ABSTRACT

TRANSITIONAL TALK:
MANAGING THE FLOOR IN AN ADULT-LEARNER CLASSROOM

By: Rebecca J. Kinser

This study explores the management of conversational floor in adult-learner classrooms by describing topic transitions in recorded data from six instructors at one technical college in the Midwest. The analyzed data shows that a classroom on its face participates in the characteristics of what conversational analysts label a "singly-developed floor." This is a floor in which one speaker controls the conversation. However, the data also show traces of collaboration. These may suggest that the classroom – specifically the adult-learner classroom but perhaps also classrooms in general – is not primarily a singly-developed floor but may be either more of a "collaboratively-developed floor" or even a hybrid of the two. The evidence of collaboration takes the form of specific word choices in managing various types of topic shifts ("I" messages) and thematic references to time management. The analysis of the data that follows will describe the topic shifts, noting issues relevant to both the singly- and collaboratively-developed floor models and arguing for the hybridity of the classroom floor.

.

TRANSITIONAL TALK:
MANAGING THE FLOOR IN AN ADULT-LEARNER CLASSROOM

by

Rebecca J. Kinser

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Arts – English

at

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
Oshkosh WI 54901-8621

July 2009

COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Advisor

7/27/09 Date Approved

Member

7/27/09 Date Approved

Member

7/29/09 Date Approved

PROVOST
AND VICE CHANCELLOR

7/30/09
Date Approved

FORMAT APPROVAL

6/30/2009
Date Approved

I dedicate this to my family because without their love, support, and patience this would not have been possible. I have a hard time believing that this journey is finally coming to a close. My children and husband may not know what to do with me. In their lives, I've always been a student. While I can't argue with the example I feel I'm setting, I certainly can thank them for their tolerance. We'll have to figure out how to adjust to non-grad student life. Perhaps they'll get more home-cooked meals, perhaps they'll be able to use the computer again, or perhaps, within a week, they'll be begging me to find a hobby! In any case, without them and without you, Mike - my one and only - I would not have been able to accomplish this! Thanks. MTYLTT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all of my professors, advisors, and classmates at the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh who were instrumental in my ability to achieve this degree. They helped me make the transition to student again.

Thanks to my colleagues in Appleton, Wisconsin who not only provided moral support as I worked on my degree, but also so willingly agreed to participate in my research project.

Most importantly, though, I give my deepest gratitude to Dr. Margaret Hostetler who shepherded me through this process. From the day I met her, she has made a tremendous difference in my life. Her willingness to help and to share her wisdom, her time, and her enthusiasm is appreciated more than she could know.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION 1

Conversational Floor 2
Turn Taking and Topic Transitions 5
Classroom Floor Analysis 8
Adult-Learner Classroom 10

CHAPTER 2 – RESEARCH DESCRIPTION 13

Community of Practice 14

CHAPTER 3- TRANSITIONAL SEQUENCES 20

Introductory Transitional Sequence 21
End-of-Class Transitional Sequence 27
Student Redirect Transitional Sequence 34
Instructor Digression Transitional Sequence 39
Activity/Topic Transitional Sequences 41
Activity Transitional Sequence 41
Topic Change Transitional Sequence 49

CHAPTER 4 - CONCLUSIONS 55

APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval 59
Appendix B: Research Project Information Sheet 61

NOTES 63

WORKS CITED 64

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a rich arena for the study of language in context, the adult-learner classroom (and here I refer to students in the traditional college-age group as well as older returning students) has not been well examined for what it can contribute to our knowledge of the concept of conversational floor management. To begin to fill this gap, I have recorded classroom conversations and examined specific sequences of talk in which instructors are managing topic shifts or introducing specific class activities. The analyzed data shows that a classroom on its face participates in the characteristics of what conversational analysts label a "singly-developed floor." This is a floor in which one speaker controls the conversation. However, my data also show traces of collaboration. These may suggest that the classroom – specifically the adult-learner classroom but perhaps also classrooms in general – is not primarily a singly-developed floor but may be either more of a "collaboratively-developed floor" or even a hybrid of the two. The evidence of collaboration takes the form of specific word choices in managing various types of topic shifts ("I" messages) and thematic references to time management. The analysis of my data that follows will describe the topic shifts, noting issues relevant to both the singly- and collaboratively-developed floor models and arguing for the hybridity of the classroom floor. A better understanding of the management of conversational floors and the framing of activities that contextualize those floors highlights the pragmatic importance of the larger institutional and temporal context – i.e. the collaborative goals of

the students and instructors over the course of the semester as well as over the course of the class period.

Conversational Floor

To "get the floor, hold the floor, or keep the floor" in a conversation or environment is typically thought of as an achievement. Yet, the notion of floor is a conversational concept without a concrete definition. It has been defined as all of the following: "a speaker, a turn, and control over part of a conversation" (Edelsky 205), or "the right to speak in an assembly," according to Webster's New World Dictionary, ("floor," def. 4). These various definitions suggest a more complex concept. One of the most significant aspects of having the floor is that for that moment or block in time, the floor holder has the conversational power; people are listening. Because an instructor meets with students for a very limited time each week and needs not only to communicate the course material, but also to communicate it in an effective and timely manner, proper management of the classroom floor is essential in creating an environment conducive to learning. Instructors need to be able to transition students from one topic to the next and from one activity to the next, and they do this by controlling the classroom floor and managing the conversation. Perhaps because of the asymmetrical relationship between teachers and students and the didactic goals of the conversation, the classroom appears to be a singly-developed floor.

In one-on-one conversations, someone talks and someone else listens. The participants exchange ideas and turns in the conversation. There are well-established

"conversational rules" about how a person knows when it is his or her turn to speak. This is the one-at-a-time floor, or singly-developed floor, in which the topic is developed by one speaker and that speaker controls the topic/conversation until that topic is closed. When the topic is closed, another speaker can "take the floor." In the singly-developed floor, "speakers take turns to hold the 'floor', with one speaker's turn ideally following on from the previous one without any perceptible gap and without any overlap" (Coates and Sutton-Spence 507). Listeners may give minimal responses to "signal among other things support [. . . for the] speaker's solo occupancy of the floor" (Coates and Sutton-Spence 507). However, in a one-at-a-time floor, the sole holder of the floor must control his or her end of the floor to ensure that his or her floor ownership is unchallenged. This seems to match the classroom environment fairly well except that the prescribed turn-taking rules do not exist and the instructor controls the conversation alone. He or she manages the floor and therefore, the activities and topics within that class period.

However, according to recent models of conversational floors, emphasis has shifted to the role of listenership in floor management. The speaker has the floor only if what he or she is saying is attended to by others. Listenership is a key element to any definition of the floor (Jones and Thornborrow 403). Shultz, Florio, and Erickson reinforce this notion by stating that having the floor means that the speaker's turn at speaking is:

> attended to by other individuals, who occupy at that moment the role of listener. Simply talking in itself does not constitute having the floor: The

> floor is interactionally produced, in that speakers and hearers must work together at maintaining it. (95)

Adding interaction to the definition of the floor illustrates some of the complexities inherent in the concept of conversational floor. Jones and Thornborrow believe that "the conversational 'floor' is something people participate in, rather than 'hold'" (420). Adding participation to the definition of floor allows for listening, interruptions, digressions, simultaneous talk and multiple floors within the conversation. Schegloff's work also reinforces the idea that not everyone has to talk to participate in the floor: "Even when a speaker is addressing a large audience with 'a speech', s/he can be doing so only with the co-participation of the audience members in *withholding* (author's emphasis) talk" (406). Participation by the other parties may be minimal as in Schegloff's example, or it may involve sharing the floor. This is dictated through the activity or the conversation. According to Edelsky, it is also possible to "hold the floor without talking" (210). For this to be possible there must be an effective way to manage the floor even if the holder of the floor is not speaking; others must still be participating at the direction of the floor holder. Jones and Thornborrow also believe that the activity dictates the floor; they argue that talk is what "social actors come together to do, and the floor, as a method of organizing talk, is part of how they do it" (421).

To address the "how they do it" question, Edelsky investigated the concept of floor through a series of departmental meetings on her college campus. She recorded a number of meetings in which she was a participant and then further refined the definition of the floor. She expanded the definition of floor to include the fact that "speakers have

the choice of two modes of conversational organization": the one-at-a-time floor and the collaborative floor (Edelsky 189). "The fundamental difference between the two floors [. . .] then is that one is inhabited by only one speaker at any one time while the other is inhabited by all participants simultaneously" (Coates and Sutton-Spence 511).

All participants in a collaborative floor have the option to change the topic, to redirect the topic, or to talk. This "overlapping speech is a palpable symbol of participants' active engagement in a shared conversational space" (Coates and Sutton-Spence 511). In contrast to the singly-developed floor, in a collaborative floor "minimal responses and laughter signal that participants are present in the shared floor even if they are not saying anything substantive; this contrasts with the meaning they carry in a one-at-a-time floor, where they acknowledge the current speaker's right to the floor" (Coates 117). However, in both types of floor the listenership supports the ownership; the listeners acknowledge the speaker's message, but are only free to add to the discussion in a collaborative floor situation.

