this, he selects her as the next person to speak. Miles is opening up space for Rory to take control of the conversation by ceding the floor to her. Notice, too, in the overlap in lines 200 and 201, Rory appears to agree with Miles, but this agreement is followed by another question from Rory. This move serves to cede the right to answer to someone else in the admin team. Rory could have taken this opportunity to position herself as someone who is accountable

for doing this; instead, Lila takes the next turn, which makes sense; as the Program director, she would be the one to answer this question. Since we are dealing with a decision-making episode (Koester, 2006), Lila in this case is expressing her opinion as to what Rory should do. Lila does not cede the authority to Rory. Instead, she states that the authority resides with the bridge program team. The final excerpt (6.9) is from the same meeting where a decision is finally made as to what to do in the case of access to at-risk information.

Excerpt 6.9:

- 242 L: So one of the things would be: (.5) you know is it (.5) okay the question
243 would be (1.0) do you want to just run a report and send it to every EAP
244 teacher so they who's at-risk↑ (2.0) Or do you want to handle it on a case-
245 by-case basis where a teacher says I'm concerned about this student you
246 look in Grades First and say, "Actually they're at-risk"
- 247 R: Mm-hm
- 248 L: That's my first question
- 249 R: It do[esn't matter to me:
- 250 L: [Cause I think those are two different ways [of
- 251 R: [Email
- 252 L: You know
- 253 R: Yeah I think either one of those would be useful (.) It doesn't matter
254 which
- 255 L: I think there'd probably be no (2.5) objections to the the second one
256 where it's on a case-by-case basis "I'm concerned about a student I've
257 noticed they're not doing well in my class" I talk to you as

258 coordinator you look em up and you sa-, “Oh you know what↑ They’re
258 actually at at-risk”

The asymmetry of this dynamic is evident. As Thornborrow (2001) has argued, institutional talk is a site where power is at work, and one way to demonstrate power is by the level of access speakers can claim for themselves in interaction. We see that Lila has the most turns, as well as the longest turns. Most of her turns are characterized by indirectness, such as the use of hedging. In line 242, Lila begins the turn by being more direct, “so, one of the things would be,” but then she switches to her (and the admin team’s) preferred indirect style. She again asks a question in line 243 using the modal “would,” which serves to decrease her commitment to the issue. It also sounds not as an imposition but as a suggestion. This takes account of Rory’s face needs, as she is giving her space to make a choice. Notice the pauses in her speech, which can indicate her thinking carefully about what she wants to say. Lila provides Rory with two careful options, which while under the guise of politeness, serve to control where the conversation is going. In lines 243 and 244, she asks Rory two questions, which indexes her desire to engage Rory in the interaction and to give her some say in the matter. However, it does not appear that Rory has a lot of space to respond and express what she would prefer to do in this case. In line 247, Rory answers without much commitment. In line 249, Rory expresses lack of commitment to either one of the courses of action proposed by Lila. Lila continues without giving Rory space to elaborate as to what she would prefer to do. All throughout, Lila is controlling the conversation. Lila is looking for Rory to commit to something, so she continues in line 250 to express that each option is different, implying that Rory should agree to one or the other. In line 251, Rory still does not commit. Instead, she says that either one would work, implying that she will not make a choice. Finally, Lila makes the decision for Rory in line 255.

She starts by using “I think,” which is another form of being indirect, followed by the modal “would” and the word “probably.” The use of the verb “think” also says that Lila is downplaying her expertise on the matter, while still deciding on the best action. There is a lot of indirectness from Lila, which serves to manage her interaction with Rory. Lila is the one who has spearheaded a change in the way the admin team works from a top-down approach to one that favors collaborative practices. As a result, she does a lot of interactional work to avoid directly telling Rory what to do. Instead, conversations have many turns with the use of indirect discourse strategies like using modals to suggest or using questions to move the conversation forward.

The team, under a collaborative framework constructed by the members themselves, do politeness by using strategies such as indirectness, the use of pronouns such as “we,” and the use of questions to advance individual points of view, maintain relationships at work, and reach decisions. The use of inclusive language that indexes solidarity is a strong practice that is associated with being polite and mindful of others on the team. A case in point is Lila, who in excerpt 1 is very careful as to what background information she provides the team and uses the pronoun “we” several times, which indexes that providing the special report is a collaborative effort. We see this in excerpt 4 when Rory is making her case to make at-risk information available to her instructors. Strategies of directness are also present in the data, but I argue that speakers display a bias toward use indirectness when bringing up topics that may elicit trouble by others in the admin team. The actions of Rory and others on the admin team are permeated by “the way we do things around here.” It is the (ideo)logic of the Program, and beyond this, as Wasson (2000) states, it is the “cultural logic linked to the organization of large American corporations” (p. 477). While the Program is just one among many in the United States, we do

not escape the larger discourse of American organizations, which favors indirectness (Wasson, 2000).

The analysis also shows that questions are used by admin team members as a way to open up space for themselves and others in the team in a less direct way. Questions in discourse are used as control devices because, as Holmes and Chiles (2017) explain, they normally exert influence on the behavior of others. In Excerpt 5, for instance, we see Rory challenging a practice in the Program that prevents her instructors from having access to information. By posing her question, she is opening up space for Lila or others to provide an account as to why this is the case.

What are the real consequences for this team and the work they do? A considerable amount of time is spent by this team discussing issues that could have been resolved in much less time if admin team members felt comfortable with being more direct. Directness happens, as the example with Rory exemplifies, but it is often the case that the speaker switches to a more indirect style to make their point. Discourse, as I have argued, places constraints on its users. For this admin team in the Program, the fact that collaboration is valued places limits on how the work is performed and how people talk about their work. While the way the admin team works may seem rather inefficient, in an environment that values open discussion and the expression of diverse points of view, this way of interacting is useful to interactionally maintain a collaborative work environment. While diverse points of view are expressed, not everyone expresses them in the same way. This decision-making episode demonstrates how arriving at a decision requires significant interactional effort. It took many turns by many participants where different speakers used questions, changed their positions, and used indirectness throughout the episode. In many ways, admin team participants are following a script that has been imposed on them by

documents containing core values and teamwork philosophies. These documents do not remain static; rather, they become generalized and embedded in the work practices of the organization.

From a CCO perspective, the way of communicating for this team, with indirectness and ambiguity, serves to solidify what is a core value for the Program: collaboration and teamwork. One cannot say that hierarchy is not present, but it is certainly unaccountable. Different participants speak at different times and try to move the conversation along in a certain direction. For example, we see Miles and Joan doing this. If we were dealing with an organization where top-down decision-making were valued, the interaction would have been very different. It is still true that Lila had the longest turns, but it is equally true that meeting participants felt free to interject at different points and that different perspectives were considered. In the end, it was Lila who decided on a course of action, but this decision was arrived at after many turns.

In Chapter 1, I first introduced the concept of materiality and how organizational communication studies have for a long time neglected the intersection between the linguistic and the material. In Chapter 7, I take on the concept of materiality and argue that in communication, the material (objects, technologies, and even bodies) is able to act or to exercise agency in communication events. Agency is not reserved to human actors, and in fact, it can be distributed among human and non-human actors (Cooren, Fairhurst, & Huet, 2012). Through a variety of meeting excerpts, I will show that the material is always present as team members do leadership and authority.

CHAPTER 7

DISCOURSE AND MATERIALITY:

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF AUTHORITY IN TEAM MEETINGS

In this chapter, I take up the interplay of materiality and discourse. As Ashcraft et al. (2009) assert, the study of communication has largely focused on the symbolic, or the linguistic aspect of discourse, while neglecting the material, or how things are both brought forth, affect and, in effect, exist alongside language. I will first argue for taking into consideration both human and non-human actors in my analysis. I will then introduce the concepts of authority and power as they relate to my work. Finally, I will demonstrate how the interplay between the linguistic and the discursive is helpful to me in analyzing the workings of a collaborative working environment.

Up to now, I have favored the linguistic in my analysis. I have done this because it not only feels natural to do so, but let's not forget that there has been an entire linguistic turn in the social sciences, one that has privileged language over anything else. My privileging of language happened because words are what we use to communicate, whether in speaking or in writing. We can also use gestures, of course, or even emotions to communicate, but there appears to be a clear division between the material and non-material, especially when it comes to agency. Non-human objects belong to a different realm, one that is separated from the linguistic. This is how I felt about communication until I read the work of Latour (2005) and Cooren (2015) on agency and materiality.

Latour (2005), in his actor network theory (ANT for short), argues for the decentering of agency to include non-human actors and for the “entanglement of interactions” (p. 65) in order to understand the social world. This entanglement entails not only the interactions between human beings, but also interactions with inanimate objects. Latour (2005) calls the actions of human and non-human actors the “collective” (p. 75), as in a collection of actions that make up social reality. He emphatically writes that this artificial division has established “an absurd asymmetry between humans and non-human” (p.76). The point here is that in interaction, humans, animals, and objects continuously interact, and it is time to include this interaction and their respective agencies in the analysis. In the case of the copier codes, which I will introduce later, the codes are brought up in conversation, as they are material to it and are made to matter by interlocutors in a similar way as I am making them material to this writing at this very moment. It is clear that a human being introduced the copier codes to the conversation, but these codes and how they work are made material and pertinent to the social world of the meeting.

