

**ACTOR COACHING: TALKING PERFORMANCE INTO BEING**

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What does it mean to coach actor(s) on a monologue or scene? Directors and teachers of acting have long referred to the practice of “actor coaching,” yet, despite an omnipresence in the field, there is virtually no theorization of the activity. So, how *do* coaches use language, dramatic text, and embodiment to communicate knowledge and develop performance? This study forges an interdisciplinary framework that uses theatre and performance studies scholarship and Vygotskian-based sociocultural learning theory, a subfield of the learning sciences, to examine the multimodal talk of a seasoned acting instructor over the course of a university-level acting class. Employing ethnographic methods, data drew from observations, written fieldnotes, analytical memos, interviews with the participants, and roughly twenty-five hours of digital video footage, which formed the chief data set. To examine the video corpus, and to locate the instructor’s coaching register, the study relied on interaction analysis, sociolinguistic methods of register analysis, and prior research on the language of sports coaching. Analyzing the instructor’s talk, as it emerged over time and interactivity, revealed four gross registers of actor coaching, which were enacted in varying participatory frames and coalesced to create implicit participatory norms. In turn, these norms served to reduce the asymmetrical power dynamics inherent in actor coaching and teaching, reify the constitutive ‘rules’ of realistic performance, and cultivate dialogic interactions that required a partial perspective taking from the coach, character, and/or student standpoint. Linguistic analysis of the coaching register yielded a

repertoire of discursive moves (*questions of knowing, eventcasts, telegraphic utterances*) the instructor contingently issued to challenge and develop performance, as well as maintain student motivation. Functionally, actor coaching demanded the student reside within a space of public attention, communicational interplay, affect, metacognition, performance, and revision. The study concludes by theorizing actor coaching as *situated* in cultural-historical settings that privilege particular performance traditions and texts, *dialogically* dependent upon communicative interaction and co-perspective taking, and guided by a coach's *scaffolded* language use. As a theory-building project, the study suggests that actor coaching is a significant disciplinary resource for theatre studies and worthy of future analysis.

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## **PREFACE**

This project would not have been possible without the assistance of a good many people; it is my intention to thank a number of them here. First, I want to thank my husband, Chuck Munter, and our children, Harvey and Margot, along with my parents, Bill and Georganne Syler; words cannot express their constant love and encouragement. Second, the interdisciplinary nature of this project would not have been feasible without the expert guidance of Dr. Ellice Forman and Dr. Bruce McConachie, as well as the support of my committee, Dr. Michelle Granshaw and Dr. Jennifer Waldron. Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to “Professor D” and his students who allowed me to learn from, and with, their class community. Thank you.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

If we are to fulfill our mission of supporting and advancing the study and practice of theatre and performance in higher education, we need to gain a greater understanding of the full shape and texture of our profession. How can we set goals, plan actions, and even know if we're advancing our mission if we don't know where we are as a field?

—Henry Bial, “Babysteps,” 2013

It is one of the great ironies of theatre scholarship that what most of us do, few of us study.

—Patti P. Gillespie, *Teaching Theatre Today*, 2005

The quotes above represent a contradiction in the field of theatre and performance studies in the United States. In the first statement, former ATHE president Henry Bial issues a practical plea for a deeper understanding of the profession in light of a fast-changing academic climate. In the second quote, however, Professor Emerita Patti Gillespie acknowledges that most theatre researchers do not study our field's classrooms or artistic practices. In the “Prologue” to *Teaching Theatre Today* (2005), Gillespie goes on to explain one reason for this irony is the profession's break from the field of education—a rift she identifies as occurring in the 1960s. Put

together, the quotes demonstrate both the practical needs and the scholarly constraints surrounding theatre and performance studies programs in liberal arts settings.

Despite this tension, there is a subset of research that concerns the teaching and learning of performance in higher education (Flitsos & Medford, 2005; Jackson, 2004; Kindelan, 2012; Smith, McConachie, & Blair, 2001; Stucky & Wimmer, 2002). Additionally, the practitioner journal *Theatre Topics* provides an important venue for academics to problematize practice and theorize classroom and rehearsal experience. In general, the scholarship in this line of research uses practitioners' lived experiences as case studies or models for undergraduate curricula. Additionally, scholars often employ tools of humanistic inquiry, such as literary analysis and historiography, to demonstrate how syllabi, textbooks, institutional goals, and policies have changed throughout the twentieth century to support shifting epistemologies in the field and the larger university setting. To use the curricular framework of education researcher Andrew Porter, this vein of theatre studies research typically examines the "*intended curriculum*" and, to a lesser extent, the "*assessed curriculum*" and "*learned curriculum*" (2006, p. 141, emphasis mine).

Although I am indebted to this line of theatre studies scholarship, what I view to be missing from the academic conversation is a serious and thorough account of Porter's fourth tenet, the "*enacted curriculum*"—that is, what actually happens in an undergraduate performance classroom in a liberal arts setting (2006, p. 141, emphasis mine).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, there is virtually no research in theatre studies that makes use of what contemporary learning scientists now know

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<sup>1</sup> Although most U.S. theatre and performance studies scholarship does not engage in qualitative empirical studies of performance learning, the wider international field does. In particular, Britain, Canada, and Australia have robust theatre- and drama-in-education programs led by prominent figures that are recognizable to U.S. scholars—for example, Helen Nicholson, John O'Toole, Dorothy Heathcote, and Cecily O'Neill. However, this research tends to examine performance learning in primary and secondary contexts, and less in sites of higher learning.

about how learning works when enacted both “in the wild”<sup>2</sup> and in formal educational settings. The learning sciences constitute an interdisciplinary field that, since the 1970s, has brought together researchers from disciplines such as cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and education to examine the nature of learning. The mission statement of the International Society of the Learning Sciences states that the field connects researchers, “interested in learning experiences across schools, homes, workplaces and communities, and who seek to understand how learning and collaboration is enabled by knowledge, tools and networks, and multiple contexts of experience and layers of social structures” (Pea, 2009). Since the formal inception of the learning sciences in 1991, the field has provided a number of important findings based on empirical studies of learning, which have proven influential for primary and secondary schooling, as well as for higher education—for example, the importance of deeper conceptual understanding, a focus on student learning processes, the creation of learning environments that harness “real-world problems,” the significance of prior knowledge, reflection and metacognition (Sawyer, 2014, pp. 2-3).

Within the learning sciences, the branch of sociocultural research has had an important impact in terms of explaining the cultural, individual, and social nature of learning. Vera John-Steiner and Holbrook Mahn note that sociocultural approaches to learning and development emphasize, “the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge” (1996, p. 191). Sociocultural approaches were first systematized by Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (and his contributors), in the 1920s and 1930s in Russia. During a time when most psychologists emphasized either an internal/subjective explanation of the mind

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<sup>2</sup> This is a reference to Edwin Hutchins’s deeply influential book, *Cognition in the Wild* (1995).

or an external/behaviorist understanding of human activity, Vygotsky rejected Cartesian dichotomy. Instead, Vygotsky argued that, “all knowledge began as visible social interaction, and then was gradually [appropriated] by the learner to form thought” (Sawyer, 2014, pp. 10). A particularly fertile space for social interaction resides within Vygotsky’s seminal construct, the zone of proximal development, which is, “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). A Vygotskian approach to learning emphasizes an empirical analysis of human development over time (i.e. genetic analysis), in conjunction with rich understandings of the cultural, social, and historical context, and the signs, tools, and discourses that mediate human experience.

Sociocultural researchers informed by Vygotsky’s theoretical contributions often look to complex social and technological environments to better understand how learning occurs in ‘natural’ settings. Using social science methods, such as ethnography, researchers have examined how learning and cognition take place in sites as various as naval ships, tailor shops, little league baseball practices, and midwife birthing spaces (Heath, 1991; Hutchins, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2011). Other sociocultural researchers, however, have conducted ethnographic and comparative studies in traditional classrooms with the understanding that formal learning environments are indeed cultural and social spaces with unwritten rules, norms, and practices that tacitly guide cognition and learning (Cazden, 2001; Christie, 2005; Heath, 1983).

What I find striking about the efforts of the learning sciences in general, and sociocultural studies in particular, is their comprehensive approach to understanding how learning works in various settings, modes of interaction, and symbolic systems. As theatre and performance studies

seeks to better understand and articulate its unique position in a contemporary university setting, it seems only prudent to leverage the theoretical and methodological tools of the learning sciences to better comprehend how performance learning occurs and, as Bial (2013) encourages, to gain, “a greater understanding of the full shape and texture of our profession.” Rather than wait for a learning scientist to come to our field and classrooms (indeed, many sociocultural researchers are interested in arts-based settings),<sup>3</sup> this dissertation proposes an interdisciplinary study that brings my background as a theatre practitioner and educator to bear alongside the scholarly training I received in theatre arts and the learning sciences during my doctoral study. Specifically, in this dissertation, I analyze the instructional coaching register of an acting instructor at the University of Pittsburgh, Professor D,<sup>4</sup> who taught an introductory-level, liberal arts acting course that ran May 12-June 18, 2015.<sup>5</sup>

The topic of actor training in U.S. liberal arts university settings provides a significant foundation for this study. This is due, in part, because introductory acting classes, often titled Acting for Non-Majors or Introduction to Performance, tend to fulfill two simultaneous goals. First, these classes usually provide a disciplinary introduction to realistic, Stanislavski-based actor training. Since at least the 1960s, the western performance theories of Stanislavski have

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<sup>3</sup> At present, learning scientists are examining learning in theatre-, dance-, visual arts-, and music-based settings. For an overview of this research, see Halverson & Sheridan (2014). Additionally, the Spencer Foundation is currently planning a national study to examine, “how undergraduate education in schools of arts actually takes place” (Personal communication with Shirley Brice Heath, June 14, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> “Professor D” is a pseudonym, as are all the names employed in the dissertation. In order to maintain a dialogic ethnographic stance, I asked the participants to choose their fictitious names. During an early interview, Professor D selected his moniker and noted that “Professor D” is a character he performs when teaching. He also noted that, as a character, “Professor D” is an amalgamation of his past instructors.

<sup>5</sup> A more detailed discussion of data collection will be explained in Chapter Three.



dominated university acting courses (Gillespie & Cameron, 2004), and a recent review of U.S. university syllabi for this kind of course confirms the trend has not shifted (Downey, 2013). Second, introductory performance courses often accomplish a university's commitment to liberal arts and general education programs. Although the terms have different histories, many contemporary universities like the University of Pittsburgh use the terms 'liberal arts education' and 'general education' synonymously in order to align similar educational philosophies, which, as a whole, posit that learning from several forms of general knowledge is an important means to cultivate future citizens who can identify, reason, and argue amongst varying bodies of knowledge (Downey, 2013; University of Pittsburgh, 2015; Kindelan, 2012; Latucca & Stark, 2002).

The Introduction to Performance course I studied at the University of Pittsburgh is representative of both the disciplinary and institutional goals described. The class textbook, *Acting: Onstage and Off* (2013), outlines a contemporary iteration of Stanislavski-based actor training, and the course fulfills a "creative expression" component within the humanities sequence of the general education requirements at the University of Pittsburgh. According to these requirements, courses like Introduction to Performance aim to provide students with the "knowledge, understanding, analytical tools, and communication skills they need to become perceptive, reflective, and intellectually self-conscious citizens in a diverse and rapidly changing world" (University of Pittsburgh, 2015). Yet, at present, there is no research that empirically demonstrates *how* such performance courses support students in experiencing creative expression through content-specific instruction (via Stanislavskian performance training or otherwise), or *how* such learning opportunities might contribute to the larger agenda of the liberal arts and general education philosophies.

Conversely, since at least the 1970s, there has been a growing recognition in the learning sciences that documenting, describing, and analyzing functional language (in formal *and* informal settings) is an important way for sociocultural researchers to understand how knowledge and experience are socially constructed and organized over time. Building from the ‘ethnography of communication’ work of anthropologists Dell Hymes and John Gumpertz (1972), as well as the ethnographic efforts of sociologist Erving Goffman (1974; 1981), contemporary learning scientists often study discourse (and additional communicative modalities) to better understand how language co-constructs novices’ participation, access, and opportunities to learn in various settings (Cazden, 2001; Resnick, Asterhan & Clarke, 2015). In a related vein, theories of functional language in linguistics have also demonstrated how fine-grained aspects of language (e.g. syntactical features) can discursively index stance in interaction. For example, educational researcher Frances Christie’s work builds out of systemic functional linguistics to examine how instructional registers enacted in classroom discourse, “work in patterned ways to bring the pedagogic activity into being” (Christie, 2005, p. 3). For discourse analysts, such as Christie, the importance is in understanding how particular instructional registers, often tacitly, enact content-specific goals through situational contexts and language choices.

In addition to investigating classrooms, cultural and linguistic anthropologist (and professor of dramatic literature) Shirley Brice Heath and applied linguist Juliet Langman have studied the instructional register of coaches in sports settings. The reinforcing research efforts of Heath (1991) and Heath and Langman (1994) examine the register of coaching in terms of context, linguistic features, and the “shared thinking” it affords players and groups (Heath & Langman, 1994, p. 82). Because the Introduction to Performance course I studied at the

University of Pittsburgh merges a formal learning setting (i.e. a classroom) with a disciplinary content that is ensemble-oriented and roughly akin to sports,<sup>6</sup> Heath's and Langman's research on coaching provides an important theoretical lens through which to examine Professor D's situated classroom speech.

The design of this study, then, melds two disciplinary fields by bringing theories of functional language and register to bear on a ubiquitous performance learning site in U.S. liberal arts theatre studies programs—the introductory acting course. The study analyzes the situational context and linguistic features of Professor D's instructional coaching register, and explores the functional associations between his situated speech and the students' appropriation of key performance practices (within a western realistic tradition of acting). Using ethnographic methods, I conducted observations of Professor D's course, videotaped each class, wrote fieldnotes and analytic memos based on my observations, interviewed Professor D before and after the course, and interviewed eight of the nine students enrolled in the course at its completion. I employed qualitative methods of data analysis to inductively and deductively investigate the classroom video corpus, and to examine the interviews I conducted with Professor D and the students (Erickson, 2004; Green et al., 2007). These efforts allowed me to answer the following questions:

- In this liberal arts theatre classroom, how does Professor D's coaching register cultivate implicit participatory norms that create scaffolded learning opportunities for the students over time and activity?

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<sup>6</sup> As a discipline, performance studies encourages a broad definition of 'performance' and acknowledges a close relationship between the practice and production of sports and that of traditional theatre performance (Schechner, 2013).

- What are the pervasive language features embedded in Professor D’s coaching register and how do they help to organize the students’ participation in scaffolded learning opportunities?

To find answers to these questions, I engaged in a number of analytical processes that allowed me to both narrow in (to examine detailed interactions), as well as to zoom out (to see such interactions as existing within the larger class system). To begin, I revisited my fieldnotes and analytical memos and then engaged in the iterative processes of interaction analysis, which involves ‘content logging’ the digital corpus to parse classroom activity based on the participants’ use of space, multimodal talk, and general shifts in activity (Green et al., 2007; Jordan & Henderson, 1995). I then inductively developed coding schemes to differentiate and cluster a number of participation frameworks repeatedly enacted in the class (Goffman 1981; Goodwin, 2007), refining the categories by returning to the video data to replay episodes and discern exemplars for transcription. Next, I transcribed a number of classroom texts from each of the participation frameworks in order to look more closely, and comparatively, at how language use and embodied communication shifted across the classroom’s participation frameworks and over the broader six weeks of the course (Erickson, 2007; Gee, 2014). Following this, I used a method of register analysis (Biber & Conrad, 2009), as well as previous findings on coaching (Heath, 1991; Heath & Langman, 1994), to identify the pervasive language features embedded in Professor D’s instructional coaching. Finally, I employed sociocultural learning theory to examine the functional scaffolding that was built into Professor D’s speech and the participatory norms he cultivated therein (Stone, 2002).

The ethnographic approaches I used to collect data, as well as the qualitative methods I employed to analyze the sources, rely on constructing new knowledge through an “instrumental

case study,” which “provides insight into an issue or refinement of theory” (Stake, 1994, p. 237). In this dissertation, the study I offer initiates the construction of a theoretical understanding of how an acting instructor deploys a coaching register over time and through activity (in this case, the activity of realistic acting). Case study research, such as this, examines bounded situations in fine detail in order to better understand how “knowledge, skills and practices are appropriated” (Streeck, Goodwin, LeBaron, 2011, p. 3). Yet, as with all forms of research, I recognize there are limitations to my project. As a study of a particular classroom, my research does not aim to generalize to additional populations, but rather proposes general issues and theoretical propositions (Yin, 2013). In addition, the study does not purport to identify every aspect of the classroom system I investigated, but rather purposefully tracks, samples, and analyzes Professor D’s instructional coaching register. Lastly, the analytical conclusions I draw are interpretative and, as such, rely on a convergence of multiple data sources to reliably demonstrate my claims (Maxwell, 2013).

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. In Chapter Two, I discuss the theoretical literatures that inform my project, theatre and performance studies research and sociocultural learning theory. In the first section, I offer a historical and cultural contextualization of performance instruction in U.S. liberal arts settings and overview the dominant performance tradition taught in such classrooms, Stanislavski-based realistic acting. In addition, I examine key tenets from cognitive theatre studies research concerning the mind’s embodied state, the multimodality of discourse, and the interactive systems that comprise performance activity. In the second section of the chapter, I look at sociocultural learning theory and participationist accounts of learning in group settings. Here, I examine how discourse can provide one facet of participation in interacting systems and discuss linguistic theories of register and scaffolding to

further consider how language and learning can function in participatory performance settings. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the literatures discussed and outlines a common frame of assumptions, which serve to guide my analyses of the classroom data.

Chapter Three provides a detailed account of the qualitative methods I used to design the study, collect data, and analyze the gathered sources. The first discussion contextualizes ethnographic methods within case study research, and identifies the strengths and limitations of the methodology. I also provide a rationale for my selection of the particular classroom and instructor, along with an acknowledgement of my own researcher positionality. The second discussion offers an overview of the methods used to collect data in the classroom, including descriptions of the material setting, motivational make-up of the course, as well as the participants involved in the study. In addition, I overview the prompts and processes that guided the writing of fieldnotes and conceptual memos, interviews with participants, and the recording of a digital corpus of classroom video. The third discussion focuses on the methods I used to investigate the data, including interaction analysis, register analysis, and prior research on coaching.

Chapter Four presents a description and analysis of Professor D's coaching register. The first discussion identifies and describes four participation frameworks, which Professor D repeatedly organized through talk and activity: *call-and-response coaching*, *stop/start ensemble coaching*, *stop/start actor coaching*, and *side coaching*. For each framework, I explain the situational features of Professor D's communicative interactions and provide a sample transcript. The second discussion in this chapter identifies and describes the pervasive language features embedded in each of Professor D's participatory frames, including language genres (*metacomments*, *questions of knowing*, and *eventcasts*) and syntactic features (*telegraphic*

*utterances, balanced negatives and directives, tag questions, pronoun use, and conditionals).*

The third layer of register analysis investigates the functional associations between the situational contexts and language features in Professor D's coaching register. In keeping with the overarching interdisciplinary goals of this project, the functional analysis is examined through the purview of learning theory, which provides a way to explain, and theorize, the (functional) learning opportunities enacted and extended in Professor D's coaching register.

Finally, Chapter Five reviews the purpose of the dissertation, overviews its findings, and explores implications for further research. The first discussion looks to the interdisciplinary origins of the project, addresses its specific research questions, presents an integrated summary of the research findings, and acknowledges the limitations of the study's design. Here, I initiate a theoretical understanding of actor coaching as a *situated, dialogic, and scaffolded* activity that can support an actor's re-organization of conceptual understanding to develop new knowledge and performance practice for the stage. The second section explores how the study's findings might inform future theatre and performance studies research on actor coaching, as well as its potential contributions to curriculum reform in higher education.

## 2.0 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I discuss the two scholarly literatures that inform my project, which, in general, derive from theatre and performance studies research and sociocultural learning theory. Before examining the literatures separately, however, I first briefly discuss how the two literatures share a number of common theoretical assumptions. Here, I look to cognitive studies in theatre and performance studies research that, like the learning sciences, relies on contemporary conceptions of the mind as embodied and active.

Since the so-called ‘cognitive turn’ of the 1960s, there has been a growing understanding that the mind does not accrue new knowledge or experience like writing etched on a blank slate, as in behaviorist traditions (Collins, Greeno, & Resnick, 1996; McConachie, 2015). Rather, the human mind is evolutionarily and bodily attuned to interactivity. Human experience is situated in sociohistorical networks and depends upon individuals’ sensorimotor, bi-directional interactions with the environment. Additionally, the mind’s active state is not disconnected from the body. Rather, the emergence of human thought, speech, and action are anchored in corporeal and emotional experience (Johnson, 2008). These basic, yet profound, theoretical assumptions undergird both sociocultural learning theory and cognitive theatre studies research, making the two discourses more related than one might suppose. Because both lines of scholarship conceptualize human experience in mutual ways, a common theoretical approach can be forged



to investigate performance as a form of learned, social activity that is discursively brought into being.

However, before delving too deeply into the joining of these literatures, I now focus the chapter on separate discussions of the two bodies of scholarship. I begin with an examination of the sociohistorical context of theatre programs and performance courses within U.S. institutions of higher education, as well as a description of the terms, theories, and relevant concepts related to Stanislavski-based actor training—the disciplinary performance content most often associated with the course. I then proceed to a discussion of sociocultural approaches to learning and, within this orientation, a line of research concerned with the study of functional language in formal and informal environments. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the scholarship presented, in order to demonstrate the relevance of bringing together these literatures and fields. Throughout the chapter, key terms are bolded and defined to highlight their operational significance.

## **2.1 PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTION IN U.S. LIBERAL ARTS SETTINGS**

Although my study focuses on a single Introduction to Performance course, which ran at the University of Pittsburgh from May 12-June 18, 2015, the class is one example within a larger cultural and institutional phenomenon in undergraduate, liberal arts education in the U.S. Because of this, I begin by reviewing research dedicated to historicizing the emergence of theatre and performance studies programs within the general context of U.S. higher education. I also explore scholarship that focuses on understanding the use of Stanislavski-based performance

approaches in higher education theatre programs and introductory performance classes in particular (Carlson, 2001; Downey, 2013; Roach, 1999). The section concludes with an examination of how contemporary cognitive studies in theatre sheds new light on the practice of acting and actor training. My purpose in this section is to provide an overview of the larger cultural and historical forces that have shaped the learning environment of my study, as well as to provide an understanding of the theoretical, practical, and cognitive foundations that ground the course's dominant performance activity, realistic acting.

A helpful place to begin this discussion is with Patricia Downey's 2013 dissertation, which examines the relationship between the goals of general education and disciplinary content in acting for non-majors courses in U.S. institutions of higher education.<sup>7</sup> Using historical analysis to understand the roots of the course, as well as a data set of seventy-five course syllabi utilized in introductory acting courses at sixty-one different U.S. colleges or universities between 2001 and 2007, Downey's project examines how the course came to be and what it currently 'looks like' in the field (p. 102). To situate the class historically and institutionally, she looks to important contributing pressures, including: "the history of higher education in the United States and the history of general education in university curricula" (Downey, 2013, p. 5). As these historical contexts also inform my efforts, I will now briefly examine these antecedents.

In general, higher education in the United States is home to three competing philosophies of education. Some institutions (or colleges within a university, to deepen the fractures) espouse a liberal arts agenda. The tradition of liberal arts education in the U.S. derives mostly from

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<sup>7</sup> Although Downey's research examines a course titled 'Acting for Non-Majors' and my project studies an 'Introduction to Performance' class, the course titles are generally synonymous based on Downey's depiction of the course—that is, its content, student population, course trajectory, and fulfillment of general education criteria.

seventeenth century English and Scottish universities, which provided a “classical curriculum packaged in a theological framework” (Conrad & Wyer, 2002, p. 60). In this tradition, the chief purpose of education is to cultivate critical thinkers who can think with, and argue across, varying discourses that are often termed the liberal arts. Classically, the liberal arts include grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (Kindelan, 2013).<sup>8</sup> Historically, students exposed to liberal arts educations are assumed to be broadly educated and thereby better prepared for the democratic role of citizenship. A liberal arts education, in the U.S. in particular, maintains a strong tie to this democratic impulse—however, the liberal arts are also tied to notions of elitism, in part, due to the country’s history of who qualifies for such citizenship (i.e. white, male, land owners) (Downey, 2013, pp. 6-7).

A second educational philosophy prevalent in contemporary U.S. universities concerns the production of knowledge—an agenda firmly linked to the modern research university. In this philosophic orientation, specialized disciplinary knowledge outdoes general knowledge and, as such, departments, fields, and colleges tend to become more discrete in order to produce specialized forms of knowledge. In step with this model is a third philosophical focus on practical, utilitarian goals that train students, “to participate in the nation’s economic and commercial life” (Lattuca & Stark, 2002, p. 70). The utilitarian approach to education helped to organize the federal government’s Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, which funded and structured many institutions of higher education in the U.S. today. Like the research model, the pragmatic, utilitarian approach to higher education emphasizes a high degree of specialization, thereby

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<sup>8</sup> As a discipline, Theatre and Performance Studies is considered an off-shoot of Rhetoric.

training students to contribute particular skills to an industrialized modern society (Lattuca & Stark, 2002).

When theatre programs emerged in the U.S. in the early twentieth century, they were established at varying institutions, each of which embraced a different philosophical model or mixture. Consequently, theatre studies, as a discipline, acquired varying educational approaches from its outset. Theatre historian, Joseph Roach, points to the U.S.'s first undergraduate drama program at Carnegie Tech that developed under an ethos of "trade-school pragmatism" in 1914, whereas George Pierce Baker's famous playwriting courses at Harvard (and later Yale) focused on "how-to-make-a-play dramaturgy" and, finally, the country's first doctorate of theatre (at the University of Iowa) centered squarely on "literary-historical professionalism" (Roach, 1999, p. 3). However, by midcentury, theatre historian Marvin Carlson notes, "the normal American pattern followed the pragmatic orientation of combining theory and practice, so that the normal American theatre programme (*sic*) would include classes in acting, directing, playwriting, and design as well as historical and theoretical study of theatre (2001, p. 139). In keeping with Downey's three models of educational philosophy, it seems knowledge production and utilitarianism mostly won out in Carlson's description of a "normal" theatre program.

However, the U.S.'s educational impetus for the cultivation of general knowledge through the liberal arts is preserved in contemporary 'general education' programs in university curricula. Downey points out that today's general education programs result mostly from a group of academics at the University of Chicago and Harvard University who, from the 1920s to the 1950s, eschewed the growing specialization in higher education and, instead, championed the merits of varying, general forms of knowledge—efforts that culminated in the publication of the influential, *General Education in a Free Society* (1946). The dissemination of this text, at a

midcentury moment when many colleges and universities were rapidly expanding, contributed to the growth and establishment of general education programs at various institutions of higher education in the U.S. (Downey, 2013).

In these ways, most introductory performance courses occupy a contested philosophical landscape of educational goals, and the class I studied is no different. The course fulfills one of the ‘general’ knowledges imparted by the General Education requirements at the University of Pittsburgh, which, in effect, sustains the legacy of the liberal arts in the U.S. This is especially evident by the high number of undergraduate non-majors who enroll in the course to acquire a “creative expression” credit in the humanities sequence of the program (General Education, 2015). To demonstrate this, in the 2014-2015 academic year, roughly six hundred undergraduates enrolled in thirty-four sections of Introduction to Performance courses offered by the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Pittsburgh.<sup>9</sup> To cohere course sections, the Department of Theatre arts uses a codified, departmental syllabus and an assigned textbook (Barton, 2012; Syllabus, 2015). As noted on the class syllabus (2015), the course aims to introduce students to acting techniques “grounded in Stanislavski’s method.” Because Stanislavski-based actor training was the dominant approach to commercial actor training in the U.S. in the twentieth century, and remains so in the twenty-first, a reference to Stanislavskian actor training implicitly links the course to the educational philosophy of utilitarianism—with the tacit premise that some students will go onto become commercial performers (i.e. ‘workers’) in U.S. society.

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<sup>9</sup> Personal communication with Department of Theatre Arts secretary, Connie Markiw, June 6, 2015.

To examine the activity of Stanislavskian performance training, I now turn to the topic of **acting**—that is, the human communication of fictional characters in public settings. The tradition of problematizing acting has been engaged by various thinkers from antiquity to modernity. For example, classical philosophers ranging from Aristotle to Augustus in the West, as well as the Indian sage Bharata in the East, have written about the varying emotions and discursive modes that actors employ on a stage (Zarilli, McConachie, Williams, & Sorgenfrei, 2009). In early modern England, Shakespeare commented on the nature of Elizabethan acting through his character, Hamlet, who directs the Players to speak with “modesty” and “discretion” in order to “suit the action to the word, the word to the action” (2006, Shakespeare, p. 78). In the eighteenth century, Denis Diderot argued in *The Paradox of Acting* (1773) that acting should be a controlled enterprise that cleanly keeps the actor and the character discrete. But, perhaps, the first individual to offer a modern, systematized philosophy and practice of acting was the Russian actor, director, teacher, and theorist, Constantin Stanislavski.

Stanislavski’s creative work is most often associated with his lengthy tenure at the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) where, from 1895 to 1928, he performed, directed, taught, wrote, and collaborated with the leading Russian performance practitioners of the day, such as Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky (Marsh, 2003). Deeply informed by the mimetic mode of theatrical production that was successful in Russia (and elsewhere), Stanislavski’s approach to acting focused on realistic performance. In general, **realistic acting** concerns “the fusion of the actor’s self with the role” and emphasizes the use of psycho-physical tools to mediate an actor’s stage presence and lifelike interpretation of a character (Marsh, 2003, p. 1281).