Turn Taking and Topic Transitions

In ordinary conversation, conversational ownership is shared. Schegloff and Sacks first described basic rules for conversation in which "at least, and no more than, one party speaks at a time in a single conversation and speaker change recurs" (264). Conversational turn taking means that the people involved in the conversation agree to the "rules" of conversation, the specific organization of talk. This system manages the "allocation of opportunities to participate" (Schegloff 409). By sharing the ownership of

the conversation, control of the floor is also shared. Turn-taking acts as an organizational device that disperses the units of floor between the participants in the conversation (Levinson 297). According to the rules described by Schegloff, Sacks, and Jefferson, a speaker change may only take place at the end of a completed word, phrase, or sentence: "the current speaker may end his or her turn at talk by addressing a new speaker, another speaker may enter the conversations, or the current speaker may continue" (qtd in Okamoto and Smith-Lovin 853). This may only happen if the current speaker indicates his or her understanding of prior talk. A conversationalist must "fit his or her current utterance to the utterance of the prior speaker" (qtd in Okamoto and Smith-Lovin 853). The number of participants may vary, but the rules still apply. Schegloff, Sacks, and Jefferson reinforced the idea that the conversation can "accommodate any number of parties as well as parties joining and leaving an interaction" (qtd in Jones and Thornborrow 401). All speakers or participants in a conversation share equal access to the floor.

Shutting down a topic and either moving to a different topic or ending the conversation is defined as a topic closure. According to Schegloff and Sacks, "closings are to be seen as achievements, as solutions to certain problems of conversational organization" (264). A topic closure happens when the participants follow the "rules" regarding appropriate turn-taking places in conversations and mutually shut down the topic. A topic change occurs when an "utterance does not show a clear sequential or referential relationship to prior talk" (Okamoto and Smith-Lovin 853). "Topic changes, however, are not random happenings; they occur in specific environments and in

characterizable ways" (Maynard 264). These concepts are linked together because generally, in order to achieve a topic shift, the speaker and listener must mutually agree to close down the original topic and proceed with the conversation. These topic shifts, transitions, or changes happen in two ways: collaboratively or unilaterally.

A collaborative transition is one in which the speakers in a conversation "collaboratively suspend the relevance of a next turn on some topic-in-progress," (West and Garcia 554) establish the basis for topic closure, and use that opportunity to shift to a new topic of talk. Collaborative topic shifts offer an "opportunity for someone to speak up, avoid a failed speaker transfer, and direct the group to a new topic" (Okamoto and Smith-Lovin 855). All participants who share a collaborative floor have equal opportunity to direct the group to the next topic.

A unilateral transition results from a noncollaborative topic shift on the part of one speaker. "Unilateral topic transitions violate turn-taking norms by failing to acknowledge the conversational rights of the previous speaker: one participant exercises control over the topic, causing the other to experience topic loss" (Okamoto and Smith-Lovin 854); the floor is not shared equally. A unilateral topic shift occurs when a conversational participant closes down the topic without following the "rules" of reciprocal topic closure activities. The participant individually controls the topic; it is not shared and the other participant's topic may be lost (Ainsworth-Vaughn 414). The person who is making the unilateral topic shift is asserting his or her ownership of the floor. The speaker does not feel it is necessary, as in a collaborative shift, to mutually close down one topic before moving on to the next.

Classroom Floor Analysis

Using these definitions of floor, turn taking, and topic transitions as a starting place, the classroom floor can now be analyzed. Understanding the context of the conversational floor is imperative to defining and analyzing the floor of the classroom. As Schiffrin explains:

> Language always occurs in some kind of context, including cognitive context in which past experience and knowledge is stored and drawn upon, cultural contexts consisting of shared meanings and world views, and social contexts through which both self and others draw upon institutional and interactional orders to construct definitions of situational action. (4)

The classroom is considered an institutional setting; teachers and students have certain expectations of the behaviors and norms allowed in a classroom. This institutional context dictates that classroom talk is:

> rigidly controlled by the teacher. When a learner engages in discourse that is not teacher-directed, it must either be sanctioned by the teacher or not noticed by the teacher. In a classroom, therefore, there is less opportunity to engage in communicative discourse than in a naturalistic context. (Bacon 164)

According to Edelsky's definition, the institutional setting of the classroom is a one-at-a-time or singly-developed floor. Only the teacher allows other participants access to the floor. He or she may address the class as "one collective listener," and "act as a moderator of the talk, in which pupils have to be selected to speak and when they do,

must speak to and through the teacher" (Jones and Thornborrow 415). Conversely, in a non-institutionalized setting, once the speaker ends his or her turn at talking, he or she has surrendered the floor.

In a classroom, the teacher must always maintain the floor even if he or she appears to have relinquished the floor to the students. He or she may give the students a portion of the floor, but usually only for a prescribed time period or activity. Even in a discussion-based class, the students follow the classroom norm of waiting to be called upon or acknowledging that only one person should be speaking at a time. This "classroom conversational activity is very highly marked, for any of the above activities carried over to ordinary everyday conversation would result in strong objections by 'innocent' parties in such conversation: They would feel that they were being manipulated" (Wardhaugh 304). Yet in the classroom context, this manipulation is expected. This discussion illustrates how the classroom, whether an adult-learner classroom or other type of classroom, appears to be a clear example of a singly-developed floor with the instructor in control. However, a closer look at some of the transitional sequences in an adult-learner classroom may require us to reconsider this as the sole or even primary model.

As may be expected, classroom topic transitions are orchestrated by the instructor, and he or she must ratify all requests from the students for changes in plan. Ultimately, an instructor's management of the transitional sequences between activities gives the most insight into classroom floor management. In the study of conversational management, these transitional moments are times of tension where potential breakdowns

may occur. A speaker may lose his or her turn to speak through overlapping talk, interruption, or blatant disregard. Therefore, how these sequences are managed determines the success or failure of the instructor's ability to hold the floor, but their management may also reveal the role of listenership and audience participation that mark the collaborative model of floor management. This collaboration may be more marked in the adult-learner classroom.

Adult-Learner Classroom

An adult-learner classroom clearly illustrates the structures of authority found in other classroom situations. Since most adult learners have already passed through primary and secondary classrooms, it should not be surprising that they are familiar with an authority model that allows the teacher to control the conversation of the classroom. However, there are some distinctions that may alter the adult-learner's participation in the classroom. According to Knowles, the andragogical model of education, "a unified theory of adult learning" (51), is based on the following assumptions that are different from those of the pedagogical model:

1. Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.

   […]

2. Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives.

   […]

3. Adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youths.

   […]

4. Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations.

   […]

5. Adults are motivated to devote energy to learn something to the extent that they perceive that it will help them perform tasks. […] (57-61)

In most cases, adult learners have a vested interest in attending class. For adult learners, "most formal education is by choice, not requirement or chance. Motivation to learn is illustrated by their choices and how and when they participate and whether they persist" (Heimlich and Norland 29). An instructor expects that the students will do what is asked of them, not because they "have-to" for fear of punishment, but because they understand the expectations of the instructor and have a desire to learn the material. Some of these expectations probably include not having side conversations, being a good listener, being an active participant in the class when asked, and being respectful of other learners. The institutional context may seem less rigid than the traditional elementary school classroom, but the ground rules established there carry over to the post-secondary classroom. The expectations and context of the adult-learner classroom floor allow for participation, but only when invited by the instructor. Yet, recent models of listenership in floor management suggest that ultimately, the instructor cannot hold the floor without the learners' acquiescence and acknowledgement of the instructor's right to the floor.

Because the classroom floor requires this ratification by the listeners, the adult-learner classroom floor cannot be definitively categorized as either a collaborative or a singly-developed floor as defined by Edelsky. Instead, my contribution to the study of floor management will demonstrate how an instructor's use of transitional sequences between activities and topics reveals traces of a unique hybrid floor that has not been previously described. Adult learners facilitate the instructor's floor ownership through listening, withholding talk, and allowing the instructor to move from one activity or topic to the next. Without this underlying collaboration throughout the transitional sequences, the floor could not be maintained.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

The data for this exploratory research project consists of recorded classroom talk. All instructors recorded teach in the Communication Skills Department at a two-year vocational school in the Midwest that offers Associate Degree programs or prepares learners for transfer to a four-year school. The average age of the students is 30 years. Students in general education courses comprise a mix of returning adults, displaced homemakers, dislocated workers, and traditional college-aged students. Seven full-time contract instructors in the Communication Skills Department agreed to be recorded: three men and four women**,** including the researcher. These recordings were used to discern transitional speech patterns. The courses that were recorded for the project were a mix of Oral/Interpersonal Communications, Written Communications, and Research Methods. Research Methods is a required course for a two-year diploma in Technical Writing. All other courses meet program-specified General Education requirements. With the exception of Research Methods, all Communication Skills instructors may be asked to teach any of these courses in any semester. Thus, some consistency might be expected as all instructors are familiar with these classes.

Instructors who volunteered to participate in the research project were given an information sheet to share with their students before the recording day. This information sheet explained the study in general, and reassured students that they would remain anonymous, the purpose of the research being the word choices of their instructors.