Expanding on Latour’s work, Cooren (2015) proposes a relational ontology in which there is no separation between the material and non-material. Rather, they both co-exist in relation to one another. In communication, a chair, a technology, a painting, or even a post-it note are made to matter because “what supports their existence appears more or less ‘experienceable’, ‘obvious’, or ‘apprehendable’” (Cooren, 2015, p. 5). In other words, these material objects are made to matter either because we bring them up in the act of communicating or because they mediate our communication in some way. To understand this idea, it is crucial to understand the idea of concern as Cooren et al. (2012) present it. In any interaction, what is being brought up by participants is matter of concern; it is something that preoccupies the speaker, and this is why it is being brought up during conversation by making it accountable. To

be accountable, an idea, an object, a technology, a policy has to be part of an account (Latour, 2005). Once an object enters an account, like in the case of the copier codes, they are made to matter. However, as Latour (2005) argues, we also have to consider that the relevance of objects can be fleeting, as they can be front and center at one moment and completely made not to matter the next. This is not exclusive of objects; it also happens to human actors.

This shift in how I am looking at communication, as Orlikowski and Scott (2015) argue, opens up avenues for understanding organization. This approach in organizational communication is still emergent, and the “concepts are necessarily constructs-in the making” (p. 2). This is how I am approaching the intersection of the discursive and the material. I am joining the conversation right in the middle, as Cooren (2015) says, in medias res.

The focus of my analysis in this chapter is about how authority is present in a collaborative environment, but it is differentially authored, as it is distributed among different organizational actors. The role of the material in the form of objects (technologies, a memo, a policy, a copier code) also are part of the analysis, as what is needed is an analysis that takes into account both the discursive and the material without separating them into their discrete parts. Through the concept of presentification (Cooren, 2000), it is possible to make visible how the Program emerges and re-emerges through the dynamic of communication. Through looking at how leadership and authority are manifested through communication (the interaction of the material and the discursive), I will show how organizational actors mobilize all available resources, and how agency – or the ability to *do* in communication -- is the property of both human and non-human actants. In the next two sections, I will introduce the concepts of leadership, authority, and power as they pertain to this work.

Leadership and Authority

At this point I would like to clarify two important concepts that are essential in this chapter: leadership and authority. Both of these concepts are used extensively by organizational literature scholars (Fairhurst, 2007; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Holmes & Marra, 2004). The concepts are interconnected in the sense that both are accomplished in interaction and neither can exist without the consent of others present in the interaction. The definition of leadership that I align with is the one advanced by Fairhurst (2007) in her work on discursive leadership, which I introduced in chapter two. “Leadership is exercised when ideas expressed in talk or action are recognized by others as capable of progressing tasks or problems which are important to them” (Fairhurst, 2007, p. 6). This definition is appealing because leadership is not tied to a particular hierarchical position in an organization. Rather, it has to do with interaction. It is not possible to advance one’s point of view if others do not recognize us as having ideas that are of value and without doing the relational work required in interaction.

As Larsson and Lundholm (2010) argue, leadership is best understood as a “collaboratively produced and emergent phenomenon” (p. 179). The emergent aspect of leadership is important because success in exercising leadership is highly dependent on which ideas are taken up by others in interaction. This definition also includes action, which in my view is connected with the work that texts do in organizations. The idea of textual agency is also connected to Larsson’s and Lundholm’s definition of leadership. Action often takes place in organizations through texts that get produced and reproduced via talk in interaction. A text can mobilize organizational members to act or not to act in a certain way. A text can exercise its agency on human actors by “channeling” (Cooren, 2015) them into the conversation and being made to matter by interlocutors. The concept of authority as presented by the members of the

Montreal School (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Brummans et. al., 2013; Kuhn, 2008; Taylor & Van Every, 2011) and is central to the concept of collaboration. For these scholars, authority does not belong to a particular individual, but rather it is a distributed phenomenon that emerges as people make texts such as vision and mission statements, policies, etc. present during an interaction. A key difference between leadership and authority is that with leadership, it is possible to point to a particular individual or individuals as the one enacting leadership, no matter how distributed it is. With authority, we are dealing with what Koschmann and Burk (2016) call an abstraction. A particular document or account can be brought up by an individual in an interaction, and this document or story can serve to give authority to the speaker and can mobilize others to act. The person who is speaking becomes less and less important and the document (or policy or even a collective of people) become authoritative. In fact, “authority is not in position or a person who gives commands, but rather in the continual process of authoring a definitive representation of the collective” (Koschmann & Burk, 2016, p. 394).

Power

As organizations have evolved from hierarchical to flatter structures, these changes are also reflected in power relations. These changes in management can also be problematic, as managers and others in positions of formal power must direct the work others do by giving directives, completing performance reviews, and giving reprimands. However, power is not only reserved for those at the very top. It can be exercised by all present at a meeting via different strategies and depending on the role the person is playing during a particular interaction. When considering power, I appreciate Clegg’s (1989) position on relational power. Power resides in relationships among speakers, and not only in the structures created by organizations. Power, then, still manifests itself in work interactions, but it is an interactional dynamic that is not

owned by a particular individual because of their position in the organization. Power is negotiated in interaction and who holds power depends on what is taking place during an interaction and the discourse strategies being used.

In her work on power in institutional settings, Thornborrow (2001) outlines her position on power not as something that is an attribute to a particular person. Instead, she sees power as a “contextually sensitive phenomenon, as a set of resources and actions which are available to speakers and which can be used more or less successfully” (p. 8). As the author argues, who gets to exercise power is very dependent on the speech situation and the structure surrounding the speech event. Structure is important because not all speech events are equal. In the admin team meetings, the structure created by organizational texts is such that participants are encouraged to express themselves. This is so because of the high value placed on collaboration. The exercise of power is represented linguistically when directives or requests are made. It can also be seen in the length of turns or in the number of interruptions within a conversation. Clegg writes that individuals possess power “only insofar as they are relationally constituted as doing so” (p. 207). Power, then, is constantly shifting according to the dynamics of interaction. All of these concepts are interconnected and in certain ways overlap. Doing leadership can be equated with doing power or exercising authority.

Going back to the work of Brown and Levinson (1987), a face-threatening act (FTA) consists of power (P), social distance (D), and the rating of the imposition on the hearer (R). In their model, individuals are relational agents that will choose mitigation as the level of the FTA increases. Their model also assumes that the greater the power distance between two interactants, the more mitigating strategies will be used by the least powerful person. While this may be true in some circumstances, it does not consider the role of participants in interaction.

This limitation has been pointed out by Harris (2003), who argues that “powerful institutional members (p. 36) also make use of mitigating language when interacting with less powerful individuals. As she says, this is not something that Brown and Levinson’s model predicts. Harris, then, assigns great relevance to the institutional role of individuals.

The discursive turn in politeness studies (Watts, 2003) took place in the 1990s, with many researchers realizing that while Brown and Levinson’s work was fundamental to the study of politeness, its view of power was a bit simplistic. Watts’ criticism of Brown and Levinson’s treatment of power is that it views power as “one participant (either speaker or addressee) having power over the other; in other words, it was “power-over” rather than “power to” (2011, p. 52). During this period, researchers began to look closely at how power can manifest itself in discourse in more sophisticated ways with people at all levels using discursive strategies to advance their goals. The work of Holmes and her colleagues in their Language in the Workplace Project in New Zealand is informational in this respect. One example of this work is the study by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), where they explore how power and politeness in the workplace are interconnected. Their work underscores the importance of context when looking at discourse data, and that looking at what happened before or after a particular utterance is critical for the analysis. It is not enough, for example, to claim that a straightforward directive means that the speaker is being curt. One has to look at the context in which it was uttered or the relationship of the speakers and their roles in the interaction. Their work looks at strategies such as being direct downwards, negotiating downwards, and humor in the workplace, among others. Their research has been greatly informative for my study.

Holmes, Stubbe, and Marra (1999, p. 354) argue that interactions at work are “seldom neutral in terms of power.” This is the case even when theories of leadership have evolved to

include democratic ideas such as shared decision-making, collaboration, and teamwork. Relationships at work are seldom symmetrical, even among peers. While hierarchical models give us an idea as to where legitimate power resides, this picture is incomplete. Power is much more than what we see in an organizational chart, as it is realized in everyday interactions and constituted and reconstituted through discourse. Mullany (2015) refers to this as a “transition of power being exercised both in an oppressive and repressive manner, to power being exercised through consent, in a repressive manner” (p. 20). Politeness plays an important role in how power is exercised at work, not only by those at the very top, but by all in the organization. Being polite or impolite are strategies that can be deployed by individuals to achieve their organizational goals. The Program values the idea of collaboration, of working together to solve problems, and of reaching consensus. In this type of organizational environment, politeness strategies are useful to advance our points of view and also to save or maintain face with others. This view of power is useful for my study, as the data analysis will show that those with hierarchical power, such as a director, will find themselves having to gain their power with every interaction by way of performing their roles.

Other studies have considered context when studying power and discourse. For instance, Holmes et al. (1999) looked at how language is used to construct professional identities and how “power and solidarity are enacted through discourse” (p. 354). Their study elucidates the dynamic interaction between context and power with examples from meetings. Their data identifies specific instances where power is “done.” For instance, power can be exercised explicitly when a person constructs their identity by asserting their authority in a very direct way. This can be done by using “I” statements followed by what the speaker intends to do. There are other ways where power can be exercised explicitly, like by using certain speech acts such as

setting the agenda, closing the meeting, expressing approval, and summarizing progress in a meeting. All of these speech acts serve to construct a particular identity of someone who is able to exercise power explicitly. Speakers also use more consensual devices when interacting at work. The authors emphasize the danger of generalizing what a particular utterance is doing in discourse. In addition to relational issues such as social distance or the influence a particular speaker has in an organization, analysis must consider the goals of an interaction. Another aspect of their work that is important to consider is the relationships that are present in a particular context.

Harris (2003) investigated how politeness theory can help in the understanding of institutional discourse in contexts where power asymmetries exist (police station, doctor's office, and a courtroom). For instance, a face threat can be interpreted as a challenge to institutional norms. In one of her examples from the courtroom, a defendant challenges a judge who is ordering him to make alimony payments to his wife. Her study focuses on request tokens because in her view, these are relevant to politeness because they will likely threaten the face of the person who hears the requests and the one who answers the request. Of interest in her study is how powerful institutional members such as judges make use of redressive strategies when faced with FTAs, which is something surprising in her study.