Stanislavski’s approach to actor training was widely influential both in and out of Russia due to the MAT’s European and U.S. tours in the 1920s (which Stanislavski oversaw), the

translation and transmission of his texts, *An Actor Prepares* (1936) and *Building a Character* (1950), as well as various students' written accounts of Stanislavski's teaching. Beginning in the early part of the twentieth century and continuing throughout, Stanislavski's system informed an international exposure to realistic performance that was embraced and enacted through varying practices and disseminations that remain influential today. Indeed, the assigned textbook for all sections of Introduction to Performance at the University of Pittsburgh, *Acting: Onstage & Off* (Barton, 2012), outlines an approach to actor training based on Stanislavskian performance, scene study, and training methods.

Although my project does not entail a deep exploration of Stanislavski's system (or systems, as there are various and contested permutations of his work), it is helpful to know basic propositions of his theory, as it inevitably informs the kind of activities I examined, documented, and analyzed in this Introduction to Performance class. To do so, I provide a brief overview of the three tenets of Stanislavski's system outlined by Robert Barton (2012) in the course's textbook.<sup>10</sup> First, to achieve a state that is like a person in real life, an actor must be physically and mentally prepared. What this means is that actors should train their bodies to become flexible and controllable instruments that are "alert and attentive" (Barton, 2012, p. 100). To that end, most acting warm-ups attempt to prepare the body to achieve a sort of "relaxed readiness" from which any number of physical actions are possible (p. 100). To prepare the mind, Stanislavski emphasized the use of a psychological tool and concept, **the magic if**. The magic if is conditional question, which enables an actor, through inquiry, to imagine him or herself in the

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<sup>10</sup> Stanislavski is a pivotal figure in theatre studies research and my introduction of his contributions at the MAT and internationally are general. For additional texts to initiate a better understanding of Stanislavski's life and work, see *Stanislavski and the Actor* (Benedetti, 2013), *Stanislavski in Focus* (Carnicke, 2009) and his autobiography, *My Life in Art* (2004).

character's situation: "what if I had experienced the character's life up to this moment—what would I do in this moment?" (p. 102).

The second proposition of Stanislavski's system, according to Barton, concerns an actor's *integration of psychological and physical actions*. Stanislavski understood all human action to be goal directed. Consequently, for an actor to create a realistic character onstage, all stage activity must be intentional. Although Stanislavski emphasized both internal and external starting points for the creation of a character throughout his lifetime, his larger emphasis concerned a seamless integration of the 'psycho-physical' human instrument. To achieve this, Stanislavski encouraged actors to identify the **motives** that underlie a character's dialogue, as well as the overarching **objective**, or goal, of the character (e.g. to seduce, to manipulate). Barton notes that when an actor performs a character's objective "feelings are powerfully sustained and expressed through movement," which "supports and beckons psychological states" (2012, p. 100). Barton's third proposition of Stanislavski's system concerns *an actor's research and analysis of the character*. Here, an actor is encouraged to engage in detailed study of the character's dialogue in order to unpack subtext, which may be performed through vocal and physical expressive dynamics. Additional actor homework might entail observation and journaling of a particular 'real life' person or an analysis of a historical figure to better understand a character.

Although Stanislavski's name is firmly tied to the practice of formal *acting* in the West, the construct of *performance* is rooted in the field of performance studies, which generally emerged out of the disciplines of theatre studies and speech/oral interpretation in the United States during the 1970s. The dominant origin stories for the field of performance studies are usually institutional—one derived from the work of Richard Schechner and his collaborations with anthropologist, Victor Turner, at NYU, and the other comes from the anthropological



efforts of Dwight Conquergood (also drawing on Turner's work among others) at Northwestern University (Jackson, 2004; McKenzie, 2001). Despite their differences, both narratives sought to usher in the use of the term **performance** as a theoretical construct that broadens the understanding of stage acting or formal theatrical production. As such, performance studies examines the various ways that humans 'perform' in any number of cultural settings, such as everyday life (i.e. the performance of social roles), specific ritualized roles (e.g. the performances of a bride and groom at a wedding), or in sporting practices and events (e.g. Brazilian capoeira) (Schechner, 2013; Zarilli et al., 2009). Because Introduction to Performance courses at the University of Pittsburgh engage in both Stanislavski-based acting techniques, as well as more general performance skills (e.g. vocal projection and articulation), in this dissertation I will use the terms acting and performance interchangeably.

One recurrent concern in both realistic 'acting' and the broader spectrum of 'performance' is the integration of the body and the mind in activity, and, in this regard, contemporary cognitive studies has had much to offer research in theatre and performance studies. Although there are examples of humanists like Mark Johnson who, since the 1970s, has employed cognitive scholarship in linguistics to theorize the mind and language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), cognitive studies in the humanities generally begins to build steam in the early 1990s (Spolsky, 1993; Turner 1996). Since that time, humanist scholars working in disciplines as disparate as history, cultural studies, and literary analysis have become interested in applying empirically-derived findings from the cognitive sciences (e.g. mirror-neurons, distributed cognition, mental and emotional states or schemas) to further explain humanistic inquiries. For example, cognitively-focused research in theatre and performance studies has employed empirical studies of attention and memory to examine how acting companies could have

performed the hefty amounts of dialogue required by the repertory system of early modern England (Tribble, 2011), as well as the Gibsonian construct of affordances to problematize performer/object interactions in varying acting traditions (Paavolainen, 2012). The strand of cognitive theatre studies of most importance to this dissertation concerns a line of research that, among other things, explicates the psychophysical processes involved in acting and performance (Kemp 2012; Lutterbie 2011; McConachie 2008; 2013; 2015). In particular, three chief insights from this line of scholarship are significant: 1) *the mind is embodied*; 2) *discourse is both verbally and gesturally communicated*; and 3) *performance occurs in interactive systems*.

As previously discussed, the body and the mind are crucial tools employed by any actor to communicate meaning onstage. As a result, this has led to competing Stanislavski-based acting approaches that emphasize either an internal/psychological origin of character development, or a physical, behaviorist extrapolation of character. But, as Bruce McConachie points out in *Theatre & Mind*, “both positions are misconceived; both depend upon a dualism that does not exist” (2013, p. 30). The dualism to which McConachie refers is the Cartesian split of mind and body, pronounced by seventeenth century philosopher and banner-waver of rationalism, Rene Descartes (1641/2013). From his vantage point, the body and mind were ontologically discrete, and Descartes’ influential pronouncements have been inscribed in western languages and theories (including Stanislavski’s) ever since.

But cognitive theatre studies is currently doing much to dismantle the body/mind binary implicitly embedded in Stanislavski-based acting approaches (as well as other twentieth century theories of performance that seek to integrate the mind and the body, such as those of Jacques Lecoq and Michael Chekhov). For example, in *Embodied Acting: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Performance* (2012), scholar and professional actor, Rick Kemp, builds on the findings of

neuroscientists Antonio Damasio and Joseph LeDoux to demonstrate how emotion and bodily responses make human thought possible. States Kemp, “physical and mental starting points for acting processes are not in themselves mutually exclusive or necessarily oppositional, but are often perceived this way by practitioners and teachers” (2012, p. 20). Understanding the mind as embodied is an important theoretical foundation for this dissertation, as the students and the teacher I studied engaged in multimodal, performative discourse and interaction, which included language, paralinguistics, gestures, kinesics and so on.

Indeed, the discourse used by an acting instructor does not only concern language, but also physical action. In *Evolution, Cognition, and Performance*, McConachie draws on the work of cognitive linguist, David McNeill, to emphasize the “co-expressive” quality of speech and gesture (2015, p. 54). McNeill’s scholarship in *Gesture & Thought* (2005) uses evidence from his clinical work and experiments to demonstrate how gestures often activate speech and thinking. This idea, in effect, expands Vygotsky’s developmental psychology to include gesture as a means of externalization that, like speech, aids in the development of thought. In *Engaging Audiences*, McConachie employs these findings to explicate (among other things) how performance modes in varying cultures have long understood the importance of creating a “mutually reinforcing” system of communication for the stage (2008, p. 89). Rehearsal, observes McConachie, is a creative space in which actors work to cohere speech and physical action. This insight has consequences for my project, as acting instruction often functions as a form of rehearsal wherein an instructor guides a student to ‘try on’ varying techniques through co-expressive language and physical action.

Finally, cognitive theatre studies acknowledges that performances and rehearsals are situated—that is, they take place in interactive systems that are materially, socially, historically,

and culturally embedded, as well as emergent. The opening of Kemp's *Embodied Acting* paints a vivid picture of the complex interactions that co-produce performance:

It all happens at once. It has to. The impulse, the breath, the speech, the gesture, the walk, the awareness of the guy in the second row who's nodding off, so I punch the end of the line that bit harder. And because I punched harder, my partner is surprised and jolted into her response with that extra calorie of spontaneity, which crackles the air, and the audience almost imperceptibly sits up, drawn in, more alert. It all happens at once. (2012, p. 1).

Much of Kemp's book goes on to explicate the unconscious mental operations that constitute *how* "it all happens at once," but his basic premise that it *does* happen all at once—through various, simultaneous, interacting phenomenological means—is itself an important proposition that refutes linear, behaviorist explanations of human experience.

Performance theorist, John Lutterbie, has used dynamic systems theory to posit a theoretical framework that explicates the interactive complexities of acting. Lutterbie observes, "[a performance] production is what *emerges* from *recursive, cyclic* interaction. The process is constrained not only by what goes on in rehearsals, but also by the techniques and limits (physical, creative, etc.) of the ensemble" (2011, p. 90, emphasis in original). Although this basic tenet is a foundational understanding of contemporary cognitive studies—that is, human experience, meaning-making, and learning occur through bi-directional and emergent interactions—this understanding of acting is important because it has bearings on my conceptualization of performance activity, as well as the instructor's discourse, which emergently and dynamically brought such activities into being.

In this section of the literature review, I have sought to contextualize the course I studied at the University Pittsburgh within a larger framework of historical, institutional, and philosophical pressures. In addition, I reviewed the theoretical and practical foundations of the course's primary disciplinary activity—Stanislavski-based realistic acting—as articulated by the class's textbook (Barton, 2012), and a stream of theatre scholarship that explicates performance techniques from the perspective of cognitive studies. Of most importance in this final portion of the discussion, is the understanding that the mind is embodied, discourse is multimodal (i.e. not solely reliant on speech), and performance activity takes place in interacting systems. By highlighting aspects of the historical, cultural, and social factors that shaped the classroom I studied, as well as examining the acting approach and cognitive theories that undergird the course's chief performance tradition, I aimed to contextualize the class and present a conceptualization of acting that, in general, accords with the learning sciences' sociocultural perspective—a discussion to which I now turn.

## 2.2 SOCIOCULTURAL THEORIES OF LEARNING AND DISCOURSE

Defining learning is a difficult task because terms and phrases are often theoretically loaded and misleading. Within sociocultural approaches to learning, for example, Vygotsky's seminal construct the **zone of proximal development** can be viewed as problematic due to the use of the word "development." Whereas the construct refers to the processes of *mutual* influence in which "the more expert party in the interchange helps to complete and extend the actions and insights of the less expert one," the phrase itself emphasizes an individual novice's development

(Erickson, 1996, p. 30). To conceptualize learning as the development of something can be tricky because it tends to construe learning as the *acquisition* of something. Acquisitionist learning terms, while plentiful, are awkward because they paint a picture of a dis-embodied and passive mind filled with things (like concepts) that accumulate over time (like cognitive structures) through transactions. Additionally, an acquisitionist approach to learning views an individual student (or novice) as acquiring objectified knowledge that is mentally ‘owned’ by the learner and later transferred to future contexts—an understanding that, in effect, sustains Cartesian dualism.

Indeed, these are just a few of the problems that Israeli learning scientist, Anna Sfard, sees in the acquisitionist metaphor of learning. In her influential article, “On Two Metaphors for Learning and the Dangers of Choosing Just One” (1998), Sfard examines the strengths and weaknesses of the two dominate metaphors associated with learning (as well as most English words associated with learning): *acquisition* and *participation*. But, as the essay’s title indicates, neither metaphor is trouble-free. Sfard finds that participationism, as a metaphor, shifts the acquisitionist idea of ‘having’ a permanent or stable concept, to the notion of ‘doing’ activities or practices in context-specific social environments. For participationists, then, “learning a subject is now conceived of as a process of becoming a member of a certain community. This entails, above all, the ability to communicate in the language of this community and act according to its particular norms” (Sfard, 1998, p. 6). Sfard acknowledges that while participationist accounts of learning can relieve the “hegemony” of acquisitionist models in important ways, the metaphor of participation demands a detailed consideration of the material and social context in which practice is situated (p. 8). But, ultimately, Sfard finds that participationism is also lacking because it often focuses so deeply on the contextualization of learning that the specific

knowledge produced in such settings is unable to be transferred *between* contexts, therefore, rendering it an inert form of knowledge.

In her conclusion, Sfard argues for metaphorical pluralism and encourages researchers to understand how their goals (and theoretically-laden data) can orient an analyst towards either acquisitionist or participationist metaphors and, as her title suggests, the dangers of relying on just one approach. Using Sfard's essay as guidance, I recognize that my study relies mostly on a participationist metaphor of learning, as discourse is a form of participation that affords and constrains a student's opportunities to learn and perform. Additionally, although I recognize that transfer is an important goal of all learning, this study does not attempt to study how or whether performance learning transfers between domains. Rather, my focus will concern the un-theorized learning opportunities embedded within the instructional speech and discursive activities enacted in the classroom I studied. But, before narrowing my focus on discourse, I will briefly contextualize contemporary approaches to learning that view knowledge construction as a form of doing, participating, practicing, belonging, communicating, or engaging in activity.

In addition to Vygotskian psychology, another important historical tradition from which the learning metaphor of participationism emerges is early twentieth century U.S. pragmatism, which emphasizes 'active' forms of learning. John Dewey, for example, examined how the participatory processes of inquiry and reflection position students to pose hypotheses, model ideas, and test methods in ways that are similar to those of a scientist or philosopher (Cole, 1996; Nathan & Sawyer, 2014). In addition, American pragmatist George Herbert Mead argued that thought emerged from concrete interaction with the social world and gradually became more abstract (Cole, 1996; Nathan & Sawyer, 2014). Here, it is important to note that both U.S. pragmatism and Vygotskian developmental psychology emphasize interactive relationships

between thought, speech, and action—perspectives that are generally consonant with cognitive studies in theatre, which view an individual’s mind and body as integrated and not severed as it is in Cartesian accounts.

Contemporary participatory learning theories in sociocultural research are informed by these historical traditions, but have looked beyond their initial focus on the *individual* learner to examine how the material, cultural, and sociohistorical context affords and constrains learning, as well as how learning happens in groups or communities. Two current theoretical perspectives, which are mostly aligned, are worth examining here. First, *activity theory* (also referred to as *cultural-historical activity theory* (CHAT)) developed out of the psychology-based research of Vygotsky and his colleagues, emerging in the 1980s following the publication of Vygotsky’s *Mind in Society* in 1978 (Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2014; Greeno & Engeström, 2014). **Activity theory** posits that learning takes place in *systems* or activities that comprise: “either two or more people, such as a dyad, a group, a classroom, a community, or an individual person working with objects and technological systems” (Greeno & Engeström, 2014, p. 128). The recurrent patterns of activity that take place in an activity system are **practices**, and the people that work together to create such practices constitute a community of practice. Here, activity theory borrows the term ‘community of practice’ from the second participatory learning perspective, *situated learning*. **Situated learning** derives from various anthropologists’ empirical studies of group and individual learning in organizations (Hutchins, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Suchman, 1987). Jean Lave’s and Etienne Wenger’s seminal text, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991), introduced the term **community of practice** and demonstrated, through diverse ethnographic studies, how learners move from peripheral to central participation through socially and materially embedded practices deemed meaningful by a community.



For the purposes of this study, I am informed by both activity theory and situated learning. Following the work of learning scientist, James Greeno, I define **learning** as “improved participation in interactive systems” (1997, p. 12). By participation, I employ Etienne Wenger’s understanding that **participation** is a human’s “active involvement in social enterprises” and reliant on mutuality, not merely an engagement in practice (1999, p. 56). Rather, participation is a means to constitute social membership in particular activity systems or, as Wenger designates them, “communities of practice” (p. 55). Moreover, I conceptualize learning as taking place through a series of **learning opportunities** that constitute a “trajectory” (Greeno & Gresalfi, 2008, p. 170). Although it may appear obvious, recognizing that learning takes place in a *trajectory* is also significant because it underscores the fact that practices (which cohere in and through participation) are not stable. Rather, practices are recurrent patterns of activity that are *emergent* and, therefore, change over time. For the analyst, this means that social practice and participation must be genetically studied in order to determine when, where, why and for who practices shift.

The opportunities one has to participate, or learn, are called **affordances**; a term first coined and theorized by J.J. Gibson in 1979. Affordances are relational possibilities that result from material and immaterial structures as well as access. Affordances, in turn, guide an individual’s physical and mental action. A chair, for example, affords the physical action of sitting whereas the syntax of a conditional utterance (e.g. what if?) affords a mental or imaginative leap. But, learning scientists Greeno and Gresalfi remind us that “affordances are relationships between characteristics of resources in [a learning] environment and characteristics of learners” (2008, p. 182). In other words, affordances for learning are not uniform for all individuals, and they shift over time through interactive (often discursive) positioning.

Although the term **cognition** can be aligned with more acquisitionist models of learning, I use cognition to mean *thinking*. But, it is important to recognize that thinking is not solely a brain bound activity. Rather, I rely on anthropologist Jean Lave’s understanding that “[c]ognition’ observed in everyday practice is distributed—stretched over, not divided among—mind, body, activity and culturally organized settings” (1988, p. 1). Along these lines, thinking, or cognition, is inherently communicative and social, occurring through speech and multimodal forms of communication.<sup>11</sup>

Drawing attention to the complex and integrated relationship between thinking and communication is an important step in articulating my project, as I want to demonstrate that multimodal classroom discourse is not a casual activity. Rather, an instructor’s discourse and embodiment operates as strong mediators of learning opportunities, or affordances, for students’ cognition and performance. In the following section, I explore the topic of discourse analysis as critically important to this dissertation, as well as the disciplinary backgrounds embedded within the resources I review.

### 2.2.1 Classroom Discourse

Beginning with a broad understanding, **discourse analysis** concerns the study of language in social, cultural, historical, and institutional contexts. Using this general definition,

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<sup>11</sup> In this regard, Sfard has theorized a new term for the complex relationship between speech and thinking, which she refers to as “commognition” (a combination of communication and cognition) (2005, p. 241-242). Consistent with Vygotsky, Sfard’s concept rejects the Cartesian dualism of body and mind so deeply inscribed in the English language. Through the creation of the term commognition, Sfard aims to dissolve the dichotomy between thinking and speech all together, arguing that the two are not separate activities.

discourse analysis is relevant for various humanistic and social science disciplines, such as history, sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, and education. Editors of the *Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, James Gee and Michael Handford, note in their Introduction, “‘discourse analysis’ covers both pragmatics (the study of contextually specific meanings of language in use) and the study of ‘**texts**’ (the study of how sentences and utterances pattern together to create meaning across multiple sentences or utterances)” (2013, p. 1). Therefore, the purpose of discourse analysis, broadly construed, is to expose the often tacit knowledge at work within, and across, texts of language(s).

One approach to the study of language that has proven particularly significant in my project concerns sociocultural research on **classroom discourse**—that is, the functional language used to enact disciplinary content and activity. Since the 1970s, sociologists, anthropologists, linguists, and educational researchers have investigated the language patterns that occur in formal and informal learning environments. In *Classroom Discourse: The Language of Teaching and Learning* (1988/2001), Courtney Cazden reviews much of this research (a great deal of which she spear-headed in the U.S.) and emphasizes that classroom discourse is the study of a communication *system*. In this regard, it seems worthwhile to quote (at length) one of Cazden’s early influences—British education researcher, Douglas Barnes, who in 1974 observed:

Speech unites the cognitive with the social. The actual (as opposed to the intended) curriculum consists in the meanings enacted or realized by a particular teacher and class. In order to learn, students must use what they already know so as to give meaning to what the teacher presents to them. Speech makes available to reflection the processes by which they relate new knowledge to old. But this possibility depends on the social relationships, the communication system, which the teacher sets up (as cited in Cazden, 2001, p. 2)

One thing to note in Barnes's quote is his emphasis on participatory approaches to knowledge construction, which accords with sociocultural perspectives that understand thought as emerging from social interaction.

Since its burgeoning development in the 1970s, research in classroom discourse has become a significant program in the learning sciences and has benefited from interdisciplinary alliances between sociologists, anthropologists, linguists, and educational researchers (trained in varying disciplinary foci, such as developmental, cognitive, and educational psychology) (Cazden, 2001; Christie, 2005). As a result, research in classroom discourse often makes use of different disciplinary priorities and takes place at different grain-sizes of discursive activity. For example, finer-grain analyses often employ methods like systemic functional linguistics, which emerge mostly from the functional theories of grammar developed by linguist Michael Halliday (Halliday et al., 1994). Analyses of coarser-grain sizes are often informed by sociological and anthropological impulses, which seek to identify communicatory codes or patterns through descriptive methods like ethnography. In general, this work is informed by linguistic anthropologists like Dell Hymes and John Gumperz (1972).

To further explore the idea of communicatory patterns, I will briefly discuss “traditional” and “non-traditional” classroom discourse patterns (Cazden, 2001, pp. 30-31). In *Classroom Discourse*, Cazden examines “traditional” classroom discourse, which generally aligns with direct instruction models that employ IRE (initiate/response/evaluation) and IRF (initiate/response/feedback) speech patterns. In these patterns of talk, the teacher initiates classroom discourse, but the initiation is usually grounded in an idea or question already known to the teacher. Consequently, the teacher *initiates*, the student *responds* and the teacher *evaluates* or provides *feedback*. On the other hand, non-traditional classroom discourse typically aligns

with dialogic instruction and uses **metacognitive**-driven questions (e.g. *how* did you know?) to prompt a different kind of knowledge from the student, thus demanding a more complex form of reasoning and response. An instructor’s discursive initiations (often voiced in the form of questions), serve to prompt students’ speech and cognition. This dovetails with Vygotsky’s basic premise that thought is first constructed externally and (often) socially processed before appropriated. Elsewhere, Cazden has referred to this phenomenon as “performance before competence”—the trying out of explanations and arguments (i.e. performance), which leads to an appropriation of thought (competence) (1997, p. 303).<sup>12</sup>

Research in classroom discourse often conceptualizes spoken language from an applied linguistics perspective, which, according to James Gee, contends that spoken language is about “saying, doing, and being”—that is, language confers information (saying), enacts particular claims or utterances (doing), and expresses a speaker’s identity (being) (2014, p. 2). Gee also emphasizes that the meaning we ascribe to language derives from the sociocultural world. Thus, language and its concomitant practices co-produce one another so that language also carries social goods. Users of language are then stakeholders who transfer social goods through written and spoken utterances. Gee notes “[s]ince, when we use language, social goods and their distribution are always at stake, language is always ‘political’ in a deep sense (2014, p. 8). Consequently, language is not neutral and almost always shaped for communicatory purposes.

In the study of functional language, there are a number of communicatory features that can shape analysis. For example, language can be examined by its **linguistic** or **syntactical features**, which, in general, allows an analyst to investigate how words and phrases go together

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<sup>12</sup> Cazden’s phrase also serves to critique Chomsky’s influential division between competence and performance, and the general marginalization of performance.

to structure sentences (Gee, 2014, p. 20). In addition, spoken language is always contextualized in particular settings and, therefore, situated in specific sociocultural material spaces that can be described and analyzed (Biber & Conrad, 2009; Gee, 2014). Researchers can also examine **paralinguistic** features of language, which convey socially meaningful information and identities through prosodic tones, pitches, and cadences (Cheng & Lam, 2012). And lastly, an individual's embodiment can be studied in terms of its communicative gestures, movements, and kinesics, as well as the perceived density of such channels (Kress, 2013). Indeed, one of the key contributions of performance studies (informed by its allegiance with the social sciences), is its acknowledgement of, and insistence on, embodied performance as a form of **enacted text** that need not be linguistically articulated (Conquergood, 2002; Schechner, 2013).

For my purposes, I seek to build from these approaches to employ **discourse** in a holistic sense meaning an individual's situated language use (inclusive of its linguistic and paralinguistic features) and embodiment (inclusive of gestures, movement, and kinesics). In this way, both language and embodiment are situated in sociocultural environments, and support an individual in saying, doing, and being through communicatory currencies that carry social goods. This integrated conceptualization of discourse, thought, and embodiment seeks to hearken back to, and reinforce, research in cognitive studies in theatre, which uses empirical research to validate an integrated conceptualization of body, mind, language, and physical action (Kemp, 2012; Lutterbie, 2011; McConachie, 2008; 2013; 2015).

## 2.2.2 Register Studies and Coaching

Because this dissertation focuses mostly on the classroom discourse of the acting instructor—the agent who set up and maintained the classroom’s communication system—it is helpful to follow the work of other learning scientists who have examined an instructor’s discourse as a **register**. The register perspective investigates a text variety, which occurs in a particular situation for specific communicatory purposes (Biber & Conrad, 2009).<sup>13</sup> The use of the word ‘variety’ is significant in this understanding, as the register perspective examines text samples from the *variety* of texts produced within the larger situational context (e.g. the classroom). To engage in a comprehensive analysis of a text variety, applied linguists, Donald Biber and Sharon Conrad, observe that a register study concerns the description of “three major components: the situational/communicative description, the description of pervasive linguistic features, and the analysis of the functional associations between linguistic forms and situational contexts” (2009, p. 8).

Within Biber and Conrad’s approach to the study of register, analysts can decompose a register into language **genres**, which refers to “the conventional structures used to construct a complete text within the variety” (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 2). A genre is often signaled through particular **genre markers**. For example, a common genre marker found in a classroom might be

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<sup>13</sup> Research on linguistic variation in use tends to focus on either registers or *dialects*. Studies of dialects often examine geographic or social (i.e. demographic) linguistic variation, to investigate “[p]honological differences” that are not associated with meaning variance (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 11). On the other hand, register studies examine the *functional* differences in linguistic variation. Biber and Conrad note that “when speakers switch between registers, they are doing different things with language—using language for different communicative purposes and producing language under different circumstances” (2009, p. 12).

“okay, let’s get started,” which marks the beginning of what can be analyzed as a complete text in the register. A genre’s chief difference from a register concerns its distribution of linguistic features. Genres mostly feature once-occurring linguistic features that occur in predictable places in the text (p. 54). Registers, on the other hand, portray *pervasive* linguistic features that occur throughout the text variety enacted in a particular situation.

Studies of register have been important in numerous learning settings—formal and informal. For example, Australian classroom discourse analyst, Frances Christie, argues that there are two registers that constrain language choices in all classrooms—a “regulative register” and an “instructional register” (2005, pp. 14-15). **Regulative registers** concern the discursive management of classroom behavior and often reify the asymmetric relations that exists between instructor and students, whereas **instructional registers** tend to have more to do with the content being communicated and learned and are thus largely determined by the disciplinary “field of activity” (pp. 20-21). Christie’s distinction is important for this project, as I investigate the *instructional* register of the teacher who led the Introduction to Performance course I studied, “Professor D.” Moreover, in this dissertation, I aim to demonstrate how Professor D’s instructional register, which is situated and informed by the content of realistic acting, is dominated by *coaching* characteristics.

The coaching register has been studied by cultural and linguistic anthropologist (and professor of dramatic literature), Shirley Brice Heath and applied linguist, Juliet Langman. In “It’s about Winning! The Language of Knowledge in Baseball” (1991), Heath examines how language genres employed by a coach prompted athletes’ everyday reasoning practices in little league baseball. In “Shared Thinking and the Register of Coaching” (1994), Heath and Langman identify the syntactic features of the coaching register through an examination of texts collected



ethnographically in various sports settings. Using detailed descriptive and linguistic analyses, the authors explain the sophisticated cognitive opportunities a coach extends through discourse: “[t]he coaching register emphasizes for individuals their need to engage constantly in minute acts of perception, self-monitoring in highly participatory and shifting actions, and mental imagining of how the current scene can bring new situations for action” (Heath and Langman, 1994, p. 101). Together, the articles provide an important theoretical lens for this dissertation, demonstrating how a coaching register often operates in ensemble-based performance settings.

One thing that is important to note in Heath’s and Langman’s work is their consistent emphasis on how the coaching register supports cognitive and imaginative affordances—calling a player to “think, look, listen and hypothesize” through participation (1994, p. 103). This allows the coaching register to maintain a strong connection to learning perspectives by, essentially, showing *how* coaches use language to move “players to practice the skills, remember and apply the rules, and, most important, see themselves as knowledge sources and skill displayers within an integrated unit of strategizers” (p. 93). Interestingly, although the use of the term ‘coaching’ has gained popularity in broad educational settings (Aguilar, 2013; Dennen, 2004; Fletcher & Mullen, 2014), the research of Heath (1991) and Heath and Langman (1994) remain the only studies to explain coaching as a *register*. This is significant, because to theorize coaching as a register conceptualizes it as a discursive phenomenon that is enacted in particular situations for specific communicatory purposes. Register analysis also tends to support the kind of fine-grained discourse analysis I have tried to achieve in this project’s location of Professor D’s coaching register.