Instructors were asked to press the "record" button on a digital voice recorder (DVR) before they entered their classrooms and to press stop when the students left the room at the end of the class. All class sessions were recorded within 18 weeks of each other in 2008. The classes varied in length from one hour to three hours, totaling approximately 19 hours of instruction time. The transcriptions from those classes contain over 56,000 words. It is important to note, however, the limitations of the DVR in the classroom. At times, it was impossible to hear some of the students' utterances due to the distance between them and the DVR. Also, if the instructor moved to the rear of the room, or if there were simultaneous conversations happening, it was impossible to discern all of the instructors' words. This, however, was the exception, not the norm. In addition, after reviewing the recorded data, I decided to omit three hours of course material because although it contained many topic shifts, it did not have the variety of sequences that the other samples did.[1] In total, 83 transitional moments were isolated for review. Ultimately, this analysis utilizes six separate audio recordings covering sixteen hours of classroom instructional time within a single Community of Practice (CofP).[2]

Community of Practice

My analysis of teacher-talk in my CofP captures valid data that "illustrate[s] and substantiate[s] general points by drawing upon concrete analyses of real discourse data" (Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton 7). A community of practice (CofP) is "'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual endeavor', in the course of which certain 'ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short,

practices – emerge'" (Eckert and McConnell, qtd. in Litosseliti 66). The challenge in studying a community of practice, according to Sunderland and Litosseliti, is to "ensure that a study compromises neither in its close analysis of [a particular] discourse, nor in its work to relate this to wider, invariably gendered, and potentially damaging social arrangements" (qtd. in Litoseleti 65). In other words, this research may help other college instructors learn what methods and techniques are most commonly used in establishing a sequence in order to transition their students, but care needs to be taken in drawing wider conclusions for other CofPs because each CofP will have its own linguistic repertoire. Yet the study is important not just for my workplace, but as a contribution to understanding management of floor/conversation in different adult-learner institutional contexts**.**

My CofP may have different language practices in the classroom because not only do we work for the same institution, we also teach the same course competencies. Competencies, as defined by the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), are a set of learning outcomes that each student enrolled in a particular course should achieve in order to successfully complete the course. In one of the courses, Oral/Interpersonal Communication, there are nine competencies in which each student must be able to successfully demonstrate their knowledge to earn a passing grade for the course. Nearly half of those competencies focus on effective verbal communication. Three of the competencies stress the principles underlying good communication, including being able to respond with appropriate feedback. One of the competencies stresses the ability to initiate and handle conflict appropriately. Since the focus of Oral/Interpersonal

Communications is on verbal communication and effective language choices, and all recorded instructors teach or have taught this course, this may influence how they manage the floor.

More significantly, since teaching conflict management skills, primarily assertiveness techniques, is a requirement, the instructors are familiar with the language choices that must be made for effective assertive behavior. According to the textbook used in Oral/Interpersonal Communication classes, Communicate!, by Rudolph Verdeber and Kathleen Verdeber, the definition of assertive behavior is "expressing [. . .] personal preferences and defending [. . .] personal rights while respecting the preferences and rights of others" (185). According to A.H. Gervasio's article, "Assertiveness Techniques as Speech Acts," assertiveness training contains many prescriptions and rules for constructing dialogue (qtd. in Crawford 54). In assertiveness training the following techniques are included:

> Speech should be direct. Requests should be in the form of straight-forward questions, never indirect references or hints. Refusals should be given without excuses, justifications, or apologies. Speakers should focus on their own feelings, desires, and beliefs. (Crawford 54)

In Oral/Interpersonal Communications, we teach the "I" message as a linguistic tool for assertive behavior and conflict initiation. An "I" message functions by allowing an individual to assert his or her own desires and beliefs in a way that does not build defensiveness in the listener. This approach softens a directive. According to Ervin-Tripp, Guo, and Lampert, directives are "attempts to produce change in the actions of

others" (qtd. in Burt 86). Using an "I" message mitigates a directive and helps the speaker to get his or her needs understood without sounding aggressive. This mitigation serves the function of adding an element of indirectness to the request. "Being indirect is one important way that people behave politely in conversation" (Brown and Levinson, qtd in Crawford 72). A request can be presented in a variety of forms that vary in degree of politeness from "rude to overly polite in normal circumstances." [For example:]

A. Open the door.
B. I would like you to open the door.
C. Can you open the door?
D. Would you mind opening the door?
E. May I ask you whether or not you would mind opening the door.

(Clark and Clark, qtd in Crawford 72).

Choice "A" would be considered an aggravated directive or a "you" message. This is a clear command using the imperative form of the verb. This type of explicit directive is used only "when the people concerned are in very clear authority relationships" (Holmes 9). This approach might seem to fit the classroom context; the teacher is the authority figure. However, in our CofP's adult-learner classrooms, it is important to build a collaborative learning environment, one that encourages open discussion, allows people with relevant work experience to add meaningful content to the class, and secures a level of respect for the learners and the instructor. This collaborative aim may seem at odds with the classroom as a singly-developed floor with the instructor tightly managing the

conversation, but it may reveal that both control and collaboration are at work in the classroom floor. The language choices of the instructors help to build this type of environment through the use of language similar to choice "B" above. "When people are equals or near equals, it is much more common to find directives being given in a [. . .] mitigated form" (Holmes 10). The speech is still direct, but an aggravated directive is not used. The addition of the "I" message softens the request, yet does not give the opportunity for the learners to question his or her expectations. "I" messages allow the instructor or anyone else who utilizes them to assertively state the actions or behavior required of the listeners. It is extremely difficult to argue with an "I" statement. Within the context of the adult-learner classroom, the instructor wants to assert his or her authority without sounding too authoritarian or patronizing.

The use of the "I" message then can be thought of as a "face-saving" linguistic application. According to Goffman:

> It seems to be a characteristic obligation of many social relationships that each of the members guarantees to support a given face for the other members in a given situation to prevent disruption of these relationships. It is therefore necessary for each member to avoid destroying the other's face. [. . .] Furthermore, in many relationships, the members come to share a face. (318)

An effective classroom allows for participation without compromising the instructor's inherent right to the floor or destroying the student's collective or individual face, "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levison

321). An "I" message allows the instructor to move the students from activity to activity without question, but also without ordering the students to do certain tasks. "It is generally in every participant's best interest to maintain each other's face" (Brown and Levinson 322). This is imperative in the adult-learner classroom and leads to significant changes in how the floor is managed.

Based on the techniques taught in Oral/Interpersonal Communications, the instructors share a linguistic repertoire; they are aware of the benefits of using different pronouns to effect change, and they use their language choices to build a collaborative classroom environment. One of the hallmarks of a CofP is that "speakers develop linguistic patterns as they engage in activity in the various communities in which they participate" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 492). How these transitional sequences function to help maintain the adult-learner classroom floor will be examined in detail in this study.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSITIONAL SEQUENCES

I recorded one of my own classes in order to identify preliminary types of transitional sequences as a first step in defining the parameters of this study. Specifically, I examined times in the classroom when I changed topics or directed the students to a new activity: transitional moments that can be particulary troublesome in "normal conversations." To mark a successful transition, I needed to look for the end of one topic and the beginning of another. Emanuel Schegloff and Harvey Sacks's article, "Opening up Closings," asserts that "closings are to be seen as achievements, as solutions to certain problems of conversational organization" (290). This achievement allows the instructor to move from one activity to the next. Without this, the instructor cannot move the class forward. The five preliminary types of sequences I identified were as follows: introductory, short activity/assignment directions, long activity, end of class, and student redirect. These distinct categories served as a framework for the analysis of the other recorded classes.

After I analyzed the data from the class recordings of my colleagues and compared it to my preliminary results, I modified my original categories. I combined the long and short-activity transitional sequence descriptions into one transitional sequence because the distinctions were not markedly different from each other. I also added the topic change transitional sequence because I determined that there was a distinct difference between whether or not the instructor was merely changing topics or

requesting the students to perform an action. In addition, I added the instructor digression transitional sequence because there were a few times in the transcripts when it was obvious that the instructor was holding the floor, yet needed to reverse direction because he or she had forgotten something. This digression is a distinct act within the management of the floor and needs to be addressed. I categorized the transitional sequences into six distinct categories to capture what the words were actually "doing." The separate sequence categories are as follows:

- Introductory Transitional Sequence
- End-of-Class Transitional Sequence
- Student Redirect Transitional Sequence
- Instructor Digression Transitional Sequence
- Activity Transitional Sequence
- Topic Change Transitional Sequence

Each of these six sequences illustrates the functional importance of context in the management of the adult-learner classroom floor. As areas of potential tension within the classroom conversation, successfully handling these transitional sequences allows the instructor to establish and maintain a collaborative working environment. Each of these sequences will be detailed in the following sections.

Introductory Transitional Sequences

Every class begins with this type of sequence. Usually before class starts, the students are either conversing with each other, with the instructor, or not speaking at all.

The official introductory sequence occurs at the start of class when the instructor focuses the class's attention on him or herself. He or she must interrupt what the class is doing as individuals and pull them together as a collaborative listening audience to get them prepared to begin the day's activities. This sequence must serve as an attention-getting step and as a bridge to the rest of the class. In this sequence, the instructor must "take the floor." Meltzer, Morris, and Hayes claim that the floor "is viewed as the site of contest where there is one winner and one loser" (qtd. in Edelsky 205). With this definition of floor, it is imperative for the instructor to gain it and control it at the beginning of the class. In the classroom environment, the instructor and the students share the expectation that the instructor has a ready-made floor. He or she should not necessarily have to work hard to win it, but must assert ownership in order to begin the class.

Evidence from the data supports the concept of two opening sequences for each class. An instructor generally begins the class period with some small talk with either an individual student or a few selected students while waiting for the "official" start of class and any last minute stragglers. During this time side conversations between students are ratified. The instructor may be speaking with one or two students, but has not yet officially claimed the floor, so the students feel free to continue to talk to each other. In four of the six transcripts analyzed, there is evidence of this "soft" opening. The instructor perhaps arrives earlier than the prescribed starting time, and he or she cannot claim the floor until the timing is appropriate. By acknowledging some of the members of the class, it appears that the instructor is "setting the stage" to take control of the floor. Once the instructor deems the timing appropriate, he or she will begin class. This time

might be used to talk about what will be done that day, what the students did since the last class, or what they need to do to get ready to work. Because the instructor has the context-driven authority, the instructor can initiate this type of pre-opening conversation.

This pre-opening conversation or "small talk" is a "critical aspect of workplace talk. It serves the social functions of constructing, expressing, maintaining, and reinforcing interpersonal relationships between those who work together" (Holmes 13). Although the classroom is not a literally a workplace, the adult learners and instructors must work together to build a collaborative learning environment based on mutual respect. This small talk assists the instructor in "establishing and nurturing" the relationships within the classroom (Holmes and Marra 381). By conversing with certain students about non-classroom-related information, the instructor is establishing a classroom environment conducive to learning. This small talk helps to fulfill "people's need to feel they are valued and important components in a team or group" (Holmes and Marra 379). The instructor is not yet claiming ownership or the authoritative role, instead, he or she is communicating with the students as equals.