The way in which solidarity can be expressed in the workplace through humor, small talk, and how it can be analyzed from the point of view of power is the focus of a book chapter by Vine (2010). Relevant to my work is her analysis of studies that deal with face-threatening acts in the workplace, as these are connected to politeness theory. In the case of directives in meetings, she refers to her 2001 and 2004 studies of women in the workplace where there were no instances of unmitigated directives. Context, too, is relevant and affects the level of

directness. Vine points out that direct forms happen more commonly when instructions are being given. Also, if an issue has been discussed for an extended period of time, more direct forms tend to be used. Vine also mentions other studies, such as the one by Koester in 2006, where the speaker with the most power tends to mitigate this power by using mitigation devices or by using solidarity devices.

In the next section, I will analyze meeting excerpts where authority is hybrid/distributed and where the material and the discursive interact.

Accomplishing Leadership through the Discursive and the Material

The following excerpts are from an admin team meeting that took place in spring 2015, when the topic of copier codes was first introduced. The organization was considering giving all employees copier codes as a way to manage the number of copies that were made in the JV in order to reduce the number of copies being made at the JV.

Meeting: Copier codes.

Excerpt 7.1:

46 L: for reducing the amount of copies that we use the waste whatnot (.) ahm

47 (.5) another thing that's that we would we are looking into is to give

48 everybody a copier code (.) and that's like everybody in the center

49 S: Mm-hm

50 L: Not just faculty (.) everybody gets a copier code=so we all have our own

51 individual pin

52 S: Mm-hm

53 L: And we go to the copier machine and we just type in our pin ((knocking

54 sound)) and then we make copies

In lines 47 and 48, Lila introduces the concept of copier codes to be used across the JV and provides an account as to what they are needed. In her account, she materializes the codes and makes them immediately relevant to the conversation. She emphasizes that these codes are not just for faculty, but for everyone in the JV. This serves to mitigate any possible resistance by others in the meeting to the issuing of copier codes. The admin team is sensitive to policies being enacted and applied only to faculty, so this is very likely why Lila is stressing that copier codes would be given to everyone. In line 50, Lila is using the mitigating word “just” to counteract any resistance to giving codes to faculty. Lila is also delineating the parameters of the discussion that will follow, which is a control act on her part. By stating the ease of the process in line 53, she is showing alignment with the idea of copier codes, and she sets the tone for the discussion to follow. The copier codes do not exist in the present moment; they will exist in the future. These copier codes are exercising their agency during the meeting, through Lila’s human agency. The discussion, then, settles around the copier codes that are yet to exist, but that are very material to the present conversation. In addition to the copier codes, the copies play an important role in the interaction. The copier codes are needed because of the excessive number of copies being made in the JV. They are the result of the interaction between human and a copier which produces copies. As Orlikowski (2019) asserts, both human and non-human actors are equal participants in the interaction. Therefore, the copy machine acts on its users and the users act on the copy machine for a particular effect. This is connected to the notion of sociomateriality which sees objects as part of the communication landscape and rejects the notion that objects have boundaries separate from what is happening in a communication episode.

The use of pronouns is also worth noticing in this excerpt. Lila uses the pronoun “we” across this excerpt. In line 47, she says that “we are looking into” to denote that this is not an idea that necessarily initiated with her, but that she has been part of the discussions, and she is aligning with the decision. This is a way for her to exercise her leadership by stating that she is part of meetings with others in the organization where these decisions are made. This “we” does not include anyone on the team at this meeting but includes people who are higher up in the organization. Lila is including herself in this other group and is positioning herself as one of the members of this group. In line 50, she also uses the pronoun “we,” this time to indicate solidarity with everyone in the JV. This “we” denotes equality and democracy, as everyone will be impacted. Lila changes her position throughout the copier code discussion quite a bit. More than anyone else on the admin team, she has a dual role in the organization. She is part of the admin team as their leader, but she is also part of the leadership in the JV, so she has to navigate both roles in interaction. The last two “we” in lines 53 and 54 are also used to denote solidarity, the idea that we are all in this together and that there will not be special considerations for anyone. To demonstrate solidarity with her team and with others in the Program is important if she wishes to get buy-in from the team. All throughout this part of the conversations the copier codes join the argument and become part of the “we.”

The meeting continues in excerpt 7.2 with the admin team speaking in hypothetical terms as to how the codes would work in practice and what would happen if someone made an excessive number of copies.

Excerpt 7.2:

179 J: Are the copier codes a done deal↑

180 L: Yes

181 J: OK

182 L: Center-wide

183 J: Mm-hm

(3.5)

184 L: Ah:m (1.0) and again the purpose is to give everybody enough (.5) you

185 know like you have a it's it's a pretty bi::g account and then we'll monitor

186 just so that wa-it's not like you get twenty and then=

187 J: =Ri-right

Joan asks Lila if the idea of introducing copier codes is final. In line 179, Joan asks Lila a direct question about the copier codes, which ends the hypothetical discussion about the codes. The codes have now transcended space and time (Barad, 2003) and are now real to the interactants. As Ashcraft et al. (2009) explain, agency is also about the possibilities that emerge during interaction and how the material (the copier codes) and the human (Lila and other participants) continually interact. It is not about one type of agency having the upper hand. Instead, this can be conceptualized as a continuous dance. This question forces Lila to give a response and an account as to how the codes will work in practice. In line 180, Lila answers with a simple “yes,” possibly because she has suddenly been put on the spot. She has been building up to let her team know that the JV was introducing copier codes, and now she has had to reveal this to the admin team. Joan answers with “OK,” a token of agreement that does not necessarily indicate agreement, but it is more like acknowledgement of what was said. Lila in line 182 again emphasizes that they will be for the entire Center, perhaps anticipating resistance from the team. Joan offers what can be considered a token of understanding in line 183. There is significant silence after that, which can indicate trouble ahead. Nobody takes the next turn until

Lila does so in line 184 to explain how the copier codes would work in practice by providing an account. This is not surprising, as up until this point, Lila had presented the idea of the copier codes as something that was still being discussed and was not a new policy. This very fact means that the social order continues to be maintained - Lila as the one who has authority in such matters.

The question arises here as to why Lila did not simply introduce the ideas of copier codes more directly by saying that this was a decision that was reached by the leadership at the JV. While an issue such as adopting copier codes to monitor the amount of copies done in the JV by everyone may sound like an unproblematic issue, Lila knows that this is an issue that needs to be introduced to the faculty very carefully. She first needs to have the support of her team, as the admin team members will be the ones who will have to support this idea with the faculty. She could certainly have used her legitimate power as the Program director and simply said that the JV administration has decided to give everyone copier codes. However, as the data shows, Lila has positioned herself as a democratic leader with a collaborative style that invites discussion and the free exchange of ideas. Now she has to convince her team that the copier codes are not going to be a big inconvenience. Her accounting begins in line 184, where Lila emphasizes the word “enough”, to indicate that everyone will get a generous number of copies they can make. She follows this with the expression “you know,” which indicates shared understanding and a form of positive politeness (Holmes, 1986; Stubbe and Holmes, 1995). In line 185, Lila uses the expression “a big account,” elongating the word ‘big’ to emphasize that the limits will be very generous. Monitoring of the limits will happen but only if a user gets over their account limit. Up to this point, Lila has been able to present the idea of the copier codes, but she still has not gained buy-in from the admin team. She needs to do more interactional

work to get the admin team on her side and persuade team members that the copy allocation will be generous and that it will not represent an imposition.

As we can see in this excerpt, interactional power can change moment by moment. If Lila succeeds with her account, she will be, in effect, authoring the text of the organization, as she will succeed in establishing a policy for all in the JV. If she fails, her exercise of authority would not have succeeded. As we have seen, the copier codes continue to be a matter of concern for everyone present. They have been made to matter by Lila and by others in the conversation. Making something matter in interaction depends on many factors. Not everything that is introduced becomes a matter of concern. Some ideas gain traction, while others do not, depending on who presents them or on the support they receive by others in the interaction.

The meeting continues, and at this point, Lila finds herself in an uncertain space. She first introduced the idea of the copier codes as something that was under consideration, when, it had already been adopted into policy. She then had to account for this during the meeting, which left her authority vulnerable. In excerpt 7.3, Lila recovers her position of power by invoking the voice of others in the JV who have observed that faculty make copies for other purposes besides their classes.

Excerpt 7.3:

- 190 L: Ahm: (1.0) but it also (.) has come to: (.) several people's attention in the
191 Center (.) especially when individuals leave their stuff
192 J: Yeah
193 L: in the:
194 FS: Tray↑
195 L: not picked up pile

- 196 FS: Mm
- 197 L: The range of (.5) items (.5) printed (.5) both in black and [white
- 198 S: [((throat
- 199 clearing))
- 200 L: and color add an expense that may be: of non-work [nature
- 201 MS: [Yeah I was
- 202 L: or work elsewhere nature

Lila shifts her strategy from emphasizing how unproblematic the copier codes will be to focusing on the bad behavior of others in the organization. Lila brings up that others in the JV have noticed that faculty are making copies that are not work-related. She uses the passive voice, which helps her distance herself from responsibility. It is not clear who belongs in the category of “people’s attention in the JV.” Lila’s move calls attention to Coreen’s concept of ventriloquism (2008), which states that during a communication activity, we bring forth people and objects and speak through them. In the example above, Lila is speaking on behalf of the organization and is materializing its existence by invoking it during the conversation. This is a way for Lila to show that she possesses privileged information that others do not, and this is a way of doing power over others. Demonstrating expertise of knowledge is a way to show interactional power. Her position allows her to be present at meetings where she receives information that is not available to others. This move also allows her to successfully leave the space of vulnerability she was in before.