Although there is not prior research on classroom discourse or instructional registers in higher education theatre programs, the terms ‘coach’ and ‘coaching’ have long been utilized to

describe the kind of discursive work an instructor or director engages in during performance training or rehearsal. As early as 1893, a *Los Angeles Times* article described the rehearsal practices of famed British actor and director, Henry Irving, as “coaching the actors” on the Lyceum stage in London (Burgin). In the current moment, graduate programs employ the word ‘coach’ to describe entire programs of study, such as the M.A. and M.F.A. degrees in “Actor Training and Coaching” at the Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, which is part of the University of London. ‘Coaching’ is also used by English-speaking instructors of non-Western and intercultural forms of performance training. Internationally recognized practitioner and scholar, Phillip Zarrilli, for example, refers to the “coaching strategies” he developed to teach Asian martial arts and Indian dance drama (2009, p. 89). Similarly, most practical textbooks for acting, however slightly, mention the discursive practice of ‘actor coaching.’ In the textbook assigned to Introduction to Performance, *Acting: Onstage & Off* (2013), the author dedicates four sentences (in a text that spans one-hundred and fifty pages) to explain how an acting coach functions, “much like a coach in sports, working with [the actor] on specific problems, having [the actor] try a number of solutions, fine-tuning the same moment over and over, driving [the actor] a little farther than [the actor] thought possible” (p. 242). Consequently, although the term ‘coaching’ appears strongly tied to performance settings, the practice is largely un-theorized.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For additional theatre and performance studies texts that briefly mention the term ‘coaching’ in practical and historical settings, see Ross Prior’s *Teaching Actors: Knowledge Transfer in Acting Training* (2012), Joseph Roach’s *The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (1993), and Mandy Rees’s and John Staniunas’s, *Between Director and Actor: Strategies for Effective Performance* (2002).

### 2.2.3 Scaffolding

Because a coaching register appears to afford particular functional opportunities embedded in speech and activity, it is worthwhile to press further into how learning can take place within such interactions. Interactive relationships and activity systems, of course, are of deep importance to cognitive studies in theatre and sociocultural learning theory. Indeed, Vygotsky's seminal construct, **the zone of proximal development (ZPD)**, aims to identify an especially fertile space for interaction, which is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Although the zone of proximal development is not domain specific (indeed it can occur in various settings such as children's play and informal conversation), it is often linked to formal learning environments and hierarchical, dyadic interactions between a teacher/student, master/apprentice or parent/child. Yet, the significance of the zone of proximal development lies not in isolated enactments. Rather, as developmental and cultural psychologist, Barbara Rogoff, reminds us, "[i]nteractions in the zone of proximal development are the crucible of development *and* of culture, in that they allow children to participate in activities that would be impossible for them alone, using cultural tools that themselves must be adapted to the specific practical activities at hand" (1998, p. 16). Rogoff's insight suggests that interactions in the zone of proximal development 'accumulate' over time to cultivate a learning trajectory for individuals and for cultures.

In step with the zone of proximal development is the construct of **scaffolding**. Most educators have heard of the term scaffolding and likely have a sense of its meaning. Yet, since

the term was coined in 1976 by David Wood, Jerome Bruner and Gail Ross, it has been the subject of wide scrutiny and analysis to the point that the definition of the term has become erroneously synonymous with broad educative goals like ‘teacher support’ or ‘instructional sequencing’ (Stone, 1998; 2002) As a metaphor, scaffolding borrows from the field of construction to suggest a temporary structure that is built to accomplish a particular modifying task for an additional structure. Yet, scaffolding, as the analogue may or may not imply, suggests a face-to-face interactional process that Wood, Bruner, and Ross note, “enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his (*sic*) unassisted efforts” (1976, p. 90). Curiously, the classic definition of scaffolding is similar to the function of an acting coach, as earlier described by textbook author, Robert Barton: “working with [the actor] on specific problems...driving [the actor] a little farther than [the actor] thought possible” (2012, p. 242). Based on the dyadic, interpersonal, and goal-directed descriptions of both scaffolding and actor coaching, it seems the two phenomena might have a good deal in common.

Yet, what the static metaphor of scaffolding often obscures (as well as mechanical views of actor coaching), is the communicative intersubjectivity that takes place between a student and a more knowledgeable other who co-construct *together*. Here, the emphasis on joint activity is key. Even though the instructor usually has a strong idea or understanding of the ‘right’ direction in which to scaffold the student, he or she must do so from the partial perspective of the novice—that is, to view the process from the student’s perspective. This can open up a dialogic space of shared negotiation of viewpoints and voices, which can be appropriated. This understanding of dialogue generally aligns with literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of

**dialogism.**<sup>15</sup> Many learning scientists who study discourse and interaction have found Bakhtin's understanding of dialogism to be a useful concept when describing the multiple perspectives, degrees of authority, and layers of appropriation bound up in communicational acts.<sup>16</sup> In scaffolding, it seems dialogism is epistemological in that it helps to guide the collaborative construction of knowledge or activity.

When scaffolding takes place within optimal, dialogic conditions, a novice does not merely experience task completion. Rather, scaffolded interactions allow a student to experience "genuine conceptual reorganization," which initiates a mastery of a new skill that may generalize (Stone, 1998, p. 349). To that end, learning scientist, C. Addison Stone, has written extensively about the "promises and pitfalls" of the metaphor of scaffolding, and has proposed an enriched understanding of the construct which emphasizes the communicative dynamics that help a novice experience the "uptake" of support. (Stone, 2002, p. 175; 1998; 1996). Stone observes, "it is possible to argue that much of what is essential to the notion of scaffolding can be captured by the three terms, *context*, *contingency*, and *challenge*" (2002, p. 179, emphasis in original).

For Stone, **context** refers to the sociocultural, institutional, material, and historical situation in which scaffolding takes place, as well as the shared goals held by the novice and the mentor. Although tasks often mean something different to an instructor and a student (i.e. a student's conception of a task or activity is often impoverished), a common interest in the task is

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<sup>15</sup> A Russian intellectual writing at roughly the same time as Vygotsky, Bakhtin's work has been deeply influential in the humanities and social sciences. For Bakhtin, the primary building block of language, the utterance, is fundamentally social, historically inherited, and always in conversation with multiple voices and respondents. Some of his central writings include *The Dialogic Imagination* (1982) and *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays* (1986). For more on the concept of dialogism, see Michael Holquist's, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (1990).

<sup>16</sup> See for example: *Voices of the Mind* (1993) and *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy, and Learning* (2004).

essential to maintain participation in the activity (Stone, 2002). **Contingency** concerns the interactional adjustments made by an instructor (or more knowledgeable other), who must continually, and through shared understanding, “engage in ongoing assessment of the learner’s current understanding and need of support” (2002, p. 179). In this regard, an instructor’s prompts are contingent if they exist along a spectrum of support (often ranging from general to specific) and emergently respond to a student’s relative ‘success’ or ‘failure’ with the task at hand. To emergently respond to a novice, of course, an instructor must continually monitor and diagnose the level of contingent support needed—in other words, an instructor selects from a spectrum of supportive prompts to match the novice’s current understanding.<sup>17</sup> And, herein lies Stone’s third, and perhaps most important, characteristic of scaffolding: **challenge**. It is not enough for an instructor to simply meet a learner where he or she is. Optimal scaffolded instruction *challenges* a student by pushing him or her just beyond their understanding, supporting a student in the transfer of responsibility. Here, it is important to note that Stone’s three characteristics of scaffolded instruction *unfold over time*, through an instructor’s responsive prompts, which emergently challenge a novice to experience, and take up, a gradual transfer of responsibility (Stone, 2002; 1998).

An instructor’s challenges are often mediated through discourse—the utterances and physical demonstrations used to pose questions, directives, or explanations. In this regard, Stone acknowledges it is possible that “challenge consists of communicational tension and inference,” which often relies on situational and conversational pragmatics, as well as dialogic collaboration

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<sup>17</sup> Additional research on scaffolding has identified “prompt hierarchies,” which can help explain an instructor’s contingent responses to a particular activity (Stone, 2002, p. 180; Wood et al., 1978).

(2002, p. 181). Although Stone does not provide a deep account of the “tension” that resides within the interpersonal communication of scaffolded interactions, perhaps Heath’s and Langman’s understanding of a coaching register may help to illuminate how discourse plays out in episodes of actor coaching in the Introduction to Performance class I studied. This discourse might, in turn, also afford opportunities to learn through participation.

### 2.3 COMMON FRAME

Shifting gears to bring this chapter to a close, I conclude with a synthesis of the reviewed scholarship to demonstrate the relevance of bringing together particular subfields from theatre and performance studies and the learning sciences. In so doing, I highlight similarities and identify a framework of common assumptions, which can serve to guide my analyses of classroom data.

Before attempting to align the scholarship theoretically, however, I first acknowledge the ways that sociocultural approaches to learning and theatre and performance studies research align methodologically. Although empirical methods may initially appear a distant relative to humanistic inquiry, the genetic analysis that is common to sociocultural research provides a way to trace human experience through time—in effect, demonstrating how material and immaterial tools, routines, and norms *emerge* to meet new constraints and functions. Theatre and performance studies scholarship, of course, upholds the power of cultural practices and memories to enact social consequences through time. Performance historians often seek to recover past cultural traditions, lodged in both the textual archive and uncodified repertoire, in

order to demonstrate diachronic change in cultural perceptions and practices (Taylor, 2003). Social science research such as genetic analysis, offers a related logic of inquiry, albeit over different time frames, boundaries, and systems.

In terms of theoretical assumptions, theatre and performance studies and sociocultural learning theory are aligned in three common ways. First, both literatures emphasize the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which human experience is *situated*—key propositions of both Vygotskian developmental psychology and humanistic inquiry. Although my analysis centers upon fine-grained discursive practices enacted and experienced by participants in a single classroom at the University of Pittsburgh, I interpret these activities within the historical tradition of the liberal arts and general education programs in U.S. institutions of higher education. Additionally, while I consider the instructor’s coaching register as scaffolding students’ learning trajectories, I also recognize that such performance learning opportunities advance a Stanislavski-based acting system created by, and with, particular cultural and historical forces. Thus, as I zoom in to investigate discourse in the learning environment of this study, I do so through a telescoping understanding of the larger contextual forces that shaped, enabled, and sustained such classroom discourse.

Second, in terms of analyzing the activities of the classroom, I view the learning environment to be a system in which performance and learning emerge through social practices that are, “recursive, cyclic interaction[s]” (Lutterbie, 2011, p. 90). In this way, social practices mediate human activity by constraining and affording opportunities. Of the many social practices to examine in an activity system, I follow the lead of sociocultural researchers Heath (1991) and Heath and Langman (1994) to focus on discourse as a register characterized by its coaching qualities and functional purposes. A coaching register affords various opportunities to perform,



which generally cohere in a learning “trajectory” that moves a student to more central roles of participation (within a community of practice) in this liberal arts undergraduate classroom (Greeno & Gresalfi, 2008, p. 170).

Third, I contend that the participants in the classroom experience performance and learning through minds that are inherently embodied. Relying on the neuroscience-based research of McConachie (2008; 2013) and Kemp (2012), I view discourse as involving human speech, gesture, and physicality—all of which are made meaningful by sociocultural contexts. Using a Vygotskian understanding of the formation of thought, I accept that utterances, physical externalizations (i.e. gestures), and the use of material tools are what lead to human thinking and, therefore, learning. In this way, cognition is “stretched over” and occurs through multimodal forms of communication (Lave, 1988, p. 1). Furthermore, through utterances, gestures, and social practices, participants in the classroom use discourse to not only think, learn, and perform, but also to “say, do, and be” as stakeholders (Gee, 2014, p. 8).

The theoretical assumptions I outline seek to join two literatures to inform this dissertation’s methods and analyses. In this regard, I pose the following research questions to answer in the subsequent chapters:

- In this liberal arts theatre classroom, how does Professor D’s coaching register cultivate implicit participatory norms, which create scaffolded learning opportunities over time and activity?
- What are the pervasive language features embedded in Professor D’s coaching register and how do they help to organize the students’ participation in scaffolded learning opportunities?

### 3.0 METHODS

This chapter discusses the ethnographic methods used to collect data in the Introduction to Performance classroom I studied, as well as the methods of analysis used to interpret the data; it is divided into three discussions. The first discussion contextualizes the use of ethnographic methods within the design of case study research, and identifies the strengths and limitations of the methodology. In this section I also provide a rationale for my selection of this particular classroom and instructor, along with an acknowledgement of my own researcher positionality. The second discussion provides an overview of the qualitative methods I used to collect data in the classroom. Here, I describe the material setting and motivational make-up of the course, as well as the participants involved in the study. I also discuss the prompts and processes used to gather data sources—for example, the writing of fieldnotes and conceptual memos, interviews with participants, and the recording of a digital corpus of classroom video. The third discussion focuses on the qualitative and interpretative methods I used to construct and investigate the data, including interaction analysis, methods for the study of spoken registers, and prior research conducted by Heath (1991) and Heath and Langman (1994).

### 3.1 ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS AND CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Ethnography is a research methodology that formally emerged from the field of anthropology in the twentieth century, but which has been informally employed throughout history.<sup>18</sup> Using a basic definition, ethnography is the “study of people in a natural setting” and, “provides an opportunity for researchers to conduct a detailed study of a group of people while being immersed in the culture of that group” (Robinson-Caskie, 2006, p. 854). A guiding principle in ethnography is for the researcher to come to understand the local participant’s *emic* perspective in the social setting—that is, to comprehend the norms, rules, values, and expected behaviors that guide symbolic interaction. Yet, while coming to see an insider’s *emic* perspective, an ethnographer also retains her *etic* perspective, which may refer to the concepts, histories, and theories that inform how the researcher interprets the local setting (Fetterman, 2004, p. 329). The use of ethnographic methods, then, relies on a researcher’s engagement in reflexive processes (often operationalized through consistent and systematic writing) to negotiate the *emic* and *etic* perspectives experienced.

In the learning sciences, ethnography and ethnographic methods are often employed in qualitative case study research (Sawyer, 2014; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2013). For many, the value of case study research resides in its different design possibilities. Multiple case studies, for example, provide a productive way to compare and contrast naturally-occurring phenomena, investigate a research intervention, or cull information for replication (Yin, 2013). Single case research, on the other hand, tends toward more holistic, exploratory, and/or descriptive purposes.

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<sup>18</sup> For example, some credit ethnography as having Greek origins found in the writings of Homer and Herodotus (Skinner, 2012).

In single case study, a system (or case) is rigorously detailed in order to examine its interrelated parts or operations. Through the use of ethnographic methods—such as observation, participant observation, written fieldnotes, interviews, and the transcription of audio and video recordings—a researcher can gain a close proximity to the case to discern the primary features, or issues, that organize the system (Stake, 1994). A thickly described case can also serve *explanatory* purposes, which may initiate, challenge, verify, or extend theoretical propositions that derive from the study (Geertz, 1973; Yin 2013).

In case design research, methodologists encourage researchers to understand the *type* of case being studied to guide the project's overall purpose. In this dissertation, the type of case I offer is what methodologist Robert Stake refers to as an, “instrumental case study,” which “provide[s] insight into an issue or refinement of theory” (Stake, 1994, p. 237). My study initiates a theoretical understanding of how an acting instructor deploys a coaching register over time and through activity (in this case, realistic acting). Yet, actor coaching as previously noted, is not a phenomenon unique to the particular Introduction to Performance course I studied. Rather, it appears to be significant in most performance training, rehearsal environments, and perhaps even in transhistorical settings (Hodge, 2001; Zarrilli, 2009). Because actor coaching is a phenomenon that exists outside the context of the single case I offer, an instrumental case study is a productive choice. This is because instrumental case studies can facilitate a researcher's analysis of a particular context in order to understand a broader issue. Stake notes that in instrumental study, “the case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, but because this helps us pursue the external interest” (Stake, 1994, p. 237). Consequently, instrumental study can help a researcher to develop theory about an issue,

as well as to develop the best methods through which the theorized issue might (subsequently) be considered among a “collective” of cases, which may not previously have been considered to manifest a common characteristic (p. 237).<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, a single case design can allow a researcher to examine a general issue at varying levels of scale and in comparative ways (Green et al., 2007; Yin 2013). For example, in this dissertation, I identify instances of Professor D’s “instructional register” as well as his “regulative register” to compare teacher/student discourse in both kinds of interaction (Christie, 2005, pp. 14-15). Similarly, tracing Professor D’s coaching register across the varying frames of participation enacted in the classroom over six weeks allowed me to document different coaching functions over time. This documentation, in turn, led me to look beyond ‘typical’ dyadic actor coaching to induce four gross categories of coaching, which operated at different levels of talk and activity, but that were genetically linked.

Despite the many strengths of single case study research, the design is not without limitations. As a study of a particular classroom, my project does not aim to generalize to additional populations, but, as previously acknowledged, seeks to examine general issues and theoretical propositions concerning actor coaching and performance learning (Stake, 1994; Yin, 2013). In addition, this dissertation does not identify every aspect of the classroom system I investigated, but rather purposefully tracks, samples, and analyzes Professor D’s instructional coaching register. Here, it is important to note that my written fieldnotes and conceptual memos provided meaningful spaces where I explored an array of other classroom features—in effect,

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<sup>19</sup> It is my nascent intention to use the theoretical and methodological knowledge gained from this dissertation in additional performance settings where coaching occurs—potentially, for the purposes of developing a monograph.

‘trying out’ various issues present in the case before honing in to analyze classroom discourse as a key organizing issue. A single case study, then, demonstrates an in-depth representation of a particular instantiation of an issue—in this case, the instructional register of actor coaching.

Because single case research focuses so deeply on a particular system, the selection of the case is of utmost importance (Stake 1994; Yin 2013). Although a researcher may not know the precise issue he or she is looking for in a case, it is helpful to have general ideas to guide case selection. For this project, two prior experiences steered my interest in studying an Introduction to Performance course. First, I had experience teaching the course.<sup>20</sup> From this applied perspective, I understood the course to afford a particular kind of liberal arts learning experience, which had not been rigorously examined from a learning sciences perspective (such as, classroom discourse analysis). This preliminary hunch was complemented by consistent exposure to theories of learning and cognition, as well as contemporary educational research methods, in my doctoral coursework. These courses allowed me to see the potential of bringing outside theories and methods to bear on a performance setting, and how they might meld with cognitive theatre studies research.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> As part of my graduate assistantship in the Department of Theatre Arts, I taught two Introduction to Performance courses during the following semesters: Spring 2014 and Fall 2014. In addition to teaching for the University of Pittsburgh, I previously taught acting courses and residencies at the University of Memphis, Belmont University, Nashville Shakespeare Festival, and TN Governor’s School for the Arts.

<sup>21</sup> During my coursework at the University of Pittsburgh, I completed the required courses for the Department of Theatre Arts, as well as a sequence of six doctoral seminars in the learning sciences, including: “Learning Sciences and Educational Change” (Spring 2012), “Skill Acquisition” (Spring 2013), “Research Interviewing” (Fall 2013), “Critical Readings in Language, Literacy & Culture” (Spring 2014), “Theories of Learning & Cognition” (Fall 2014), and “Qualitative Methods” (Spring 2015).

Second, I conducted a pilot study of a *different* Introduction to Performance course to better understand whether the course might merit deep investigation and analysis. My pilot study took place within the context of a Qualitative Methods seminar, where I collected a small data set from an Introduction to Performance course taught by then Theatre Arts faculty member, Bria Walker. The pilot study experience convinced me that the class was, indeed, a robust site for qualitative research for a number of reasons: 1) the multi-modal means through which performance learning took place appeared highly complex, suggesting that discourse operated in particular, patterned ways; 2) the quality of the instructor was high, which cultivated an energetic learning environment full of rich interactional data; and 3) I realized that my practical experience teaching performance did not help me understand how performance learning operated in the classroom—in fact, it seemed to hinder it. But, this challenge also proved an intellectual catalyst.

Although the pilot study experience secured my interest in studying an Introduction to Performance course for dissertation research, I also knew that the quality of the course hinged on a strong instructor. Consequently, it was fortuitous that the Department of Theatre Arts selected “Professor D” to teach the lone section of Introduction to Performance during a summer session in 2015. Professor D is a seasoned acting teacher who holds an MFA in Performance Pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University, has over five years of experience teaching performance in various undergraduate liberal-arts settings, and is a professional actor and fight choreographer who regularly works in regional theatre. In addition, Professor D was willing, and seemed pleased, to allow me to study his classroom. Access can be difficult to procure in empirical studies and classrooms are no exception. In fact, performance classes (and rehearsals) are often considered deeply private spaces in order to help actors engage in exploratory, risk-taking work in confidence. The fact that Professor D was both an established professional *and*

willing to allow me to study his course provided compelling reasons to select his class. Additionally, the fact that the course ran during the summer semester allowed me the requisite time to focus completely on the course and to participate in the rigors of data collection (i.e. the reflexive reading and writing required by ethnographic methods).

In addition to assisting my selection of a case, the pilot study experience helped me begin to understand my role as an ethnographer. In his influential article, “Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics (1991),” performance theorist Dwight Conquergood advocates what anthropologist Michael Jackson (following William James) calls “radical empiricism,” which privileges, “the intersubjective grounds on which our understanding is constituted” (1991, pp. 181-182). Conquergood advises: “[t]he radical empiricist’s response to the vulnerabilities and vicissitudes of fieldwork is honesty, humility, self-reflexivity, and an acknowledgement of the interdependence and reciprocal role-playing between knower and known” (p. 182). Borrowing from Bakhtin’s concept of *dialogism*, or the meaningful interaction of varying viewpoints and voices, Conquergood encourages ethnographers to embrace their subjectivity and produce scholarship that is not a monologue of information, but rather a dialogue of communication (p. 182).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that theatre and performance studies scholars often study cultural instantiations of performance through the method of *critical* ethnography (Conquergood, 2013; Denzin, 2003; Madison, 2013). Leading authority (and former student of Conquergood’s), D. Soyini Madison, notes, “[c]ritical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain” (2013, p. 5, emphasis included). By utilizing ethnography and ethnographic methods to identify and analyze power dynamics, critical ethnography is characterized by a Foucauldian sense of critique, which functions as an a priori interpretative stance (Madison, 2013, p. 8). While I acknowledge that critical analytic features (e.g. race, class, gender) are important characteristics of any research setting and its participants, my project employs ethnographic methods from a more anthropological stance that first distinguishes and describes what happens in the social setting—



Conquergood's insights are significant for this dissertation, as an ethnographer's subjectivity functions as an interpretative instrument that negotiates the emic and etic perspectives experienced. Indeed, qualitative research demands that an analyst identify and interrogate the standpoints and lived experiences that influence one's interpretation. In the *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, sociologist Katrina Deliovsky notes, "[t]he researcher's position influences the questions he or she asks, whom he or she approaches for case study, and how he or she interprets the data" (p. 886). Undoubtedly, my background as a practitioner of theatre (as a professional director, teaching artist, actress, and former education director at a regional theatre company), influenced my desire to empirically study performance. Furthermore, my 'insider' status as a member of the theatre arts department at the University of Pittsburgh certainly proved helpful in gaining access and establishing trust with both Professor D and Professor Walker. I also recognize that as a white, middle-class, cisgender female, my positionality is not neutral. Rather, my features are cultural and historical markers that denote privilege and authority, which I strove to be cognizant of as a researcher. In this regard, I also acknowledge that the scope of my project does not aim to push heavily on critical boundaries, but rather mostly presses upon disciplinary borders.

Bridging the fields of theatre and performance studies and the learning sciences, however, did challenge my positionality. Because of my proximity to the Introduction to

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that is, the identification of the norms, practices, roles, and discourse found in the classroom. In this regard, I follow Alessandro Duranti's observation that, "[l]inguistic anthropologists start from the assumption that there are dimensions of speaking that can only be captured by studying what people actually *do* with language, by matching words, silences, and gestures with the context in which those signs are produced" (1997, p. 9, emphasis included). In this regard, it is also important to acknowledge that anthropological assumptions, such as Duranti's, need not be solely clinical. Rather, many anthropologists first identify what discursive acts count as power *before* applying a critical interpretation.

Performance course, its content, and performance practice in general, I initially struggled to shift out of a dramaturgical mode of seeing, assessing, and interacting with performance practice (as determined by a mostly Stanislavskian epistemology in this classroom). Ethnographic research is often considered a process of, “making the familiar strange,” and this was certainly my experience in the field (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 32). Essentially, I had to put aside my previous training as a director and as an acting teacher, in order to begin to see performance as a kind of social participation organized by overlapping contexts and communicatory channels. In this regard, my initial fieldnotes and conceptual memos demonstrate the difficulties and steep learning curve I experienced. To meet this challenge, I relied on one of the fundamental methods of anthropological inquiry—thick description (Geertz, 1973). Through the detailed *description* of the performance setting (including its participants, activities, and material environment), as well as the transcription of classroom discourse and historical research, I began to slowly shift out of the “professional vision” of a theatre practitioner, and into a more anthropological mode of viewing the social interactions that constituted the norms, roles, and discursive practices used in this classroom (Goodwin, 1994).<sup>23</sup>

In the following section, I discuss the specific resources, which guided the ethnographic procedures I used to collect data in the classroom—such as the prompts that directed my written fieldnotes and conceptual memos, interviews with participants, and the use of video technology.

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<sup>23</sup> To be clear, the challenge I describe departs from the theatre and performance studies’ methodology of “practice-based research” or “practice as research”—see, for example, *Theatre Topics* 23(2): 2013 special issue, as well as Kershaw & Nicholson (2011), and Freeman (2010). Practice-based research is a methodology that allows a researcher to study his or her own performance practice, and is akin to “action research” or “participant action research” in the qualitative paradigm. My project differs in that I sought to systematically study *other people’s* performance practice over time, which demanded a considerable shift in my relationship to, and analytical understanding of, performance.

But first, I contextualize the material setting and ethos of the course, as well as the participants involved in the study.

### **3.2 OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The Introduction to Performance course I studied at the University of Pittsburgh took place during a six-week summer semester, which ran May 12—June 18, 2015; class sessions were on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6–8:30p. During this time, I attended, observed and video-recorded each class that took place (~26 hours in the field). In addition, I accompanied the class to a professional theatre production at City Theatre (~4 hours), attended a number of the students' rehearsals that were held outside of class (~5 hours), conducted three interviews with Professor D (~6 hours), and held individual interviews with the students near, or after, the conclusion of the course (~10 hours).

Although the course was capped at eighteen students, a total of ten students initially enrolled in the course and nine students completed it. Choosing to study a summer course, in which a fewer number of students enrolled than usual, offered both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the condensed time frame precluded me from observing the more nuanced changes, which inevitably would have occurred over a longer semester. And, the small class size prevented me from observing a larger sample of student experience. Yet, on the other hand, the compressed time frame provided longer class periods to study, which allowed me to observe how ideas, concepts, utterances, and participation frameworks shifted over longer class blocks. Additionally, because my analytical focus eventually became localized on Professor

D's dyadic coaching sessions, the smaller number of students enrolled in the course worked to my advantage in the sense that these coaching sessions often lasted longer because there were fewer students to 'get through.'

### **3.2.1 Course Setting and Participants**

The course took place in a classroom that is used (almost entirely) by theatre arts performance courses, and located in the basement of the Cathedral of Learning (B-18) on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh. The following description of the classroom is from my fieldnotes and Figure 1 provides photographs of the space.

May 12, 2015

B-16 is a long rectangular room (~18 feet wide and ~48 feet in length) painted a light, creamy yellow with large windows that face a retaining wall (of sorts) along the west side of the Cathedral of Learning. There are two large heating/cooling registers along the exterior wall, which constantly hum and make a good deal of white noise that obscures speech. The ceilings feel low (~10 feet) and have exposed pipes that run in a grid-like fashion, as well as rows of hanging fluorescent lights that whirr softly. Green chalkboards are fixed to three of the walls. The floor feels sprung and looks to be painted plywood built up from the concrete subfloor. The shorter 'ends' of the rectangular room are occupied by different types of furniture. At one end, a number of neutral black boxes line the walls, as well as benches, and a large black door hung on hinges. The door is built into a frame and is on wheels so it can be moved around the space to be used in varying scenes, which need a formal entrance and/or exit. The other end of the classroom holds a

number of mismatched chairs that form three loose rows for spectators to view performances; behind the chairs are two closets. In between the two 'ends' of the classroom is a wide rectangular open space. The arrangement of the space is significant because it appears to divide the class into two modes of participation. The 'spectator' end

**Figure 1: Photographs of the Performance Classroom**





of the room is where most of the class took place today (60%), and it is where the students kept their notebooks and computers and listened to the instructor's opening 'lecture.' When the students moved to the classroom's open space for a performance exercise, they left all of their 'typical' school tools (paper, pen, computer) at the spectator chairs, and this seemed to signal an immediate shift in the students' learning experience.

In addition to the material setting of the classroom, the motivational context, or ethos, of the course played a large part in shaping the learning environment. Because Professor D was the chief agent responsible for setting up the tone and belief system of the class community, it is important to further describe his background and the ways that he influenced and organized the

classroom's culture. At the time of the case study, Professor D had just completed his second year of doctoral study in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Pittsburgh, where he had previously taught two sections of Introduction to Performance.<sup>24</sup> Prior to attending graduate school, Professor D worked in professional theatre in New York City for five years and taught performance courses as an adjunct instructor at CUNY (Hofstra and Queensboro campuses). As mentioned, he holds a MFA in performance pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University, a BFA in performance from the conservatory theatre program at the University of Evanston, and attended the high school for the performing arts in Miami, FL. At thirty-one, Professor D is a self-described “Hispanic kid from Miami” with warm brown eyes, an athletic physique and a resonant voice that has a soft lilt to it, which identifies him as a native Spanish speaker. In general, he is extroverted and speaks with confidence about the merits of performance and academic study.