In the pre-opening sequences analyzed, the instructor speaks to one or two students before addressing the class as a whole. In the sequence below, the instructor speaks to an individual student.[3]

I (6): Where is everybody?

S: I don't know.

This brief exchange is followed by a few minutes of side conversations between students and a conversation between one student and the instructor. These happen before she

addresses the class as a whole. In another example, the instructor addresses the students as he enters the room and then has an individual conversation with a student about music as he is preparing for the day.

I (5): Here we go again.

S: (Laughter)

After that exchange, there is a pause while the instructor starts the computer. He then continues with a conversation about music directed to just one student. As students continue to enter the room, the instructor welcomes them, but does not assert himself as the owner of the floor. However, he does direct their attention to information on the whiteboard. It is clear, however, that he does not yet "own" the floor. The students are still conversing with each other during the following sequence:

I (5): C'mon in. Have a seat in your groups.

I: While you're waiting, you can write down these words. It'll be just the first ones here. And, of course, write down what you think is the best definition. Everybody always gets here early. Give it another couple minutes.

The instructor realizes that the floor is not yet his to claim. He references the time and the fact that all of the students have not yet arrived.

In yet another example, the instructor immediately begins talking to just one student. He follows that conversation with a question directed toward the entire class, but does not assert ownership of the floor until the next sequence. There are still multiple side conversations happening as he is preparing for the class.

I (2): All right. Travis, are you speaking today? All right, I guess we'll be seeing you the last week of the sememster. And is anyone else? Persuasive speech?

This question is followed by a student affirming that she will be speaking during class, so the instructor returns to Travis and says the following:

I (2): All right. Heather took your spot.

At this point the instructor has closed that conversation. Travis understands the expectation and knows that Heather will be speaking. This is an interesting "soft" opening because although he has not yet claimed the floor, when the instructor addresses the entire class, the students provide an answer, but then immediately resume their individual conversations. They understand that the instructor has not yet "officially" claimed the floor of the classroom.

Floor ownership by the instructor is always an expectation of the students, but until it is "official," the students work within their own collaboratively-developed floor which may or may not include the instructor. In this collaboratively-developed floor, the floor is open to all participants. The students view this talk as a "joint enterprise. Two key features of a collaborative floor are overlapping talk and the joint construction of utterances" (Coates and Sutton-Spence 518). Students know that they have the freedom to converse with other students about whatever topics they want.

However, when the instructor is ready to begin class, he or she will address the class as a whole. From the transcripts it is evident that the opening of the class serves a two-fold purpose. First, the official opening claims the floor at that moment, but more

importantly, it establishes a framework for the entire class period, thereby claiming ownership of the floor from the opening sequence through the closing sequence. The instructor's first claim on the floor is the call to attention. In the transcripts analyzed, four out of six of the instructors use discourse markers – either *okay* or *all right* – to seize the attention of the audience and the command of the floor. Discourse markers are "sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk" (Shiffrin 31). The discourse marker serves as the prompt for the class to begin listening to the instructor. Side conversations are no longer ratified; the expectation of the classroom is that the attention must be focused on the instructor. The discourse marker functions as a "minimal link" or an affirmative token before a topic change (Ainsworth-Vaughn 422) and is used by the instructor to transition into the next statement. In all the examples, the instructor moves directly from the discourse marker to his or her next statement. For example:

I (3): Okay, everybody, I'm going to give you a sheet to read.

Or

I (6): Okay, do you remember, last week we talked about [. . .]

It is important to note that none of the instructors ask for the floor or ask for the class's attention; instead the instructor asserts sole ownership of the floor by using the discourse marker to gain attention and then by simply continuing to talk.

The other function of the official opening of the class is to preview the rest of the class period. In this manner, the instructor not only asserts initial ownership of the floor, but also uses the preview to explain what he or she will be doing with this ownership. In the following examples, three different instructors specify the activities that will be

accomplished during class, during the week, and with the other students. This is a norm for this type of sequence, and examples are noted below:

I (5): I just want to give you an idea of what we're doing this week.

Or

I (3): Okay, this evening we are going to do some more work on "I" messages. [. . .] Then we're going to do an exercise on conflict, and then we're going to assess your conflict styles [. . .].

Or

I (4): We're going to do two things today.

By this use of a preview, he or she is not only claiming the floor for that minute in time, but also for the entire class period. The time reference/framework for the class lets students know that the instructor has a plan; it also ratifies the instructor as the owner of the floor and helps him or her maintain that ownership until the end of class. It may additionally contribute to an underlying collaborative nature of the floor since students are included in knowing the agenda.

End-of-Class Transitional Sequence

At the end of the class period, the instructor needs to relinquish the floor. The end-of-class transitional sequence stands opposite but parallels the beginning of class sequence, in which the instructor gains the floor and sets the stage to keep it throughout the class period. Even while the students are working on an activity, the floor is still maintained by the instructor. However, the final step in this sequence takes more than a

simple "good-bye." This final sequence begins with the cue that the class period is ending. In three of the recorded transcriptions, the ending of the class is actually broken down into three distinct pieces: an end of the lesson, a preview for the next class, and a distinct "goodbye."[4] Only after the dismissal is the floor relinquished; this floor relinquishment process is a potential site of conflict in floor management**.** Important information is disseminated in this final sequence, and it is imperative to hold the floor until the day's goals have been met. Students are generally eager to leave the classroom, but understand that they are still functioning as part of the collaborative floor until they are released from the classroom context. In three of the five recorded class endings, all three goals are accomplished at the very end of the class, but in the other two, the goals are accomplished in a much more gradual method because the instructor has allotted an end-of-class "work time" for the students; students are free to leave the classroom only after they have completed a specific group or individual activity.

The first goal of the closing sequence is to finish the day's lesson. The following example demonstrates this close:

I (3): Okay, ah, just before you leave now, I'd like you to tell me what did you learn about the power of some of our communication skills?

In this example, the instructor begins the statement with a discourse marker to indicate that the instructor is speaking to the entire group. She begins her question with a reminder that the end of class is approaching and then uses the question to reinforce what the class learned during that session.

In the next example, the instructor uses this portion of the sequence to help remind the students of the time constraints of the class.

I (5): So, we have, um, ten minutes left. You can use these ten minutes to get a rough draft of those guidelines – as much as you can.

He explains what he expects of them in the final minutes of class. This is the summation of what they were just discussing in class, so he is giving them time to work on the concept within their groups. As in the previous example, he also references the fact that the end of the class is nearing.

In the following example the instructor closes the lesson portion of the class by asking the students to do a "fist-to-five assessment", a quick evaluative tool, used to get an idea of the students' level of comfort with their new knowledge.

I (1): Okay. On a scale of "0," I don't know where to start, I am not enthused about this, I cannot believe I'm going to write, nor do I think I'll be able to, to "5," I am feeling pretty confident about at least getting started: I have sources, I have a plan. Let me see where you fit on a scale of "0 – 5."

This assessment functions as a bridge from one portion of the closing sequence to the next. It very succinctly finishes one section of the class and makes it easier for the instructor to explain or preview the expectations for the next class period.

The majority of the closing sequences recorded contain a next-class preview. The evidence supports the fact that instructors use the closing sequence to exert control over the future floor. By explaining to their students what is expected of them and what will be

accomplished in the next class period, they have already started claiming the floor for the following class period. For example, in the sequence that was started above, the instructor continues with the following:

> I (1): You want a good idea of your topic, a good idea of your sources, you have a good outline, so when I meet with you next week, you're set to go. I want a draft of the body, I want more than an outline. I want a word-processed draft with in-text documentation with headings and subheadings. I want you good to go for the middle.

This is a very specific list of the instructor's expectations for the following week. She uses a mitigated directive in the form of an "I" statement to explicitly lay out her expectations of what should be accomplished before the next class period. This mitigated directive helps maintain the collaborative environment by encouraging listenership without building defensiveness. The students listen to the expectations and understand what needs to be done for the following week.

In the next example, the instructor uses very similar language to preview future classes:

> I (3): Okay. For next week, I would just like you to show up, no WOWs. No, this is what I'd like you to do for next week [. . .] For next week I'd like you to use the time to catch up. [. . .] I do want you to come prepared with a topic that you will an informative speech about and in class we're gonna work again on outlines and thesis statements and goal statements.

She very clearly states her expectations for the following week. Again, this instructor uses "I" statements to state her directives rather than using "you" command language. She is speaking to the entire class without singling out the students who "need to catch up." Instead of harshly reprimanding the students who are behind, she helps them to "save face." The instructor, as stated by Goffman, is performing facework to "represent his [her] willingness to abide by the ground rules of social interaction" (316). Her aim is not to humiliate, but to maintain mutual respect within the floor. This allows the class and their listenership to continue**:** another sign of underlying collaboration. She then continues with her plan for the time during class the following week and includes herself in these plans through the use of the collaborative "we" statement at the end of the request. This helps her to bridge the gap between the two class sessions. The instructor in the following example uses the same collaborative language choices to preview the next class session, but he includes the following week in his preview:

I (5): Ah, just to close things for you here, what will happen is the next class, on Friday, we'll meet together and then we'll be moving to the computers as a group. Make your guidelines look very professional and creative, something you could post on the wall. Then we'll share them next week.