In line 191, Lila mentions “stuff” which means the copies that people make in the JV which are connected to the need to have copier codes. She is materializing these copies that are left in the “not picked up pile” (line 195). The copies are becoming increasingly problematic as

the conversation continues. Also notice the pauses in lines 190 and 192 which can be explained by what conversation analysts call ‘turn constructional units’ (Clayman, 2013). It is clear that Lila has just gotten started with the turn and that she has not reached completion. For this reason, while the pauses are significant, nobody else is taking the turn away from Lila. Everyone present recognizes that she is building an account and that she is in fact finding the right words to make it.

Joan concurs with Lila by providing a token agreement in line 192. Lila continues in line 197 by emphasizing the word “range” and punctuating her statement with small pauses. Some faculty are making copies both in black and white and color (line 200). She points out that these copies may not be related to the work they do, and that they may even be connected to work they do somewhere else (line 202). Lila’s assertion serves to justify the need for copier codes across the JV and especially for faculty. The faculty, not present during the conversation, and invoked by Lila, have been transported in space and time and are also made to matter in the conversation. As Cooren et al. (2012) remind us, that which matters can be materialized in discourse, even if not physically present in interaction. In fact, even though Lila does not say so explicitly, it is clear that in her comment about less than ideal behaviors, she is referring to the actions of the faculty. In spite of the fact that she is still being indirect and not saying that this is something she advocated for, it is clear she supports the decision of assigning copier codes. Even though she is still being indirect and not saying that this is something that she directly advocated for, it is evident that she supports the decision of assigning copier codes. Lila is gaining ground in the discussion, and her version of the organizational text is winning. Through the different agencies, both human and non-human, Lila is making the case for the outcome she prefers.

Excerpt 7.4:

- 210 L: =and it's been observed enough that people are like "Wha::t↑" so it it
211 doesn't I I had a copier code in San Diego and it wasn't a big deal like I
212 never went over it wasn't a problem
- 213 J: We did it=
- 214 L: =They gave you enough
- 215 J: We did it when I was teaching in EDU and it was never an issue
- 216 N: Yeah
- 217 L: Yeah I mean it's not a (.5) big deal
- 218 N: ((I'm sorry))
- 219 L: it just makes you kinda think
- 220 FS: Yeah
- 221 L: Like "Should I (.5) scan↑ or photocopy:: (.) in color
- 222 J: And we can we can
- 223 L: this chapter I just may use in my class
- 224 J: We can frame it as that can't we↑
- 225 L: Yeah
- 226 J: it's it's not (.) you know (.) nobody's gonna run out of photocopies (.)
227 that's not what it's about
- 228 S: ((No it's a tradition))
- 229 J: What it is is a way of making us a little bit more aware
- 230 L: Yeah

After all the interactional work that Lila has put forth so that her team aligns with her, she has finally achieved her goal. At no time did she have to directly say that the JV administration has decided to establish copier codes as a way to control the making of copies across the JV. In excerpt 7.4, she again makes the point that the problem of faculty making copies that are not work-related has “been observed.” Again, it is not clear who has done the observing, but the implication is that this is something that people who are part of the administration have noted and that these actions are, in fact “observables” and therefore monitored in an ongoing basis.. Lila is also part of this group. Lila then switches to another line of argument and in line 211 uses herself as an example to indicate that having a copier code is nothing special and that it happens in many schools. Joan agrees with her in line 213 by saying how she had to use copier codes in other places where she had worked. By doing this, they both minimize the significance of having copier codes by rationalizing it as something that is not out of the ordinary and that takes place in many workplaces as a matter of course. The exercise of authority, too, is evident in how Lila used the copier codes as speakers to bolster her own voice in persuading her team to accept the necessity of having copier codes. In fact, the copier codes were not a negotiable matter and the decision to introduce them had been reached before the meeting with the team. Collaboration was the goal, so Lila has to engage in this type of discourse dynamic as a matter of course, an exercise of collaboration or authority under its guise. Once collaboration is worked up as a sensemaking frame for the organization, it operates as a metadiscourse, and it maintains itself.

Leadership and Reaching Consensus

As I have pointed out throughout this work, in a collaborative work environment, working together to find solutions of problems or new ways of doing things is emblematic of collaboration. For the admin team in this study, organizational texts make salient the concepts of

collaboration, and as a result, a way of working where ideas are discussed together, and consensus has become ubiquitous for the team. Reaching consensus in meetings is an important goal for this team, and in fact, important Program documents state this. In the examples that follow, I will show how the admin team engages in a collaborative problem-solution process, and how questions can be used to exercise power and control. The exercise of power and control happens not only through the use of linguistic resources, but by the deployment of objects (ideas, people, policies, etc.). At this meeting, the admin team was preparing to administer annual surveys to students to collect data on program satisfaction. The following excerpt is from a meeting where the admin team is discussing how to administer final course evaluations. The existing process did not work well the previous semester, so Lila is asking the admin team for options.

Meeting: Course evaluations.

Excerpt 7.5:

42 L: Right↑ (1.5) So my question is, “Do we want to” OK this is two-
43 two things (.) One (.5) we would have possibly an option (.5) of
44 taking this semester’s final course evaluations and I think this
45 might be too late for you but and extending the time a little bit
46 (1.0) °I know right° (1.0) Ahm because[
47 [((laughter))
48 L: You can have them open the file-maker app (.5) click click click
49 my four classes (.5) submit and then oop (.) here’s the last page
50 link to the Google form “Now please complete our annual survey

- 51 click ((whoosh sound)) takes you outside of the file-maker app
 52 goes to (.5) internet page and now you do: (.5) this three page (.5)
 53 click click click program evaluation form (3.0)
- 54 A: I feel that=
 55 L: =OR [we find another to the students (.5) that would be ensuring:
 56 a higher response rate
- 57 A: [°OK°11
 58 L: response rate (.) The challenge is that (.5) the students are here
 59 now (.) like if we move it to spring[
- 60 A: [°right right°
 61 L: the difficulty is you have a whole bunch of students who just got
 62 here and have no idea what you're talking about

Questions, as we have seen, can be used to open-up space for others to participate. They can also serve to exercise control over what can be discussed. In the above excerpt, the admin team is asked to consider what to do with the program evaluations for students. In the previous semester, the evaluation was administered via a link that was sent to students, but the response rate was very low. Lila is presenting the possibility of doing something different this time around, which is to bring iPads to the classes and have students do the evaluations right there, ensuring a higher response rate. By bringing technology into the conversation as to how to administer the evaluations, the concept of sociomateriality (Orlikowski, 2009) becomes relevant. Objects, and in this case, technology, are part of the communication space where humans interact. By bringing them into the conversation, they become present and material, and their very existence has an effect on what is being said and what is being decided. The entire

conversation is mediated by the presence of these technologies, which act on what individuals can accomplish.

Orlikowski (2009) writes that “the resulting entailments are contingent, dynamic, multiple, and indeterminate” (p. 1445). Lila mentions iPads and FileMaker, which is a software program for data management that is central to the operations of the Program. In line 42, Lila starts by offering options for her team to consider. By offering only these two options, she is limiting what can be brought up for consideration. This is an exercise of Lila’s power, as in her position as Program director, she is the one in the position to introduce this topic for discussion. The way Lila introduces the topic limits the realm of possibilities available for consideration to only two. In line 42, notice the use of the pronoun “we,” which indexes that the solution is something that the admin team will decide together. Even though the use of the pronoun “we” signals collaboration, notice how Lila also proposes the solution to the issue in lines 48 to 53. Her initial questions were not posed to elicit ideas by the team, but rather for her to limit what could be proposed as solutions. Whether this was intentional or not on her part is not relevant; instead, what matters, because it is materially consequential to the immediate conversation and to the social arrangements that are implicated in it, is how her choice shapes the way others on the team can talk about the issue and the interactional dynamic that ensues. Lila materializes how the process will work and how it will be experienced by users (lines 48 to 53), which puts the process at the forefront of the conversation. The process itself is doing something in the interaction; it is co-participating in the meaning-making process. This technology is central to the Program, and as a result, it is central to the discussion. Lila highlights the ease of the process for the students who will only have to click a few times and be done with it, and by doing this, she is limiting further the possibilities that can be introduced. In line 57, I tried to interject to say

something, but Lila did not allow this, as is evidenced in her continuing on in line 58. Notice how she stresses the word “or,” which signals that she was not finished with making her statement. She still has the floor and is making this known, and she plans to keep it.

Notice the length of Lila’s turn. She started the turn by posing two questions for the admin team, but until now she has not allowed anyone in the team to express which option will work the best. This very lengthy turn underscores the fact that she is the most powerful person in the team and is taking considerable time making her case for the outcome she favors.

The next example is from the same meeting. In excerpt 7.6, Trent offers an option for solving the issue. In this excerpt, Trent also uses questioning to exercise control through politeness. This example also shows the discourse-materiality relationship.