Professor D's character informed how he shaped and disseminated performance content, which, in turn, affected how it was taken up by the students. In this regard, he fostered the students' participation by talking to them *as if* they were actors. For example, on the first day of class he told the students with a wry, yet knowing grin, “We are actors—you *all* are—because you signed up for an acting class.” From this moment forward, Professor D routinely referred to the students as “actors,” thereby encouraging a sociodramatic frame in which the students could

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<sup>24</sup> Professor D and I took two doctoral seminars together during our Theatre Arts coursework at the University of Pittsburgh: Contemporary Approaches to Latin American and Caribbean Theatre and Performance Histories (Fall 2013) and Performance and the Global (Spring 2014). At the time of this study, we were cordial but not close friends. This was due, in part, to the fact that our research interests are quite different. As this dissertation demonstrates, my scholarly interests are rooted in theories of cognition, learning, and performance and rely on ethnographic methods; Professor D often examines performance within the context of global tourism, leveraging post-colonial theories and historiographical methods.

see themselves as acting apprentices—not merely students in an introductory course. At the same time, however (and unlike a competitive conservatory environment), Professor D routinely presented the course to the students as a series of opportunities, in which everyone could experience success. For Professor D, success did not refer to a student’s commercially-determined ‘talent’ level, but rather a student’s willingness to do the work typically required of actors, including introspective and analytical writing (e.g. journal reflections and character analyses) and full participation (e.g. physical and vocal group work and games).

Professor D also demanded that the students have a high degree of respect and empathy for one another, qualities he cultivated through *meta-comments*, which asked the students to see themselves in (and through) their peers’ performances. For example, in the midst of giving a note to an actor during an improvisatory exercise or during scene work, Professor D often turned to the rest of the class to remind them: “This is for everyone...I’m telling him stuff (*gesturing to the performing student*), but am I only telling him stuff?” (Class 5). Metacomments opened up a dialogic frame, which exposed students’ successes and mistakes so that the entire class could (potentially) experience them as learning opportunities. Lastly, Professor D emphasized a set of all-purpose professional standards for the students—standards that are valid in theatre practice, but also in a host of other professions. For instance, Professor D stressed the importance of showing up on time, completing assignments to the best of one’s ability, active listening, coming to class prepared, and supporting the ensemble. In our interviews, Professor D emphasized that, “at this level of performance training,” the course should be an, “exercise in professionalism” (Fieldnotes, May 8, 2015). Professor D’s expressed goal was for the students to cultivate a generative skill set, which might reinforce pathways for success in any number of professional contexts.



As is common in this general education class, the students were not theatre majors and only two (of the nine) had prior experience with formal acting. In interviews, I learned that each of the six men and three women who enrolled in the course did so to earn a ‘creative expression’ credit in the humanities sequence of Pitt’s general education program, which, in turn, contributed to their various degree programs and majors: biology, nursing, economics, business, and civil, chemical, and computer engineering. The students ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-four, including two sophomores, two juniors, four seniors, and a post-baccalaureate student who retained student status while applying to medical schools. Although most of the students attended the University of Pittsburgh’s main campus, one student attended the Titusville branch campus and another student attended the Johnstown branch campus (satellites of the larger University of Pittsburgh system). In terms of race and ethnicity, the students were somewhat diverse—one student identified as Black, one Greek, one Persian, and six White.

### **3.2.2 Additional Data Sources**

Prior to entering the field, I wrote a series of documents to help me prepare to collect data. With guidance and feedback from my theater arts advisor, Bruce McConachie, and my learning sciences committee member, Ellice Forman, I wrote a series of documents in which I articulated a research aim, research questions, and literatures to consult (methodological and theoretical). The following research questions guided my entrance into the field, and directed my initial *observations* of the classroom system:

- What kinds of behavior, demonstrations of skill, and patterns of talk and/or appropriation are viewed as “successful” in this class and why?

- What kinds of tools or artifacts are employed to assist classroom “success”?
- How do the teacher and students co-construct a shifting (and perhaps even contradictory) definition and enactment of “success” throughout the course?

In order to research human subjects, I submitted an application to the University of Pittsburgh’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).<sup>25</sup> On the first day of the class, Professor D introduced me to the students and I explained the nature of my research study. I then invited students to participate by handing out consent forms that were approved by IRB.<sup>26</sup> Although one student did not initially wish to be part of the project, he later changed his mind and elected to sign a consent form. Consequently, in the end, each of the nine students and Professor D consented to be part of the study.

In addition to complying with Pitt’s institutional standards for ethics, it was important to establish clear expectations with Professor D concerning my role as a researcher in his classroom. Together we agreed that I would mostly be a silent observer, but that I would occasionally join in the class’s performance activities and games. Professor D and I felt it was important that I act as a *participant observer* in the class for two, interrelated reasons (Heath & Street, 2008). First, the presence of a researcher in a learning environment can introduce an atmosphere of surveillance. In all likelihood, this is especially true in a performance classroom where students are asked to breach social norms through improvisatory performance games. Hence, if the students were going to engage in “silly” performance exercises, I also wanted to participate in the games and make myself vulnerable. To provide consistency, I participated in a

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendix A for IRB’s Approval Letter.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix B for an example of the IRB approved consent form.

part of each class's opening warm-up activities (~5 minutes), after which I sat down in a peripheral location to observe and make jottings.<sup>27</sup>

The second reason I chose to act as a participant observer concerned my use of a *video camera* in the class. Learning scientists (and social scientists in general) routinely use video technology in research settings to generate an audio and visual archive of activities and discourse. The varying complexities, advantages and disadvantages of using a video camera in learning settings have been well theorized (Erickson, 2006; Green et al., 2007; Hall, 2000; Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Camera placement is especially tricky, as it determines an ontological vantage point for the analyst. Following the advice of learning scientist, Frederick Erickson, I positioned the camera at a peripheral location, and made few changes in zooming or movement back and forth. States Erickson: “[t]he main advantage of this kind of footage is that it provides a continuous and relatively comprehensive record of social interaction, a document that is to some extent phenomenologically neutral...[and] less distracting for the participants in the event being recorded” (2006, pp. 177-178). In addition, this camera position freed me from standing *behind* the instrument (a position of power), so that I could, instead, be *in* the camera's frame in peripheral places. The few times I did move the camera (to record small group interactions), I typically sat down alongside (or behind) the students so that I was also in the

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<sup>27</sup> Although I was mostly a silent observer or participant *during* the class, at breaks I did choose to engage the students to build rapport. When appropriate, I asked the students basic questions about their coursework, year in school, or major. In the end, it seems my role in the classroom was mostly dialogic, because, as the class community took shape, the students began to engage me at breaks, invite me to their rehearsals, and even tease me about my research—such as, “come over here (to observe), we’re doing good stuff!” (Class 11).

camera's shot. Decisions such as these were purposeful, and aimed at building a dialogic (in a Conquergoodian sense) relationship to the research participants.

Here, it is also important to acknowledge the theoretical assumptions that undergird the use of video footage as a primary data source. Because sociocultural theory understands human cognition and meaning-making as taking place through social activity (which, over time, coalesces into regularities of interaction within defined communities of practice), the theoretical orientation presumes that the social world is accessible for examination. Video recordings, then, offer one way for a researcher to segment activities, analyze interactions, and re-play particular moments to discern meaningful details. But, this is not to say that what a researcher observes on film is reality. Rather, the video footage provides a re-presentation of an event, which has been transformed and documented by a camera instrument, which is limited in its placement, angle, partiality, and effects (Erickson, 2006; Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Furthermore, as Erickson reminds us, videotape is not data: "it is a *resource* for data construction...[i]nformation derived from video, in itself, does not give us direct, unmediated access" (p. 178, emphasis mine). How I constructed data from the continuous videotape footage is discussed in the following section.

In addition to video recording each class, I also engaged in a core component of ethnography—consistent writing (Heath & Street, 2008; Fetterman, 2004). Following each class, I wrote descriptive *fieldnotes* by following directives set out in two well-known methods texts, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (2011) and *On Ethnography: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research* (2008). To develop in-class jottings into "thickly" depicted scenes, each of my fieldnotes identified: 1) "a running account of events in real time" and a description of each activity 2) "notable phrases and conversations" and 3) "change[s] in audience, routines, rituals, and features of context that co-occur with shifts in language and modes" (Heath & Street, 2008,

p. 77). My overarching goal for the written fieldnotes was to document what happened in as much detail as possible. I often watched class videos while revising my fieldnotes in order to make sure I conveyed each activity as completely as possible in (mostly) neutral writing that sought to *describe*, not analyze (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2008; Geertz, 1973). On average, the fieldnotes for each class were ten pages in length,<sup>28</sup> and included a running commentary (to the side) where I reflected on possible connections, observed patterns, potential modes of analysis, or literatures to consult. In this manner, I sought to keep the ‘raw’ descriptive data separate from my analytical interpretation (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011; Heath & Street 2008).

After writing fieldnotes, I wrote a weekly *conceptual memo* to analytically reflect on my time in the field. Using the guidance of *On Ethnography* (2008), I segmented each memo into the following categories: 1) Overview, 2) Problems & Setbacks, and 3) Patterns, Insights, and Breakthroughs (p. 80). These memos were, on average, eight pages in length and sent to Dr. McConachie and Dr. Forman for weekly review;<sup>29</sup> both scholars generously provided weekly feedback, which was instrumental in guiding my thinking and reading during my time in the field. The meat of each memo was the ‘Patterns, Insights, and Breakthroughs’ section where I identified two to three issues from the class to explore using varying scholarly literatures and/or analytical frames. In this exploratory writing space, I examined varying grain sizes of classroom activity (e.g. utterance level, dyad interactions, whole group exercises) and tried out different theories to explicate my observations. In general, the conceptual memos facilitated an inductive research approach where I identified a wide array of classroom phenomena, engaged in nascent analyses, and developed particular inquiries and observations.

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<sup>28</sup> My fieldnotes totaled one hundred and twenty-one pages (double-spaced).

<sup>29</sup> My conceptual memos totaled fifty-nine pages (double-spaced).

Based on the exploratory writing I did in the weekly conceptual memos, my research focus began to shift from broad student-centered questions towards an investigation of Professor D's language use. Ethnographic methods require a researcher to emergently respond to data analysis and iteratively revise one's inquiry in response (Green et al., 2007). This process led me to articulate new research questions, which guided future analysis:

- In this liberal arts theatre classroom, how does Professor D's coaching register cultivate implicit participatory norms, which create scaffolded learning opportunities over time and activity?
- What are the pervasive language features embedded in Professor D's coaching register and how do they help to organize the students' participation in scaffolded learning opportunities?

Finally, in order to better understand the participants' experiences, I conducted *interviews* with Professor D and the students. I interviewed Professor D once before the class began, midway through the semester, and after the course concluded. My first two interviews with Professor D were informal, in that I did not audio record them. Rather, I made jottings during our interviews, which became the basis for fieldnotes I wrote after the interviews. The informal approach I used in the early interviews with Professor D was purposeful. In order to build trust and re-orient a peer relationship to that of researcher/instructor partnership, I thought it important to not begin our conversations with an audio recorder in my hand (a tool that can be alienating).

Near the end of class, however, I did schedule and audio record in-depth interviews with Professor D and eight of the nine students.<sup>30</sup> Guided by the methods text, *Qualitative*

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<sup>30</sup> One student did not elect to participate in the interview.

*Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (2012), I developed an interview protocol to use with Professor D and a different protocol for the students' interviews; Dr. McConachie and Dr. Forman reviewed both protocols.<sup>31</sup> In general, the protocols employed open-ended questions to allow the students to talk about their perceptions and interpretations of classroom learning activities. Questions like "How did you come to take this class?" or "What is it like to be coached by Professor D?" aimed to evoke narratives from the students, which often yielded rich explanations of the students' perceptions of the course and their classroom learning experiences. During each student's interview, I also included a "stimulated recall" section where I played a video clip of the student being coached by Professor D (Heath, 1991, p. 115). After playing the clip for the student, I asked questions that guided the student to explain what he or she was thinking during the coaching experience (Heath, 1991).<sup>32</sup>

Because Professor D and the students were willing to share their time and perspectives with me, I wanted to extend some measure of reciprocation. For Professor D, our meetings occurred at restaurants where I bought our meals. For the students, I gave each undergraduate a ten-dollar gift card to the University Bookstore on Fifth.<sup>33</sup> Although these gestures were modest, I felt it important to communicate to the participants that I valued their time, knowledge, and

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix C for the interview protocol used with Professor D; see Appendix D for the interview protocol used with the students.

<sup>32</sup> I transcribed all of the interviews conducted with participants (totaling one hundred and twenty-seven pages of transcription), using guidelines discussed in the following section.

<sup>33</sup> My thanks to Theatre Arts Chair, Annmarie Duggan, and Department Administrator, Pam Weid, for providing these gift cards so that I could avoid the University's WePay system. WePay is the University's official method of payment for all IRB-sanctioned studies. I did not wish to go through the WePay system because it would require me to collect personal information from the students, such as their social security numbers.

willingness to share with me. In the following section, I discuss the methods used to construct data from the videotapes collected in the classroom.

### 3.3 OVERVIEW OF DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Although the historical and theoretical research overviewed in Chapter Two, as well as the ethnographic methods (i.e. fieldnotes, conceptual memos, and interviews) previously discussed, contributed to my understanding of the Introduction to Performance class, the digital videotapes I collected provided the primary data source for the study. This section overviews how I worked with the videotapes to systematically analyze Professor D's instructional register, chiefly, through the use of two complementary methods, *interaction analysis* and *register analysis*.

Interaction analysis is a method frequently employed in the learning sciences (Erickson, 2006; Green et al., 2007; Jordan & Henderson, 1998), and has roots in ethnography and discourse analysis (Goffman, 1974; 1981; Hymes & Gumperz, 1986;). Informed by sociocultural theory, interaction analysis, “finds its basic data for theorizing about knowledge and practice not in traces of cranial activity, but in the details of social interactions in time and space and, particularly, in the naturally occurring, everyday interactions among members of communities of practice” (Jordan & Henderson, 1998, p. 41). Video data is used as a form of empirical evidence from which analysts can identify, collect, and theorize the social “regularities” that guide participants' actions and cognition in complex activities (p. 41).

The process of examining video evidence requires “a logic of inquiry” that employs both deductive and inductive reasoning (Green et al., 2007, p. 121). Before attempting to draw



meaning from a video (or a corpus of videotapes), a researcher needs guiding research questions and concepts to act as a priori categories of investigation, which, in turn, can be complemented by inductive observations that may reveal unexpected patterns, meaningful outliers, and emergent phenomena through iterative investigation. In general, interaction analysis allows an analyst to segment and parse classroom activity to examine, “an intertextual and intercontextual web of consequential progressions” (p. 123). Through such parsing, an analyst can begin to see how social action overlaps and accumulates.

The interaction analysis I engaged in took place in three phases in which I examined different grain sizes of activity that served as different analytical foci. In general, this approach coincides with Douglas Biber’s and Susan Conrad’s descriptive and analytical framework for the study of registers: “the situational/communicative description, the description of pervasive linguistic features, and the analysis of the functional associations between linguistic forms and situational contexts” (2009, p. 8). Looking at the varying layers of talk and activity in the classroom (from coarser to finer grain) provided a holistic way to locate Professor D’s coaching register over time.

The first phase of analysis (i.e. the situational description) involved the creation of content logs for the entire video corpus, which allowed me to divide classes into parts, or episodes, to begin to discern where, when, and how the coaching register was deployed in ritualized “participation frameworks” (Goffman, 1981; Goodwin, 2007). In the second phase (the description of the pervasive linguistic features), I theoretically sampled and transcribed Professor D’s coaching register in varying classroom episodes (or texts) to comparatively examine language use. I could then identify the pervasive language features embedded in Professor D’s speech using both inductive and deductive analysis (Heath, 1991; Heath & Lagman, 1994).

Third, I traced the functional emergence and organization of Professor D's register throughout the course, using learning theory to better understand the participatory learning affordances embedded with Professor D's classroom interactions. The remainder of this section details each phase of my inquiry.

### **3.3.1 Content Logs and Situational Analysis**

In order to begin to organize and analyze the video corpus collected from the Introduction to Performance classroom (~26 hours of film), my first step was to create a content log for each class. As learning scientists Brigitte Jordan and Austin Henderson note, content logs are “useful for providing a quick overview of the data corpus, for locating particular sequences and issues, and as a basis for doing full transcripts of particularly interesting segments” (1998, p. 43). Content logs provide an initial, molar level of analysis, which direct an analyst's viewing through the use of overarching research questions. For example, the question I initially posed when re-viewing and logging the classes was: “what are the identifiable regularities in Professor D's discursive interactions?” Using a table format for the content logs helped me to focus this question further, with spaces dedicated to the identification and description of different types of observed activity and talk. To provide a sense of how content logs facilitated my analysis, Table 1 offers a portion of a content log recorded from Class 2. As might be expected, I analyzed the twelve classes in sequential order, completing a content log for each class before moving on to the next class.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Each content log was ~9 pages (single-space in table form); all of the completed logs totaled 103 pages in length (in single-space table form).

In general, the content logs allowed me to identify and segment the varying *participation frameworks* that took place within the continuous stream of classroom activity. Participation frameworks are often associated with sociologist Erving Goffman, and refer to the varying arrangements of interaction that constitute human experience in particular spaces and activities—he states, “[t]he codification of these various positions and the normative specification of appropriate conduct within each [participation framework] provide an essential background for

**Table 1. A Portion of a Content Log from Class 2**

<b>Time Stamp</b>	<b>Activity Code</b>	<b>Type of Talk &amp; Further Context</b>
23:27	Students stand in a circle	D directs them to find actor neutral—guiding them to feel their knees, hips, shoulders, neck and so forth. The students ‘respond’ through appropriate physicalities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaze: Here the students watch D to explicitly mimic his actions. But D doesn’t really watch them; he’s focused on his own body. D asks the students to take a moment to look at one another and thank their peers by “smizing” (with the eyes and mouth) to one another to acknowledge that their learning takes place in and through an ensemble.</li> </ul>
25:00	Students Perform Velociraptors	The actor neutral lesson switches, as D guides them in becoming and performing velociraptors—dinosaurs—showing them how to pull their arms up and stick out their necks a la chickens. At first students change their bodies in the static circle. Then they take off in movement, swirling in and out of one another in the space (~26.00). The students appear immediately engaged. They are all smiles. D coaches: “Gotta be on the balls of the feet; go wherever in the room”
27:05	Elaborating the Raptor	As the students whizz about the space, D guides the students to add on vocalizations and hunting objectives as he also performs a velociraptor. At each layering point, he stops and the students stop in space but keep their general velociraptor shape while watching and listening to him. D first demonstrates his own example of vocalizations, jumps, etc. and he then asks them to do their own versions. D’s elaborations are performance models for the students. <i>(He’s off camera, but I think that D keeps his arms up during these interludes, which is why the students also stay in character (arms up) while listening.)</i>

28:00	“Relax! Circle up!”	<p>Transition back to circle. “Now we’ve got our velociraptors, now what I’d like is”—D moves them to experience new physical characters/states. He tells them to explicitly not look at one another. He doesn’t look at them either. D directs the students to experience ‘first circle,’ which is ‘small’ in body and tone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next D guides the students in 3<sup>rd</sup> circle—shoulders back, overly confident “you’re looking at people, but you’re looking above them or down your nose to them”</li> <li>• D directs the students to find a 2<sup>nd</sup> circle physicality—more like actor neutral</li> <li>• So D directs the students gaze and vocalization, which they do. The students make vocalizations that accord with the character he’s coaching them to experience.</li> </ul>
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interaction analysis” (1981, p. 3). Building from Goffman, linguistic anthropologist, Charles Goodwin, stresses that embodied participation frameworks create “a visible, public locus for attention and action that includes both relevant structure in the environment and the actions and bodies of the other participants,” and constitute “the primordial site for the organization of human action, knowledge and cognition” (2007, pp. 59-60). Although participation frameworks can be parsed at varying levels of detail, I tended to segment the action of the Introduction to Performance classroom at times when the students and Professor D physically moved to create (re-frame) a new activity in a different spatial orientation. For example, any time a student(s) left a seat(s) to begin a new activity, or a static physical warm-up shifted to a movement-based performance game, I marked a new participation framework on the content log, as well as a sample description of Professor D’s corresponding language use. Such shifts in embodied participation, quite literally, required Professor D and the students to adopt new stances and organizations of joint attention, cognition, and action.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The importance of physical adjustments to the re-organization of cognition and stance has been noted by many, and can be analyzed at different levels of interactive detail. In *Forms of*

Although it may seem that such shifts in participation are mundane and inconsequential, learning scientists (following the work of sociologists and anthropologists) view such episodes to be crucial sites to study, in order to identify the varying and overlapping modes of participation through which social experience accumulates. Indeed, most practice-based fields of study that depend upon apprenticeship models of education (e.g. archeology, medical surgery, ship navigation), hinge upon repeated, interactive organizations of embodied action, which anthropologists have studied in similar detail (Goodwin, 1994; 2007; Hutchins, 1995; Ingold, 2000). Content logs, like those I created, offer an analytical method to help identify, locate, quantify, and map the ordinary frames of participation embedded in a social setting.

To name the varying participation frameworks listed and described on the content logs, I applied activity *codes*. Coding data is also an analytical method. Qualitative methodologist (and professor emeritus of drama education), Johnny Saldaña, states, “[a] code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (2013, p. 3). Because I was interested in Professor D’s instructional register, I employed “in vivo” codes derived from his speech (e.g. ‘Come into the space’) as well as “descriptive” codes to document classroom activity (e.g. Tom’s monologue) (p. 7). The codes provided a preliminary filter, which helped me to subsequently cluster regularities of classroom participation, activity, and discourse—in particular, Professor D’s instructional, coaching register.

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*Talk* (1981), for example, Goffman proposes the term (and concept) “footing” to describe how individuals continually re-align themselves in conversation, often indicated through the participants’ physical re-positioning of feet.

Much like fieldnotes, the content logs were mostly descriptive and, to that end, I separated my analytical notes and questions with italics. Before viewing a class tape, I first reviewed my fieldnotes to re-orient myself to the class. In general, every hour of film I logged required two to three hours of analysis because I often re-played particular moments or strips of behavior. After completing a class content log, I wrote a brief, informal memo to myself to cluster themes and potentially significant observations. When I completed six content logs (the class's midway point), and twelve content logs (the conclusion of the course), I wrote formal conceptual memos that followed the format of my previous memos: 1) Overview, 2) Problems & Setbacks, and 3) Patterns, Insights, and Breakthroughs (2008, Heath & Street, p. 80). These memos were shared with Dr. McConachie and Dr. Forman, who again provided feedback and guidance in terms of the meaning I was drawing from the videos and the construction of data.

After creating content logs for all of the classes, I purposefully sampled classroom episodes—or texts—in which Professor D enacted an instructional, coaching register. To distinguish Professor D's coaching register from his "regulatory register," I went back to the content logs and videotapes to examine Professor D's and the students' level of participation in performance activity (Christie, 2005, p. 20). Heath and Langman note that a coaching register is characterized by a number of features, the first of which is "that participation and demonstration—and hence activity—provide the primary contexts in which [coaching] language is used (1994, p. 85). Consequently, it was mostly clear when the students and Professor D were immersed in content-based activities and when they were not. For example, I did not sample episodes in which Professor D lectured from the textbook or discussed upcoming assignments,

because, in these texts, his discourse did not serve to bring about the students' participation in performance activity.<sup>36</sup>

After sampling a number of episodes in which Professor D enacted a coaching register, I was left with a hefty pile of classroom texts. But, I also discerned gross categorical patterns of activity and talk. For example, I grouped many of the texts under class warm-up sessions where Professor D coached the entire ensemble, while another group of texts concerned Professor D's dyadic coaching sessions in public forums. Goffman notes, "we quite routinely ritualize participation frameworks," and this certainly seemed to be true in terms of the varying, ritualized categories of activity and talk embedded within Professor D's acting class (Goffman, 1981, p. 153). From this parsing, I induced four "higher-order" participation frameworks to which I applied descriptive codes: *call and response ensemble coaching*; *stop/start ensemble coaching*; *stop/start actor coaching*; *side coaching* (Erickson, 2004, p. 490). In this way, I created a comparative analysis within the single case, which Biber and Conrad stress is a crucial way to effectively analyze what makes a particular register, or text variety, distinct (2009, p. 36).

### **3.3.2 Transcription and Pervasive Language Features**

In order to examine Professor D's language use across the four main participation frameworks, I transcribed a number of sample texts from each of the four categories as exemplars. Here, I chose to transcribe episodes that demonstrated the fullest expression of performance practice—

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<sup>36</sup> This is not to say that listening to a lecture is not an activity, or that it does not hold relevance for theatre practice. Rather, the mode of Professor D's speech in these episodes served a different function.

episodes in which performance was “talked into being” (Green et al., 2007, p. 121). In general, I was able to identify these texts for two reasons: 1) as a practitioner, I recognized the episode’s talk and activity as achieving a dynamic “approximation” of professional practice (Grossman et al., 2009, p. 2055); and 2) as a researcher, I recognized the episodes as demonstrating what linguistic anthropologist, Michael Agar, calls “rich points” where culture emergently happens in unpredictable ways (1994, p. 106). In other words, the texts that I transcribed appeared to showcase what it was to coach actors in this classroom.

Transcription, of course, is another method of analysis, which has been deeply considered, theorized, and debated (Erickson, 2007; Gee, 2014; Hall, 2000; Ochs, 1979). As most methodologists acknowledge, no transcription (however fine grained) is complete, and the re-presentation of spoken discourse into symbolic representation always advances particular communicatory channels over others and reveals cultural biases. Because my goal at this level of transcription was to examine the text varieties within Professor D’s coaching register for “pervasive linguistic features,” my transcriptions were fairly broad (Biber & Conrad, 2008, p. 53). In general, I used a play script format with speech to the right of names, and nonverbal physical movements italicized in parentheses. As Erickson notes, this format “over privileges the representation of speech, making it seem the central activity in interaction” and yet, at this phase of analysis, it provided a helpful way to begin to identify the discursive regularities within Professor D’s instructional, coaching register (2007, p. 184). For analytical purposes in Chapter Four and Five, I organized some of the classroom transcripts in table format and used italics to emphasize particular language features in the text (e.g. pronouns).

After completing a number of transcripts for each of the four higher-order coaching categories, I inductively examined Professor D’s discourse looking for pervasive language



genres and “genre markers” (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 54). In register analysis, language genres are thought to achieve particular functions and genre markers serve to repeatedly “mark” complete texts. To assist my deductive interpretation of the pervasive linguistic features in Professor D’s coaching, I returned to the empirical research of Heath (1991) and Heath and Langman (1994) to examine the language genres and syntactic level linguistic features identified within sports coaching.<sup>37</sup> Because these articles are important for my analysis, I will take the time to briefly discuss the language features identified and theorized therein.

In “Shared Thinking and the Register of Coaching,” Heath identifies “the language genres that dominate the team’s communications,” which include *eventcasts* and *questions of knowing* (1991, p. 103). In an eventcast, a coach issues a narrative commentary that accompanies the players’ actions—either before or during the action. Within eventcasts, Heath identifies a number of specific talk moves coaches often pose to players, which generally emphasize conditionality and encourage a hypothetical scenario for the player to consider. Heath also examines the language genre of *questions of knowing*, which are the questions that coaches pose to players to elicit narrative responses about previous events. For example, a coach might ask a player for a spoken *reflection* (“options and think-aloud analyses of certain plays or scenes”) or a *rule recount* (“recitations of rules that applied in the situation just witnessed”) (p. 113).

Heath’s second article on coaching is co-authored with applied linguist Juliet Langman, and here the analytical focus shifts to consider the “five types of syntactic phenomena” that illustrate many of the finer-grained linguistic characteristics of a coaching register (1994, p. 93).

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<sup>37</sup> Heath’s & Langman’s work on the coaching register appears in *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register* (1994), which Douglas Biber co-edited. By drawing from Biber’s more current work, *Register, Genre & Style* (2009) (co-authored with Susan Conrad), I sought to anchor my research in a consistent approach to the study of register.

The syntactic phenomena offer a way to understand how coaches discursively cultivate team membership and create opportunities to learn through talk that is affective and motivating. As Heath's and Langman's syntactic phenomena also figure heavily in my analysis, I will briefly define and outline each:

1. *Telegraphic Utterances*. These are short bursts of speech that occur during practice and games (or, in my case, rehearsal and performances) that either identify actions as positive or cue particular skills. Example: "Nice!" "Go, go, go!" (Class 11).
2. *Conditionals*. Conditionals are the bread and butter of a coaching register and create hypothetical conditions that "provide the players with alternatives and examples of causal environments which have an effect on the playing of the game...the overarching frame is that of 'what if?' and the accompanying expectation" (p. 94). Because conditionals are so prevalent in the coaching register, Heath and Langman offer subdivisions:
  - *If-Then Conditionals*. These utterances can feature one statement and one result, or feature one statement and varying/branching results. Example: "So, *if* you say you're going to leave, [*then*] leave" (Class 11).
  - *Conditionals Stated as Question-Directives*. These questions are often fast-paced and followed by an explicit directive. They tend to be sarcastic in tone, but the sarcasm can be used to personalize the utterance for a particular individual. Example: "You react, right? You can't have a silent reaction" (Class 11).
  - *Sociodramatic Bids*. Statements that pull players into the fantasy of "real" game (or performance) conditions and then offer directives or questions-directives to highlight

- potential courses of action at the fictional moment (Heath & Langman, 1994, pp. 96-97). Example: “I want you to transform into your character and sit down” (Class 7).
3. *Balanced Negatives and Directives*. When the coach uses negatives, they are most often followed by positive assertions. This also includes the use of rhetorical questions that aim to confirm or explain an event that has just taken place (p. 97-98). Example: “Great energy, but keep it consistent—don’t drop it” (Class 5).
  4. *Tag Questions*. These questions are metacognitive in aim, and try to mark particular points in the action where players should check for themselves on what is happening and “be in a constant state of self-monitoring” (p. 98). Example: “So you have to look at us, *okay?*” (Class 7).
  5. *Pronoun Usage*. Refers to the “use of first person plural and second person pronouns that draw the players into the talk by invoking team membership and a lack of distinction between players” (p. 99). Such language also positions the coach as both an insider and outsider within the team. Example: “There are a couple of beat changes *we* [Professor D and the students] need to see.” (Class 7).