He explains to the class what they will do the next class period, but he also explains and sets up the project for the following week. The students know before they leave the classroom what will be accomplished in the following two weeks of the course. This management of future floor is part of the larger institutional context for an adult-learner classroom. Collaboratively, the instructor and the students must accomplish certain

learning objectives, tasks, and assignments to successfully complete the course. They need to work toward the same goal. Adult learners have a vested interest in not only *if* the requirements will be met, but also in *how* they will be met. Previews of future floor activities from one class period to the next not only help students understand that the instructor has a plan, but they also help maintain the floor from one class period to the next. If students have an idea of what will be happening the following week, they may be less likely to contest the floor ownership at the beginning of the next class period.

The final goal of the end-of-class transitional sequence is the dismissal. As discussed earlier, the institutional context of the classroom clearly has some very rigid expectations. The students understand that they may not leave the classroom without being granted permission by the instructor. A tightly-held instructor floor does not allow for this type of insurgency. Therefore, the students need to be dismissed; the instructor must give them permission to exit the classroom or indicate that the floor is no longer solely owned by the instructor. This statement or dismissal is the last statement made by the instructor to the class as a whole. The class and the instructor are not required to stop speaking at the dismissal, but rather they stop operating within the constraints of the floor. In other words, they have been released. For example, at this point the class could end with a note of thanks, a directive, or a simple goodbye:

I (3): Thank you very much everybody.

This simple thank you releases the group. This statement follows the class wrap up and the class preview for the next session. The following example is also the third in the closing sequence:

I (5): All right. Good work. Put your chairs back.

The instructor uses the discourse marker to gain the attention of the class, compliments them, and then dismisses them with an aggravated directive.

As mentioned earlier in this section, an alternative ending sequence was also evidenced in the transcriptions. If, at the end of class, the instructor allows class time to work on a project, the dismissal from the floor may be gradual, but it is still under the control of the instructor. In these cases, the instructor's final words to the entire class do not release the students from the floor, but allow them to build their own collaborative floors under the main classroom floor and work on a project. When the project is completed to the instructor's specifications or requirements, the students are dismissed individually and leave the classroom or exit the floor. The three components from the standard class exit, all students departing at one time, still exist; however, there are a few modifications to the timeline. In the exit previously described, the instructor controls the floor throughout the entire class period and dismisses the class as a group. In this second exit variation, the instructor still controls the floor, but the timing is different. For example:

I (4): All right. Now we're going to switch gears. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to get in your groups for the group presentation. You should all have research, so what I want from you before you leave is a comprehensive outline of your presentation.

Instead of closing the class down and dismissing everyone at once, the instructor specified items that needed to be accomplished before the learners could leave and gave

them a certain amount of time – until the end of class – to complete the project. This use of time allows for a more liberal interpretation of the end of the class on the part of the students. The expectation of the instructor is still clear, but the time given is not as specific. The students know exactly what they should be working on, and how the rest of class time will be spent. They understand the expectation of the instructor and the instructor is still managing the floor, yet she is giving the appearance of "relinquishing" the floor so that the students can accomplish the necessary tasks. The time implication in this example is that the student is free to exit the classroom, or leave the floor, once the work is complete. This allows for a gradual dismissal from the day's class. The students are responsible for managing their own collaborative subfloors to finish the tasks assigned.

Student Redirect Transitional Sequence

While working within their own collaborative subfloors, or within the instructor-developed floor, students can get distracted or lose focus. In this case, the instructor utilizes a redirective transitional sequence to maintain his or her control of the floor. This may be directed to one student, a few students, or all the students, whoever is being distracting or is distracted. It seems as though in an adult-learner classroom, as opposed to a primary school classroom, the redirection transition should not be necessary. However, the instructor has to be able to correct students who are undermining the efforts of his or her classmates and the instructor. In a singly-developed floor, "overlapping speech of any duration (more than a single word or syllable) signals conversational

malfunction, since the current speaker's right to the solo floor is being challenged" (Coates and Sutton-Spence 511). This challenge needs to be met; the instructor must reassert his or her right to the floor. However, this redirection should happen in a way that will allow the student to save "face." As asserted by Brown and Levison, it is "in general in every participants' best interest to maintain each other's face" (322). As an instructor, it is important to redirect effectively and efficiently, so the rest of the class does not get distracted and mutual respect is maintained. According to Goffman:

> The combined effect of the rule of self-respect and the rule of considerateness is that the person tends to conduct himself during an enounter so as to maintain both his own face and the face of the other participants. (308)

Respect for the other learners and the instructor is an important feature of an adult-learner classroom. Because of their varied backgrounds, adult learners in the technical college system come to the classroom with different needs, expectations, and education levels. Their reasons for choosing a technical college vary, but it is important to remember that they have widely different lives and experiences. It is possible that they are students right out of high school, but it is equally probable that they are returning to school for the first time in twenty years, that they were downsized from a job, or that they already have an advanced degree and are looking for a career change. Because of the challenge of returning to school, it is imperative that adult-learners are shown respect. There are times that a word of encouragement can make the difference between a student remaining in

school, and vice versa. If the redirect is interpreted as punitive or humiliating by the student, the student may not return to class or to school:

> Open, productive, and noncritical communication offers students an opportunity to relate what they do or do not know. Initimidation displayed by the instructor toward the learner slams the door on interaction and the opportunity for student growth. (Musinski 47)

Handling these situations in an effective and timely manner helps to maintain the collaborative nature of the floor. These acts of redirection are evidenced in the transcriptions; they occur at the discretion of the instructor and may take place at any time during the class, even interrupting other transitional moments.

A general redirection is used to move the class back "on topic." For example, in the following example the class has drifted off topic. A student related a story that she thought fit the example in the text, and the class began discussing that situation. The instructor realizes that the class is drifting too far from course material and says the following to tie the story back to the text:

> I (6): And I think that's what Cooper's trying to talk about in that persona scenario, making them real people.

She then continues with the following:

> I (6): Okay, here we are on 107. He talks about learning styles [. . .]

She utilizes the first statement to bring the group back under her controlled floor, and the second statement to keep them within the floor. By tying what they were discussing back to the the text for the class, she is reasserting herself as the owner of the floor. In the

second statement she utilizes the discourse marker to seize the floor and continue on. It is important to note that she does not reprimand or single out any students. She does not even directly address the fact that the class is off topic. Instead, she references the text and moves the class smoothly back to the topic.

Another type of redirection happens in a slightly different way. If the students are working in groups on an activity, but the instructor needs to ensure that they are operating within the parameters he or she set, the instructor may reassert him or herself over the floor. In the following example, the students are working in small groups on an activity, and a student asks a question. The instructor decides that the question's answer would be pertinent to the entire class, so he interrupts the working groups to say the following:

I (2): Guys, I need your attention please. I know we haven't done this in a while, so paraphrasing is short, simple, in your own words, easy to understand, example.

This acts as a redirect because the instructor's goal is to help them to accomplish their group work even more efficiently. After answering the question, the students returned to their groups, but with clearer directions. Again, the instructor at no point indicates that they are doing the work incorrectly; instead, he reminds them of how to do the activity correctly. He uses the redirect to ensure that they are operating acceptably within the floor parameters he has set.

The final type of redirect is actually more disciplinary in nature. Under the control of the instructor's floor, the students in the following example were to be working on a group activity. There are a number of side conversations happening in the classroom

that do not relate to the activity at hand. In a face-saving measure, the instructor redirects the group's attention by asking a question:

I (4): Are you working in your groups?

Again, she doesn't use command or accusatory language. Instead, she asks a pointed question that reminds the students that even though they are working together and in their own collaborative subfloors, they are still operating within the classroom floor at the direction of the instructor. This question immediately reasserts the instructor's ownership of the floor, and returns the learners to the assigned task. As the only task-oriented redirection within the transcriptions, this example is important because it illustrates the instructor's control over the floor while at the same time reinforcing the idea of the shared context of the floor.

The learners understand that the instructor holds the floor and they need to operate within it to accomplish the objectives for the day. In addition, the instructor does not hesitate to redirect the class when necessary. Given the need to save face, the redirect is a tension moment that needs to be well managed in order for the conversation to proceed; it also reveals collaboration on the part of the students and instructor for the instructor to manage the floor in the best interests of both parties.

Instructor Digression Transitional Sequence

Since the instructor has the power to redirect the students within the classroom floor, it follows that the instructor may at times need to redirect him or herself. Rather than asking for a modification of the students' behavior or conversation, a digression

transitional sequence is a self-repair of the instructor's behavior or conversation. According to Wardhaugh, a repair is a correction of "some kind of 'trouble' that arises during the course of conversation" (302). While there is only evidence of the digression transitional sequence happening two times within the transcriptions, the digresson is an important event because it provides evidence of the floor-holding power of the instructor and also reveals possible collaboration between the instructor and the students. Instead of changing the topic, he or she realizes the need to reverse course and return to the original topic. These digression transitional sequences are corrected immediately by a self-repair because "most repair is done within the turn in which the repairable occurs" (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 724). The learners understand that the instructor still controls the floor, so no objections are made as the instructor unilaterally switches to a different topic. In this example, the instructor does not even acknowledge the repair, yet the students follow the lead anyway:

> I (2): All right. So, what do you think? Group work. Our one and only group project, but of course, you've been working in groups the whole semester, right? I also have the speeches to hand back. Let's talk about those for a minute.

In the first portion of this statement, the instructor clearly seems to be moving toward discussing group work. He uses the discourse marker to seize the floor, asks a rhetorical question, answers it, adds a tag question, and then changes the topic. The final topic change is an unexpected shift. The students and the instructor seem to be prepared to discuss group work. Instead, the instructor adds the information about the speeches. The

students do not have the opportunity to fully make the shift to the group work topic before the instructor changes topic. Only the absolute owner of the floor could change the topic without regard to the previous topic. After the speech information is discussed, the instructor reverts to the original topic. In this way, he or she can continue to direct the class through the required materials.