Excerpt 7.6:

- 115 T: Maybe we’ve already thought of this but ahm every single student has a
116 smart phone
- 117 L: Mm
- 118 T: Is there a way that we can kind of harness that↑
- 119 A: ((Good idea))
- 120 T: And either direct them to Google↑ I-I don’t know (.5) Survey Monkey or
121 something=
- 122 L: =Yeah
- 123 T: And take five minutes and do it that way because they’ve all got that
- 124 L: Right-

There are several objects that are exercising their agency in the conversation (Cooren, 2004, 2006). There is mention of Google, smart phones, and Survey Monkey. The entire interaction is about how these technologies will facilitate the process of administering the evaluations. Trent starts his turn in line 115 in a very tentative manner. He uses mitigating language as a way to introduce his idea in several ways. He uses the word “maybe” to propose his idea. He also uses the pronoun “we” to indicate that the idea may have already been thought about by others in the admin team, a nod to the collaborative spirit valued by the group. Trent continues in line 118 by still being indirect and asks the group a question to consider. Notice how he again uses the pronoun “we,” which again underscores the importance this team gives to collaboration. In line 119, I eagerly agree with Trent. Trent continues in line 120, still a bit tentatively, to indicate how the process would work for the students. Notice the upward intonation after the word “Google,” which indicates that he is unsure of this plan. This is followed by “I don’t know,” which does not mean lack of knowledge, but rather his being cautious in offering options for consideration. While Trent is tentative in how he introduces an option for consideration, it is still a way for him to exercise his power and influence. He found an opening for himself in the conversation and introduced it following the discursive logic of this team, which is to favor politeness and indirectness. Notice, too, the agency that objects exercise in this excerpt. There is a smartphone, Google, and Survey Monkey. All of these, while mobilized by Trent, exercise their agency by making a difference in the interaction by now being present in the conversation and perhaps becoming part of the solution to the issue of how to administer course evaluations.

Authority and Power through Advice Giving

Another way admin team members exercise power through is through the activity of advice-giving. The following examples allow me to show this strategy in interaction. Advice is a type of discourse that is future-oriented (Heritage & Selfi, 1992), as it has to do with something that has not happened yet. In the following excerpts, both Lila and Rory offer advice to Trent, which is a display of power and authority through knowledge.

Earlier in the same meeting, Lila asked the admin team to give a short update on something they had been working on. Trent volunteered to be the first to do so. He explains his plan to help teachers collaborate with one another on courses by creating Canvas course shells for each course a teacher teaches in the Program. Lila comments that Trent should consider that teachers on average teach four courses each semester, which will mean that they will have a considerable number of courses on Canvas. Below is Trent's reaction to Lila's evaluation of his strategy.

Excerpt 7.7:

- 78 T: And ahm (1.0) you're right [I think that is the concern can get big
79 L: [You might want to pilot it like mayb[e
80 T: [and
81 messy
82 (.) Yeah
83 L: because you have over 40 courses
84 A: ((laughter)) °Fair point°
85 L: So you may wanna pilot it because we were talking about this the other

After Trent acknowledges that his plan may present some issues, Lila introduces advising discourse, which is framed in relation to Trent's acknowledgment. This allows Lila to confidently offer her suggestions. In line 79, Lila overlaps her speech with Trent's to offer her advice, which she does by using the modal "might." Notice how she uses the pronoun "you," which is a very direct way of giving advice. She mitigates this by ending her suggestion with the word "maybe." Since Trent agrees with Lila, she continues giving him reasons as to why piloting is a good idea. In the following excerpt, she includes the voice of others in the Program, which has the effect of increasing the illocutionary force of her advice-giving.

Excerpt 7.8:

- 103 L: and try to see if that how they use it ahm because another thing Rory
 104 and I were just talking about (1.0) where's the future of the Program going
 105 with where to put materials and stuff are we move from Google Sites to
 106 Canvas and if so can we do something in a consistent manner so that when
 107 teachers move programs it's not having to remember "OK, I can find this
 108 in this program and this place
 109 T: Yeah

Lila's advice becomes normalized when she references a conversation she had with Rory recently. This has the effect of making the advice be not something Lila wants but something that makes sense for the Program. The implication is that it will benefit all the teachers in the Program. Lila mentions the "future of the Program," which constructs a picture of a possible future for the Program. All of these discourse moves contribute to constructing Lila as the

knowledgeable and experienced head of the Program that is able to provide guidance as to what is best for the Program.

In the next excerpt, Rory intervenes by offering an option for Trent to consider. This is also a way of exercising authority, but in a different way from how Lila did it above. Following the script that is common for this team, she uses politeness strategies to introduce her idea. She uses an “if” statement together with considerable hedging and indirectness. Also, notice how the material is layered in the conversation and made to matter by Rory and others in the interaction.

Excerpt 7.9:

126 R: What if you (.5) ahm cre:ated OK I am thinking you could do this one of
127 two ways you could either inside each course shell (1.0) you could create
128 gro:ups of instructors so (.5) you know when you create a group in Canvas
129 that each group has their own home page that nobody else in the course
130 can see so you could create a group in the course shell and then that could
131 be the collaboration page OR you could just create an AE teacher
132 collaboration course shell [and then
133 J: [Oh:::

Rory starts in line 126 by using “what if,” which signals that she is offering possibilities for consideration to Trent. These possibilities are connected to the use of technology - course shells in a learning management system. By introducing the use of Canvas as a possibility, Rory is making this possibility real or material to the conversation. Canvas becomes the mean for Rory to exert her influence. This is now among the possibilities available to address the issue. This is also a very polite way for Rory to offer Trent an idea for consideration. In the admin team, Rory and Trent have the same position in the hierarchy, so she is being careful not to

appear to be imposing any ideas on a colleague. While collaboration is openly embraced by the admin team, team members are careful as to how they present ideas about the projects of others in the team. Rory begins in a very tentative way and then switches to being more direct. Notice how in line 126 she says, “I’m thinking,” which is a polite way for her to give advice to Trent as to what to do with the courses. As Haugh (2015) states, indirectness in discourse can serve to maintain interpersonal relationships by allowing interactants to maintain relationships while at the same time meeting their own goals. In this example, Rory makes extensive use of modals. In lines 126 to 131 she uses the modal “could” six times to offer Trent options. By doing this, she is reducing the illocutionary force of her suggestions and it also serves to reduce the obligation on the Trent’s part to actually do as she says (Haugh, 2015). Her use of indirectness strategies actually serves to encourage a collaborative discussion between her and Trent, which happens later.

Excerpt 7.10 is lengthy, but it demonstrates something very important about how this team works. Team members did not orient very much to Lila’s options, but instead went on to co-construct the process without much regard as to who was proposing ideas. It also demonstrates well how the different types of agencies (human and non-human) are part of the interaction. This excerpt exemplifies how leadership is distributed in an environment that embraces collaboration. It also shows that the discursive and the material are “reflexively enjoined to shape what is present or absent in specific circumstances” (Putnam, 2014, p. 711). We see how the process is outlined from the emailing of a link to the use of cell phones. Even though it was Lila who introduced the issue to consider, turns were distributed among almost everyone present at the meeting. As Koschmann (2016a) argues, effective collaboration is much more than assembling a group of people together in a room and expecting collaboration to

happen. Instead, collaboration is about “collective agency” (p. 413), people working together in an interaction to find a solution to an issue. In excerpt 7.10, collective agency, as well as leadership/authority as a distributed phenomenon, is evidenced. As I have argued, this agency is not only the property of humans, but it is also shared with objects.

Excerpt 7.10:

63 N: Ah we-we’re running grammar exam on December 8 (.5) we can do-we

64 can have them take the survey after the exam↑

65 L: Yes (.5) that is possible

66 A: That is a better idea=

67 T: =That’s a really good idea

68 L: Yeah

69 E: I don’t think so::

70 T: ((Elisse doesn’t))

71 E: Survey results will be very:: low (.5) well not low (.5) [they

72 A: [they will be

73 negative you mean after a test↑

74 M: Because it’s a test↑

75 E: Yeah

76 ((laughter))

(lines 77 to 88 omitted)

89 N: BUT there is another idea (1.0) last day of classes both teachers are

(lines 90 to 104 omitted)

105 T: Maybe we already thought of this

106 A: I have but I'm not going to say I'm not going to take- I-I don't do it

107 L: Yeah

108 A: You can give it to me and I don't do it (.) not giving you my grades is a

109 different thing

110 S: °Well yeah you're right°

111 L: Well or if you do it at the end of the e-course evaluation process it could

112 be and we have an optional survey if you could click through this

113 A: Yes

114 L: I don't know

115 T: Maybe we've already thought of this but ahm every single student has a

116 smart phone

117 L: Mm

118 T: Is there a way that we can kind of harness that↑

119 A: ((Good idea))

120 T: And either direct them to Google↑ I-I don't know (.5) Survey Monkey or

121 something=

122 M: =Yeah

123 T: And take five minutes and do it that way because they've all got that

124 L: Right

(lines 125 to 133 omitted)

134 T: Or we could email them a link

135 L: That's what we did last year

136 ((laughter))

137 T: No but I mean they would [IN CLASS
138 M: [In class
139 T: the teacher would say
140 L: Oh
141 T: “OK everybody take out your phone”
142 A: Oh::
143 T: You know but maybe some of them would ge- I would think by the end of
144 the semester they would have their emails accessible on the phone (.)
145 right↑
146 A: Right
147 T: Hopefully↑
148 A: Not everybody will have a phone (.) but most of them do
149 T: Yeah it would have to be in class
150 A: ((More than nineteen)
151 L: But it’s not unique either so you can even just post here’s the link:
152 A: Let’s do it now
153 L: to the form
154 T: Yeah
155 L: Type it in
156 T: Right (.) yep
157 A: I like that idea (.) we can try that

In line 63, Nina immediately proposes a date for the administration of the student survey. Notice how she uses the pronoun “we,” which, as we have seen, is something that is prevalent in

the transcripts. This “we” refers to the Program as a whole; it is a collective “we.” Nina introduces her idea as a possibility as indexed by the upper stress at the end of the statement. Lila agrees, but leaves it open to other possibilities (line 65). I align with Nina in line 66 and disagree with the previous proposal presented by Lila. I say, “That is a better idea,” which means that Nina’s idea makes better sense than Lila’s. Trent latches on to the end of my turn and aligns with me by emphasizing that Nina’s idea is a “really good” one. Notice his use of the intensifier “really,” which interactionally does the work of showing agreement both with me and Nina’s proposed course of action. Elisse shows her disagreement with the idea in line 69 by being very direct and simply stating that she doesn’t think so. She goes on to explain her position openly, which is what one would hope to see in a team that values collaboration. In line 71, Elisse gives the reason for her disagreement. The Program will not get reliable results, as students may feel negatively about the Program after taking a test. Elisse is providing a reasonable need of the Program, which is to get the most reliable results possible as a reason to look for a different alternative. In line 72, I overlap with Elisse and clarify what she meant by her comment, and the two of us co-construct it together.