The language genres and syntactic-level language features outlined by Heath (1991) and Heath & Langman (1994) provided a priori guides for my analysis of Professor D’s classroom transcripts, allowing me to deductively discern and describe a number of his repeated talk moves. But, learning to deductively discern embedded language features also helped me begin to inductively recognize additional communicative moves in Professor D’s register. In the following section, I look at the functional associations that existed between Professor D’s pervasive language use and the classroom’s situational context.

### 3.3.3 Functional Analysis

The third phase of analysis concerns the finest-grain (or perhaps most invisible) level of activity—the functional level of Professor D’s coaching register. Here, I examine the relationship *between* the situational contexts (i.e. participation frameworks) and Professor D’s pervasive language features in order to look more closely at the dynamics of coaching interactions—how, when, and why certain talk moves are deployed by Professor D and how, when, and why certain students ‘take up’ his prompts to create new knowledge and performance. By zooming in to locate and illustrate key students’ experiences in dyadic coaching sessions, I further interpret how Professor D’s pervasive language features dynamically enacted the “contingency” and “challenge” of scaffolding (Stone, 2002). In addition, I employ learning theory to understand the *kind* of knowledge students built in coaching interactions, as well as its generative potential (Engle, 2006; Lave, 1997; Winne & Azevedo, 2014).

Because this section of the analysis relied on less systematic procedures, and more on interpretative conclusions, the analytical methods depend upon close readings of classroom transcripts and video interactions. I then triangulated these analyses with interview evidence and participatory learning theory. Qualitative research methodologist, Joseph Maxwell (2013), argues *triangulation* is an important way to strengthen a researcher’s credibility by using multiple data sources to inform conclusions. Similarly, Biber and Conrad (2009) note that an analyst’s functional interpretations of a register should consider both one’s data as well as the findings of previous studies. Hence, the functional interpretations I draw are based on the use of multiple sources of data to more reliably construct meaning.

#### 4.0 FINDINGS: PROFESSOR D'S COACHING REGISTER

This chapter presents a description and analysis of Professor D's instructional register (Christie, 2005), which, I argue, is characterized by a coaching quality that provides, "oral accompaniment to activities of practice and demonstration that...simultaneously reflect the building of group relations and the incremental accumulation of participatory knowledge by each member of the group" (Heath & Langman, 1994, p. 85). To demonstrate Professor D's coaching register, I rely mostly on a descriptive and analytical framework set forth by applied linguists Douglas Biber and Susan Conrad, which focuses on three major components: "the situational/communicative description, the description of pervasive linguistic features, and the analysis of the functional associations between linguistic forms and situational contexts" (2009, p. 8). The chapter is organized in three sections, which discuss each of the components.

Because a spoken register is a language variety determined by its use in a particular context, the first discussion identifies and describes the situational characteristics that shaped Professor D's language use in the Introduction to Performance class. In this section I describe four, higher order *participation frameworks*, which Professor D repeatedly organized through talk and activity (Goffman, 1981; Goodwin, 2007). For each framework, I explain the situational features of Professor D's communicative interactions and provide a sample transcript. The second discussion identifies and describes the pervasive linguistic features embedded in each of

Professor D's participatory frames, including language genres and syntactic features.

Decomposing Professor D's coaching register into participation frameworks, language genres, and syntactic features provides a way to further distinguish the overlapping, communicative texts he enacted. The third layer of register analysis investigates the *functional* associations between the situational contexts and language features situated in Professor D's instructional coaching register. In keeping with the overarching interdisciplinary goals of this project, the functional analysis is examined through learning theory, which provides a way to further explain, and theorize, the (functional) learning opportunities enacted and extended in Professor D's coaching register.

#### **4.1 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS: COMMUNICATIVE DESCRIPTIONS AND TEXT SAMPLES**

One of the first significant findings I experienced in early data analysis was the recognition that Professor D's coaching register did not solely exist in 'traditional' actor coaching sessions (in which a coach works with one or two actors to improve a monologue or scene). During my time in the field and throughout the processes of fieldnoting and memo-ing, I recognized that traditional actor coaching sessions were rich interactions where Professor D's coaching register seemed to be in full expression. But, what I did not realize was that the activity of actor coaching depended upon an array of prior interactions and language genres, which were developed and performatively established over time in the class's varying participation frameworks.

In this section, I provide a situational analysis of the range of activities that took place in

the Introduction to Performance classroom. In particular, I attend to a number of analytical features that Biber and Conrad (2009) identify as significant for situational analysis, including: levels of interactivity, spatial shifts and relations among participants, communicative purposes and channels. In general, Biber's and Conrad's features are similar to those put forth by Goffman (1981) and Goodwin (2007) for the identification and study of participation frameworks, which are generally induced through interaction analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1998). Hence, the bulk of this discussion describes four gross participation frameworks, which were repeatedly organized by Professor D through talk and activity across the six-week course. The four frameworks help distinguish the situational characteristics and kinds of talk, which served to organize Professor D's general coaching register. The frameworks are "thickly" described to provide a sense of Professor D's intended respondent(s), degree of interaction, spatial organization, and about when (in the six-week course and in individual classes) the activities took place (Geertz, 1973). To further ground each framework in Professor D's language use, I include sample transcripts. To conclude the discussion, I synthesize aspects of the four participation frameworks to establish the overarching, participatory features of Professor D's coaching register.

#### **4.1.1 Call-and-Response Coaching**

Call-and-response texts generally took place at the beginning of each class during initial student "warm-ups." Most warm-ups occurred in the open portion of the classroom with Professor D and the students standing in a circle. Here, Professor D verbally scripted his own physical actions (or demonstrated a vocal action and then described it), which served as a 'call' for the students.

After hearing and viewing Professor D's call, the students uniformly 'responded' by repeating his physical or vocal action to the best of their abilities. To issue calls, Professor D used varying communicative modalities, including: linguistic utterances (e.g. a tongue twister), prosodic sounds (e.g. a lip buzz or non-linguistic vocal run), physical movements (e.g. a silent mime exercise), and physical movements simultaneously scripted or narrated (e.g. describing and demonstrating a stage combat move). The following transcript demonstrates the type of talk that dominated this participation framework:

Transcript from Class 1—May 12, 2015.

Professor D: (*Standing in a circle with the students*) Let's think about finding actor neutral...so your feet are shoulder-width apart (*Professor D shifts his feet and weight, and the students mimetically move their bodies and feet accordingly*) and I want you to think about your skeleton holding you up and not your muscles. Your feet have tripods (*the students start looking at their feet and 'feeling' them*)—one at the ball of the foot, one at the blade here (*Professor D picks up his right foot and points to its exterior edge*), and one at the heel (*pointing to the heel and then placing his foot back on the ground*). Think about those tripods rooting themselves into the floor and do that by bending the ankles. (*Students begin to play with bending their ankles, while Professor D observes the class and bends his own ankles*) Nice. Now think about your ankles and move them side to side a little bit.

In general, it seems the purpose of call-and-response coaching was to prepare the students' bodies and voices for the class period's performance activities, in effect, cultivating physical, vocal, and cognitive (i.e. "focus") sub-skills. In this language genre, Professor D tended



to speak in long blocks of text to guide the students through varying physical and vocal activities. It is important to acknowledge, however, that Professor D's talk was *dialogic* in the sense that it was multi-turn and contingent; he repeatedly adjusted his 'calls' based on the students' non-linguistic responses. For example, Professor D's use of the word "nice," near the end of the transcript, indicates an acknowledgement of the students' physical response and the interactivity of his talk.

Although the kind of performance activities narrated in call-and-response coaching texts might initially appear mimetic and mindless, Professor D's language (in this transcript and other call-and-response texts) continually asked the students to mentally, physically, and imaginatively engage with performance practice in psychophysical ways. This is perhaps best demonstrated by his consistent use of the verb "think" ("*think* about finding actor neutral;" "*think* about your skeleton holding you up;" "*think* about those tripods rooting themselves;" "*think* about your ankles"). For their part, the students did not verbalize their thought processes or mental engagement, but rather demonstrated their understanding through physical or vocal 'responses.' A student's overall participation, then, was subject to evaluation when Professor D asked the ensemble to *integrate* discrete sub-skills into complex actions.

Typically, Professor D 'called' for integrated action through a *performance model*—or an embodied/linguistic demonstration of more challenging or layered performance action. For example, after 'calling' a handful of discrete stage combat moves through call-and-response, Professor D concluded the lesson by modeling an integration of the combat moves in a performance model, which the students were asked to appropriate (Class 4). Professor D's performance modeling appeared to transmit information to the student/actor through paralinguistic and physical practices that were stable, yet not fixed. Rather, performance models

attempted to provide students with a performance *structure* that was appropriate for exploration and/or elaboration.

Because Professor D enacted call-and-response texts at the outset of every class, it helped to establish key characteristics and norms of his coaching register and the students' responsive participation. In addition to emphasizing multimodal dialogue and communication, call-and-response texts served to develop a communication pattern based on student appropriation. It is important to identify this pattern as appropriative and not imitative, as Professor D repeatedly encouraged the students to elaborate and interpret performance structures beyond what he extended to them in 'calls.' Yet, the back-and-forth nature of call-and-response coaching sessions established a foundational way for the students to try on, and try out, the practices and sub-skills of performance. Professor D's scripted or narrated talk (a kind of performative thick description) served to recruit the student's attention, analysis, and monitoring of their bodies, voices, and minds through guided speech.

#### **4.1.2 Stop/Start Ensemble Coaching**

Stop/start ensemble coaching texts usually occurred immediately *after* call-and-response episodes, thereby linking the two participation frameworks in important ways. After guiding the students through a number of warm-up exercises in call-and-response coaching, Professor D purposefully faded his participatory role to allow the students to complete activities while he silently observed their work. However, at points of group success or failure, Professor D contingently intervened (thereby *stopping* the ensemble's activity) in order to point out, model, or adjust the students' activities for improved performance. After communicating these

adjustments, Professor D asked the students to re-start their practice and incorporate his suggestions, at which point he again faded his participation.

In order to more fully describe what this participation framework looked and sounded like, I will briefly explain a particular “ball game” that the student ensemble played in almost every class following call-and-response “warm-ups.” In the ball game, the students stood in a circle in the empty space of the classroom and tried to keep a whiffle ball in the air while adhering to two rules: 1) the ball must only be hit (or volleyed) with the hands, and; 2) no individual can hit the ball two times in a row. Professor D initiated the ball game by asking the students to achieve a certain number of ball ‘hits’ or counts (e.g. ten to thirty), after which he receded to a peripheral location to observe the activity. During his time at the side, Professor D participated through silent observation or brief linguistic utterances aimed at focusing the ensemble’s mental and physical readiness (e.g. “look alive”), clarifying the activity (“the ball’s still in!”), or praising a player’s strategy (“nice hit!”) (Class 2). These sorts of utterances were embedded into the activity of the ball game like the backchannel (i.e. responsive listening) of everyday conversation and, therefore, did not break the students’ action or focus.

But, as previously noted, Professor D did not stay at the side for long. At naturally occurring breaks in the game (e.g. the ball was dropped), he intervened to *repair* a problem. At these times, Professor D literally stepped into the performance space to explain *why* a particular error was occurring, or to provide a strategy that might help the group move past an obstacle. For example, after introducing the game on the second day of class, Professor D intervened at a stopping point to talk to the students about their repeated failure to hit the ball in time, stating—“If you’re going for it [the ball] (*demonstrating with his body by reaching up with both hands and pretending to hit a ball*), go all in so everyone sees you do it.” Here, again, Professor D’s

communication relies on scripted action, which the students were encouraged to appropriate. In general, Professor D's interventions were brief and offered concrete strategies for improvement, which were quickly appropriated by the students and integrated into the game.

In addition to repair, Professor D also intervened when the ensemble experienced repeated success. In these moments, Professor D stepped into the ball game to up the ante, or, in his words, "*raise the stakes*" (Class 2). For example, in Class 3, after the group easily achieved ten hits in the ball game, Professor D stepped in and told the group their new goal was twenty-five hits—a significantly harder goal. When the student ensemble became fairly proficient at the ball game and could reach high hit counts easily, Professor D raised the stakes by trading out the whiffle ball for a tennis ball, which required the group to adjust to a new ball's weight, texture, velocity of descent, and so forth.

Although it may seem that describing Professor D's stop/start ensemble work in the 'ball game' is ancillary to the larger project of demonstrating his general coaching register, it was actually quite significant. The traditional phenomenon of dyadic actor coaching depends upon a coach's contingent 'stepping in' to iteratively develop performance and make repairs. Indeed, textbook author, Robert Barton, emphasizes the interactive and iterative process of actor coaching, describing it as: "working with [the actor] on specific problems, having [the actor] try a number of solutions, fine-tuning the same moment over and over, driving [the actor] a little farther than [the actor] thought possible" (2013, p. 242). Consequently, in this classroom, the origins of the stop/start interactional pattern of actor coaching can be found in Professor D's stop/start *ensemble* coaching. In addition, his overarching *purposes* for intervening—that is, *to develop* the ensemble's performance through additional challenges that "raised the stakes" or *to repair* ineffective choices—remained mostly the same when coaching individual actors.

### 4.1.3 Stop/Start Actor Coaching

Whereas call-and-response sessions began on the first day of class, and the “ball game” commenced on the second day of class, Professor D did not initiate stop/start actor coaching until the fourth class period (roughly eight hours into the twenty-eight-hour course). The delayed entrance of this participation framework speaks to its advanced level of complexity and reliance on the previously described participatory norms and language use. In addition, stop/start actor coaching sessions usually occurred *after* Professor D spent time warming up the students’ bodies and voices through call-and-response coaching and stop/start ensemble work like the “ball game.” As a result, by the time the students engaged in stop/start actor coaching sessions with Professor D, they did so with a good deal of exposure to his coaching register and performance activity.

Stop/start actor coaching sessions mostly align with the typical account of actor coaching, previously described by Barton. This participation framework begins *after* a student (or students) perform a prepared monologue (or scene) in the open space of the classroom, while Professor D and the remaining students observe from the spectator end of the space. Before coaching begins, Professor D usually stood up from his seat in the audience to bracket coaching sessions with a *metacomment*, which alerted the entire ensemble of the distributed nature of actor coaching and his expectations for multiple forms of participation. Here is an example of one of Professor D’s first metacomments:

Transcript from Class 5—May 26, 2015.

This is for everyone, okay, so this is good. This is our first time where we're all like doing a performance and having me coach and whatnot. I'm telling him stuff (*gestures toward and looks briefly at Matt*), but (*shifts his gaze back to the class*) am I only telling him stuff? (*The students shake their heads and murmur 'no.'*) Who am I really telling? (*The students murmur and gesture towards themselves.*) Everybody else! (*Again pointing to Matt*) He already went (*i.e. performed in front of the class*). He already got a good grade. I'm helping him for the next time, but I'm really helping you for your own performance. So I'm giving everybody notes using his body.

When I asked Professor D about these comments in an interview he described them as creating “zero down time” for the students, so that even when they were not physically engaged in performance practice they could still learn through observation (Interview, June, 23, 2015).

After initiating stop/start actor coaching sessions with a metacomment, the participation framework generally followed a similar sequence of events. First, Professor D responded to the students' performance with broad feedback, beginning with praise and concluding with suggestions for improvement. Then, the student(s) re-performed the monologue or scene to integrate Professor D's suggestions into their work. After watching a few seconds of the re-performance Professor D stopped the actor to address specific performance issues—in effect, initiating the stop/start interactional pattern characteristic of traditional actor coaching.

Throughout the stop/start sessions, the actor remained 'onstage' in the classroom's open performance space while the observing students viewed from their seats. But, Professor D's

physical location changed depending on his understanding of the actor's level of need or support. For example, if a student struggled through a performance, Professor D got out of his chair during stop/start actor coaching to join the student 'onstage' and provide explicit performance models (e.g. gesturing, blocking, volume levels) for appropriation. Alternatively, if a student had a fairly competent performance, Professor D usually remained seated in the audience and engaged the student in conversations that gave way to the actor's re-performances of particular parts of the monologue.

Although the conversations Professor D initiated with the students ran the gamut of topics, it seems his overall purpose was either to *repair* a technical problem (e.g. "Speak up! I can't hear you!" (Class 11)) or to develop a student's understanding of text and/or performance (i.e. character, dialogue, narrative, intention). In terms of developing performance, Professor D repeatedly initiated multi-turn talk by asking the student actors what Heath calls "questions of knowing" (1991, p. 113). The following are examples of Professor D's questions of knowing:

Ok, who are you talking to? Where are you? (Class 7)

Does the scene start with you there, or do you enter from somewhere? (Class 11)

What do you mean by [that line of dialogue]? What's your subtext there? (Class 11)

How many times has he [the character] done this? (Class 4)

Where do you work? (Class 4)

So tell me about this character...why is he saying all of this? (Class 7)

Overall, Professor D's interrogatives required the student actors to articulate on-the-spot analyses of the dramatic text (from the perspective of the student) *and* an understanding of performance interpretation (from the perspective of the character). In this way, the questions appeared to draw

students into an actor/character blend and the larger fiction of performance. Thus, Professor D's reflective questions supported the actors in emergently making or refining choices that aligned (or purposefully misaligned) with the dramatic text.

#### **4.1.4 Side Coaching**

Side coaching is the most slippery participation framework, as it was embedded within the stop/start actor coaching texts and operated at a finer level of interaction. Like the backchannel utterances Professor D offered during the 'ball game,' side coaching allowed a faded, yet dialogic, presence during actor coaching. These interactions, then, were more complex for the student actor, as he or she had to maintain participation in the fictional performance frame, as well as remain responsive to Professor D's additional side-coaching commentary. Perhaps because of this level of complexity, side coaching only took place in two of the classes I observed and, in both occasions, it took place with two students who needed less direct, onstage support in stop/start actor coaching texts.

In general, Professor D engaged in two kinds of side coaching. The first was the backchannel discursive work previously mentioned. To maintain a faded presence, Professor D offered brief, quiet utterances throughout the students' performances to mark excellence ("Nice!"), develop action ("Yes—go, go, go!") or repair activity ("Not so fast.") (Class 11). Because the purpose of these utterances seemed to encourage subtle shifts, the prosodic and paralinguistic qualities of Professor D's speech (i.e. pitch, rhythm, volume) were especially important. For instance, all backgrounded side-coaching utterances were spoken at a low volume to not overly disturb the performers onstage. Similarly, Professor D's prosodic delivery of



language was important. And, when Professor D uttered, “yes—go, go, go” with a driving urgency it encouraged the actor to speed up an exit. In this way, backgrounded side-coaching telegraphed both affect and propositional information for the student performer to appropriate or carry out.

In addition to the brief, side coached utterances delivered underneath a student’s performance, Professor D also engaged in descriptive side coaching, which served to narrate an actor’s physical *and* mental performance action. The following example demonstrates this kind of speech:

**Table 2. Transcript from Class 11 (June 16, 2015).**

D:	Hold on. ( <i>Tom turns to look a Professor D who is seated in the audience</i> ) [On the line] “what do you think of him”—I want you to have turned your body ( <i>pointing to the interior wall of the classroom</i> ) all the way this way. ( <i>Tom turns his body in the direction Professor D points</i> )...Thank you. I want to see on your face that you’re taking a moment to think about what [the other character] has said. ( <i>Tom continues to watch Professor D and nods yes</i> ). But, also, I want you to look at the door like...
T:	Tom: Hmm! ( <i>Smiles and brings his right hand up with a “got it” gesture, as if he has made new a connection.</i> )
D:	( <i>slipping into an interior kind of side coaching of Tom’s character’s thoughts</i> ) ...maybe I should leave before she gets more information out of me because I drank too much.
T:	( <i>Nods in agreement</i> )
D:	And then, it’s like, in your mind the wheels are turning and you’re like, well if she wants to know what I think...I’ll tell her!
T:	( <i>Laughs</i> ) Alright!

Professor D’s first block of text, in particular, demonstrates descriptive side coaching; a phenomenon that Heath terms an “eventcast” (1991, p. 108). This longer block of speech is reminiscent of Professor D’s call-and-response talk due to its emphasis on physical action.

However, as the episode ensues, the cognitive nature of side coaching becomes more explicit, when Professor D specifically tells the actor what to *think* in terms of his character's mental goals ("And then, it's like, in your mind the wheels are turning and you're like, well if she wants to know what I think...I'll tell her!"). Situationally, Tom, the student actor, is onstage while Professor D scripts his mental and physical action from a seated position in the audience. But in these moments, Professor D was not relaxed; rather he was active, alert and on focused on Tom.

To more clearly see about how much class time was spent in each participatory frame, Table 3 offers an "event map" of the six-week course (Green et al., 2007, p. 121). The time allotments were gathered and compiled from the class content logs.

#### **4.1.5 Organizational Aspects of Professor D's Coaching Register**

To conclude this section, I synthesize aspects of the preceding participation frameworks and language genres to establish the overarching, comprehensive features that *situationally* organized Professor D's instructional coaching register. The following synthesis draws on the insights I gained from inductive and descriptive analysis of the classroom data set, as well as the "[f]our underlying organizational aspects of coaching" that Heath and Langman foreground in their study's "location" of the coaching register (1994, pp. 84-85).

First, Heath and Langman contend that "participation and demonstration—and hence activity—provide the primary contexts in which language is used" (1994, p. 85). In the case of Professor D's coaching register, this was perhaps best demonstrated through his consistent deployment of physical, linguistic and affective *performance modeling*. Although it may seem obvious, performance modeling effectively *created* and *sustained* performance content and

epistemologies. Without the varying performance models Professor D issued in call-and-response ‘warm-up’ texts, the students would have had no performance structures on which to base and develop their sub-skills. Yet, a key reason Professor D’s performance models provided effective communication for the students was his deep skill in physical articulation. In Class 7,

**Table 3. Event Map of Professor D’s Participation Frameworks**

May					
5/12/15	5/14/15	5/19/15	5/21/15	5/26/15	5/28/15
C&R <i>25 min</i>	C&R <i>30 min</i>	Field trip to City Theatre	C&R <i>25 min</i>	C&R <i>15 min</i>	C&R <i>35 min</i>
	S/S E <i>18 min</i>		S/S E <i>10 min</i>	S/S E <i>10 min</i>	S/S E <i>15 min</i>
			S/S A <i>15 min</i>	S/S A <i>22 min</i>	S/S A <i>15 min</i>

June					
6/2/15	6/4/15	6/9/15	6/11/15	6/16/15	6/18/15
C&R <i>30 min</i>	C&R <i>15 min</i>	C&R <i>10 min</i>	C&R <i>30 min</i>	C&R <i>10 min</i>	C&R <i>15 min</i>
S/S E <i>5 min</i>		S/S E <i>10 min</i>	S/S E <i>15 min</i>		S/S E <i>10 min</i>
S/S A <i>40 min</i>	S/S A <i>20 min</i>		S/S A <i>25 min</i>	S/S A <i>32 min</i>	
SC <i>5 min</i>				SC <i>5 min</i>	

C&R—Call & Response Coaching

S/S E—Stop/Start Ensemble Coaching

S/S A— Stop/Start Actor Coaching

SC—Side Coaching

for example, Professor D guided the students through a series of pantomime exercises from a French corporeal tradition (à la Marcel Marceau). After watching Professor D repeatedly touch a ‘wall’ in front of him, one student, Ava, genuinely gasped and said “I see it!”—to which Professor D quietly responded “I know” and the remaining students began to giggle. Ava’s exclamation helps to demonstrate how Professor D’s performance models were not simple endeavors. Rather, his physical modeling *brought forth* performance activity and contexts, in which the students could begin to ‘see’ a phenomenon and appropriate it.

Heath’s and Langman’s second organizational aspect of the coaching register logically follows the first—“action scripts talk” (1994, p. 85). Although Professor D issued nonverbal performance models (as in the mime example above), he often ‘bookended’ silent actions with descriptive speech or, alternatively, deployed physical models with simultaneous descriptive narration. For example, in the previous mime example, Professor D went on to teach the students mime techniques, which he scripted while performing: “I have to let my hand go limp (*shaking out his hand from the wrist*), and then when I go to touch [the wall] (*moving his hand out into space and flattening it against a ‘wall’*)—click!” (Class 7). The overarching purpose of multimodal scripted talk concerns knowledge transmission. In this instance, Professor D’s speech makes visible (or audible) the knowledge embedded within his physical action.

The third aspect of a coaching register, according to Heath and Langman, “provides the wider context of the first two: the primary goal of those engaged in the activities is to function as a group in order to accomplish a single jointly determined goal” (1994, p. 85). Whereas actors rehearsing for a play collectively strive towards a single performance goal, acting classes approximate this by assigning groups of students to co-perform dramatic scenes. But even though there was not a singular culminating performance event in the classroom, Heath’s and Langman’s assertion remains important. Activities like the “ball game” allowed the students to consistently work together as a group, and Professor D’s *metacomments* framed actor coaching sessions as distributed experiences. As Heath and Langman note, coaches recognize that novices bring an array of skill levels and consequently “deemphasize hierarchical judgments” in order to support each student’s optimal performance, in order to ensure the larger group’s success (p. 86). Similarly, Professor D’s talk and actions cultivated a kind of group ethos that demanded respect, empathy, and support, rather than competition.

The final organizing feature of the coaching register, “relates to the rule-constituted and regulated nature of the activity for which coaching takes place” (Heath & Langman, 1994, p. 85). Like the rules that governed the students’ participation in the “ball game,” Professor D repeatedly emphasized the rules that helped to shape the students’ performance exploration and elaboration. For instance, while exploring stage combat moves with the students, Professor D often paused the activity to ask the class, “who is in control?” to which the ensemble would respond, “the victim is in control!” This example illuminates the multi-turn, interactional pattern so characteristic of Professor D’s coaching register, but it also demonstrates how performance standards and larger epistemologies (e.g. stage combat, realistic acting, corporeal mime) served to anchor classroom activity.

These organizational aspects of Professor D's discursive participation further define the overlapping contexts in which he enacted an instructional coaching register. Through consistent deployment of performance models and scripted action, he effectively brought forth performance content and activity for the students to appropriate. Although Professor D did encourage each student to engage with performance practice at an individual level, group activities like the 'ball game' and his use of metacomments developed a team ethos that minimized competition and hierarchical judgment. Similarly, focus was often taken off individual performers through a consistent reliance on the epistemic rules of performance practice, which Professor D dialogically brought to bear to generate and determine practice. Thus, as the creator of classroom norms and as the steward of professional standards, Professor D's coaching role was liminal—he was both an outsider and insider. He was not a direct team member (performer), but through talk and activity his participation brought forth the frameworks that determined performance practice.

#### **4.2 DESCRIPTION OF PROFESSOR D'S PERVASIVE LANGUAGE FEATURES**

Having laid out the participation frameworks and communicative descriptions of Professor D's instructional coaching register, I now shift to a discussion of the pervasive language features lodged within his register—some of which were previously introduced, but which are further expanded upon here. The analytical framework employed in this section is assembled from the methodological guidance of Biber and Conrad (2009), as well as the empirical research findings of Heath (1991) and Heath and Langman (1994).

My rationale for piecing together aspects of these sources has to do with answering my

larger research question: what are the pervasive language features embedded in Professor D's coaching register and how do they help to organize the students' participation in scaffolded learning opportunities? To answer this question, I first follow the advice of Biber and Conrad who direct linguists, in the second layer of register analysis, "to identify the language features that are typical or characteristic of the target register" (2009, p. 51). However, unlike Biber's and Conrad's examination of mostly grammatical structures from the text samples, I first identify coarser language features that exist at genre levels, such as *recounts* and *eventcasts* (Heath, 1986; 1991). Within these language genres, I then narrowed to examine pronoun and verb usage to better understand speakers' stances and investigate the "five types of syntactic phenomena" that Heath and Langman identify as operating in a coaching register (Heath & Langman, 1994, p. 93). Although I recognize the earlier research findings of Heath (1991) and Heath and Langman (1994) will not always map cleanly onto my project and data, their work provides important filters for deductive analysis. In the ensuing discussion, I examine the following language genres within Professor D's speech—*metacomments*, *questions of knowing*, and *eventcasts*.

#### **4.2.1 Language Genres: Metacomments, Questions of Knowing, and Eventcasts**

As previously acknowledged, Professor D repeatedly used *metacomments* to initiate and bracket stop/start actor coaching sessions. Metacomments can be understood in a variety of ways. In general, they fall within what Heath and Langman call "philosophical setups," which "outline the call to team membership and responsibility" in sports coaching (1994, p. 87). In terms of spoken register studies, Professor D's metacomments provide a "genre marker," which indicates the beginning of a complete text of dyadic coaching (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 2). And, when asked

about these statements in an interview, Professor D acknowledged their practical importance: “I try to make the best of the time that I’ve got...and, for me, that means that when I’m coaching, I’m coaching everybody” (Interview, June 23, 2015).

A closer look at the linguistic features of Professor D’s metacomments reveals a consistent use of first, second, third, and indefinite pronouns, which I italicized for emphasis in the following samples:

*I’m giving everybody notes using his body.* (Class 5)

*I want you to be in the type of headspace where I’m talking to one person but I’m really talking to you.* (Class 7)

*I’m speaking to Tom, but I’m really speaking to everyone.* (Class 8)

*I’m coaching them, but you are learning through what my comments are to them.* (Class 11)

The varying pronoun features embedded in Professor D’s metacomments emphasize distributed and dialectical understandings of self, other, and group (i.e. *I, I’m, everybody, his, you, everyone, them, my*). In comparison, the pronouns embedded in directives from Professor D’s “regulatory register”— issued in more ‘standard’ classroom participation frameworks where the instructor faces the students to discuss expectations for upcoming assignments—were limited to first and second positions (Christie, 2005).