The ability to revert back to a previously closed-down topic demonstrates the ultimate the control the instructor has over the classroom floor. In the following example, the instructor verbally repairs her attemped topic shift:

I (6): Okay, chapter four. Testing for user-centered design. Oh wait, before we go to Chapter 4, can we back up? I wanna just go around the room. What were your terms for chapter three?

The instructor marks the change in topic with a the discourse marker *okay*, and then announces the new chapter and its title. Immediately after uttering the new topic, she repairs the topic shift. She asks a rhetorical question stating her desire to return to the previous topic. This repair work is evidence of a deeper control over the floor. The students understand that the instructor owns the floor and has the ability to move within it however she or he sees fit, but this example also demonstrates the instructor's need for collaboration because she asks if they can "back up." She would not ask the question if she did not feel it necessary to encourage the development of the collaborative nature of the floor. The instructor does have the sole ability to control topic changes and can repair any mistakes made in the development of the class period, yet without the collaborative context, the digression would not help to move the class forward.

Activity/Topic Transitional Sequences

Apart from the transitional sequences used to open, close, or redirect, there are two other types of transitional sequences necessary for the instructor to manage the class period: the short activity transitional sequence and the topic change transitional sequence. Effective management of these transitions is necessary to move the class through the required content throughout each class period. The fundamental difference between the two types is that the activity transition helps to move the students into and out of an activity while the topic transition helps move the students from one topic to the next. Throughout the six recorded transcripts, there is evidence of 67 separate transitional transitional sequences. Of the 67 sequences, 22 of them were activity transitions and 45 were topic transitions.

Activity Transitional Sequence

Of the 67 transitions identified within the transcriptions, 22 function to transition the students from passively listening to the instructor to actively participating in whatever activity is prescribed by the instructor. The activity may include leaving the classroom, working in groups of two or three people, or working individually on a project. The instructor's goal in using this type of transition is to move the students into an activity in an expedient manner. The instructor needs to "set-up" the activity, explain it, and set a timeframe for the students participating in the activity. The instructor is actually building a collaborative floor within his or her singly-developed floor.

In order to understand the instructor's request or objective, the student needs to know the context for the concept. The instructor may use personal experience, textbook

examples, or another teaching method to assist the students with their understanding of the activity or concept before they are moved into the learning activity. The instructor must preview the activity for the students before the transition can occur. In this case, the instructor also needs to "relinquish the floor" or at least give the appearance of "giving up the floor" so the students can freely discuss the information or perform the action required of the instructor. Although the instructor is no longer speaking, he or she still controls the floor since the students are completing the activity according to his or her direction.

To maintain that floor the instructor needs to manage the time that the students have to complete the activity. Since the instructor's responsibility is to cover the course material within a certain amount of time, the material must be managed over a time continuum. The data suggests that time is a primary concern and a primary method to manage the floors and subfloors within the class period. When transferring the floor to the students to accomplish a task, it is important that the students be allowed to complete the activity, but it is equally important for the instructor to manage the time allotted for that activity. In 68% of the activity transitional sequences, the instructor references time. The time notation could be the amount of time the students have to complete the activity, to prepare them for approximately how long they will be discussing a certain topic, to tell them what is expected of them within a certain timeframe, or to let them know how much time they have for their break. In all cases though, it frames the class time allotted for that activity so that the students are aware that they need to finish what was requested within those constraints.

To manage an activity, the instructor might limit the amount of time the students are allowed to work on it. For example:

I (3): Share your "I" messages. I will give you five minutes for them, and then we'll come back and go over them.

In this example the instructor gives a very specific command and then with the use of an "I" directive, opens the floor for the students to perform within it. However, she limits the time that the students may operate within a collaborative floor within her unilaterally developed floor.

In this next example, the students are working within their groups and the instructor attempts to summon them back to the large group:

I (3): Okay, one more minute.

Would you like a few more minutes?

Okay.

Okay, I've had a request for another couple minutes, so we'll go another couple minutes.

The instructor's initial attempt to summon the group back to the larger group to discuss the activity was modified because the students indicated that they needed more time to accomplish the activity. After indicating they would like to keep their collaborative floor open, the instructor agreed. However, the students could not have kept their subfloor open without first ratifying their request with the instructor. The instructor also demonstrated respect for their collaborative subfloor by asking if the students needed more time to complete the activity. When they responded in the affirmative, she did not

close their floor. However, after the few minutes were over, she closed their collaborative floors by saying the following:

I (3): Okay, I'd like you to come back to the large group, please.

Again, she demonstrates ownership of the classroom floor. She neither asks nor commands, but the intent is the same. Their collaboratively-developed subfloors are now closed, and the attention must once again be focused on the instructor. The learners ratify her request by listening.

In addition to being specific about time to complete activities, instructors may use "time-oriented" words to help let their students know what to expect during the class period. In the following examples, the instructor is letting the students know exactly how long he plans to speak about a certain topic:

I (5): All right. So, I need you to take notes for just a little bit, ten minutes, most.

Again, the instructor uses the "I" message for his directive, and then softens it even further by downplaying the amount of time the students will need to be doing that note-taking activity. Instructors may also use smaller references to time. These smaller references are not time specific, but provide the students with the concept of a smaller chunk of time. Words such as *quick second, little bit,* or *a minute or two* assist the instructor in communicating the idea that the next piece of information will not take long to grasp. For example,

I (5): So why don't you take a quick second and let's do this.

OR

I (5): So, I'll give everyone a minute.

Including time in these directives helps to preview the activity for the students. They know up front how much time the instructor has planned for this activity.

The next use of time is the more specific time allowed for breaks. Each three-hour class at our campus is allowed two ten-minute breaks. The role of the instructor is to manage these breaks; therefore, breaks can be thought of as an activity to be managed within the constraints of the classroom floor. If students do not come back to the classroom on time after breaks, valuable class time is lost. Exerting his or her control over the floor during break time is imperative for the instructor to maintain the floor. Within the activity transitions, three breaks were noted. In the first example, the instructor notes the time the break begins and the time that she will begin speaking again.

I (3): Okay. It is 7:30. I will begin at twenty to eight. Have a good ten-minute break, and I'll see you in ten minutes.

Within the 24 words, she repeats the fact that the break is ten minutes in length three times. This repetition reinforces the time of the break within the minds of the students. She also previews the next transition by stating when she will begin again. The students know that even though they are not in the classroom, they are still within the managed floor of the classroom. Repetition is used in the following example as well:

I (2): We've just got a couple more items left a couple of groups, so let's do this. In order to make those groups work harder under pressure, let's take a ten-minute break and then come back. Okay? Ten minutes, then we'll go over these.

However, in addition to the repetition, the instructor is also managing the collaborative subfloor of the groups that are performing the activity. Those groups that are still working do not get to take advantage of the entire ten-minute break. He excludes those groups from the break time until they have finished the activity. He is using his singly-developed floor to influence the collaborative subfloor within the activity.

Consistently using time references to manage the floor seems to be a significant method instructors utilize to reinforce the development of the classroom floor. Another tactic used within my CofP, and mentioned above, is the use of the "I" message. The "I" message is emblematic of the adult-learner classroom floor. Assertive in nature, it is still slightly mitigated and plays an important role in maintaining the collaborative nature of the adult-learner classroom. Within the activity transitions, the "I" message is used in 73% of the directives. There are only four instances where the "you" command is used without an accompanying "I" message. In other words, the imperative stands alone less than 20% of the time. This assertiveness technique is best demonstrated in the following examples:

I (3): I would like you to create a situation and role play for us a bad way to handle conflict with that person and a good way to handle conflict with that person.

OR

I (1): I'll meet you at the door with your partner.

In each of these examples, the instructor is giving the students specific instructions as to what they should be doing within the constraints of the classroom floor. She is directing

them to perform a task. By stating her request within an "I" message, she is reinforcing her ownership of the floor in a way that builds collaborativeness, not defensiveness, but floor ownership is not contested; the instructor does not give the opportunity for the learners to question his or her expectations. "I" messages allow the instructor or anyone else who utilizes them to assertively state the actions or behavior required of the listeners. Combined with the classroom context, the "I" message is an extremely effective transitional technique. Within the context of the adult-learner classroom, the instructor wants to assert his or her authority without sounding too authoritarian or patronizing. An effective classroom allows for participation without compromising the instructor's inherent right to the floor. An "I" message allows the instructor to move the students from activity to activity without question, but also without ordering the students to do certain tasks:

I (1): Okay, then I'll take one of your instruction sets per group, and I will meet you and your partner at the door.

In this example, it might have been easier to say "hand in your instructions and go to the door." However, the "I" message is just as effective a command without the harshness of the imperative.

In contrast, the following example utilizes the imperative form of the verb:

I (1): So, stick your pieces of paper up on the wall where they fit and come back in ten minutes.

This is only one of four times the "you" directive stands alone the transitional sequences. In all of the examples where the "you" directive is used in conjunction with an "I"

message, the "I" message comes first. The instructor leads with what he or she wants or needs the group to do and follows with the imperative. So, even in cases where there is a "you" directive combined with an "I" message, the "I" message is first. For example:

> I (4): Here's what I want you to do. I want you to get in your groups for the group presentation. You should all have research, so what I want from you before you leave is a comprehensive outline of your presentation. So you need to start combining ideas, you need to let each group member know what you will be talking about, you need to write some good, smooth transitions statements.

In this example, she leads with what she expects and then follows that with what the students need to do to accomplish the expectations. The next example differs slightly:

> I (1): I'll meet you at the door with your partner. If you weren't here last week, sit tight.

Again, the expectations of the instructor for the majority of the students are clear, but the students who were absent are issued their instructions in the command form of the language. This aggravated directive is used "only if the speaker does not fear retribution" (Brown and Levinson 327). The students know that since they were not present the week before, they cannot participate. There is an expectation that they will not be treated the same as the students who were present.