The discussion continues with more ideas being brought up until in line 115, Trent attempts to take the floor unsuccessfully. While the others are being much more direct during this interaction, Trent uses mitigating language like “maybe” to introduce his idea. As I have noted before, Trent’s discourse style tends to be indirect and tentative, so his attempt here is no different from his usual style in meetings. Notice the use of the pronoun “we” to index inclusiveness. In line 118, Trent asks the admin team a question, which is also an indirect way of presenting this idea without disagreeing directly with anyone present. I agree with Trent in line 119. Trent continues, still tentatively, in lines 120-121. He starts explaining how he

envisions the process to work, which would involve the use of an online survey program. Miles offers a token of agreement by latching on to Trent's turn in line 122. Trent continues to make his point and appeals to how little time the whole process would take - only five minutes.

Throughout most of the interaction, Trent's point of view is gaining momentum. He started in a very tentative manner, but he has managed to keep his idea going strong throughout the interaction. His particular way of leading is to be cautious, but in this case, it is influencing the rest of the team. In line 134, Trent proposes a course of action - sending a link to the students. Lila disagrees by reminding him that that was the process they followed last year which got them less than ideal results. Trent is not discouraged, and in line 137, he first starts with a negation that serves to agree with Lila, and immediately after, he explains that the link would be open in class. Notice how he stresses the words "in class," which serves to emphasize how his idea is different from what was done before. Miles repeats the idea in line 138, which is a way of showing his alignment with Trent. Trent continues by making the teachers in the Program present, which is powerful because he is exemplifying how the teachers would experience the process; he is introducing the teachers' point of view. Just like Lila and others have done before, Trent is using presentification (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009); he is invoking the voices of the teachers, who while not present, carry great weight at the meeting. Trent is also doing what Clifton (2012) calls "claiming primary rights to manage the meaning of the merging decision." While his idea has been contested throughout the interaction, he is emerging as the leader by taking the floor, arguing for his point, and in general, being the author of the decision. The discussion continues, and at this point, it is clear that everyone is aligned with Trent's point of view. In fact, for the rest of the conversation others add their ideas to co-construct how the process would work and how it could be refined.

In this chapter, I have looked closely at the concepts of leadership/authority and power, not as things that belong to individuals because of their roles or positions in the organization, but rather as emerging during interaction. I have shown how power is a dynamic that changes very rapidly within an interaction, as in the case of Lila and the copier codes. I have also introduced a discursive-material approach, one that different scholars understand in different ways. With the understanding that the relationship of the discursive and the material is still in flux, I have incorporated the material in my analysis because, along with the linguistic, it makes a difference in how organization emerges. In interaction, what matters, what is made material, is what speakers bring up during conversation. This can be a process, a policy, a group of teachers, or a technology. These continue to matter as long as they are maintained by others in communication. What matters is always in flux; it is always emergent matters. I have introduced in my analysis a different way of conceptualizing the idea of communication, one that goes beyond the dualism prevalent in organizational communication studies. The CCO approach acknowledges the role of human and non-human agency through a relational approach (Cooren, 2015). It is through these multiple interactions that the organization gets constituted.

Interactional resources are available to all in the meeting, but not everyone can use these resources at the same time or in the same measure. In the case of the copier codes, Lila, due to her role within the admin team and the Program, has the ability to keep the floor for much longer than others. She can also introduce new topics for discussion. Even so, others can also be effective at challenging her, and can exercise their own interactional power, as we have seen with Rory and Trent. The exercise of interactional power does not happen in a vacuum. The members of this team are part of a larger universe, which is the Program and the University. Beyond that, they also belong to a much larger universe, which is universities in the United

States. For this admin team, it means that they favor a particular interactional style that is less direct and that indexes politeness.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In this final chapter I will first address the research questions that I posed for this study. I will then consider the ways in which this work is meaningful to my work, and its broader implications to the areas of social interaction, sensemaking, collaboration, and leadership. Finally, I write about how my engagement with discourse analysis has profoundly changed the way I see communication.

I started this project because of a change in my workplace that resulted in a different way of making sense of what was happening, understanding ourselves, and working as an organization. This work took place in meetings. As I write this final chapter, nine years after the merger of the two organizations, we are again undergoing a period of intense change. I want to point out that even though I live in communication, and I conceive of communication not as a process, but as the very thing that constitutes organizational life, the very way I am writing this account makes it sound as though the experience of change is taking place somewhere outside of communication. The organizing activities that are making up the organization are being constructed through discourse, as we speak and talk in meetings, through email communication, or face-to-face. The description that follows cannot be conceived outside of communication. This is a point that is worth emphasizing, as it is at the core of this work. Nothing that takes place in an organization happens before or separate from communication. Change is not a thing

that happens without us; although it may seem that way, we participate in it, we materialize it, and we create the very affordances for it. Organization does not exist a priori of communication.

The international student enrollment arena is vastly different now from the way it was eight years ago. Enrollment numbers are declining in the U.S. because of geopolitical concerns and more intense competition. Even though the organization as I described it in this work is not the same organization that I am experiencing now, the results of this work can provide suggestions to improve our practice, which is also my practice. As Barge (2016) proposes, communication scholars engage in research that has an impact on nonacademic communities by producing interventions that create “resources to generate new practice and build the capacity of a community to develop new patterns of meaning making and action” (p. 3). This is the type of research that has always appealed to me, and this is one of the reasons I embarked on this project and made the choice to study communication as social interaction and examine it as I have done.

In Chapter 1, I wrote about my intention for my work to connect theory with practice because as Craig (1989) has argued, communication is a practical discipline. I will first address the research questions I posed. Through the integration of the Communication as Constitutive of Organization approach, existing literature on organizational meetings, leadership, sensemaking, and the construct of collaboration, I have analyzed meeting discourse to answer three research questions about how team members engage with one another in a collaborative organization. The construct of collaboration as understood and practiced by admin team members was embedded both in the texts of the Program (Statement of Core Values and Our Philosophy on Teamwork) as well as in the practices of the Program (working groups, creative teams, meetings). As discussed in Chapter 5, the idea of collaboration became entextualized in Program documents and practices because of a change in leadership. Even though the

word collaboration might not have been directly referred to in meetings, the entailments of a collaborative approach to organizational life is inextricable to how the admin team worked and how the Program functioned. The way admin team members worked together was connected to collaboration and the idea that asking for input, sharing in decision making, and problem solving would result in better organizational outcomes. Admin team members did not have to express that they were collaborative to understand that they were following the precepts that were established in important organizational texts. Admin team meetings were conducted in a way that encouraged participation and sharing of ideas. This way of working happened because important texts coordinated the way meetings in particular and work in general should take place. These documents authorized a way of being for organizational members that excluded other ways.

Research Questions

Question 1.

I wanted to find out how, in a collaborative work environment, the use of politeness strategies can help or hinder how team members have constructed the idea of collaboration. The discourse data from admin team meetings demonstrate that the admin team has a bias for politeness, which perhaps is not surprising. To work effectively with others, it is necessary to get along, so the use of politeness strategies seems like what would make sense to get the work done.

Use of indirect and mitigating language. One of the findings of this study is that admin team members prefer politeness discourse. This is manifested in the use of mitigating and indirect language. The admin team leader, Lila, has a strong tendency for indirectness, and in many of her turns, especially when introducing an issue to the team, she takes a lot of time to

frame issues. While it is important to frame issues carefully and to provide adequate background to assist in understanding, at times this can be counterproductive. For example, when the organization introduced copier codes for all employees, Lila spent a great amount of time framing the issues indirectly without getting to the point. While this may seem counterproductive, and in practice it probably was, Lila was the proponent of how we were to change the interactional dynamics of working together. She spearheaded the process of developing core values. For her, this idea of collaboration mattered, so it makes sense that she would work hard at maintaining this way of interacting.

Indirectness and mitigation can also be detrimental to how the admin team operates. Admin team members often expressed their positions with great indirectness and mitigating language. While this did a lot to preserve both positive and negative face, and maintain work relationships, it would be good for team members to consider when it makes sense to express points of view much more directly to aid in problem solution.

Heath and Frey (2004) write about collaborative group processes and what makes them successful. They posit that fostering dialogue, less emphasis on hierarchical roles, shared decision-making, and attention to diverse points of view are core principles in collaborative teams. My own participation and observations as to how the admin team worked confirm that some of these ideals were present in team interaction. Admin team members consulted each other before making decisions that would have an impact on the entire Program. Any time there were proposed policy changes, they were discussed collaboratively in formal or informal meetings. There was less emphasis on hierarchy for the most part, but hierarchy was still important. It was important for the admin team to achieve consensus when discussing issues of importance. One noticeable change was an emphasis on reaching out outside of the admin team

to ask for feedback and input before reaching a decision or making a change. As mentioned in this chapter, several processes and practices in the Program facilitated this.

As to how the admin team worked together in meetings, team discursive practices favored reaching consensus and asking others for and considering others' opinions before reaching decisions. During admin team meetings, discourse strategies that encourage participation were used often. For instance, asking what others think about something, using the pronoun "we" to signal solidarity, and the use of politeness strategies when discussing issues. Hardy et al. (2005) depict effective collaboration as the product of conversations that draw upon existing discourses, creating a shared identity. This is true for the Program. These discourses were embedded into our practices, in the way we approached problems that emerged, and how we made decisions.