*I’ve asked you to do the research character analysis—you can do half a page.* (Class 5)

The final performance is two weeks away, and so the sooner *you* do it the more *I* can coach *you*—put *you* onstage and talk to *you* about what *you’re* working on. (Class 8)

*You’re* going to find a scene and *you’re* going to research it and perform it. (Class 8)

*I want you to think about these points.* (Class 9)



Tracking Professor D's pronoun use in his coaching and regulatory registers, helps to reveal how his utterances grammatically index *stance*, a fundamental element of communication. Sociolinguist, John Du Bois, defines stance as, “a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means (language, gesture, and other symbolic forms), through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (themselves and others), and align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field” (2007, p. 163). In a way, stance provides a finer-grained version of a participation framework—or what Goffman has referred to as *footing*, a “[p]articipant’s alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self” held across “a strip of behavior” (1981, p. 128). Goffman’s notion of “projected self” is of particular importance for this study, as theorist Bruce McConachie explains that *psychological projection*, or the ability “to simulate alternative, imaginary, and future worlds,” provides the cognitive foundation for performance (2015, p. 41).

As dispensers of disciplinary knowledge, teachers mostly communicate epistemic stances imbued with authority (Christie, 2002). Indeed, all of the above utterances sampled from Professor D's classroom discourse retain the kind of epistemic, authoritative stance typical of instructors (I → you). Yet, the grammar of Professor D's metacomments (I → you/his/everyone) asks the observing students to affectively align with, and performatively project themselves into, their peers' performance practice for the purpose of observation and appropriation (I → you/his/everyone). Consequently, metacomments worked to grammatically de-center Professor D's epistemic authority by shifting who in the classroom could bring forth performance content. In other words, the student actors performing onstage could now provide a kind of performance modeling for analysis and uptake—similar to the way that Professor D issued performance

models in call-and-response coaching for appropriative purposes.

In addition to metacomments, Professor D consistently posed questions during stop/start actor coaching sessions to initiate multi-turn talk with the actors. As previously noted, these interrogatives generally accord with what Heath terms “*questions of knowing*” in sports coaching, which are posed to elicit different “types of narrative responses covering past events” (1991, p. 113). For Heath, there are different types of questions of knowing. *Reflections* are questions that ask a player to voice “options and think-aloud analyses of certain plays or scenes,” while *rule recounts* ask a player to recite the constitutive rules that apply to the preceding scenario (p. 113).

During stop/start actor coaching sessions Professor D typically posed *reflective questions of knowing* to a student actor, which opened up a discussion of the dramatic world of the play *and* the actor’s performative interpretation of a character. Yet, interestingly, Professor D’s questions to the student actors were often grammatically addressed to the fictional character in first or third person pronoun positions. To better demonstrate this, I revisit the interrogatives listed in the previous discussion, but now with italicized pronouns:

“Okay, who are *you* [the character] talking to? Where are *you* [the character]?”

“Does the scene start with *you* [the character] there, or do *you* [the character] enter from somewhere?”

“What do *you* [the character] mean by [that line of dialogue]? What’s *your* [the character’s] subtext there?”

“How many times has *he* [the character] done this?”

“Where do *you* [the character] work?”

“So tell *me* about this character...why is *he* saying all of this?”

Despite the fact that these questions were addressed to the fictional *character* (e.g. where do you work?), the analytical information Professor D requested, of course, had to derive from the *student's* knowledge of the scene or play. Consequently, the conversations that resulted from reflective questions of knowing tended to involve multiple 'people'—Professor D, the student, and the fictional character(s). The following transcript between Professor D and Tom helps to illustrate the multiple 'people' involved in such conversations:

**Table 4. Transcript from Class 7 (June 2, 2015)**

D:	So tell <i>me</i> about this character...why is <i>he</i> saying all of this? What is <i>his</i> objective?
T:	Well, <i>they're</i> the big underdogs, so <i>he</i> [Tom's character] needs to pump <i>them</i> up so <i>they</i> know <i>they</i> can win this [game].
D:	So <i>he's</i> trying to pump <i>them</i> up. To do what?
T:	To go out and play the best game of hockey of <i>their</i> lives.
D:	Um-hmm.

What is striking about Professor D's reflective questions of knowing, is how he consistently positioned students to experience multiple, simultaneous understandings of self and character in order to make inferences from both perspectives.

In addition, Professor D also employed *rule recounts* during stop/start actor coaching sessions, which asked the student to recount the *constitutive* rule(s) of the preceding performance activity. Philosopher John Searle reminds us that constitutive rules serve to create, define, and determine behaviors that exist apart from broader, sociocultural regulative rules of social interaction (i.e. manners, etiquette). Instead, constitutive rules serve to constitute activities such as games and, therefore, "create the very possibility of playing such games" (1969, p. 33). In this

classroom, Professor D routinely posed rule recounts (or questions akin to a rule recount) to help define the rules of realistic performance for the students. For example, during one coaching session, Professor D stopped an actress's monologue to say, "Did you or did you not have a list right there? ...Lists can't have the same value, you gotta build it!" (Class 7). In the same class he asked a different student, "What is a 'moment of recognition'?" (Class 7). And, after watching a scene where the actors seemed to stand for too long without moving, Professor D asked the actors, "What is the 90/10 rule—do you have to look at the other person the entire time?" (Class 11). All of Professor D's rule recounts pressed the actors to re-voice, re-perform, or re-cognize a constitutive rule of realistic performance. Unlike reflections, which served to support a performer's construction of the fictional dramatic world, rule recounts reified the regulatory mechanisms that determine realistic performance.

In general, questions of knowing allowed Professor D to initiate multi-turn talk with the actors, which produced conversations and re-performances that expanded performance through a deepening of the actor's knowledge (narrative-, character- or rule-driven). Following this dialogic work, stop/start actor coaching episodes tended to give way to a new participation framework, *side coaching*. In side-coaching episodes, Professor D purposefully re-framed his role through spatial and linguistic adjustments. For example, if he was previously standing onstage talking with the actors, Professor D retreated to the audience. Rather than engage actors in multi-turn talk, his utterances were mostly composed of blocks of descriptive speech, which, as previously noted, Heath identifies as *eventcasts*.

Eventcasts are "commentaries that accompany action in process," and Heath acknowledges that sports announcer talk is, perhaps, the most recognizable form of eventcast (1991, p. 108). In sports *training*, however, eventcasts are often modified to not just responsively

narrate unfolding action, but may also verbally direct action. Heath notes that eventcasts can offer players a “bid for sociodramatic play” through the narration of emergent activity and, “in addition to the sequencing of these actions, speakers interlace eventcasts with explication of specific features of roles, individual actors, and conditions of particular events within each episode” (pp. 108-109). In short, coaches tend to tailor eventcasts to particular sporting scenarios and for specific participants’ needs or abilities.

One of the key conditions of realistic acting, of course, is its emphasis on psychophysical action and, as such, Professor D’s eventcasts often scripted physical *and* mental action. To delve deeper into how this worked in coaching interactions, I re-examine the previous transcript and italicize Professor D’s pronoun usage as he takes up the role of both the student and the character:

**Table 5. Transcript from Class 11 (June 16, 2015)**

D:	Hold on. ( <i>Tom turns to look a Professor D who is seated in the audience</i> ) [On the line] “what do you think of him”— <i>I want you to have turned your body (pointing to the interior wall of the classroom) all the way this way. (Tom turns his body in the direction Professor D points)...Thank you. I want to see on your face that you’re taking a moment to think about what [the other character] has said. (Tom continues to watch Professor D and nods yes). But, also, I want you to look at the door like...</i>
T:	Tom: Hmm! ( <i>Smiles and brings his right hand up with a “got it” gesture, as if he has made new a connection.</i> )
D:	( <i>slipping into an interior kind of side coaching of Tom’s character’s thoughts</i> ) ...maybe I should leave before <i>she</i> gets more information out of <i>me</i> because I drank too much.
T:	( <i>Nods in agreement</i> )
D:	And then, it’s like, in <i>your</i> mind the wheels are turning and <i>you’re</i> like, well if <i>she</i> wants to know what <i>I</i> think... <i>I’ll</i> tell <i>her</i> !
T:	( <i>Laughs</i> ) Alright!

There are a number of important features to highlight in this transcript. Not only does Professor D's initial chunk of speech serve to direct, through eventcast, the actor's physical position onstage (similar to call-and-response coaching of the body), it also sets up a bid for sociodramatic play. When the actor, Tom, raises his hand in a 'got it' gesture it appears that he 'accepts' Professor D's bid. At this point, Professor D ceases to actively direct Tom's body and, instead, begins to guide his thinking. By voicing the character's interior monologue, Professor D provides Tom an affective experience, and line of thought, to better understand the nuances of the performance moment. Professor D's shift from acting coach to Tom's character can be tracked through his pronoun use. Early on, Professor D uses "I" to reference himself ("I want you [Tom] to look at the door"). Yet, almost immediately in his next block of speech, Professor D uses "I" to perform Tom's character ("maybe *I* should leave"). Professor D then proceeds to blur the distinction between the actor, character, and instructor even further. Initially, he tells Tom what his character should be thinking ("and then, it's like, in *your* mind the wheels are turning and *you're* like), but then Professor D discursively *becomes* the character by again taking on a first person position ("if she wants to know what *I* think, screw it, *I'll* tell her!").

Similar to the way that Professor D's reflective questions of knowing posed questions to both the student and character, eventcasts can allow students and Professor D to experience overlapping understandings of self and character. The phenomenon of double consciousness, or the simultaneous experiencing of self and other, is well-established in performance theory. For example, aforementioned theorist, McConachie, draws from the work of cognitive researchers Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner to explain role-playing as a kind of conceptual integration, or blending, of self/character. From a more applied approach, Augusto Boal terms an actor's dual

awareness, *metaxis*: “[t]he state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image” (1995, p. 43). Consequently, while it is not surprising to find double consciousness at play in an acting class, this transcript shows how an eventcast can serve to discursively mediate and cultivate the phenomenon. Moreover, tracking Professor D’s pronoun usage in the eventcast suggests that an acting coach (in the tradition of psychological realism, at least) takes on brief moments of *triple* consciousness—that of coach, actor, and character. As such, eventcasts appear to be a form of talk that is both cognitive and distributed in quality, initiating a kind of shared thinking that extends a psychic performance model for an actor to experience and appropriate.

In the following section, I move to an investigation of the five “syntactic phenomena” embedded in Professor D’s coaching register, which support a coach in “invoking team membership, building up a set of skills in players, and ensuring that players learn to think of themselves as strategists” (Heath & Langman, 1994, p. 93).

#### **4.2.2 Language Features: Syntactic Features of Coaching**

Although I previously outlined the syntactic features of the coaching register in Chapter Three, it is helpful to now ground Heath’s and Langman’s framework in text samples from Professor D’s coaching register and embedded language genres. Having previously attended to one of the syntactic features, *pronoun usage*, the ensuing analysis focuses on the other four phenomena: *telegraphic utterances*, *balanced negatives and directives*, *tag questions* and *conditionals*.

As the name suggests, *telegraphic utterances* are brief bits of speech—“no more than five morphemes”—dialogically implanted into a performance activity by a coach (Heath & Langman,

1994, p. 93). Professor D tended to use telegraphic utterances during stop/start ensemble work (e.g. the ball game), as well as stop/start actor coaching sessions, for declarative or imperative purposes. For example, in the ball game, Professor D directed the following telegraphic utterances to the entire ensemble: “look alive!” and “the ball’s still in!” (Class 2). In stop/start actor coaching sessions, Professor D’s telegraphic utterances were usually directed to a particular individual: “yes—go, go, go!” and “not so fast” (Class 11).

Although seemingly inconsequential, telegraphic utterances are an important syntactic feature of the coaching register because they further demonstrate its dialogic, affective, and cognitive qualities. All of the telegraphic utterances cited above allowed Professor D to cultivate a faded communicatory presence with performance activity. The backchannel of telegraphic utterances appeared to communicate a peripheral support system to the actor(s) by consistently acknowledging performance through evaluative and relational interjections. But, Professor D’s telegraphic utterances were not only concerned with praise. Heath and Langman note that “[c]oaches think of this barrage of talk as a mental prod to get players to internalize the quality or feature of their current action” (1994, p. 94). Consequently, Professor D’s telegraphic utterances were also cognitively oriented in that they sought to explicitly confirm or modify actors’ performance interactions. In this sense, telegraphic utterances could mark a performative action as ‘acceptable’ (e.g. “nice”) or, alternatively, an action could be flagged as ‘unacceptable’ and in need of repair (e.g. “try that again”).

Another feature of the coaching register is the consistent deployment of *balanced negatives and directives*. According to Heath and Langman, balanced negatives are, “negations followed immediately [or preceded] by positive assertions” (1994, p. 97). Professor D often used balanced negatives during stop/start actor coaching. For example, after a student performed a



monologue, Professor D told him: “Great energy, but keep it consistent—don’t drop it” (Class 5). Later, in the same coaching session, Professor D offered a different kind of balanced negative, a negation followed by an explicit rule of performance: “you can’t cover [the pain] by going slow—because people who are pretending to be okay don’t [speak] slowly” (Class 5). This kind of balanced negative attempted to help a student ‘see’ how an acting choice fits within a larger performance aesthetic and the epistemic rules of realistic acting. Finally, Professor D also balanced negations with *humor* or *sarcasm*. For instance, while coaching a scene about an employee who was late to work and bumped into the boss on the way in, Professor D offered a negative balanced with sarcasm. When the actor playing the employee started the scene with a smile on his face, Professor D immediately intervened to say, “Nah, you can’t be smiling when you roll up!” Because of Professor D’s humorous and casual language, the actor realized his misalignment of actions and words, said “oh, yea!” and the class burst into laughter (Class 4). Negatives balanced with affirmations, performance rationales, and humor, further demonstrate how Professor D used affective- and cognitive-driven speech to dialogically respond to, and improve, students’ performance work. Furthermore, even though Professor D’s balanced negatives were typically directed toward a particular student, they also served to implicitly develop group knowledge by emphasizing the constitutive rules or elements of realistic performance.

An additional syntactic feature that Professor D frequently used was *tag questions* (especially *right?* and *okay?*). Tag questions effectively turn imperative or declarative statements into interrogatives. Although fleetingly interspersed into discourse, tag questions contribute to the coaching register by emphasizing persistent self-monitoring for the actor. For example, during Class 11, Professor D gave the following directives to four different actors during

stop/start actor coaching:

You react, *right?* (*pointing to the actor*) You can't have a silent reaction.

So, if you say you're going to leave [the stage], leave. *Right?*

Now, the lines aren't there. They gotta be there two days from now. *Right?*

Stomp over here. All of a sudden it puts you in a relationship where everyone can see you. *Okay?*

So, I don't want to see caricatures of women. I want you to just play these two women. *Okay?*

We don't talk like this (*standing too close to someone*), *right?*

Although the tag question “right?” is frequently used in professional settings to imprint authority, shore up collegiality, or as a kind of internal backchannel, the purpose of Professor D’s tag questions in the above examples are different because they are not rhetorically uttered. Rather, in all of these instances, Professor D’s “right?” or “okay?” pressed students to re-cognize a particular performance moment or nuance, which again implicitly emphasized realistic performance conventions or expectations for the entire class. Finally, notice how Professor D’s tag questions often overlapped with other syntactic phenomena of the coaching register. Two of Professor D’s utterances (the second and the fifth in the list) feature negatives balanced by a performance rationale and then tagged with questions.

The overlapping quality of the syntactic features, and their presence within the language genres, is perhaps best highlighted in the coaching register’s final syntactic element, *conditional statements*. As the bread and butter of the coaching register, conditionals create hypothetical circumstances that “provide the players with alternatives and examples of causal environments which have an effect on the playing of the game...the overarching frame is that of ‘what if?’ and

the accompanying expectation” (Heath & Langman, 1994, p. 94). Of course, the overarching frame of ‘what if?’ also provides a foundational construct for Stanislavski-based realistic acting, enabling an actor to imagine him or herself in a character’s fictional situation. Both acting and sports coaches, it seems, posit conditional statements (e.g. “if-then” utterances) to afford players the opportunity to try on varying scenarios and endpoints.

It is worthwhile to briefly pause, here, and further examine discourse-bound conditional usage, as well as Professor D’s deployment of conditionals in the context of this performance classroom.<sup>38</sup> Heath reminds us that conditional constructions, “allow interlocutors to make inferences that try out various alternatives on the ‘small-scale’ model of external reality that individuals carry around in their heads. Speakers and listeners must imagine connections across situations and bring knowledge of past events to bear on a projected scenario” (1991, p. 110). In this way, conditionals depend upon speakers’ shared understandings and knowledge of the social world.

Shared knowledge is also important for the use of counterfactual conditionals. Heath notes that counterfactuals are often used in environments of collaboration, as well as in moments of tension, because initiating a call to pretend (i.e. *irrealis*) can effectively takes the focus *off* the actual situation (i.e. *realis*). Counterfactual conditionals can also introduce the meta-awareness and meta-communication of sociodramatic play, something anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972) first identified. Interactions in sociodramatic play require participants’ deep attention

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<sup>38</sup> The study of conditionals has long fascinated linguists, psychologists, and philosophers of language. It is a field of study with many traditions and methods including that of grammatical analysis, logical analysis, language acquisition and development, mental reasoning and inferencing. For more on the study of conditionals, see: *Mental Spaces in Grammar: Conditional Constructions* (2011) and *On Conditionals* (2009).

because, as Heath states, “the shifts between what is real and what is not real can come at any moment” (p. 112). In this classroom, Professor D often used sociodramatic play and counterfactual conditionals for comedic and instructional effect, such as in the earlier example when he stood too close to a (male) student and said, just inches away from his face, “We don’t talk like this, right?” (Class 11).

Because conditional statements are so prevalent in the coaching register, Heath and Langman offer syntactic subdivisions. First among these is *if-then conditional* statements, which feature one statement and one result, or one statement and varying/branching results (1994, p. 95). Despite the name, if-then conditionals are often achieved without the actual use of the words ‘if’ and ‘then.’ The word “so” (sometimes suggesting a challenge) can be used in place of “if,” and two seemingly discrete statements can function as an if-then conditional with undeclared linkages (p. 96-97). Professor D often used this type of conditional when giving a student a balanced negative with a performance rationale:

So, *if* you say you’re going to leave [the stage], [*then*] leave. Right? (Class 11)

[*If* you] stomp over here, [*then*] all of a sudden it puts you in a relationship where everyone can see you. Okay? (Class 11)

Similar to if-then conditionals, Professor D also issued *conditionals stated as question-directives*, which feature fast-paced questions followed by an explicit directive, often sarcastic in tone (Heath & Langman, 1994, p. 96).

You react, *right?* (*pointing to the actor*) You can’t have a silent reaction. (Class 11)

Did you or did you not have a list right there? ...Lists can’t have the same value, you gotta build it!” (Class 7)

Finally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the type of conditional that Professor D seemed to use the most were *sociodramatic bids* (Heath, 1991, p. 108-109). These are statements that outline a performance scenario for students, which then *becomes* the context for the following action. Professor D often used sociodramatic bids during eventcasts to direct psychophysical stage action, as well as in his metacomments, to create a sense of shared knowledge building:

And then, it's like, in your mind the wheels are turning and you're like, well, *if* she wants to know what I think [*then*], screw it, I'll tell her! (Class 11)

[*If*] I'm speaking to Tom, [*then*] I'm really speaking to everyone. (Class 8)

To conclude this section on conditionals, it is important to re-ground Professor D's utterances in context. I emphasize this, because, after initially looking at Professor D's conditional usage in transcript form, I was tempted to consider his abstract, hypothetical statements as dialectically contrasting with the concrete, un-hypothetical performance models he so often extended to students in call-and-response coaching sessions. However, after going back to the video data to examine Professor D's in-context use of conditionals, I realized that many stop/start coaching sessions featured conditionals deployed *in conjunction with* performance models, which served to anchor conditionality in a particular performance moment or act. For instance, in the above example, Professor D told a student to "stomp over here" while simultaneously stomping his own feet, presumably, to model the kind of physical and aural qualities he thought the student should achieve in performance. Thus, Professor D's conditionals often supported the kind of scripted action so important to the coaching register. However, in side-coaching sessions, Professor D tended to only use linguistic conditional statements (sans performance models) with heightened paralinguistic features to communicate with actors.

Consequently, as a syntactic feature of Professor D's coaching register, it seems conditionals provided powerful mediating tools in varying participatory frameworks.

### **4.2.3 Integrating the Pervasive Language Features of Professor D's Coaching Register**

Having established the language genres (*metacomments, questions of knowing, and eventcasts*) and the syntactic elements (*telegraphic utterances, balanced negatives, tag questions, conditionals* and *pronoun usage*) of Professor D's instructional coaching register, I now look at how the pervasive language features 'worked' in concert (Heath, 1991; Heath & Langman, 1994). To better discern how the varying (and often overlapping) language features of the coaching register mapped onto an actual stop/start coaching text, the following excerpt is taken from one of Professor D's coaching sessions midway through the course, immediately following Ava's monologue performance (Class 7). For the sake of clarity, I arranged the transcript in a table form with the language features of the coaching register highlighted in the text and identified to the right.

Table 6. Transcript from Class 7 (June 2, 2015)

D:	Alright. Thank you. Alright good. So go back to your center/center [stage position].	Telegraphic Utterance
A:	Moves to the center of the stage.	
D:	Excellent. Alright. Ah, at your slate I want you to stand.	Telegraphic Utterance
A:	She stands.	
D:	And I want you to be yourself. So(=if), when you're doing your slate, I want you to be bubbly, I want you to be your happy, you're sort of Ava—you know, talking to us and then tell us the name of your character and the name of the play or movie that it's from. Practice right now.	Sociodramatic Bid If-Then Conditional
A:	(moving around fidgeting) My name is Ava De...	
D:	(interrupts) Don't move around. Just stand still—	Balanced Negative
A:	(begins to quiet her body and stand still)	
D:	So(=if). That means find an actor neutral stance; don't weight shift. (Then) tell us in a bubbly way (pause)	If-Then Conditional
A:	Hi! My name is Ava Dehigh and I'm going to do a monologue from School of Rock as Dewey Finn.	
D:	Perfect. And then immediately I want you to transform into your character and sit down.	Telegraphic Utterance Sociodramatic Bid
A:	Sits.	
D:	Good. Alright, now. The question for this is—you stood up too early so you started pacing around. When is the good time in the monologue to stand? It's gotta be a little bit later so that it's powerful...	Telegraphic Utterance Question of Knowing
A:	(offering a line of dialogue from the monologue) "Here's a useful lesson: give up!"	
D:	(pause) Doesn't that come sooner though?	
A:	Yea	
D:	Alright, its gotta come later—	Telegraphic Utterance
A:	Okay. (Lengthy pause) Umm (more silence).	
D:	Alright, I'll give you a hint. Don't you, you have a list in there where you list peoples' names?	Telegraphic Utterance Question of Knowing
A:	Yea	
D:	Alright. So [=if]. At the names part, [then] let's try that.	Telegraphic Utterance If-Then Conditional
A:	Stand up at the names part?	
D:	Yes....And who are you making eye contact with during the monologue?	Question of Knowing
A:	The class. (in the fictional scene)	
D:	The class. But we have an actual audience, so you have to look at us, okay?	Sociodramatic Bid

This transcript provides a helpful way to see how the language genres and syntactic features of the coaching register can layer, converge and accumulate over a brief amount of interaction. From his first utterance, “alright,” Professor D telegraphs an acknowledgement of Ava’s previous performance work, which seems to secure permission for him to re-direct her spatial and character choices (“I want you to stand; I want you to be bubbly”). Because this transcript is from midway through the course, this kind of psychophysical coaching was a common practice and it seems Ava had no problem comfortably responding to Professor D’s direction. Professor D then issues a series of conditionals (a *sociodramatic bid* and *if-then*) to draw Ava into the fiction of acting, focusing her physicality to help her to create a high-quality slate (i.e. introduction of the monologue). Here, Professor D uses a balanced negative to help Ava understand the reasoning behind his negation, which Ava seems to understand and accommodate. Professor D’s telegraphic utterances then become more specific (“perfect” and “good”) and he moves into a second phase of coaching, which focuses on the monologue’s text and blocking.

To initiate co-inquiry, Professor D uses *questions of knowing* (“When is the good time in the monologue to stand?”). Yet, because Ava cannot fully answer these questions, Professor D follows them up with conditionals that are more explicit to move her in the ‘right’ direction. All the while, Professor D continues telegraphing his acknowledgement of Ava’s efforts repeatedly using “alright” to maintain a level of relational assurance, which seems to encourage her to continue ‘trying’ even if her answers are not spot on. At the end of the transcript, Professor D draws Ava’s focus to an awareness of the larger classroom environment and its potential for



interaction and performance. He does this by using a sociodramatic bid to help Ava create a fictional class out of the “actual class” she is looking at, in effect, encouraging a meta-awareness between fiction and reality—a complex task essential in formal performance.

Zooming out to look at the transcript as a whole, it is fairly obvious that Professor D’s interactive and iterative work with Ava helps her to re-perform and fine-tune particular parts of the monologue. But, locating the embedded language features of the coaching register helps to better demonstrate how, when, and why dialogic actor coaching can provide a foundation for cognitive and performative expansion. Professor D’s actor coaching extends a kind of talk that encourages Ava to comfortably ‘live’ within a state of consistent monitoring, revision, and performative action, as he emergently identifies trajectories for improvement. In order to keep Ava’s interest, motivation, and willingness to continually adjust her actions, Professor D uses a host of language features to emphasize relational, distributed, and dialectical understandings of self, other (i.e. character), and group.

Yet, perhaps, one of the most trustworthy evaluations of Professor D’s coaching work comes from Ava herself. In our interview, I asked her about the experience of being coached by Professor D and I showed Ava the video clip of her being coached in the above transcript. Ava’s response was enthusiastic but not specific. When I pressed Ava to tell me more she said:

So, yea, [Professor D]. He criticized, yea he did. And for that, I like that...because accepting and understanding what you’re doing wrong is the only way to effectively improve yourself...[coaching] gives you the opportunity to reevaluate everything and sit down and say okay this is what I’m going to do differently. [Coaching] helps you improve yourself. You know? Because in life you don’t always get second chances.

What Ava could not tell me, of course, was how the language features embedded in Professor D's coaching coalesced to support her growing understanding of criticism, self, the character, and the making of improved performance. But even though Ava's feedback exists at a coarser level of understanding, her words help substantiate the fact that Professor D's coaching register cultivated a significant opportunity for her to construct new knowledge.

#### **4.3 FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN THE SITUATIONAL CONTEXT, LANGUAGE FEATURES, AND LEARNING**

The final layer of Biber's and Conrad's (2009) approach to register analysis investigates the *functional* associations between the situational contexts and pervasive language features of the coaching register. In keeping with the overarching interdisciplinary goals of this project, the functional analysis is examined vis-à-vis learning theory, which serves to further explain and theorize the (functional) learning opportunities lodged in Professor D's coaching register. In general, the learning affordances Professor D extended were scaffolded and relied on the students' improved participation in the classroom system.

Here, it is helpful to briefly return to the discussion of participatory learning theories overviewed in Chapter Two, and recall learning scientist Anna Sfard's cautionary advice on acquisitionist and participatory metaphors (i.e. theories) for learning. Sfard finds that participationism shifts an acquisitionist account of 'having' a permanent or stable concept, to the notion of 'doing' activities or practices in context-specific social environments. For participationists, "learning a subject is now conceived of as a process of becoming a member of a

certain community. This entails, above all, the ability to communicate in the language of this community and act according to its particular norms” (Sfard, 1998, p. 6). Sfard’s insight is quite significant for this study, as Professor D’s coaching register certainly seemed to socialize the students into a particular mode of talk and activity, in effect, apprenticing them into a “community of practice” centered around realistic performance (Wenger, 1998).

But, not all of the students in the class community communicated as strongly as others. The situational analysis of Professor D’s coaching register demonstrates how seldom the side-coaching participation framework occurred during the class’s progression. This might be because side coaching appears to introduce a higher degree of complexity through the use of a third frame of communication. Drawing on Bateson’s work, Heath notes, “social play is possible only if the participants are capable of metacommunication, of signaling that a counterfactual is at work” (1991, p. 112). As a type of “play,” formal performance requires that an actor maintain two modes of communication—the ‘real’ and the ‘fictional.’ In stop/start actor coaching, Professor D essentially pressed ‘pause’ on this dualism to have a conversation *about* the fictional frame while communicating in the ‘real’ one. Whereas all of the students could competently engage in stop/start actor coaching by the time the course concluded, only two students could sustain side coaching, where an actor communicated with a scene partner, the audience, *and* the acting coach. The spectrum of actor coaching frameworks identified in this study (i.e. call-and-response coaching, stop/start ensemble coaching, stop/start actor coaching, side coaching) suggests that one important skill the students learned throughout the class was how to communicate with Professor D in varying, overlapping frames of coaching talk.

The trajectory of communicative proficiency with actor coaching is, perhaps, best demonstrated by Tom—the student whose eventcast is featured in the preceding sections and

who did successfully engage in side coaching. In an interview conducted after the class concluded, I asked Tom about the experience of being coached by Professor D, and I also showed him a video clip of himself being coached on a monologue in Class 7. Tom replied:

The longer the class went on, the more I like appreciated [coaching] and was able to like understand exactly what [Professor D] wanted, um, yea and... whenever [Professor D] started asking those questions I was like oh I see what he's doing. I really like have to think like this [character]. I have to really like be that person entirely. Yea and then when [Professor D] started asking about the situation, I was like okay yea. Like [my character's] the one in control, but he's probably just as nervous as these other guys. [My character's] probably fighting off all of these emotions and he's gotta be the cool, calm, collected leader. So I guess [coaching] made me think about my character a lot more.