An activity change transitional sequence is important because its success or failure is immediately observable. If the learners participate in the activity, the transition was successful, and if they do not, the floor can be lost. The instructor must then

immediately reword the transition so that a conversational breakdown does not occur. Within the adult-learner classroom, it is imperative that this type of transitional sequence be skillfully handled. The line delineating the success of the transition is clear. However, in a topic change transitional sequence, success is not so easily observed.

Topic Change Transitional Sequence

The most ubiquitous type of transitional sequence observed in the data is the topic change. Topic changes are used to introduce an assignment, explain a new concept, or discuss a graded assignment. Instructors must be mindful of the amount of material that must be covered in a given class period and need to be certain to move the students from topic to topic effectively and efficiently. Through the use of topic changes, the instructor closes down one topic and begins the next. This is the opposite of what happens in typical "conversations," where one participant closes down the topic and then the other participant has the option to introduce a new topic. In addition to a topic change, this may result in a floor shift. However, in the classroom context, the learners do not have the opportunity to introduce a new topic unless that request is ratified by the instructor.

The instructor alone has the power to introduce and maintain shifts in topic. This finding is similar to Ainsworth-Vaughn's research on patient-doctor relationships where she concluded that "physicians, because of their status as gatekeepers to information and treatment are the ones who have the most interactional power" (424). The purpose of this sequence is similar to the activity-change sequence; however, the students are not expected to physically participate. They may, however, be asked to verbally participate or to participate through withholding talk. In either case, the students need to follow an

instructor-created topic shift by becoming active listeners in order to ratify the instructor as the speaker. The instructor may allow the learners to participate in the discussion or ask questions, but ultimately, the instructor controls the conversational topic shifts. To hold the floor, the instructor is responsible for both the opening and the closing of the topic transitions. The evidence from the data supports that the "opening" and the "closing" of a topic are usually accomplished at the same time by the instructor.

According to Schegloff and Sacks, the instructor will need to "close down the topic" in order ascertain that the students comprehend the instructions before moving on to the next activity (295). The topic does not simply end; it must be brought to a close by the instructor. In non-classroom conversations, a terminal exchange must occur to ensure that the topic is closed and the conversation is over. An official closing happens to "co-converationalists at a point where one speaker's completion will not occasion another speaker's talk, and that will not be heard as some speaker's silence" (Schegloff and Sacks 265).

Within the topic-change transitional sequence, evidence suggests that the instructor relies on the absence of a response from the learners, rather than the completion of an adjacency pair, to move to a new topic. An adjacency pair, according to Schegloff and Sacks, is a sequence which has the following features: "(1) two utterance length, (2) adjacent positioning of component utterances, (3) different speakers producing each utterance" (265). The classroom context does not usually require that the learners complete the adjacency pair in order for the topic to close. In 68% of the topic-transition sequences noted in the transcripts, the instructor arbitrarily closes the topic with the use

of a discourse marker and an indication of the next topic. In this case, the discourse marker is being used as a back channel, "confirming the reception of a message as it is being delivered" [including the instructor's own message]. At the beginning of the the turn, the discourse marker retains "the function of marking topic transition" (Ainsworth-Vaughn 419). He or she does not even consider that there may possibly be a need for a change in speaker. For example:

I (6): Okay. Chapter 4. Testing for user-centered design.

The instructor in this example closes down the previous topic and moves to the next without pause. The chapter number and title are said as a statement, leaving no room for the learners to object to the topic change. In the next example, the instructor uses the same technique, but includes himself in the directive to help maintain the collaborative classroom environment:

I (5): Okay, so let's go to the vocabulary.

The discourse marker notes the end and the beginning of a new topic. In these examples, the instructor is very clearly changing the topic within the managed classroom floor, and expects the learners to adapt to this change. The instructor is making a "topic shift in a relatively unilateral way, that is without reciprocal closure activities. [This indicates that the instructor] has exercised control over the topic rather than control being shared" (Ainsworth-Vaughn 414).

In the other 32% of the topic transitions, the instructor closes down the topic, introduces a new topic, and invites the learners to participate in the new topic through the use of a question. Questions used to invite the learners into the conversations can range

from very specific content-related questions to very general, almost rhetorical questions. However, in both cases, the instructor is clearly seeking to elicit a response from the learners. In the first example, the instructor is asking for personal input from the learners:

> I (3): Okay, I'd like you to take out your Exploring Conflict – the other paper I asked you to do for today. I asked you to think about a conflict situation that you've been involved in. First of all, what happens inside you and what do you do when something or someone bugs you? What happens to you, inside you?

She changes the topic through her use of the discourse marker "okay" and her reference to a worksheet that the students worked on before attending that day's class. She asks two questions regarding the worksheet and waits for the answers. She has efficiently switched topics and engaged the learners in a new discussion while still maintaining the floor. The question at the end of the sequence ratifies the learners' participation. The question is directed to the whole class; the contextual setting of the adult-learner classroom then allows any of the students to either participate or indicate their willingness to participate through raising their hands or speaking.

In another example, the learners are also being asked to participate through the use of an interrogative, but the intent of the instructor is not to get them to fully engage, rather it is to ensure that the material to be covered is the right material.

I (5): Okay, so we're gonna be talking about guidelines next. Just wanted to check with you, did I share with you the guidelines? Or the rules for guidelines or not?

The instructor's question is not an invitation for the students to begin discussing guidelines. Their participation in a discussion about guidelines has not been ratified; the students are only being asked whether or not the instructor has already covered that material. By asking the question in this format, the instructor is able to maintain a tight floor. The students can add to the conversation, but are limited by the scope of the question. In this example, the students are "co-participants in the floor. They may give minimal responses to "signal among other things support [. . . for the] speaker's solo occupancy of the floor" (Coates and Sutton-Spence 507).

Another interrogative device employed by the instructor that limits the scope of the learners' participation is the rhetorical tag question. Unlike the other two types of questions, the rhetorical tag question does not require a response from the student. The instructor asks the question, but does not expect or want the students to respond verbally. Instead, the rhetorical tag question functions as the beginning of a closing adjacency pair and the silence acts as the closing. In the following example, the instructor uses two rhetorical questions. He proceeds to answer both of them. The students' participation is not ratified through the use of this type of question.

I (2): All right. So, what do you think? Group work. Our one and only group project, but of course, you've been working in groups the whole semester, right?

Instead, the instructor is using this device to transition to the new topic. In the next example, the instructor uses the rhetorical tag question as a bridge between the prior topic and the new topic.

I (1): So, now you have this big pile of research for your research paper, right? I find when I write that starting is the hardest.

Again, there is no opening or expectation that the students will or should participate. The instructor begins with a discourse marker, makes a statement, adds a rhetorical question, and immediately launches into her own experience. The tag question is used to draw the students as listeners into the topic and into the preview for the next topic of conversation.

Through the use of these unilateral topic transitions, the instructor moves the students from topic to topic through the course. Each time an instructor needs to change the topic, there is a potential for conversational breakdown, so the instructor must skillfully manage these transitions. The learners, through their listenership, ratify the floor and this contribution reveals that basic collaboration allows the instructor to control the floor, thus making the classroom a hybrid floor.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

Although the data strongly supports the idea that the instructor is responsible for holding the adult-learner classroom floor, it is also evident that the instructor cannot do this alone. Without the acknowledgement and ratification of the learners in the shared institutional context, it would be impossible to transition students from one activity or topic to the next. This underlying and necessary collaboration makes it impossible to categorize the classroom floor as either a true collaborative floor or as a singly-developed floor. Instead, based on the preliminary evidence from my study, I believe that the adult-learner classroom floor is a hybrid floor. Since all participants share a common goal – mastery of the course material – it is in the best interest of the learners to assist the instructor by honoring his or her right to the floor. It is, however, ultimately still the instructor's responsibility to effectively facilitate floor management.

Floor management can best be captured in the transitional sequences that hold the course together throughout the class and throughout the semester. If the instructor does not have tight control of these transitional sequences, the learners may opt out of the developed floor. To maintain the floor even through these instances of potential conversational breakdown is a true hallmark of effective floor management. Instructors facilitate these transitional sequences to enhance the collaborative nature of the adult-learner classroom and to continue to control the hybrid floor. Learners who participate in the instructor's hybrid floor assist the instructor in maintaining that floor. They are

allowed to participate in it, but they do not have equal access to it; they know that because of the classroom context, they cannot control it.

Participation and engagement in the hybrid floor is an expectation of the adult-learner classroom context and is best managed through the transitional sequences. The analysis of these six types of transitional sequences reveals commonalities and patterns among and between the sequences. In particular, there are similarities within my CofP with how instructors use mitigated and aggravated directives, discourse markers, face-saving techniques, and interrogatives to transition their classes and to manage the classroom floor. However, the most startling conclusion is the consistent reference to time throughout the recorded class sessions.

According to the data, how instructors manage time within the class period and throughout the semester is vital to the success of their floor-holding power. Instructors not only manage time at the beginning of class, at the end of class, and at break time, but they must also control the time spent on discussion topics and the time learners spend in collaborative subfloors. Instructors are fully cognizant of the appropriate time to claim the floor as their own, and learners follow the lead of the instructor. The instructor then continually controls the time spent in each portion of the class period. It is important to note that the instructor does this verbally. By letting the students know what to expect and when to expect it, the instructor is facilitating his or her own hybrid classroom floor. If the floor were truly singly-developed without any collaboration, these verbal references to time would not be necessary. The instructor could just continue moving through the material without regard to time constraints. However, if instructors withheld these verbal

references to time, the collaboration evident in my data would not be as prominent because the instructor would not be facilitating the shared use of time over the class period and more importantly, throughout the semester.

By utilizing previews of objectives to be accomplished during the class period, before the next class, and before the end of the semester, the instructor not only manages the current class floor, but also sets up the expectation for control over future class floors. Within the adult-learner context, this is imperative because both the learners and the instructor understand that there is a certain amount of material that must be covered within the semester, and learners must understand how and when that material will be covered and these previews result in a more collaborative classroom. In addition, when the learners are excused from the classroom, they know what is expected of them and what will be accomplished in the next session. Managing the course over a semester-long time continuum assists in establishing the hybrid floor for each class session. The instructor can build upon the preview from the previous week and begin the next class session without struggling to establish a collaborative hybrid floor.

Management of the hybrid floor is also reliant on certain language uses to effectively transition learners into and out of the floor and activities within the floor. In particular, a hybrid floor requires that the owner of the floor encourage collaboration to successfully manage the floor. Within my CofP, instructors' uses of mitigated assertiveness and face-saving linguistic strategies seem to be necessary to establish and maintain effective floors within their adult-learner classrooms. Face-saving techniques and mitigated directives in the form of "I" messages were the two most prevalent types of

phrasing found within the transitional sequences. Both of these function to maintain the collaborative nature of the adult-learner classroom.

Without this collaboration within and between the transitional sequences, it would be impossible for the instructor to manage these potential tension areas within the transitions and the floor would be lost. My research and findings should be considered a first step in understanding the hybrid nature of the adult-learner classroom floor. A larger, quantitative study would serve to validate these preliminary findings. A next step in research might be to learn whether primary and secondary school classrooms also function with a form of a hybrid floor. Do teachers at those institutions use similar transitional sequences, mitigated directive strategies, and references to time? In addition, researchers may want to measure the effectiveness of managing these transitional floor-holding sequences, or perhaps to learn under what circumstances the transitional moment breaks down completely and the floor is lost. Finally, another question would be to widen the scope of the study to determine whether or not my discovery of the hybrid floor within my CofP translates into institutions and classrooms where assertiveness techniques are not emphasized or taught by the instructors.

APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
OSHKOSH

March 14, 2008

Ms. Rebecca Kinser
1338 Tuckaway Ct.
Menasha, WI 54952

Dear Ms. Kinser:

On behalf of the UW Oshkosh Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Participants (IRB), I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved for the following research: The Dynamics of Power in an Adult-Learner Classroom: How Instructors' Language Choices Maintain, Regain, or Relinquish Control.

Your research protocol has been classified as EXEMPT. This means you will not be required to obtain signed consent. However, unless your research involves **only** the collection or study of existing data, documents, or records, you must provide each participant with a summary of your research that contains all of the elements of an Informed Consent document, as described in the IRB application material. Permitting the participant, or parent/legal representative, to make a fully informed decision to participate in a research activity avoids potentially inequitable or coercive conditions of human participation and assures the voluntary nature of participant involvement.

Please note that it is the principal investigator's responsibility to promptly report to the IRB Committee any changes in the research project, whether these changes occur prior to undertaking, or during the research. In addition, if harm or discomfort to anyone becomes apparent during the research, the principal investigator must contact the IRB Committee Chairperson. Harm or discomfort includes, but is not limited to, adverse reactions to psychology experiments, biologics, radioisotopes, labeled drugs, or to medical or other devices used. Please contact me if you have any questions (PH# 920/424-7172 or e-mail: rauscher@uwosh.edu).

Sincerely,

Dr. Frances Rauscher

Dr. Frances Rauscher
IRB Chair

cc: Margaret Hostetler
1337

APPENDIX B

Research Project Information Sheet

Research Project Information Sheet
Thesis for MA in English
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Research Project Title: The Dynamics of Power in an Adult-Learner Classroom: How Instructors' Language Choices Maintain, Regain, or Relinquish Control

The purpose of this summary is to describe the research project and to explain the study's scope, aims, and purpose.

Research Topic: My research interest is in how language is used by the instructor in the college (adult-learner) classroom. I will study how instructors maintain, regain, and/or relinquish control of their adult learners at the beginning of class, at the beginning and end of a class activity, and during those times when words are needed to refocus the class's or an individual student's attention. I will focus my research on issues of how language choices affect the power dynamic of the classroom and on how the gender of the instructors may influence language choice.

Data Collection: The speech data will be collected by recording device during Spring Semester 2008 in Communication Skills classes at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton or Oshkosh, Wisconsin and through an email survey.

Participation is voluntary: The acquisition of knowledge from this project will accrue only to the student researcher. There will be no public use made of this data. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.

Participation is confidential: Any personal information that appears in the data will be treated confidentially. Information which identifies you as an individual will not be released, without your consent, to anyone for purposes which are not directly related to this research study.

If you have any question about this project, or your rights, you may call or write:

Rebecca Kinser
1338 Tuckaway Court
Menasha, WI 54952
920-954-1018
kinser@fvtc.edu

If you have any complaints relating to the project you may contact the chair of the UW Oshkosh Institutional Review Board.

You will be given a copy of this statement, which serves to acknowledge the fact that you have been informed about the project and that you have voluntarily agreed to participate.

NOTES

1. The pedagogical style of this course, unbroken lecture, made it too different from the other courses, which were group discussion-based, for comparison. Including this data would have taken my study beyond its scope.
2. To protect their privacy recorded instructors are not listed by name, but rather are marked with the numbers 1 – 6.
3. Within this study, I denote the instructor as "I:" and all student responses as "S:".
4. One instructor's recording abruptly shut off before the end of the class, so there is no data from the closing of that class.

WORKS CITED

Ainsworth-Vaughn, Nancy. "Topic Transitions in Physician-Patient Interviews: Power, Gender, and Discourse Change." Language in Society (1992): 409-426.

Bacon, Susan. "Taking and Keeping the Floor in the Elementary Foreign-Language Classroom: The Strategies of One Child." Hispania 74.1 (1991): 163-174.

Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. "Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage." The Discourse Reader. Ed. Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland. London: Routledge, 1999. 321-35.

Burt, Susan Meredith. "Solicitudes in American English." International Journal of Applied Linguistics 13.1 (2003): 78 - 95.

Coates, Jennifer and Rachel Sutton-Spence. "Turn-Taking Patterns in Deaf Conversation." Journal of Sociolinguistics (2001): 507 - 529.

Coates, Jennifer. "One-at-a-Time: The Organization of Men's Talk." Langauge and Masculinity. Ed. Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998. 107-129.

Crawford, Mary. Talking Difference: On Gender and Language. Ed. Sue Wilkins. London: SAGE Publications, 1995.

Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConnell-Ginet. "Communities of Practice: Where Language, Gender, and Power All Live." Language and Gender: A Reader. Ed. Jennifer Coates. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1998. 484-494.

Edelsky, Carole. "Who's Got the Floor?" Gender and Conversational Interaction. Ed. Deborah Tannen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 189 -227.

Goffman, Erving. "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction." The Discourse Reader. Ed. Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland. London: Routledge, 1999. 306-20.

Heimlich, Joe E., and Emmalou Norland. Developing Teaching Style in Adult Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.

Holmes, Janet. Managing in Style: Flexible Discourse at Work. Rep. no. 143. ERIC. Polk Library, Oshkosh. ERIC document reproduction service no. ED 427 545.

Holmes, Janet, and Meredith Marra. "Relational Practice in the Workplace: Women's Talk or Gendered Discourse?" Language in Society 33 (2004): 377-98.

Jones, Rod and Joanna Thornborrow. "Floors, Talk, and the Organization of Classroom Activities." Language in Society 33.3 (2004): 399-423.

Knowles, Malcolm Shepherd. The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species. 4th ed. Houston: Gulf Pub. Co, 1990.

Levinson, Stephen C. Pragmatics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Litosseliti, Lia. Gender & Language: Theory and Practice. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Maynard, Douglas W. "Placement of Topic Changes in Conversation." Semiotica 30.3/4 (1980): 263-290.

Musinski, Barbara. "The Educator as a Facilitator: A New Kind of Leadership." Nursing Forum 34 (1999): 23-29. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO. Polk Library, Oshkosh. 8 June 2009 <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=2153701&site=ehost-live>.

Neufeldt, Victoria, and Andrew N. Sparks, eds. "Floor." Def. 4. Webster's New World Dictionary. 1995. 228.

Okamoto, Dina G and Lynn Smith-Lovin. "Changing the Subject: Gender, Status, and the Dynamics of Topic Change." American Sociological Review 66.6 (2001): 852-873.

Sacks, Harvey, Emanuel A. Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation." Language 50.4 (1974): 696-735.

Schegloff, Emanuel A. and Harvey Sacks. "Opening Up Closings." The Discourse Reader. Ed. Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland. London: Routledge, 1999. 306-20.

Schegloff, Emanuel A. "Discourse, Pragmatics, Conversation, Analysis." Discourse Studies. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1999. 405 - 435.

Schiffrin, Deborah. Discourse Markers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Schmidt, Richard W., and Jack C. Richards. "Speech Acts and Second Language Learning." Applied Linguistics 1 (1980): 129-57. WISCAT. Fox Valley Technical College, Appleton, WI.

Schultz, Jeffrey J., Susan Florio and Frederick Erickson. "Where's the Floor? Aspects of the Cultural Organization of Social Relationships in Communication at Home and in School." Children in and out of School: Ethnography and Education. Ed. P. Galimore and A.A. Glattham. Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982. 88-110.

Verderber, Rudolph F. and Kathleen S. Verderber. Communicate! 12th Edition. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008.

Wardhaugh, Ronald. An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. Fourth Edition. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002.

West, Candace and Angel Garcia. "Conversational Shift Work: A Study of Topical Transitions Between Women and Men." Social Problems 35.5 (1988): 551-575.