Use of inclusive language. Another finding in this study is that team members favor the use of inclusive language (use of the pronoun "we", for example). However, the use of inclusive language does not necessarily mean that true collaboration is taking place. One example of this is the meeting where copier codes were discussed. Lila introduced information to the admin team as if they could be part of the decision-making process when in fact, the decision had already been made. Valuable time was used to discuss an issue and framing it as something that required input from the team, when in fact, that was not the case.

Question 2.

I also wanted to find out how the construct of power/authority manifested itself in the discourse of team members. Several findings emerged from the data analysis. Power/authority is not something that depends completely on formal hierarchy. This is especially true for a program that works in a collaborative work space. While there is no denying that Lila is the one with the

most and longest turns, and that her position in the organization gives her access to resources both discursive and material to exercise influence, it is also true that others on the admin team also have access to discursive strategies to get meet their goals. Because it was important for Lila to establish an environment where everyone had a chance to express their opinions, space was allocated in meetings for this to happen. This is important because the opposite could have been the case. For example, studies about how companies communicate about sustainability document something called “greenwashing” (Siano, Vollero, Conte, & Amabile, 2017) where organizational texts describe a company’s sustainability practices, but in reality, these are just symbolic statements that have no connection to what happens in practice. Something similar can take place with collaboration, but this is not the case with the Program. An intentional effort was made to create spaces, both physical and discursive, to encourage participation and the sharing of ideas. The transcripts show that using politeness strategies, admin team members were able to express their points of view and advance their agendas. One example is the case of Rory when she advocated for more access for teachers who taught EAP courses in the bridge program. Power/authority is distributed in collaborative environments and while people may not enjoy the benefits of more visible positions, they can still advance their points of view and form alliances as needed.

Question 3.

The third research question addresses materiality and discourse, which I considered important because of the recent turn in organizational studies which calls on researchers to consider the agency of objects and technologies in communication. This turn to the material in organizational communication came about after considering the work of Latour (2005) and taken on by Cooren (2015) and many others and is now an important conversation in our field. The

turn to materiality is truly interdisciplinary and includes research in the fields of information systems and computer science among many others. The central idea with materiality is that objects have agency and are therefore actants, or agents, in interaction. In communication, what is material is anything that matters during the interaction, and while I am not suggesting that we should ascribe superior agency to objects, I am advocating that social interaction scholars who study organizations take into account the material when conducting organizational communication research. To illustrate my point, let's consider an example that takes place every day in our classrooms. An instructor needs to plan a lesson where the content is the American Civil War and the skill is finding the main idea with supporting details. The instructor wants to make her lesson appealing to students, so she decides to create a lesson using a software program that will create a very nice set of graphics to make her points. In this example, the instructor's agency resulted in her searching for available software to help her with her idea. The software also acted as agent, as it afforded the instructor a tool to display the material in a way that the students would find appealing. The software also acted on the instructor by constraining what she would be able to achieve with it because it has been designed to do certain things and not others. It is useful to think of materiality as a relationship where both humans and objects create a new process as a result of their interaction.

Practical Implications in the Workplace

This study's findings have implications for organizational members. I introduced Weick's (1995) sensemaking heuristic in Chapter 2. Sensemaking is a social activity, as people depend on others to do their jobs well. Roles are connected to other roles via processes that are mediated via communication. The Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) in New Zealand is the best example I have come across to use research to impact the lives of people. Their ideas

have inspired me to take research beyond the text and to find practical applications to help the lives of people at work. I would be open to organizing a data session with team members to retrospectively make sense of the data for this study to achieve a collective understanding for their actions. While in this case we are not dealing with unexpected events or great uncertainty, looking back at what transpired to make sense of it to better understand the role we play in meetings is useful. I would be open to helping members make sense of the data and analyze constructs like collaboration to help them identify which strategies are useful to advance their goals. I would offer members of the admin team and others in the organization the opportunity to explore how collaboration is actually accomplished in discourse. We can do this by looking at data from this study and together we can make sense of how our discourse patterns contribute to maintaining organizational reality. We can look at, for example, how the length of turns in an interaction may be communicating something about power and leadership (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). We can also explore how being indirect helps maintain the concept of collaboration as we understand it. I am now more aware of the strategies I and others are using. I am the resident communication expert at work and some of my colleagues come to me at times for me to do a mini discourse analysis on a piece of communication they may find difficult to understand. I often find myself saying, "See the work this is doing here." This also represents a change, even if at a personal level.

I will venture to say that most of the members of the team conceive of communication as a simple transfer of information. The conduit metaphor (Reddy, 1979) is a very powerful one, and it inevitably influences how team members think of the work they are doing. For instance, when we work on curriculum changes, we may think that faculty and students will understand what we want to accomplish with these changes and that simply by making and communicating

these changes they will be understood unproblematically. Raising awareness of team members as to how communication is a constitutive force in organizations and not just a means of transmitting information can help team members be more mindful when crafting messages for internal and external audiences. While these conversations do not need to include the principles of the CCO as proposed by the Montreal School (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Cooren, 2000; Taylor, 2009; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009), they should include concepts such as coordination, as language in meetings or in texts have a coordinating effect on the work people do in organizations. The concept of presentification (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009) is also relevant, as organizations make their presence felt through the voices of their members in meetings and documents. This awareness raising can also help team members understand the way politeness in the form of indirect language can hinder collaboration and this awareness can also help them make their points more directly and reach a resolution in less time. As the data show, the admin team favored indirectness, which while it may be less face-threatening and may help build relationships, it is very time consuming. In addition, it takes work for both the speaker and the hearer to navigate indirectness. While I am not advocating for the use of face-threatening language in the workplace, learning how to be more direct can help this team reach decisions in a timelier manner and with less ambiguity. I am a believer in civil discourse, and see the value of politeness in maintaining relationships, but directness does not equate to hostility. An attempt by all to say what we mean in a way that still maintains relationships is important.

While it has not been my choice to focus on this, an awareness of how interactional styles contribute to how meetings are conducted is crucial and can help the team make changes to move toward consensus, which is a goal for team meetings. Many places of work include members from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, an understanding of how interaction styles differ

from culture to culture is important. For example, Mills (2009) makes the point that what may be considered impolite in one culture may be considered impolite in another. She provides an example of Arabs speaking English and their tendency to be more direct, which in the Western world could signal rudeness. She states that for Arabs, the opposite is the case. Being indirect could signal lack of engagement with your interlocutor. This reminds me of my interactions in the classroom with Arab students and how at times I have felt that their directness is impolite. The understanding that politeness principles are not always universal is enlightening. For organizations with multicultural teams, understanding that someone from Russia may favor a more direct style of interacting can help other team member be more accepting of this. On the other hand, team members with more direct interactional style can become more aware and can learn to be less direct at times.

The concept of materiality and communication, if I am honest was the most difficult for me to approach in this work. As I have argued, due in great part to the influence of the linguistic turn (Rorty, 1967), language has had a privileged position when it comes to understanding workplace practices. This makes sense, as for the longest time, communication was regarded as another variable to be considered when analyzing workplace practices, and its constitutive effect was ignored. However, in the course of my readings and as I delved into concepts such as the “sociomateriality of organizational life” (Orlikowski, 2009, p. 125) my perspective on this topic broadened, and I came to understand that artifacts, including technologies are part of the communication space where human interacts. It is not enough to consider, for instance, the use of iPads in a process as part of the background, as something that is there, that is not consequential to the action. Instead, Orlikowski (2009) and others (Barad, 2007) insist that objects in general, and technological objects, must be part of the analysis and must be seen as

consequential. In fact, the CCO approach recognizes the both human and non-human agency have a role in the constitution of organization (Cooren, 2004).

In Chapter 7, I attempted to make both discourse and objects, the discursive and the material, part of the discussion about collaboration. As Caronia and Cooren (2013) argue, it is not possible to determine a priori what makes a difference in an interaction. All interactants, whether human or not, should be considered in the analysis, and objects should not be relegated to the background. A practical implication of the role of materiality in communication is for organizational members to consider the role of technologies (software, hardware, etc.) in interaction. For instance, when deciding on something seemingly mundane like what type of classroom furniture to choose, it is important to consider how the choice will impact interactions among teachers and students, and students with one another. Taking into consideration the ‘hybrid responsibility’ (Caronia and Cooren, 2013, p. 17) of objects in communication without ascribing them superior responsibility will have a positive impact on work processes. For example, using an iPad to complete a survey requires the interaction between a person and a piece of technology. Both are entangled in the practice of completing the survey. As Orlikowski (2007) reminds us, sociomateriality is present in the actual practice in which the iPad finds itself embedded. While it is easy to think of the iPad as something that exists separate from the act of completing the survey, it is at the moment when the technology and the person interact that it becomes evident what this interaction affords. The practice of completing the survey is a social activity that is understood and shared by all who complete the survey. At that moment, it allows certain actions to happen and not others.

In this study I have proposed that collaboration is a construct that does not have a fixed meaning; it is not a particular set of actions or behaviors that can be decided outside of

communication. Rather, collaboration means what the people working under a collaborative framework decide it means. For the members of the admin team, two key texts in the Program provided the basis for their understanding of collaboration: The Statement of Core Values and the Philosophy on Teamwork. The ideas in these documents became laminated (Boden, 1994) in the way the admin team engaged in meeting and in work practices.