In addition to Tom's awareness that the ongoing coaching experiences comprised a learning trajectory, his reference to "those questions" and Professor D "asking about the situation" are of interest. It seems Tom understood that the questions Professor D posed were significant catalysts for thought. Indeed, he references "thinking" twice. Initially, Tom mentions that coaching caused him to think *like* his character, and soon after this Tom notes that coaching caused him to think more *about* his character. Once again we see how the construction of Tom/character, and the ability to inference from two perspectives, is shaped by Professor D's third voice.

While seemingly obvious, it is important to emphasize that Professor D's actor coaching took place in a situated *context*. For learning scientist, C. Addison Stone, context refers to the sociocultural, institutional, material, and historical situation in which scaffolding takes place, as well as the shared goals held by the novice and the mentor. Although tasks often mean

something different to an instructor and a student (i.e. a student's conception of a task or activity is often impoverished), a common interest in the task is essential to maintain participation in the activity (Stone, 2002). In this classroom context, the joint objectives of the students' and Professor D were (mostly) pre-determined by U.S. institutional heritages, which established realistic acting as the foundational mode of performance learning around the mid-century (Downey, 2013; Gillespie & Cameron, 2004), as well as general education programs of study (Harvard University, 1945).

In terms of *how* Professor D discursively maintained the students' interest in the performance context, it seems that many of the language features and syntactic phenomena of the coaching register contributed (e.g. performance models, scripted action, telegraphic utterances and balanced negatives). Furthermore, by bracketing stop/start coaching sessions with metacomments, Professor D effectively asked the observing students to align with, and project themselves into, their peers' onstage performance practice for the purpose of observation and appropriation. In the following metacomment, notice how Professor D frames the coaching experience as significant to *two* contexts—the present stop/start coaching scenario, as well as future class-based performance opportunities.

This is for everyone, okay, so this is good. This is our first time where we're all like doing a performance and having me coach and whatnot. I'm telling him stuff (*gestures toward and looks briefly at Matt*), but (*shifts his gaze back to the class*) am I only telling him stuff? (*The students shake their heads and murmur 'no.'*) Who am I really telling? (*The students murmur and gesture towards themselves.*) Everybody else! (*Again pointing to Matt*) He already went (*i.e. performed in front of the class*). He already got a good

grade. I'm helping him for the next time, but I'm really helping you for your own performance. So I'm giving everybody notes using his body (Class 5).

Learning scientist, Randi Engle, has written about the importance of framing classroom interactions to cultivate *generative learning*—also known as the elusive notion of knowledge transfer. Based on empirical research, Engle argues that “transfer is more likely to occur to the extent that learning and transfer contexts have been framed to create what is called *intercontextuality*... when two or more contexts become linked to one another...[so that] content established during learning is considered relevant to the transfer context” (2006, p. 456, emphasis in original). In Engle's terms, Professor D used metacomments to frame *time* between a present moment and an upcoming future event, and also to frame the students' observation as a form of active *participation* accountable to the larger intellectual and performative conversation.

For the most part, it seems, Professor D's metacomments did cultivate intercontextuality. In both my field notes and content logs, I consistently wrote about the students' attentiveness during stop/start actor coaching sessions. But, evidence from the students' interviews might speak to this fact more credibly. When I asked the students about Professor D's use of metacomments (although I did not use the term), the students spoke to the phenomenon with enthusiasm. Here are excerpts from three interviews:

[Observing a classmate being coached is] cool because then you get to see what you did but through like third view.

[Professor D] prefaced [coachings] with an 'I'm not just doing this for you but this is for everyone to take a part in.' So I kind of liked that because it was less pressure off of you because, if I see something I like, I log it in my head. I'm like, 'I like the way that uh he's emoting during this scene'—or 'I really didn't like the way he moved from one side from upstage to downstage,' maybe I would do that a little differently, don't do that. So, I basically have this mental checklist of dos and don'ts that I pick up from watching other people.

[During coachings if] people were doing something that I liked or I didn't like—like some people would shift their weight a lot, which I found like super distracting—I would consciously think in my head 'ok, don't shift your weight.'

Of interest, here, is the students' metacognitive characterizations of Professor D's coaching of their peers. Phrases like "third view," "log it in my head," "mental checklist," and "think in my head" help to demonstrate the mental work that occurred for students during in-class coaching sessions. Additionally, it suggests that students' were able to take up Professor D's metacomments to think across contexts and utilize a participatory stance for the purposes of appropriation and learning.

The joint activity that takes place in the context of actor coaching is, in many ways, a departure from traditional western education where individual, acquisition-based tasks are administered through direct instruction. Learning in participation, or "situated learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), takes place in real time, engages newcomers in authentic tasks, and emphasizes a dialectical relationship between a student's *part* in the activity's *whole* (Sfard, 1998). According to learning scientist Etienne Wenger, such participatory settings demand a "negotiation of meaning" through "mutuality" and "joint enterprise," which can build individual *and* group knowledge through a heterogeneous "repertoire" of practices (e.g. discourses, gestures, routines, concepts) that "reflect a history of mutual engagement" (1998, p. 83). In a similar vein, performance theorist Diana Taylor uses the term "repertoire" to refer to the uncoded, embodied knowledge and practices that are historically circulated, yet which are often overshadowed by textual "archival" knowledge (2003, p. 24). Both Wenger's and Taylor's conceptions of "repertoire" have bearing on this study's reification of Professor D's coaching register, and its dialogic and cognitive characteristics. Yet, it is also important to acknowledge

that in formal dyadic contexts, repertoires are often brought forth and, therefore, *transmitted* through the contingent processes of scaffolding.

As Stone's second tenet of scaffolding, *contingency* concerns the interactional adjustments made by a more knowledgeable other who must "engage in ongoing assessment of the learner's current understanding and need of support" (2002, p. 179). Moreover, an instructor continually monitors and diagnoses the *kind* of contingent support needed. In this classroom, for instance, if a student could not successfully take up a sociodramatic bid (e.g. "I want you to immediately transform into your character and sit down"), Professor D often contingently followed up with a performance model to explicitly demonstrate a course of action. Alternatively, if a student could successfully take up a sociodramatic bid in stop/start actor coaching, Professor D typically faded his presence to a side-coaching participation frame in which he restricted his speech to telegraphic utterances. In these ways, during stop/start actor coaching, Professor D's contingent responses were calibrated along a spectrum of support often known as a *prompt hierarchy* in the scaffolding literature. Stone notes that prompt hierarchies offer "rough approximations of relative degrees of explicitness in the support provided during a goal-directed activity" (2002, p. 179).

Embedded in the contingencies of scaffolding is Stone's third tenet of scaffolding, the "communicational tension and inference" that can *challenge* a student to perform in her zone of proximal development (Stone, 2002, p. 181). Challenge is implicit in accounts of knowledge transfer through the processes of scaffolding. To use Professor D's terms, "raising the stakes" issued challenges to performance practice by effectively bumping 'up' the level of complexity and participation. In ensemble-based activities, like the 'ball game,' challenge occurred when Professor D switched out the fairly-easy-to-hit whiffle ball for the more-difficult-to hit tennis



ball. While it was easy to pinpoint acts of challenge in the ball game, the language and affect involved in stop/start actor coaching can make identifying challenge less obvious.

However, reviewing transcripts of Professor D’s stop/start actor coaching (i.e. contingent scaffolding) suggests that *questions of knowing* often initiated a turning point in a student’s conceptual understanding of text and performance. This is not to say, of course, that every student could receive and successfully take up a question of knowing. Professor D often had to backtrack (i.e. use a more explicit prompt) to support an actor who could not engage a question of knowing. In the following transcript notice how Professor D introduces two questions of knowing, but, when Ava cannot answer the questions, Professor D shifts to a more explicit prompt—an if-then conditional.

**Table 7. Transcript from Class 7 (June 2, 2015)**

D:	Good. Alright, now. The question for this is—you stood up too early so you started pacing around. When is the good time in the monologue to stand? It’s gotta be a little bit later so that it’s powerful...	<i>Telegraphic Utterance</i> <i>Question of Knowing</i>
A:	(offering a line of dialogue from the monologue) “Here’s a useful lesson: give up!”	
D:	(pause) Doesn’t that come sooner though?	
A:	Yea	
D:	Alright, its gotta come later—	<i>Telegraphic Utterance</i>
A:	Okay. (Lengthy pause) Umm (more silence).	
D:	Alright, I’ll give you a hint. Don’t you, you have a list in there where you list peoples’ names?	<i>Telegraphic Utterance</i> <i>Question of Knowing</i>
A:	Yea	
D:	Alright. So [=if]. At the names part, [then] let’s try that.	<i>Telegraphic Utterance</i> <i>If-Then Conditional</i>
A:	Stand up at the names part?	

D:	Yes	

One reason that Professor D's question of knowing may have proven difficult for Ava in this moment is because his prompt emergently transformed and expanded the performance task. Professor D's question called attention to, and integrated, key features of the monologue's text and Ava's performance, to which she had (seemingly) previously not attended. Ava's inability to fully engage Professor D's questions in this transcript was probably due to her on-the-spot reevaluation of the original task (i.e. perform a memorized monologue).

But, it didn't take long for Ava to begin to share in Professor D's understanding of the revised performance activity. As the stop/start session continued, Ava began to answer Professor D's questions and successfully incorporate his ideas into her performance practice. All the while, Professor D telegraphed positive utterances ("good," "perfect," "alright") to create a supportive bed of backchannel on which the coaching session could rest. Toward the end, Professor D posed a somewhat complex question of knowing, which Ava successfully answered.

**Table 8. Transcript from Class 7 (June 2, 2015)**

A:	<i>(Performing her monologue):</i> “So don’t waste your time trying to make anything cool or pure or awesome, because ‘the man’s’ just going to call you—”	
D:	Hold on a second, <b>was that a list?</b>	<i>Rule Recount</i>
A:	Yes.	
D:	They can’t all have the same value. Now that doesn’t always mean that you have to build up [in volume and pitch]. <i>(Descending his pitch melodramatically)</i> Sometimes you can build down.	<i>Balanced Negative</i>
A:	<i>Nods and smiles and returns to performing her monologue with more vocal variety):</i> “So don’t waste your time trying to make anything cool or pure or awesome, because ‘the man’s’ just going to call you a fat, washed-up loser and crush your soul. So just do yourselves a favor—”	
D:	Good. <b>Now. Who’s the fat, washed-up loser here?</b>	<i>Question of Knowing</i>
A:	<i>Grins and begins to point to herself repeatedly with excitement.</i>	
D:	<i>Nods ‘yes.’</i> So it can’t just roll off your tongue like it’s nothing. It has to be a little painful. Because that’s what ‘the man’ called you: a fat washed-up loser. <b>[You] had a dream one time, right? But now you don’t because it got crushed. Well, I need to see that.</b>	<i>Balanced Negative</i> <i>Sociodramatic Bid</i>

Unlike the previous questions of knowing, which required Ava to recall textual facts about the monologue and her performance choices, Professor D’s final question (“Who’s the fat, washed-up loser?”) asked Ava to *reinterpret* her character’s relationship to the world of the play—and, by extension, her performative expression of the character in this moment.

Ava’s excitement to answer Professor D’s question suggests an emergent *conceptual reorganization* of her understanding of the character and her performance. Additionally, notice how Ava’s apparent development of thought is initiated on the social plane, which is consonant with Vygotskian understandings of sociocultural learning theory. But, it is also important to

acknowledge that the opportunity to learn, which Ava experienced through Professor D's coaching register, was part of a larger learning trajectory (of which this transcript provides only a glimpse). Thus, Stone's overarching tenets of scaffolding—*context*, *contingency* and *challenge*—provide a helpful way to understand the larger practice of actor coaching. When context, contingency, and challenge meld in co-operation, an actor's performance and thought can expand. In this classroom, Professor D's coaching register (composed of a repertoire of discursive and embodied moves) provided the interactional 'stuff,' which organized such scaffolding.

To close this chapter, I wish to briefly acknowledge the scaffolding processes described here generally fall within what cognitive anthropologist, Jean Lave, calls "understanding-in-practice" (1997, p. 31). Unlike acquisitionist modes of instruction and learning (in which abstract information is 'gained'), Lave contends that coming to understand involves developing meaning *about* what is being learned. This is akin to the moment where Ava learned, amidst practice, *about* her character and performance through the recognition that *she* (or her character) was the "washed-up loser." Because this example reflects Ava's growing understanding, it is worthwhile to press a bit further into how her understanding-in-practice may have taken shape. By posing a question of knowing at a moment when Ava was ready to successfully experience uptake, Professor D initiated a new way of thinking for her, which could have remained submerged 'under' unconscious thought. In this way, Professor D's question was contingently enacted. But, it also initiated the bi-directional relationship between what Vygotsky called "elementary mental functions" and "higher mental functions," the latter of which originate on the social plane (Ford & Forman, 2006, p. 30).

Learning scientists outside of sociocultural research often discuss this sort of

phenomenon in terms of multiple kinds of knowledge. For example, the knowledge developed in and through performance activities generally constitutes what is termed “procedural knowledge”—the processes, actions, and affective responses necessary to engage in a performance task (Winne & Azevedo, 2014, p. 64). For the most part, an individual’s procedural knowledge occurs in and through time, remains embedded in contexts, and exists at implicit levels of control or awareness. Procedural knowledge is, of course, a deeply important form of knowing, yet it can remain inert beyond its context or, in this case, performance setting. The processes of articulation can help shift procedural knowledge into semantic networks that reside in “declarative knowledge” (p. 64). Although declarative knowledge can certainly be flawed, or encompass misconceptions, it is this form of knowledge that sets the stage for metacognitive awareness and allows an individual to monitor and reflect on how learning is taking place and, therefore, to calibrate thought and activity. Professor D’s coaching—in the form of questions of knowing—pressed students like Ava to not only experience performance, but also to articulate and monitor in-situ thinking about textual evidence, interpretation, and shifting actions.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, it is also important to acknowledge the larger dynamics of the classroom context. Although the final portion of this chapter focused on the dyadic coaching scenario between Ava and Professor D, we must remember the observing students who, via metacomment, are psychologically projecting themselves into Ava’s performance experience. In this classroom, actor coaching enacts a dynamic interplay of communication, knowledge, and thought that can

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<sup>39</sup> Beyond procedural and declarative knowledge lies “conditional knowledge” (Winne & Azevedo, 2014, p. 66). Conditional knowledge concerns an individual’s understanding of the additional *conditions* in which procedural and declarative knowledge can be used, and has much to do with “adapting and transferring strategies in unfamiliar, complex problems and contexts” (p. 66). This study, however, does not seek to document the students’ transfer of performance-based skills to additional domains or conditions.

afford participatory learning opportunities for both real (i.e., Ava) and imagined (i.e., the observing student) individuals. As this fine-grained analysis of Professor D's coaching register helps to reveal, the intimacies that can take place between a coach and an actor provide a foundation for cognitive and performative expansion—both onstage and off.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

This chapter reviews the purpose of the dissertation, overviews its findings, and explores implications for further research; it is divided into two discussions. The first section looks to the interdisciplinary origins of the project, addresses its specific research questions, presents an integrated summary of the research findings, and acknowledges the limitations of the study's design. The second section explores how the findings might inform future theatre and performance studies research in higher education.

### 5.1 REVIEW OF THE STUDY: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & LIMITATIONS

This dissertation provides an in-depth description and analysis of an instructional coaching register deployed by a seasoned acting instructor in a liberal arts performance course at the University of Pittsburgh. By locating and describing the pervasive, multimodal language features embedded in Professor D's coaching register, this study demonstrates how such features can organize students' participation in scaffolded learning opportunities. Moreover, it initiates a theoretical understanding of actor coaching as a *situated*, *dialogic*, and *scaffolded* activity that can support an actor's re-organization of conceptual understanding and develop new knowledge and performance practice for the stage.

The focus of this project aligns with the unique interdisciplinary training I received in theatre studies and the learning sciences at the University of Pittsburgh and, in turn, supports the larger purpose of the study: to better understand how performance learning operates—that is, its social and discursive organization—in theatre and performance studies courses. Here, the dissertation contributes to a subset of theatre studies research concerning the teaching and learning of performance in higher education (Fliotsos & Medford, 2005; Jackson, 2004; Kindelan, 2012; Smith, McConachie & Blair, 2001; Stucky & Wimmer, 2002).<sup>40</sup> The study also departs from this vein of scholarship by bringing qualitative methods to bear in a higher education learning environment, including ethnographic processes, interaction analysis, and the study of spoken registers (Biber & Conrad, 2009; Erickson, 2006; Heath & Street, 2008). Methodologically, then, this project returns to the social scientific and linguistic roots of performance studies—examining strips of enacted classroom behavior and discrete speech acts—in an effort to understand actor coaching as a kind of “human social action” (Schechner, 1992).

The theoretical assumptions that ground this study reside in cognitive theatre studies and sociocultural learning theory, which is a subset of the learning sciences (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; McConachie 2015). Both scholarly literatures view human action as socially, historically, and culturally situated, developed through dynamic and interacting systems, and experienced through minds that are inherently embodied. Relying on the neuroscience-based research of cognitive theatre studies (Kemp, 2012; McConachie, 2015), this study understands discourse as

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<sup>40</sup> The study’s significance, however, is not limited to higher education. Realistic actor coaching occurs in a variety of training spaces, including high schools, conservatories, and private studios. The findings of this dissertation could be helpful in initiating an understanding of how actor coaching does (or does not) work in any number of settings.



encompassing human speech, gesture, and embodiment—all of which are made meaningful by sociocultural contexts. Using a Vygotskian understanding of the formation of thought, the project accepts that utterances, gestures, and the use of material tools are what mediate human thinking and, therefore, learning. In this way, cognition is “stretched over” multimodal communication, activity, and material settings (Lave, 1988, p. 1), allowing individuals to think, learn, and perform as well as “say, do, and be” as stakeholders (Gee, 2014, p. 8). Vygotsky’s seminal construct, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), helps to identify the developmental space an acting coach and actor(s) move through to construct or expand performance. A more practical understanding of ZPD can be found in the concept of scaffolding and its three key tenets—context, contingency, and challenge—which provide a helpful framework to examine the emergent processes of actor coaching (Stone, 2002).

Leveraging these theories and methods, this study investigates a neglected area of scholarship, actor coaching, to answer the following research questions:

- In this liberal arts theatre classroom, how does Professor D’s coaching register cultivate implicit participatory norms, which create scaffolded learning opportunities over time and activity?
- What are the pervasive language features embedded in Professor D’s coaching register and how do they help to organize the students’ participation in scaffolded learning opportunities?

Using the study’s findings, I now address and discuss these questions.

The Introduction to Performance course that provides the context of this dissertation is culturally and historically situated within the tradition of higher education in the United States, general education and theatre programs in particular, and the epistemology of Stanislavski-based

actor training. In many ways, these larger contextual forces determined the goals and content of the class I observed—including Professor D’s coaching register, which, in all likelihood, is part of a larger speech community of realistic acting instruction (Hymes & Gumperz, 1972). Yet, despite the fact that Stanislavski-based acting remains the dominant performance style taught in performance courses in U.S. higher education (Cameron & Gillespie, 2005; Downey, 2013), its discursive facilitation remains un-examined.

Actor coaching, then, appears to operate as a seemingly implicit disciplinary resource. For example, it is not dealt with in any manner of detail in theatre and performance studies scholarship,<sup>41</sup> the class’s textbook,<sup>42</sup> syllabus, or even by Professor D. In our post-course interview, I asked Professor D about the process of coaching actors and he noted, “there are portions of my class that I plan out and there are portions that I do not. The coaching portion is one that I do not...I only look at what I see and then react to it as a [coach] in that moment to help their scene forward.” Consequently, Professor D’s coaching practice appeared to be a trained, yet tacit, way of responding to performance phenomena—energetically expressed in the classroom, but strangely silent in scholarship. Yet, this is ironic because actor coaching is the repertoirc stuff of performance studies (Taylor, 2003). Perhaps, no form of talk is more

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<sup>41</sup> This is not to say that actor coaching is entirely undefined in the field. For example, a number of practical, theoretical, and historical texts on acting mention coaching in brief. My larger point concerns the lack of a detailed, operational understanding of actor coaching.

<sup>42</sup> In *Acting: Onstage & Off*, the book assigned for Introduction to Performance at Pitt, author Robert Barton dedicates only four sentences to the practice of actor coaching in a text that spans over three-hundred and fifty pages. As previously noted, Barton identifies an acting coach as someone who functions, “much like a coach in sports, working with [the actor] on specific problems, having [the actor] try a number of solutions, fine-tuning the same moment over and over, driving [the actor] a little farther than [the actor] thought possible” (2013, p. 242).

“performative” than the multimodal utterances made by a coach who talks performance into being (Austin, 1965).

Studying a class filled with newcomers, rather than practitioners fluent in (or at least accustomed to) the discursive interactions of actor coaching, provided a helpful way to comparatively locate Professor D’s talk, as well as to trace its emergence over time and in activity. This is because the complex ‘meat’ of actor coaching—that is, the dyadic or triadic scene work that so often characterizes *stop/start actor coaching* sessions—relies on actors first achieving a certain degree of competency in the interactional discursive processes of coaching. In general, Professor D cultivated the students’ participatory competency in far simpler, ensemble-driven participation frameworks. Through *call-and-response* warm up sessions and *stop/start ensemble coaching* (e.g. the ball game), Professor D established a number of uncodified participatory norms, which informed the more advanced work that took place in *stop/start actor coaching* episodes. While it may seem obvious that the emergence of Professor D’s coaching register first relied on fostering ensemble/coach relations, isolating the participatory norms he discursively established, and understanding how scaffolded learning opportunities were embedded *into* such norms, are more complex.

Perhaps first among these norms was the way that Professor D’s coaching cultivated a teacher/student relationship where the instructor’s authority was decentered. Although his language retained a mostly I→you syntax (“I want you to think about your skeleton holding you up”), this was mitigated by the fact that Professor D was also *doing* the actions he described *with* the students—modeling performance and scripting his actions in “eventcasts” (Heath, 1991). Consequently, the I→you power dynamic of Professor D’s speech was undermined by the collective “we” co-created through performance activity. This established a distributed learning

environment in which participation was negotiated—cultivated individually, but shared by the class’s “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998). In this way, Professor D’s coaching relied on mutuality and a Bakhtinian sense of dialogism (the meaningful interplay and sharing of partial perspectives). Thus, to participate in ensemble coaching was to publicly share in an enterprise that co-produced performance activity and co-established implicit ways of responding to one another.

As the professional in the room, Professor D set the standards for what constituted performance practice. As he directed the call-and-response warm ups and intervened in the ball game, he contingently established, repaired, and developed the students’ individual and group participation. Moreover, he did so contingently and with compassion. Based on the students’ level of uptake, Professor D re-modeled and re-scripted performance basics with patience, kindness, and humor to maintain an upbeat tone. Professor D’s discursive stance also positioned the students *as if* they were capable of performance practice; he referred to them as “actors,” and employed language features like balanced negatives and telegraphic utterances (supportive backchannel) to sustain student interest and motivation. He also repeatedly foregrounded the epistemic *rules* of performance practice (rather than his subjective opinion) to anchor working sessions around the larger, epistemic determinants of realistic performance. In general, Professor D’s participation with the ensemble, discursive positioning, friendly affect, and reliance on the rules of realistic acting co-produced the compassionate contingency he enacted during ensemble-based coaching sessions.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> But, compassionate contingency is not always the case. An acting coach’s contingent response to an actor’s performance can also enact asymmetrical power dynamics, as detailed in Rosemary Malague’s feminist critique of “Method” actor training (2012). Based on the findings of this

Professor D's compassionate contingency, in turn, cultivated the students' implicit ways of responding to his coaching register—responses that relied on appropriation, heightened self- and group-monitoring and, above all, performance revision based on Professor D's calls to adjust activity. As he instilled the “procedural knowledge” of performance through ensemble-based coaching, Professor D's eventcasts and interventions encouraged the students' metacognitive focus—a kind of tuning ‘in’ to the current psychophysical work of performance activity, as well as a tuning ‘forward’ to plan future performance action (Winne & Azevedo, 2014, p. 64). To playfully ‘reside’ in the focused space in which procedural knowledge was established in the ensemble, appeared to be in itself a heightened experience for the students. But, Professor D *challenged* such experiences when he asked students to make adjustments that effectively reified or integrated the procedural processes, thereby ‘bumping up’ the level of difficulty to “declarative knowledge” (p. 64). Such challenges occurred when Professor D explained the rationale (or expectation) of a performance model, called students to integrate discrete performance models into a fluid physical phrase (as in fight choreography), or adjusted the ‘rules’ of the ball game (swapping a tennis ball for a whiffle ball). By continually embedding challenges into performance practice (and shifting procedural knowledge to declarative knowledge) Professor D asked the students to reside in the instability of performance practice—a developmental space where ‘mistakes’ were expected, revised, and improved with Professor D's (or sometimes a peer's) compassionate contingency. It also brought the students into a new

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dissertation, it seems the intrinsic power dynamics involved in actor coaching have much to do with the kind of discursive stance a coach enacts, the language features deployed, affective tone, and the coach's reliance on (or deference to) the epistemic rules of performance. I discuss power dynamics in coaching further in the second section of this chapter.

identity, or production of self, that was publicly negotiated, constituted by the rules of performance, and ratified by the community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

The participatory norms Professor D established in the class's ensemble-based coaching sessions created a foundation for the interactional and discursive negotiations of stop/start actor coaching. In fact, the pervasive language features embedded in Professor D's coaching register built upon these norms. Professor D's metacomments, for instance, explicitly called students to retain a distributed approach to performance activity. Even though stop/start actor coaching introduced a different participation framework for the ensemble, Professor D's metacomments emphasized that mutuality was still in effect—"I'm giving *everybody* notes using *his* body." The italicized pronouns in the preceding example help to further indicate how Professor D grammatically indexed stance in distributed ways to emphasize shared knowledge, group accountability, and an ongoing sense of public contingency (DuBois, 2007; Stone, 2002; Wenger 1998).<sup>44</sup>

The multi-turn talk characteristic of stop/start actor coaching was also informed by the participatory norms established in ensemble-based coaching sessions. Although ensemble warm-ups were certainly dialogic in a multimodal interactional sense (i.e. Professor D's *calls* elicited the students' *responses*), stop/start actor coaching initiated a different reliance on dialogue. Professor D usually established dialogue by posing a question of knowing to a student (either a reflection or a rule recount) after he or she completed a monologue or scene (Heath, 1991). Such

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<sup>44</sup> Again, Professor D's choice to deliberately frame stop/start actor coaching as a distributed activity is compassionate in that it diffuses competition in what could be a hierarchal environment. But, the comments are more than egalitarian in aim. Metacomments also encourage students to practice the cognitive work of performance. Bruce McConachie (2015) reminds us that spectating involves the same kind of psychological projection, or conceptual blending of self and other, which is foundational in performance practice.

questions effectively challenged the student to shift their own procedural knowledge (of the preceding performance) into declarative knowledge—asking the actor to verbally interpret their character in light of their previous performance activity (reflection), or to articulate the constitutive rules that determine practice (rule recount). In these ways, the students’ spoken answers served to discursively construct the fictional world(s) of performance *and* the rules of the realism.

Challenge, the final tenet of scaffolding, tended to take place when the actor applied the character or text analysis dialogically constructed with Professor D, and integrated it into performance practice. In these moments, when the student’s performance participation foregrounded an integration of discursive analysis and action, Professor D’s level of activity faded to either focused (silent) attention or side coaching. Professor D’s spatial and linguistic contingency created an emergent and dynamic coaching process, which required the student to ‘live’ within the challenging state of consistent external attention (from Professor D and the student onlookers), internal monitoring (metacognition), performance, and revision. Through the contingency and challenge of scaffolding, Professor D and the student *co-constructed* social action and developed new knowledge concerning textual interpretation, character analysis, and performance practice (Stone, 2002). The students’ opportunities to learn resided within this co-construction and cohered in a learning trajectory, which resulted in ‘improved’ performance practice (Greeno & Gresalfi, 2008).

The varying discourse- and syntactic-level language features embedded in Professor D’s coaching register comprised a repertoire. Certain prompts in Professor D’s repertoire functioned as more explicit directives (e.g. performance models, if/then conditionals), whereas others were more abstract analytical prods (questions of knowing). Additional syntactic features of Professor

D's discursive repertoire appear seemingly unimportant (telegraphic utterances, tag questions, balanced negatives), yet compounded to foster student interest and motivation. In the dialogism of stop/start actor coaching sessions, Professor D's varying language features intermingled and converged as he contingently responded to the student's needs—bumping 'up' a student's level of challenge through abstract prompts, easing a student 'down' with explicit modeling or an if/then conditional, and maintaining a student's motivation through affective backchannel and balanced negatives. All the while, Professor D tempered his contingent and compassionate discourse with spatial adjustments that often took him onstage with the student (i.e. explicit modeling—similar to his role in the call-and-response participation framework), as well as offstage to issue interrogatives.

Thus, in this *situated* liberal arts theatre classroom (a sample of one amidst a larger cultural and historical phenomenon in U.S. higher education), Professor D's instructional coaching register was comprised of a repertoire of discourse- and syntactic-level features, which *dialogically* organized ensemble and dyadic coaching sessions to *scaffold* students' learning opportunities. These affordances changed over time in terms of participation and interactive complexity. For example, in ensemble-based coaching sessions, Professor D first cultivated the students' competence with the norms of the coaching register—especially in terms of its distributed, dialogic, and scaffolded qualities. These qualities were then extended to stop/start actor coaching frameworks, in which Professor D's repertoire of discursive moves expanded to a spectrum of explicit-to-abstract prompts that were contingently deployed and culminated, for the actor, in a re-integration of performance practice and a re-organization of conceptual understanding.



Table 9 offers an explanatory matrix of Professor D's coaching register in this class, using Stone's (2002) tenets of scaffolding and the specific discursive moves that comprised the repertoire of Professor D's coaching register. One thing to note in this representation is the

<p>Stone's (2002) Tenets of Scaffolding</p> <p><b>CONTEXT</b></p>	<p>Call-and-Response Coaching</p>	<p>Stop/Start Ensemble Coaching</p>	<p>Stop/Start Actor Coaching</p>	<p>Side Coaching</p>
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**Table 9. A General Overview of Professor D's Coaching Register**

<p>explicit prompts</p> <p>↑</p> <p><b>DYNAMIC CONTINGENCY</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p>abstract prompts</p>	<p>Performance Models Eventcasts</p>	<p>Performance Models Telegraphic Utterances If/Then conditionals</p>	<p>Performance Models Telegraphic Utterances Balanced Negatives Tag Questions If/Then conditionals</p>	<p>Telegraphic Utterances</p>
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b></p>	<p>Integrated Performance Models</p>	<p>‘Ball Game’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher Number</li> <li>• New Ball</li> </ul>	<p>Metacomments Questions of Knowing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflections</li> <li>• Rule Recounts</li> </ul> <p>Sociodramatic Bids</p>	<p>Eventcasts</p>

double arrows in the “dynamic contingency” cell. Although scaffolding may appear to fade cleanly from explicit to abstract prompts, the double arrows represent the non-linear nature of such interactions. Contingency is a dynamic process and depended upon Professor D’s responsiveness to the student’s perceived needs. Indeed, the dynamic qualities of scaffolding are akin to cognitive theatre theorist John Lutterbie’s understanding that performance “is what *emerges* from *recursive, cyclic* interaction” (2011, p. 90, emphasis in original).

Having reviewed the study’s research questions and findings, I now shift to discuss the limitations of the study’s single case design. Because there is no prior research that explores, describes, and examines actor coaching at varying levels of scale (i.e. situational, linguistic, functional), this study employs what methodologist Robert Stake identifies as an “instrumental case study,” which “provide[s] insight into an issue or refinement of theory” (1994, p. 237). Using this research design, the dissertation demonstrates an in-depth representation of actor coaching and initiates a theoretical understanding of how the phenomenon was organized over time and through the activity of realistic acting. As a study of a particular classroom, however, the study does not aim to generalize to additional actor coaches, but, as previously acknowledged, seeks to examine general operational issues and theoretical propositions concerning actor coaching and performance learning (Stake, 1994; Yin, 2013)—such as the situated and dialogic nature of coaching and its scaffolding of performance and reorganization of knowledge. Moreover, the study does not identify every aspect of the larger classroom system I investigated, but rather purposefully tracks, samples, and analyzes the organization of Professor D’s instructional coaching register, as well as instances of his regulatory register (Christie, 2005).

Choosing to study a summer course, in which a fewer number of students enrolled than usual, had limitations. The condensed time frame precluded me from observing the kind of nuanced changes that would have inevitably occurred over a longer semester. Additionally, the class's small enrollment prevented me from observing a larger sample of student experience. One way to augment these limitations could have been to investigate multiple introductory performance classes (i.e. cases). Yet, studying multiple case studies would have reduced the level of detail I achieved by 'going deep' into a single system. Widening the scope of the project to collect and analyze data from additional classrooms would have, in all likelihood, diminished the level of description, genetic investigation, and detailed analyses, which I was able to accomplish by peeling back the situational, linguistic, and functional layers of Professor D's coaching system.

Studying an introductory summer course for non-majors also impacted the study's findings, perhaps mostly in terms of Professor D's compassionate contingency and general classroom demeanor. Like most instructors in beginning courses, acting teachers do not generally expect the same level of commitment, vulnerability, or competence from non-majors as they do from majors enrolled in upper-level courses. Consequently, while it was important to acknowledge Professor D's compassionate coaching demeanor, this likely had to do with the class's *introductory* level. During our post-course interview, Professor D noted that his coaching processes remain the same in upper-level acting courses, but "I'm not as nice... So when [a student's] all like 'Um, I don't know'—I'll be like 'Well c'mon, wake up! Let's go!'" This quote suggests that Professor D expects students in advanced acting courses to bring with them an

understanding of disciplinary norms, which includes a general competency with the interactional practices of actor coaching.

While this study is certainly limited by its individual depiction of the phenomenon of actor coaching, its findings are significant because they offer a holistic representation of how coaching can be enacted over time, activity (i.e. realistic acting), and through a repertoire of discursive features that converge, coalesce, and create opportunities to generate new knowledge and performance practice. By explaining how actor coaching can be organized, this study provides an initial understanding of one of the most ubiquitous disciplinary practices in theatre studies and performance learning. In turn, the dissertation sets the scholarly stage for comparative analyses that may challenge, verify, or extend the theoretical and methodological propositions derived here (Yin, 2013). To further consider the implications of this study for the field of theatre and performance studies, I now move to the second discussion of this chapter.

## **5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

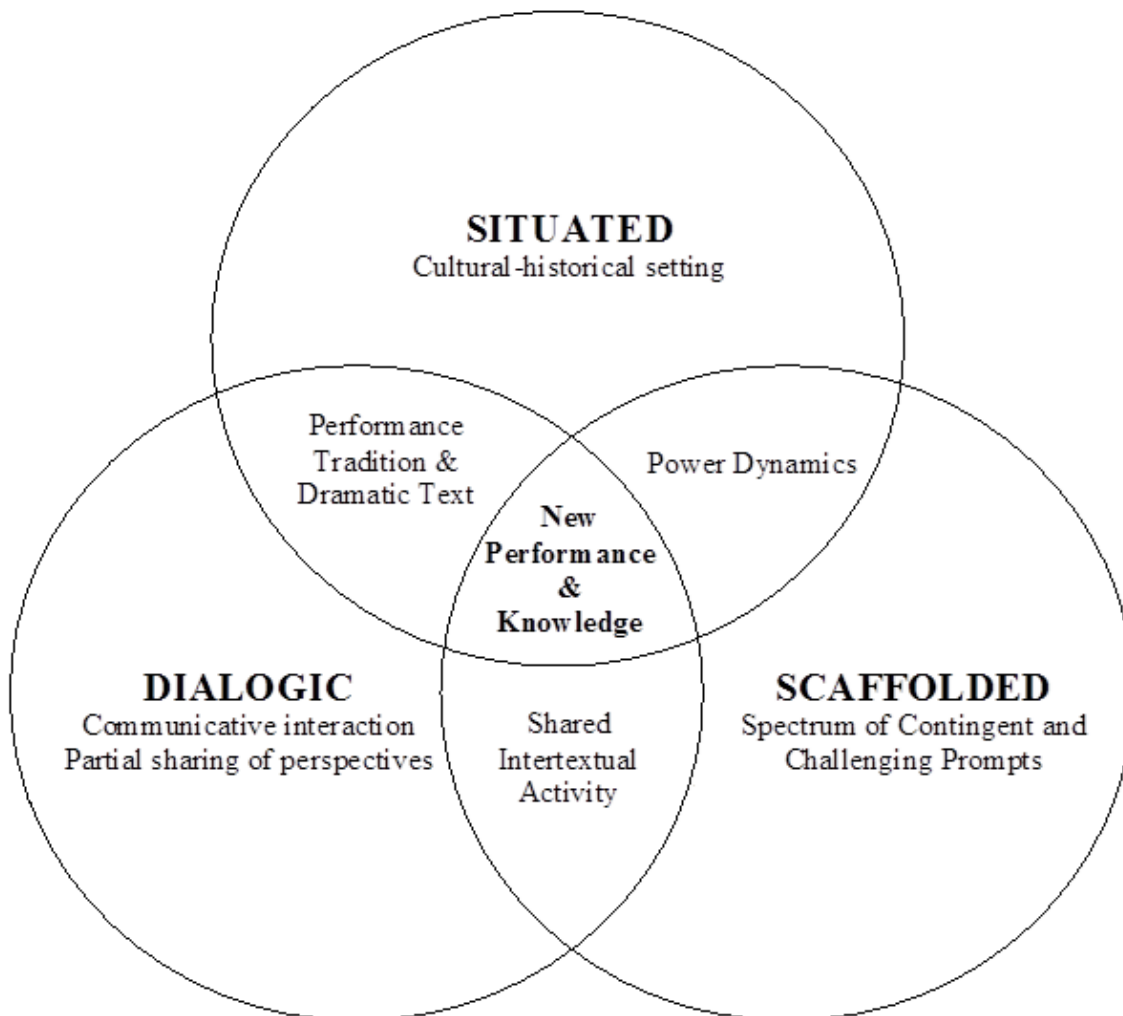
In this section, I offer two ways the research presented in this dissertation might inform scholarship in the field of theatre and performance studies. First, I identify how this study's understanding of actor coaching provides a framework for future research. Second, I look to the current call for curricular reform in U.S. institutions of higher education and consider how actor coaching might open up new ways to conceptualize introductory acting classes in the academy.

### 5.2.1 New Directions for the Study of Actor Coaching

Theorizing out of this dissertation's case study, I offer a framework for future researchers to employ when investigating actor coaching. Here, as in the previous section, I conceptualize actor coaching as a discursive and relational apparatus, which is concurrently *situated*, *dialogic*, and *scaffolded*. First, actor coaching is *situated* in particular cultural-historical settings that privilege particular performance traditions and their constitutive dramatic texts. Consequently, to investigate the practice of actor coaching in a particular context, one needs to have (at the very least) a general understanding of the cultural-historical setting and the performance tradition being coached. Second, coaching is enacted by cultural agents—the coach, the actor, and the onlookers—who work together *dialogically*. In other words, a coach's discursive prompts meaningfully interact with the actor's performance (from partially shared perspectives) to co-construct an intertextual performance activity. The dialogic space of coaching produces two dimensions of performance—the performance tradition and the fictional world of the dramatic text. Third, actor coaching depends upon *scaffolded interactions*, which anticipate the actor's reorganization of thought and performance through a coach's contingent and challenging prompts. Such prompts form a coach's discursive and relational repertoire, and are dynamically enacted along a spectrum of explicitness. The coach's repertoire of discursive moves also serves to produce the intrinsic power dynamics of actor coaching, which are informed by the language features embedded in the prompts (i.e. discourse- and syntactic-level), the coach's affective tone and stance, and reliance on (or deference to) the epistemic rules of the performance tradition. Figure 2 provides a representation of this framework.

As an initial conceptualization of actor coaching, this framework is not intended to be fixed; rather, it provides an overarching understanding of the phenomenon of actor coaching and will inevitably be shaped by future investigations. In this way, the framework provides a number of entry points for researchers to develop particular analytical foci with more evidence and analysis. Take the *situated* aspect of actor coaching, for instance. Within this focus, an analyst

**Figure 2. Organizing Features of Actor Coaching**





might choose to examine actor coaching in a situation other than a formal classroom. In this regard, a performance scholar could investigate how a professional director coaches seasoned actors over time (i.e. genetic analysis)—from the casting process through a multi-week rehearsal. The shift of the study's *situation* would then inform the *dialogism* of the director's and actors' co-construction of the dramatic world and performance tradition. Given professional actors' high levels of skill, the director's *scaffolding* might manifest through a repertoire of prompts that are perhaps subtler (or suggestive of a shared history) than those outlined in Professor D's classroom of novices.

Alternatively, a researcher might wish to better understand how power dynamics are enacted in the scaffolded interactions of performance coaching. For example, the U.S.'s tradition of 'Method' acting (and its varying fault lines) has been the subject of much theatre research, which often examines and critiques the power dynamics embedded in the varying realistic performance traditions. An additional way to investigate the training of 'Method' acting could be to track the regularities of talk deployed by some of its famous acting coaches. There are hours of training sessions captured on videos, which feature well-known teachers like Lee Strasberg, Sanford Meisner, and Uta Hagen coaching young actors. Leveraging the methodologies of this study (e.g. interaction analysis, transcription, discourse- and syntactic-level analysis), a researcher could get 'up close' to these coaches' registers and repertoires to examine how power and affect are lodged in contingent and challenging prompts. Indeed, an important continuation of this study concerns how critical features (race, class, gender) of the actors' *and* the characters' are discursively indexed (or negated) in a coach's dialogic interactions. Similarly, it will be important to further examine how a coach's affective stance(s) can shape coaching interactions.

An additional way to engage this study's theorization of actor coaching might be to focus on the collaborative dialogism of a coach, actor(s), and the peripheral (but still consequential) onlookers. Such interactions might be especially relevant in performance traditions that demand a heightened or exaggerated use of text and voice. For example, what does the dialogism of actor coaching look and sound like in the performance traditions of hip-hop theatre or a musical theatre? Might such coaching interactions necessitate the coach have a proficiency in the performance tradition (e.g. hip-hop or musical theatre) in order to model performance? Does a coach then 'code-switch' between the performance traditions and everyday talk? When and for what reasons might such shifts in communication take place or break down?

The preceding paragraphs offer concrete ways to build upon this study's framework of actor coaching through additional case studies. In the following section, I shift gears to look at the current push for educational reform in higher education theater programs to consider how actor coaching might contribute to such goals.

## 6.0 COACHING AS A DISCIPLINARY RESOURCE

Although efforts to revise undergraduate and graduate theatre programs in U.S. institutions of higher education are nothing new, the current neoliberal political climate has elicited a new crop of critical responses from scholars.<sup>45</sup> In particular, Nancy Kindelan’s cogent “call to action” in *Artistic Literacy: Theatre Studies and A Contemporary Liberal Education* (2012) encourages theatre programs (and educators) to play leading roles in university-wide curriculum creation and to employ production work in cross-disciplinary programs that serve general education goals (p. ix). Addressing a variety of outcome-oriented issues, Kindelan repeatedly argues that a key resource of theatre departments rests in its “signature pedagogy” of “collaborative experiential learning” (p. 94). Here, Kindelan purposefully employs educational philosopher and psychologist Lee Shulman’s term, “signature pedagogy,” which deserves a short explanation.

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<sup>45</sup> *Theatre Topics*’ recent special issue on “Theatre And/As Education” is representative of one such response. In particular, Matt Omasta’s and Drew Chappell’s “Theatre Education in the Academy: Major Impacts of Minor Differences” (2015) looks at ways to strengthen higher education by integrating K-12 theatre education programs in more cohesive ways. Also in this issue, Peter Zazzali’s and Jeanne Klein’s “Toward Revising Undergraduate Theatre Education” encourages a “post-course” curriculum, which critiques “bounded, self-contained courses” and favors “a student-centered pedagogy steeped in inter/intradisciplinarity, collaboration, peer review, and learning communities” (2015, p. 263). For more on the current neoliberal environment of U.S. higher education, see Henry Giroux’s *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Education* (2014).

According to Shulman (2005), signature pedagogies are the kind of teaching methods that are so distinguishable, one might see them dramatized in films—the Socratic drill of a law professor, the extensive chalkboard writing of an engineering professor, or the knowing gazes and silences of a painter leading a critique. Shulman’s interest in, and theorization of, signature pedagogies developed in part from a longitudinal research program he led while president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This study examined how knowledge and instruction are enacted, and thus transmitted, in professional learning settings. Based on this research, Shulman observed that signature pedagogies do not take the place of content knowledge; rather they reveal *how* such content is framed, understood, and valued. Like other performative acts, Shulman finds that signature pedagogies tend to operate in tacit ways that render them remarkably durable over time.

Although the Carnegie Foundation did not examine the profession of theatre in its study of signature pedagogies, actor coaching seems a likely candidate. The introduction of Shulman’s article on signature pedagogy makes this supposition striking:

The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson once observed that if you wish to understand a culture, study its nurseries. There is a similar principle for the understanding of professions: if you wish to understand why professions develop as they do, study *their* nurseries, in this case, their forms of professional preparation. When you do, you will generally detect the characteristic forms of teaching and learning that I have come to call *signature pedagogies* (2005, p.52).

University introductory acting classes are, of course, one of the nurseries of the theatre profession. And, this dissertation's investigation of one such nursery of novices yielded a rich understanding of how talk and interaction can organize actor coaching.<sup>46</sup>

Regardless of whether actor coaching is the designated “signature pedagogy” of theatre studies, there are two important points to tease out from Kindelan's (2012) call to action and use of Shulman's concept. First, Kindelan's work suggests that the *enactment* of theatre instruction in the liberal arts is distinct and she encourages theatre programs to harness our discipline's unique pedagogical attributes in campus-wide initiatives. Second, Shulman's (2005) concept of signature pedagogy emphasizes how *professionals* are prepared in educational settings (i.e. law schools, engineering programs, and design schools). While I agree with Kindelan that our field should indeed leverage our unique pedagogical approaches (like actor coaching), I am less sure that treading the path to professionalization (which Shulman's term suggests) is the best route. So, then, how might this dissertation's theorization of actor coaching merge with Kindelan's call to action?

One way to begin to answer this question is to conceptualize actor coaching as a disciplinary resource that is not reliant upon a trajectory of professionalizing acting classes. The operative concepts embedded in actor coaching—dialogue, practice, metacognition, consciousness of self and other (fictional character, coach, and audience)—are certainly

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<sup>46</sup> Rather than draw on Shulman's concept of signature pedagogy, I elected to follow the discursive register work of Heath and Langman to situate this dissertation within the literature on classroom discourse in the learning sciences. I did so because, in theatre studies at least, the term ‘pedagogy’ can be used as a catch-all that does not specify *how* instruction organizes social action, cognition, and affect. Nor does ‘pedagogy’ usually account for the values, attitudes, moral dispositions, and implicit norms associated with a particular body of knowledge.

foundational for the performance classroom. But they also provide important means of fostering students' critical consciousness of the cultural world, or what educational philosopher Paulo Freire calls, *conscientização* (2000, p. 109). Although actor coaching is not inherently critical in value or production, there is space within its situated, dialogic, and scaffolded framework to create ways to critically and meaningfully engage with performance, self/other, and the cultural world.

Yet, to harness actor coaching in such a way would require a re-conceptualization of the disciplinary goals of introductory acting classes. Such classes would need to shift from sites of bounded, professional (albeit introductory) actor training into spaces where students experience performance *alongside* an exposure to critical concepts, such as those embedded within the cultural and commercial production of performance. Interestingly, this sort of course re-conceptualization is actually better aligned with contemporary liberal education goals. In her chapter on "The Evolution of the Liberal Arts," Kindelan notes that current liberal arts agendas favor "integrated and practice-oriented initiatives," which calls into question the past, "models associated with traditional compartmentalization in higher education" (2012, p. 47). Furthermore, Kindelan observes that contemporary liberal arts courses should respond to an increasingly pluralistic society and diverse life experiences (p. 46). In keeping with this contemporary mandate for the liberal arts, let me sketch one way an introductory performance course might be reconceived to utilize the rich affordances of the coaching register and to broaden curricular goals beyond actor training for the profession.

Introductory performances classes could be organized around the topics of acting *and* cultural representation—that is, the unspoken cultural 'standards' that are transmitted in and

through commercial performance. Such courses would still rely on the instructional coaching register, but they would be augmented to critically problematize, as well as facilitate, performance. For example, students could be asked to *collect*, *critique*, and *create* short commercial advertisements, which are first gathered on the class's blackboard page. The commercials would then form an archive from which the students could compare, contrast, and *critique* cultural representations using the tools of realistic acting. For example, the instructor might ask the students the following questions of knowing: "Based on this short video, what do you think are the characters' given circumstances or objectives? How do the actors' race, gender, age, dress, or body communicate meaning? What might the commercial's meaning convey about the larger culture's values? After dialogically problematizing these commercials, the students could then be assigned to *create* performances that respond to the advertisements—responses that might run the gamut from direct imitation to parody. But the instructor's guiding question for the students' creative responses might be: "what happens to the message of the commercial when casting changes and various students step into the character's role?" This kind of assignment utilizes the disciplinary resource of actor coaching to facilitate performance, as well as cultivate the students' critical lenses. Such exercises would also support students in coming to understand how performance operates as both a method *and* object of study.

Introduction to performance courses, such as the one studied in this dissertation, provide ready-made sites of mobilization that are ripe for curricular change. Moreover, the coaching register's dialogic<sup>47</sup> and scaffolded affordances provide a significant disciplinary resource, which

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<sup>47</sup> Freire's use of *dialogue* and *dialogism* has overlap with Bakhtin's understanding of dialogism, but they derive from different historical and theoretical backgrounds. For more on these

liberal arts theatre programs could leverage when considering how such courses might move beyond professionalizing goals.

## 6.1 FINAL REFLECTIONS

The beginning of this study is framed by two quotes concerning the learning and teaching of theatre and performance in U.S. institutions of higher education in:

If we are to fulfill our mission of supporting and advancing the study and practice of theatre and performance in higher education, we need to gain a greater understanding of the full shape and texture of our profession. How can we set goals, plan actions, and even know if we're advancing our mission if we don't know where we are as a field? (Bial, 2013).

It is one of the great ironies of theatre scholarship that what most of us do, few of us study (Gillespie, 2005).

I revisit these quotes at the end of the dissertation to suggest that the interdisciplinary theories and qualitative methods employed in this project can provide productive ways to respond to both scholars' concerns. Merging the theoretical assumptions of cognitive theatre studies with the

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distinctions see Peter Rule's (2011), "Bakhtin and Freire: Dialogue, Dialectic, and Boundary Learning." My larger interest concerns opening up the dialogic practice of actor coaching, which is largely epistemological in its pursuit of improved performance, into a more open-ended form of problematizing performance through dialogue.



sociocultural approaches of the learning sciences, can offer theatre and performance scholars important ways to rigorously study the *social enactment* of performance learning and better understand, “the full shape and texture of our profession” (Bial, 2013). Forging interdisciplinary alliances and expanding our methods of analysis may also provide important ways to respond to the changing face of higher education through empirical data that documents, demonstrates, and distinguishes how learning operates in our classrooms, rehearsals, and performances. In so doing, it is my hope that interdisciplinary, qualitative scholarship centered on the teaching and learning of performance might contribute to the development of theatre education and its central participation in contemporary institutions of higher learning.

## APPENDIX A

### UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH IRB APPROVAL LETTER



To: Claire Syler  
From: IRB Office  
Date: 5/7/2015  
IRB#: PRO15040601  
Subject: Novice Learning in an Introduction to Performance Course: Communication Practices and Cognition

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1)

Please note the following information:

- Investigators should consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might alter the exempt status. Use the "Send Comments to IRB Staff" link displayed on study workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- It is important to close your study when finished by using the "Study Completed" link

displayed on the study workspace.

- Exempt studies will be archived after 3 years unless you choose to extend the study. If your study is archived, you can continue conducting research activities as the IRB has made the determination that your project met one of the required exempt categories. The only caveat is that no changes can be made to the application. If a change is needed, you will need to submit a NEW Exempt application.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

## APPENDIX B

### IRB-APPROVED CONSENT FORMS DISTRIBUTED TO PARTICIPANTS

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

“Novice Learning in Introduction to Performance: Communication Practices & Cognition”

**Principal Investigator**      Claire Syler  
Dept. of Theatre Arts  
University of Pittsburgh  
[syler@pitt.edu](mailto:syler@pitt.edu)

**We are conducting a research study to:**

- (a) Clarify how performance learning takes place in a classroom setting, as a result of spoken and embodied modes of communication.
- (b) Better understand how the student’s participation in a performance classroom engages cognitive functioning.
- (c) Better understand student perceptions of performance learning.

**If you agree to participate, the Principal Investigator will ask you to:**

- (a) Agree and consent to be videotaped during Introduction to Performance classes. One camera will be visibly set up in the back of the classroom to record the class. The video will commence recording at the beginning of the class and conclude recording at the class’s end.
- (b) Agree and consent to be observed in the classroom setting.
- (c) Agree and consent to be interviewed by the Principal Investigator concerning your perception of what and how you learned in Introduction to Performance. The interview will be roughly thirty minutes in length. If you agree to participate in the interview, you will be compensated with a ten-dollar gift card.

**NOTE:**

- All videotaped research activities will occur during the Introduction to Performance course (May 12—June 18, 2015) at the University of Pittsburgh. Interviews with the Principal Investigator, Claire Syler, will be schedule near the conclusion of the course or immediately following it.
- Participation is purely voluntary; there are no adverse consequences for those that elect not to participate. Your participation in the research project does not affect your grade in the course.

**Confidentiality:**

- (a) The researcher agrees to store all videotape data and consent forms in a secure location on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh.
- (b) The researcher agrees that only the PI will have access to the videotape for analysis purposes. Video data will be used for scholarship (e.g. the writing of scholarship concerning the findings of the study) and educational purposes (e.g. the use of a clip at an academic conference). Should a video clip be used, your face will be visible but no other identifying features will be available. Your name will not be used.
- (c) Authorized representatives from the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office may review your data solely for the purpose of monitoring the conduct of this study.
- (d) Analysis of the videotapes will occur after Introduction to Performance concludes and the findings of the study will remain confidential.

**This is a very low risk study.**

- The risks associated with this study include the potential breach of confidentiality, such as the research data (e.g. the video data and research coding) being assessed by individuals not part of the research study. However, to reduce the risk of that happening the researcher will store all video evidence in a secure location. Your name will not be included with the collected videos.
- It is possible that you may feel emotional discomfort while being videoed.

**Benefits.**

- Other than the ten-dollar gift card, you will not receive any direct benefit from participating in this research study.
- However, the information we obtain from you may inform the development of acting theory and education, thus contributing to knowledge production in the field of theatre and performance studies.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

The above information has been explained to me, and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions will be answered by the investigator listed on the first page of this consent document at the email address given. I understand that I may always request that the listed investigator address my questions, concerns

or complaints. I understand that my participation in the research study has no bearing on my grade in Introduction to Performance at the University of Pittsburgh. Should I elect to withdraw from the research study, the video data will be retained and utilized, but no additional recordings will be made.

I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concern, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations in the event that the research team is unavailable.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research. A copy of this consent form will be given to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature                      Printed Name of Participant                      \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**CERTIFICATION OF INFORMED CONSENT**

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above-named individual and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of study participation. Any questions the individual has about the study have been answered and we will always be available to address future questions as they arise. I further certify that no research component of this protocol was begun until after this consent form was signed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent                      Role in Research Study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL USED WITH THE INSTRUCTOR OF INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE: JUNE 23, 2015

#### 1. *Grades*

- At the beginning of the class you often told the student “one of my goals for this class is that everyone should get a good grade.”
  - Did everyone in the class, indeed, earn an A?
  - Tell me about why this is important to you.
- What about a student like Roy—why give him multiple chances?

#### 2. *Performance*

- The students played a wide range of characters that they self-selected. Tell me about the choice to allow students to select their own scenes/monologues?
- Most of these students did a performance from a movie and a number of them talked about watching that film over and over to learn from the film actor and, presumably, imitate. How is imitation valuable for a young actor?
- One thing that fascinated me by the students’ selections was the diversity of the characters they selected. Almost all of the students played outside of their age, gender, and race at some point in the class.
  - What did you think about this?
  - How is it different for you, as the instructor, when students choose to play outside their given circumstance?

### *3. Coaching*

- I really loved watching you coach the students and, based on my interviews, it was one of the students' favorite experiences. Almost every time you coached the students you emphasized that you were giving advice to the student onstage, but also to the other students. Tell me about this pedagogical practice—how did you come to it and why is it important?
- Sometimes you coach from your seat, other times you coach by getting onstage—how are these different experiences for you?

### *4. Future Development*

- Tell me about the decision to have the students consistently, in writing, relate their in-class performance experiences to their majors or professional goals?
- Toward the end of the class, you repeatedly told the students that they would go on to be leaders and successful. Why tell them these things?



## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL USED WITH STUDENTS ENROLLED IN INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE: JUNE 17-24, 2015

*Script & Greeting:* Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me for an interview. For your time I have a \$10 gift card to the Pitt bookstore (*give gift*). To remind you, I'm audiorecording our interview so I can go back to it and consider your comments more thoroughly—are you okay with me recording our conversation? (*yes/no*) Also, I want to know that our conversation is confidential. I won't repeat anything you said to any of your peers or to the instructor. And your name won't ever appear in my research; if I refer to you I will employ a pseudonym—would you like to choose a pseudonym for yourself? (*yes/no*) Finally, my interest in these questions is to understand this course from a student's perspective—so please feel free to be completely honest with me. You will not hurt my feelings or anyone else's.

1. I want to ask you a few basic questions first.

- Remind me, what is your major?
- And what year are you in school? So that makes you \_\_\_ years old?
- Have you been at Pitt for your entire college experience?  
What has it been like to come to the main campus?

2. Tell me about what made you decide to enroll in this course?

- Did you have any expectations about the class before enrolling?
- Did you know anyone who had taken it? What had he/she said about it?
- How has the actual class compared to your interest in (or expectations for) the course?

3. How has the class compared to other courses you've taken at Pitt (or elsewhere)?

- What makes the class so different?
- What about grades in this class—how does earning a grade (on assignments or projects) compare to earning a grade in your other coursework?
- What do you think contributes to making grading in this class so different?
- So, if grades indicate a student’s level of proficiency of learning a subject, would you say that all of the students in the course are on the same level of performance proficiency? Or are some students “better” than others? How can you tell the difference?

4. You performed a lot of roles in this class in the various performance assignments. In the Solo Object performance, you performed a version of yourself, in the monologue you performed \_\_\_\_, and in your final scene you performed \_\_\_\_.

- Which role was the hardest to perform and why?
- Which performance experience do you think you learned the most from?

5. What is it like to be coached by the instructor in front of the class?

- Do you think the coaching experiences improved your performance(s)? If so, how?
- What about watching your peers being coached by the instructor—what was that like? What did you learn by watching others being coached?
- Stimulated Recall
  - *Play a clip of the student in a coaching session with the instructor and ask about the process of following (and internalizing) the instructor’s directives.*
  - What were you thinking about here?
- Because the coachings are so public, and are like evaluations, did you find the experience competitive? Why or why not?
- What makes you trust the instructor in these sessions?

6. What would you tell a friend taking this class next semester?

- What kinds of connections have you made between this class and your ‘real life’?
- What might you “take away” from this class? or What do you think you’ve learned from taking this course?

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