For the Program, which demonstrates in its texts and practices that collaboration is important, the emphasis is on negotiation of meaning and not on the imposition of ideas. This negotiation of meaning is evidenced in admin team meetings where admin team members are encouraged to participate in how decisions are made and in the creation of organizational meaning. Negotiation of meaning also happens through activity coordination. In organizations, once processes become second nature, organizational members conduct their jobs following established routines. For the analyst, this means that it is important to follow what is said in texts and how this is manifested in work practices. Even when individuals do not express directly that they are working collaboratively, for instance, this is made evident in how they perform and talk about their work in meetings. Collaboration can be seen as an organizing because it coordinates the way work is conducted. As Kuhn (2012) argues, organization emerges from micro interactions that scale up through conversations. These micro interactions have a global or macro effect through the organization.

One practical implication of this is for organizations to realize that texts matters in the dynamics of organizing, and as a result, we must pay attention to how texts, once created, actually participate in the conversations that constitute our organizations. One example of how this can be accomplished is during onboarding of new members. Organizations can offer sessions either face-to-face or virtually where new team members engage in sensemaking as to

what the ideas the organization is conveying in important documents could mean to them in their work and how they are realized by organizational members in their day-to-day activities. During annual performance reviews, organizational members can reflect on how well their work is aligned to the core values of the organization and what they have done to contribute to the attainment of these goals. For managers, the reflection should include questions about how well the ideas in important documents are reflected in their own practices. In other words, are managers walking the walk or just talking the talk? Otherwise, having mission statements and core values becomes a linguistic exercise meant to satisfy board members but with no practical meaning. During annual retreat and other organizational events, time should be reserved for sessions where organizational members reflect on what core values and mission statements mean to them and how these ideas can create opportunities for them to be better employees but also how the concepts can be constraining. Managers should include opportunities for honest feedback on ways these documents should be modified. Research on guided reflexivity (Konradt, Otte, Schippers, & Steenfatt, 2016) shows that teams that engage in reflexivity during transition phases (times devoted to preparing for future work) obtain better results if the focus is on teamwork and not just on task. This guided reflection can be done during team meetings and does not need to be time consuming (Konradt, et al., 2016).

For the admin team in this study, team reflection could be incorporated as part of the pre-semester planning meeting. Examples of items to reflect on could include:

1. Goals and objectives
2. Decision-making activities
3. Methodology in conducting work
4. Evaluation when things do not go as planned

This study also has implication as to how leadership is accomplished in interaction. I align with the work of Raelin (2016) and Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff (2010) in their definition of leadership as a practice. Leadership cannot be based on theories, but rather, leadership “emerged and unfolds through the day-to-day experiences” (p. 134). This is an important distinction because management books contain theories of leadership and formulas as to how to be a good leader. For these scholars and for me leadership emerges one interaction at a time independent of organizational roles. A practical implication of my study is that as members, we must conceive of leadership as situated and not something that is reserved for those with fancy titles. We lead one interaction at a time, and organizing leadership circles for team members to talk about critical leadership incidents, times when they have led and something has gone right or wrong can result in learning and changes in practice.

Epilogue

Change has been discursively constructed in the period since I started this work and where we find ourselves now. Lila left the organization to work elsewhere, which meant another change in leadership for us in the Program. The idea of working together through collaboration has become even more important now because the new head of the Program is also the head of the bridge program, which is the program where students take University courses as well as ESL classes. The goal is to ensure that both the Program and the bridge program are working together in toward a common goal. There are plans to reorganize with an emphasis on creating committees that will work together to make decisions. There has been resistance by members of the Program and the bridge program, as there is not a clear understanding as to what collaboration means if we reorganize. For the new director of the academic unit, collaboration means that everyone should have a say in decision-making and that to accomplish this, all

decisions should be discussed in committees. Also, members are concerned as to the amount of time it would require to work in this type of environment, and the real possibility that work will not get done. Some of the original team members have left the organization. In addition to Lila and Rory, Miles and Gabrielle have left the organization. Oriel retired after 30 years at the University. Both Trent and Elise are still with the program and still doing curriculum work, but their jobs descriptions have changed. My own role is vastly different. I have a more visible role managing the day-to-day operations of the Program. Nina's role is also different, and she works now in the area of program operations. There are also new organizational actors. For example, we have a new coordinator who works with faculty. All of these roles are in flux now as we consider reorganizing, and this is reflected in how we talk about our roles. For example, while my official role as described in my job description is to work with faculty, in reality, my duties include many other activities outside of this role. I notice how this change is a constant mediation between spoken and written discourse, our bodies, and the objects that we employ to bear in our organizing.

The field of TESOL has also changed dramatically, which is reflected in how members of the field talk and write about it. There is increased competition in the United States as new players join the marketplace to offer universities the promise of increased international student enrollment. On the other hand, the market in the U.S. is not expanding; in fact, the pie is very likely shrinking as countries decide to train their own teachers to provide in-country instruction before students are sent to study abroad. Geopolitical concerns have also caused changes in the number of students who come to study in the U.S. The perception of the U.S. as a beacon of democracy and diversity has taken a hit as news about the U.S.'s stance on refugees and immigrants has been widely disseminated. All of these factors have changed the landscape, not

only for us, but for many ESL providers in the U.S. These changes have inevitably impacted how we are organized, and more changes are the horizon. The organization will change, but it will also persevere and will be maintained locally by the discourses we use in interactions such as meeting, and translocally by way of how these discourses travel through time and space. Perhaps the most important change is the change that has happened with me, the researcher, analyst, and organizational member. This is undoubtedly one of the most important implications of this study. I started from a place where I understood the concept of change as a process that was mostly linear, taking place outside of communication. Now, I cannot conceive of organization outside of communicative processes. Communication is in fact organizing; both go hand in hand as organizing cannot happen without communication mediating it. Going back to the beginning of this work where I first wrote about meetings as mundane activities and the work of Harvey Sacks, I now see the organization in them. They are all vital to the understanding of the workplace reality we inhabit. The fact that these activities are commonplace is precisely what makes them matter so much. They are both invisible but present, and it is in them that we produce and reproduce the way we understand work.

As I walk the hallways of my workplace, I see little reminders of how much language matters. A sign on someone's door that reads, "meeting with center director" is not simply saying that a meeting is taking place. It also says that that the person who wrote it has the status in the organization to have this meeting. It also says that this person is engaged in work that is consequential enough to warrant a meeting with the center director. As I read emails sent by others at work, I find myself reading and rereading, not to find something hidden or obscure, but to see what has been there all along. Very recently I received an email in my inbox sent to everyone in the organization that asked all of us in the organization to attend an important

meeting where we would learn about new directions for the organization. I thought of the message sender as an authorized agent to speak on behalf of the organization. I thought of the words contained in the message and the work they were doing. Understanding communication as a constitutive force has been life-changing for me. The realization that communication matters in ways that I never imagined before has transformed how I experience the world.

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APPENDIX A:

TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS

Symbol	Meaning
[point where overlap starts
]	point where overlap ends
=	latching utterances, no gap between utterances
(.)	a gap of approximately one tenth of a second
↑	marked shifts in pitch: higher
:	prolongation of immediately prior sound
:::	the more colons, the longer the sound is drawn out
<u>Word</u>	indicates speaker emphasis
◦◦	relatively quieter than previous talk
(())	Transcriber's inability to hear what was said; transcriber's description of what was heard
WORD	Upper case indicates shouting

APPENDIX B:

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

6/4/2014

Ariadne Miranda, M.A.
Communication
4202 East Fowler Avenue
FAO 100
Tampa, FL 33596

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review

IRB#: Pro00014790

Title: The Discursive Construction of Organizational Change in an English Language Program

Study Approval Period: 6/4/2014 to 6/4/2015

Dear Ms. Miranda:

On 6/4/2014, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

[Research Protocol for IRB Miranda.docx](#)

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

[Informed Consent Adult Interviews Miranda.pdf](#)

[Informed Consent Adult Meetings.pdf](#)

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found

under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR

56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristen Salomon', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C:

IRB INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

IRB Study # PR00014790

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

I am asking you as an organizational member of the ELP at USF to take part in a research study called:

The Discursive Construction of Change in an English Language Program

The person who is in charge of this research study is Ariadne Miranda. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Mariaelena Bartesaghi.

The research will be conducted at the English Language Program (ELP) at INTO University of South Florida.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

- look at organizational change from a communication perspective. The principal investigator is interested in understanding how organizational members in the English Language Program (ELP) at USF experience change. In this study, the principal investigator will collect data in the form of talk and text in the ELP. For talk data, semi-structured interviews will be conducted of organizational members about their experience with change in the ELP as well as record data in selected meetings in the ELP.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- Give permission to audio record meeting data in which you are a participant. Some examples of occasions when these meetings take place in the ELP are: Faculty Forum, faculty meetings, ELP administrative team meetings, teacher training day meetings, ELP retreats.
- You will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection period. You will be informed of the option of withdrawing from the study.
- To protect your privacy, I will change all names of all participants to pseudonyms.
- All research activities will take place in the ELP at USF.

Total Number of Participants

About 50 individuals will take part in this study at the ELP at USF.

Alternatives

You do not have to participate in this research study.

Benefits

The potential benefits of participating in this research study include:

- This research study may add to your understanding of the process of change in the ELP from a discursive perspective.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study. You may, as a result of participating in this study, experience discomfort while you talk to me about your experience with change in the ELP. This is highly unlikely.

Compensation

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Cost

There will be no costs to you as a result of being in this study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

N/A

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator and her advisor. Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, staff in the USF Office of Research and Innovation, USF Division of Research Integrity and Compliance, and other USF offices who oversee this research.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from this study will have no adverse effect to your

New information about the study

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an adverse event or unanticipated problem, call Ariadne Miranda at 813-436-3183. You can also email her at ariadnem@usf.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study and authorize that my health information as agreed above, be collected/disclosed in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he/ she understands:

- What the study is about;
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used;
- What the potential benefits might be; and
- What the known risks might be.

I can confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in the appropriate language. Additionally, this subject reads well enough to understand this document or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her. This subject does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give legally effective informed consent. This subject is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization