THE ROLE OF DISCOURSE IN ESTABLISHING AN ENABLING CONTEXT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE CREATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

By

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ABSTRACT

The field of knowledge creation within organizational studies has pointed to the importance of an organization establishing an *enabling context* for fostering innovation and knowledge production. Factors identified as critical for enabling include the existence of structures and practices that foster solid collegial relations and enact a climate of care. Based on ethnographic research, this thesis adopts a broadly sociolinguistic approach to an exploration of interpersonal relations within a New Zealand IT company, in order to identify the ways in which a knowledge enabling context is instantiated.

Using, in particular, the rapport management framework developed by Helen Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) and highlighting the variable of participant relations, the study analyses the discourse of the organization as both language and action, to provide a more extensive account than has so far been achieved in the knowledge enabling literature, as well as extending the sociolinguistic work on language in the workplace into new domains of discourse.

The study shows that facilitation of and support for collegial relations occurs at all levels of the selected organization, from the spatial configuration and connectivity of the organization as a whole, through its component social structures, to the management of relations across levels of hierarchy. At the level of the organization as a whole, one organizational activity - the weekly company meeting - through its frequency, regularity, inclusiveness and management, facilitates and sustains collegial relations in multiple and distinctive ways.

Two distinct kinds of organizational community are identified: the widely recognized community of practice (CofP); and a different kind of community, referred to in knowledge

creation literature as a micro-community of knowledge. As well as identifying distinctive characteristics of these two communities, the analyses show that rapport is managed differently in each, while shedding new light on the productive interdependence of these two types of community.

An interactional ethos characterized by care is reflected in the communication style at all levels of the organization. Despite substantial differences in power and status, the study finds that associative expressiveness, low distance and generally positive affect dominate interaction throughout.

In closing, this thesis discusses the implications for future research into knowledge creation. It suggests, in particular, that including considerations of spatiality in the analytical framework has potential to contribute further to the field of language in the workplace through its influence as a vector of interaction.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Language is central to our work lives (Boden 1994, Cicoural 1973), and as such workplace discourse is an increasingly important focus for both linguists who approach the workplace from a discourse perspective (eg Sarangi and Roberts 1999, Sarangi et al 2006, Hak 1999, Holmes and Stubbe 2003, Jenson 2006, Mullany 2007, Angouri 2007, Baxter 2009) and those who approach communication from an organizational perspective (eg Nahapiet and Goshal 1998, Wenger 1998, Maturana and Varela 1998, Cheney and Zorn 2010, Mintzberg 2002). These disciplines offer their own strengths based on theoretical underpinnings and assumptions, yet research which bridges the two perspectives remains scarce (see Fairhurst 2007, Vine et al 2008 for notable exceptions). My professional and academic experience places me in the somewhat fortuitous position of straddling the two perspectives: I have worked in large organizations throughout my employment history, including the past decade as a lecturer in communication within a Faculty of Business; my most recent academic training, however, is in applied linguistics. My previous research has focused on language use in organizational emails (Fletcher, 2002) and on organizational Communities of Practice (Fletcher 2007). This background in both strategic management and applied linguistics offers a promising combination of approaches to delve into issues which are relevant across the disciplines.

Organizations are naturally interested in developing and maintaining a capability for innovation as well as the associated competitive advantage gained through knowledge creation, but don't always recognize the role of language in this innovation. The economic advantages provided the impetus for strategic management researchers to investigate the unexplained success of Japanese companies and resulted in Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) Knowledge Creation Theory. This theory identified the processes by which tacit knowledge held by individuals can be transformed into explicit knowledge available for an organization. Nahapiet and Goshal (1998) also focus on sources of organizational advantage. Their research identifies strong connections between social capital and intellectual capital in underpinning such advantage. They found that the development of social capital influences the development of intellectual capital through the development of trust and a willingness to contribute. Similarly, Wenger (2000) found that particular social structures (communities of practice) within organizations contribute to organizational knowledge enabling capabilities, in part because they are sites of both the development and application of learning. Yet at this stage, interaction was only given a passing nod.

As a further step which builds on the recognition that the communicative context of the organization is a key factor in developing this innovative capability, Von Krogh and colleagues attempted to operationalise Knowledge Creation Theory by identifying conditions and practices that enable these processes (Von Krogh et al 2000). They describe an organizational context that fosters this capability as a knowledge creating context and two crucial components of such a context as 'organizational structures that foster collegial relations' and 'a climate of care'. It is

these elements which are the focus of my research; in this thesis I explore the discourse of one organization to consider the influence of these structures as well as evidence for this climate. While Von Krogh et al (2000) describes in depth many examples of knowledge creating companies and highlights the importance of interaction in the sharing of ideas and the development of a knowledge enabling context, the more macro approach, despite explicitly highlighting the importance of interaction, stops short of providing empirical evidence from naturally occurring interactions, for the development and maintenance of the context.

It is here that a linguistic approach has much to offer. Through a detailed analysis of both the language and the linguistic strategies used by participants in interaction, a discoursal exploration of an organization's knowledge enabling 'right context' has the potential to provide empirical evidence of just *how* the social context and the interactions that form the basis of workplace relationships are co-constructed. Through the analysis of naturally occurring (spoken and written) interactions, we can see empirical evidence of how a knowledge enabling context is instantiated in the discourse of the organization. A better understanding of how such a context is enacted can inform both theory and practice relating to communication in organizations.

Although my initial motivation for this investigation of the knowledge enabling context was my own interdisciplinary background, the motivation to use discourse analytic approaches also aligns with calls by Von Krogh et al (2000) to investigate 'conversations' (or 'texts' in discourse analytic terms) as part of a knowledge enabling organizational context. My motivation was also stirred by a sense that a

second aspect of Von Krogh et al's findings, the importance of a climate of care as part of a knowledge enabling context, remained underdeveloped, despite being noted as an important underpinning and part of a necessary management practice and philosophy (2000). This is particularly interesting in that it is seemingly at odds with the hypercompetitive paradigm dominant in late 20th century business (Magalhaes, 1998; Von Krogh et al, 2000). The goal of my research, therefore, is to move forward from the descriptions given by Von Krogh et al (2000) to explore in more depth the notion that a knowledge enabling context depends on the quality of day-to-day interactions between people. Support for the notion of the creation and maintenance of a knowledge enabling context stands or falls on the empirical evidence of key elements of such a context through a range of naturally occurring interactions in variety of organizational situations by a range of different people over time.

Drawing on this background, in this thesis I use the micro-level analytic skills offered by discourse analysis, specifically Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework (2000, 2008), to explore exciting findings regarding knowledge creation and the knowledge enabling context. Taking an ethnographic approach, I investigate the discourse of a growing New Zealand based IT organization, widely recognized as having an ongoing capacity for innovation. My work fits into the established linguistic subfield of workplace discourse.

The research of the Wellington Language in the Workplace project (LWP) holds an important position within this field. The LWP research team has investigated many specific aspects of workplace interaction, both transactional and relational. Small talk, for example, once discounted as trivial and time wasting in the workplace, has

been shown to play an important role in a variety of ways including: 'oiling the social wheels' of organizational life (Holmes, 2006; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003) and as one means of 'doing power' (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). Research on the role of humour shows its value in reducing tension in workplace meetings; as an acceptable way of contesting power; and as a way of supporting collegiality by expressing solidarity (Holmes 2000a; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Holmes & Marra, 2002a, 2006). Focusing on both the traditional transactional and less obvious relational talk has meant that the team have provided a rich picture of talk at work.

Others have drawn on the methodological procedures and approaches promoted by Holmes and colleagues in their investigations of meeting talk, gender, team talk etc (e.g. Laadegard 2008, Mullany 2007, Angouri 2007, Handford 2010). Outside of this approach there is also a growing body of work in the field, including research on organizations as centres of impersonalization, power and its (re) production (Iedema & Wodak, 1997, 2006) and the (re) contextualization of professional and organizational phenomena (Sarangi, 1998; Iedema & Wodak, 1997; Blommaert, 2005). The separate but related concept 'institutional talk' is likewise important to the field, and research in this area has drawn heavily on traditions of Conversation Analysis and its interest in the sequences of talk (e.g. Linde, 2003; Boden, 1994; Barnes, 2007).

This rapidly expanding field offers rich potential for investigating language use in organizations at a micro-level. However although it continues to reveal many insights into the micro-processes that comprise the fabric of organizational communicative contexts, the narrow and detailed focus has also meant that few if

any studies have drawn together the various threads required to address an exploration of organizational communicative contexts. Insights into how this might be explored are provided for instance by Blommaert (2005) who draws attention to aspects of context previously neglected in linguistic research, including linguistic and other resources as context; and the role of text trajectories. Similarly, Hak (1999) notes the importance of not only talk but talk *and* action as key considerations in researching context. An investigation of context allows for understandings of the shared representations, interpretations and systems of meaning among parties (see also Cicourel, 1973). Understanding the role of discourse in creating and maintaining a context is the very heart of the exploration of knowledge creation and thus this exploration has the potential to contribute to both the linguistic and management literature.

1.2 Research focus

As introduced above, this thesis focuses on investigating the development of collegial relations and evidence for a climate of care as key elements of a knowledge enabling organizational context. According to Von Krogh et al (2000) organizational structures that foster solid collegial relationships involve the provision of appropriate physical spaces, computer intranets or networks of relationships. The climate of care, on the other hand, is manifested in the ways people show consideration for one another and the little things that often go unnoticed but that show care and concern for others on a day-to-day basis. Both are broad concepts that need to be further refined.

Von Krogh et al's (2000) approach includes consideration of what they term 'conversation management' drawing on guidelines from Grice's conversational maxims; and various kinds of categorized conversational outcomes. Although language use is integral to both concepts, the objectives of this study require a more detailed approach, one which takes account of the interactional moves and discursive strategies of individual participants. Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework provided an appropriate way of operationalising the investigation of these concepts.

Developed out of and partly in response to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the rapport management framework is consistent with the objectives of this study through its focus on the management of interpersonal relations. The term rapport management broadens consideration of politeness strategies to consider not only self but self and other. It also takes account of language use beyond the management of face sensitivities, in the construction, maintenance (and threat to) interpersonal relationships more holistically. This approach views social relations as having three distinct but interconnected bases: face sensitivities; interactional goals of participants; and their sociality rights and obligations. According to Spencer-Oatey, interactional goals both influence the progress of an interaction and impact on its outcome. They may include both the goal of the interaction and the goals of participants. The management of dignity and respect for others (face) is inherent in the notion of collegiality. And various social rights and obligations may operate in the workplace. Participants in interaction manage all three simultaneously, so the rapport management perspective provides for a more nuanced understanding of the day-to-day enactment of collegial relations.

The rapport management framework is being used more regularly within the field of workplace discourse for its focus on relational aspects of talk. Murata (fc), for example, uses this approach to investigate differences in social talk in business meetings between New Zealand and Japanese business people. Spencer-Oatey herself has applied the framework for explaining miscommunication in intercultural meetings (eg Spencer-Oatey and Jiang 2003), and Lazzaro (2010) uses rapport management to investigate the way in which overlapping talk can be perceived as polite and facilitative rather than disruptive in intercultural interaction.

Although this and other research focuses on a wide range of issues in workplace discourse, so far as I'm aware no studies have specifically focused on the analysis of discourse as central to an organizational knowledge enabling context. This thesis aims to contribute to the development of such a perspective by adopting a cross disciplinary approach to the investigation of a knowledge enabling organizational context, which may yield insights that are useful to both the fields of linguistics and strategic management.

Thus my overarching research question is:

How is a knowledge enabling context instantiated through organizational discourse?

Although the concept of knowledge enabling context is a broad one, this thesis focuses specifically on structures that foster solid collegial relations and a climate of

care. For Von Krogh et al, (2000), solid collegial relations are a key factor in helping knowledge creation to proceed more effectively. They are fostered by more than physical or hierarchical structure and may include aspects of physical space (e.g. design of the office); virtual space (e.g. computer networks and e-mail); and mental space (e.g. shared experiences, ideas and emotions). This leads to the first sub question:

Research Question 1a:

How are collegial relations instantiated through organizational discourse?

A second strand of the exploration arises from Von Krogh et al's (2000) description of the knowledge enabling context as 'a network of interactions determined by the care and trust of its participants' (p. 49). The notion of care in the hyper-competitive environment of 21st-century business is an interesting one. According to Von Krogh et al, when the hyper-competitive environment is mirrored within the company it can create grave problems, and in fact contributes to an environment which is the antithesis of a knowledge enabling context. As mentioned earlier, one of the motivations for this study was to see if and how care translates within an organization widely recognized for its ongoing capacity for innovation, as well as for its being a popular place to work. Von Krogh et al believe that care has behavioural dimensions and they identify five dimensions as follows: mutual trust; active empathy; access to help; lenience in judgment; and courage. This notion of care can involve listening to customers with care, caring for others to help them learn, integrating the needs of individuals and groups, and exercising wisdom as a caring manager. Additionally, when colleagues are supportive, participants are more likely

to articulate their knowledge spontaneously, to express emotions and to share tacit knowledge. Since the organization in the study is predominantly male, and since these characteristics of care are culturally indexed as feminine behavior, a second relevant sub-question is:

Research Question 1b:

How is a climate of care enacted through organizational discourse?

The organization selected as a setting for the investigation of these questions is introduced and described in section 1.3 below.

1.3 Introduction to the organization

Since language does not exist in the abstract but is utilized and reproduced by individuals and groups in daily interaction, an investigation of an organization's communicative context and in particular its structures and collegial relations, required close engagement with the organization over time. This is also consistent with the principles of ethical research, which takes account of participant perspectives (Sarangi, 2003; Roberts, 2003). For this research, I worked with participants at a NZ-based IT organization psuedonymed Phoenix.

If Von Krogh et al's (2000) claim is correct, i.e. that organizations that maintain a consistent capability for knowledge creation are characterized by what they term a knowledge enabling 'right context', then any organization with a reputation for ongoing innovation together with a sound competitive position maintained over time, should exhibit many or most of the features of such a 'right context'. My selection of

an organization as a setting for this study was made by my already having access to Phoenix which has maintained a reputation for innovation as well as an excellent competitive position over time. This opportunity arose through a colleague, who invited me to work with him on interviews with CEOs of innovative New Zealand companies. Phoenix later became the focus of my MA research on the role of email in organizational knowledge creation processes (Fletcher, 2002). During this research, participants often commented on how the organization was 'special' and I too felt it was special in a way that was not easy to define, although clearly it was something in the organizational context itself, something about the way people talked with each other and the way management was enacted on a daily basis. It was clearly in the little things, but how to articulate such components of what made it 'special' was what needed to be identified. The decision to remain working with this organisation for my doctoral research was easily made and welcomed by the organisation itself.

Phoenix (pseudonym) employs less than 50 people and is located on one floor of a central city office building. In terms of innovation and competitive position, the organization, despite being located in New Zealand, is sought out by major software manufacturers internationally to test new software. It is also commonly sought by companies in the UK, US and Europe, to undertake work for them even though geographic distance means there will rarely if ever be face-to-face meetings between the companies' principals. Many of these intercompany relationships are initiated, established and maintained (over the long term) via computer mediated means. Phoenix is a predominantly (90%) male organization comprising mostly New Zealanders of European descent for whom English is a first language. At the time

research was conducted, there were only four non-New Zealanders and all had native speaker competence in English.

Occupying one floor of a central city office building Phoenix is configured as one large open plan office. There are three small rooms along one side, a reception area and a small kitchen. The formal hierarchy is relatively flat, comprising Michael - the managing director, four senior managers, then everyone else. Desks of managers and employees are all located in the one large open plan space. No one has their own office. Instead, the three small rooms at the side of the main office operate on a booking system and no one has precedence in their use. The company is privately owned, with Michael the principle shareholder and employees the only other shareholders.

Phoenix' principal business is website design, system development and integration, and consultancy. It has many clients within New Zealand and overseas, ranging from individuals and small companies to large multinationals and government agencies. Many of the relationships that Phoenix has with other companies were established and are maintained via computer mediated communication (CMC). The nature of the business places high demands on employees' communication competence and skills in the use of multimodal technologies.

A long period of ethnographic observation and recordings in the organization supports the analysis which are presented in the thesis as outlined in the following section.

1.4 Thesis Overview

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature, tracing the origin of the research question from its beginnings in the theory of organizational knowledge creation, through its synergies with the field of applied sociolinguistics, to the research area of workplace discourse – in particular the discourse of collegiality.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of the methodological and analytical procedures followed in the course of this research. As an ethnographic study, the methods include data gathering through observation, unstructured interviews, emails and audio recorded interactions and meetings. The wide range of data I gathered as participant observer was organized and prepared for analysis using Hymes' (1974) ethnography of communication framework. The rapport management framework (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2008) used in analysis, extends the examination of interactions beyond the illocutionary domain - in which the focus is primarily the rapport threatening/rapport enhancing implications of speech acts such as apologies and requests. Spencer-Oatey and Xing (1998, 2004, as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008), argue that multiple aspects of language are used in the management of politeness and that any aspect of language use can threaten rapport. By incorporating other domains of language use, the rapport management framework overcomes some problematic aspects of politeness theory and enables consideration of a wider range of relevant contextual features and their impact on meaning making in the organization's day-to-day interactions.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the organization's social ecology, through the analysis of interactions that take place in the large open plan office via email, and face-to-face interaction, as well as recorded interviews, field notes and observations. I take discourse to mean both language *and* action, I also take into consideration Sailer and Penn's (2007) view of space as a vector of interaction. The analysis identifies two distinct kinds of communities that comprise Phoenix. These are: communities of practice (CofPs) that clearly meet Wenger's (1998) criterial characteristics, plus another kind of community termed by Von Krogh et al (2000) as micro-communities of Knowledge (MCKs). A closer investigation of these two communities, is the focus of chapter 5.

The analysis in chapter 5 suggests the different ways in which collegiality is enacted in each of these communities. By extending analysis beyond the illocutionary domain, the rapport management framework takes account of multiple aspects of context that provide insights into both collegiality and the social structures that give rise to it. Although the findings support claims made by Wenger and Von Krogh respectively, with regard to the importance of CofPs and MCKs for organizational knowledge creation, the analysis identifies additional characteristics of each of these communities. A model is proposed that accounts for their different ways of doing collegiality and suggests their contribution to the organization's overall knowledge enabling context. The analysis also suggests that a more broadly based collegiality has been imported or transferred from outside the boundaries of either of these communities.

In chapter 6 the analysis focuses on activities at the level of the organization as a whole – aiming to identify the source(s) of this broader collegiality. A range of open meetings and task-based group activities were audio recorded. This data enabled a comparative analysis of different meeting types and enabled the identification of the impact of one frequent and regularly occurring meeting over time. The analysis also identifies an overall organization-wide sense of collegiality as being fostered by the 'weekly meeting' an open meeting that takes place 50 times per year. The discourse of these meetings evidences participants' strong sense of identification with the organization as a whole. Collegiality fostered and maintained by participation in the weekly meeting also functions to support collegial relations in other dimensions of the organization.

The discussion in chapter 7 draws together the findings from chapters 4 to 6, that identify the distinctive ways in which collegiality is fostered and maintained in the different dimensions and activities of the organization. Spatial configuration and computer connectivity combine to facilitate ease of interaction as well as highlighting participants' awareness of sociality rights and obligations. The components of collegiality (participant relations comprised of power/ status, and distance/ solidarity) shift in relation to each other across the different dimensions of the organization and influence the management of interpersonal rapport.

The second strand of the focus in chapter 7 draws together the evidence of Von Krogh's et al's (2000) climate of care that occurs throughout the analyses. Each of its elements: mutual trust, active empathy, access to help, lenience in judgment and courage, can be seen in various dimensions of the organization, in action, interaction

and in organizational procedures. At a more micro level, the organization's communicative ethos is influenced by its communication style, which is informal, direct, generally explicit and somewhat blunt, reflecting the 'family' or 'village' culture, described by both employees and management. Other more general features of style - associative expressiveness; low distance, high solidarity and positive affect - combine to create an ethos characterized by care.

The analyses contribute to our understanding of: the communicative skills necessary for effective functioning by the same people working in different organizational communities; the characteristics of different organizational communities; the expression of affect in a predominantly male organization; and the potential significance of spatiality in organizational context - specifically as a facilitator of interaction.

CHAPTER TWO

A KNOWLEDGE ENABLING CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

Although the concept of a knowledge enabling organizational context is a very broad one, its components - structures that foster solid collegial relationships and a climate of care - are social and relational, and therefore are of obvious interest to workplace discourse researchers. The components inherently involve language and language use and the dialectical relationship between language and social structure. These underpin the social constructionist view in both the sociolinguistic approach to workplace discourse and the knowledge enabling view of organizations. This underlying synergy was a particular motivation for undertaking a cross disciplinary study, and one which deserves greater exploration.

In this chapter I review a selection of relevant literature to describe the development and understanding of those working in the area of knowledge creation theory and, more specifically, the significance of the knowledge enabling context. Once this background is established, I will demonstrate the synergies with existing research on workplace discourse, and argue for the unrecognized but potentially fruitful convergence of the two fields. A clear statement of the research question concludes the chapter.

2.2 Background to discourse as a focus in organizational knowledge creation

In the last two decades, there has been an explosion of interest in organizational knowledge creation. In part, this has been driven by an interest in benefits to the organization from a focus on knowledge (Choo & Bontis, 2000). In particular, within the field of strategic management, the knowledge based view of the organization (Grant, 1996) developed as a sub-field of the resource based view of the firm (Barney, 1991). This broadened the traditional focus on the external market based view of the firm, which was centred around transaction costs and market failure (Magalhaes, 1998, in Von Krogh Roos & Klein, 1998 p. 100). The knowledge based view placed language as a central consideration in organizational activities (Grant, 1996), and positioned it as a key resource for competitive advantage (Chakravarthy et al., 2003).

> Organizational knowledge creation is the process of making available and amplifying knowledge created by individuals as well as crystallising and connecting it within organizations and knowledge systems. In other words, what individuals come to know in their work life benefits their colleagues, and, eventually, the larger organization (Nonaka et al., 2006, p. 1179).

The new focus on knowledge creation was entwined with the emergence of interest in knowledge capital, shaped by a shift in value creation from goods to services (Burton-Jones, 1999), and a world increasingly driven by a globalizing knowledge economy (Garvey & Williamson, 2002).

Within this context, knowledge work, and the human communication needed to enable it, became central to organizational enquiry (Blackler, 1995). Kogut & Zander (1996), for instance, proposed that the firm be viewed as a social community that specialised in efficiently creating and transferring knowledge. Although heightened interest in organizational community emerged in the 1990s, it can be traced back to Penrose's (1959) notion that what makes a firm grow is the accumulated knowledge and experience from within (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998). Subsequently, Pondy and Mitroff (1979) had argued that language should not be left out of models of organization. Pondy and Mitroff's (1979) research had shown how the systems criteria for organizational modeling leave out language and meaning as important organizational phenomena. Their research exposed the significant distance between studies on measurable aspects of organization and intangible aspects such as knowledge and learning. However this was largely overlooked, resulting in a delay in placing language and meaning high on the organizational research agenda.

Organizational communication researchers Philip Graham and Bernard McKenna (2000), argue that traditional approaches to communication, information, and the role of language in human organizations had obscured rather than clarified the role of language. And they proposed sociolinguistics as an approach to organizational research. They note for instance: Fairclough's (1992) emphasis on the role of language and identity in the way power relations are imposed and exercised, and how societies categorize and build identities for their members; and Lemke's (1995) focus on intertextuality (drawing on Bakhtin, 1927) as a way of identifying discourse communities - which each have their own 'canons of intertextuality'.

Increasingly, dialogue is centrally positioned in organizational knowledge creation (e.g. Adair, 2004; Devonport & Prusak, 1998; Garvey & Williamson, 2002; Isaacs, 1993). This positioning is often grounded within theoretical interests in organizational discourse and language. Approaches to enquiry include ethnographic methods and discourse analysis (e.g. Boje et al, 1996). Although the importance of language for organizations had become more widely recognized in organizational research by the 1990s, and the postmodern approach had drawn attention to the need for new methods of analysis based on discourse, this trend has been criticized for not addressing the 'enactive dimension', that is – the structures and systems created by management through rules, procedures and authoritative acts (Weick, 1995; Magalhaes, 1998). By showing that the conversion of tacit to explicit organizational knowledge is firmly embedded in the internal processes and life of the firm, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) gave significant impetus to the view of organizations as generating and sustaining their own knowledge creating capabilities from within. And by focusing on language as a key aspect of knowledge conversion, they cemented the role of language and language use at the forefront of research on the knowledge-based view of the firm. A brief overview of knowledge creation theory follows.

2.3 Overview of Knowledge Creation Theory

Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) Knowledge Creation Theory (KCT), makes a significant contribution to placing language and language use at the forefront of research on workplace communication. They note that

Our dynamic model of knowledge creation is anchored to a critical assumption that human knowledge is created and expanded through social interaction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. We call this interaction "knowledge conversion." It should be noted that this conversion is a social process between individuals and not confined within an individual. According to a rationalist view, human cognition is a deductive process of individuals, but an individual is never isolated from social interaction when he or she perceives things. Thus through this "social conversion" process, tacit and explicit knowledge expand in terms of both quality and quantity (p. 61).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that what makes knowledge different from an asset in the classical sense is that knowledge creation processes are dynamic and involve contributions from many people throughout the organization.

The basic mechanisms they identify for making better use of tacit knowledge at the organizational level revolve around language and language use. For instance: figurative language such as metaphor and analogy is used to articulate new concepts; individual knowledge is shared through the use of dialogue and discussion; and ambiguity and redundancy are used to create common ways of thinking. They identify the processes involved in knowledge conversion - that is the way that tacit knowledge held by individuals is converted into explicit knowledge available for the organization. These processes are not linear but rather circular and reflexive. A brief overview of the processes follows.

The process begins with building a field of interaction in which people can share mental models and experiences. They term this phase *socialization*. The second phase, termed *externalization*, occurs as people endeavour to articulate aspects of their individual tacit knowledge in a group or team. Because tacit knowledge is hard to communicate, people often use metaphor and analogy as they try to articulate an idea or concept. Third, the *combination* phase occurs as questions are asked, justifications are provided and suggestions offered, thus combining knowledge from different people. Finally, when new knowledge in the form of products, processes, philosophies or ways of doing things is spread throughout the organization and becomes part of everyday practice, it is said to be *internalized* and incorporated into the tacit knowledge base of individual employees. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) note: 'Thus organizational knowledge creation is a spiral process, starting at the individual level and moving up through expanding communities of interaction' (p. 72).

Nonaka and Takeuchi's theoretical framework integrates traditional and non-traditional views of knowledge. It provides a synthesis of western epistemology - which tends to place the highest values on abstract theories and hypotheses and the explicit dimensions of knowledge, and Japanese epistemology - which places a higher value on the embodiment of direct, personal experience and the more tacit dimensions of knowledge. And although Nonaka and Takeuchi follow Polanyi (1966) in distinguishing between *tacit knowledge* - which is personal, context specific and hard to communicate - and *explicit knowledge* - which is codified and transmittable - they do not regard them as totally separate but as mutually complementary entities. For them 'Tacit and explicit knowledge interact with and interchange into each other in the creative activities of human beings' (Nonaka &

Takeuchi, 1995: 61). They also differentiate between information and knowledge, viewing information as 'a flow of messages, while knowledge is created by the very flow of information, anchored in the beliefs and commitment of its holder' (p. 59). Like Polanyi they believe that knowledge is closely related to human action, and they refer to 'Searle's (1969) discussion of the "speech act" [that] also points out the close relationship between language and human action in terms of intention and the commitment of speakers' (p. 59).

The key implication of this theorisation for organizations is that since knowledge creation depends on interaction between people, organizations need to develop a context that facilitates interaction at many levels.

2.4 The knowledge enabling framework: operationalizing knowledge creation theory

Von Krogh et al (2000) expand and operationalize knowledge creation theory by identifying the conditions and processes that support it, which they term *knowledge enabling*. They differentiate this from the commonly used term 'knowledge management' with its overemphasis on measurement and information technology, and they note that managers need to support and facilitate knowledge creation rather than try to control it, as knowledge itself is inherently uncontrollable. In contrast to the command and control principle of the hypercompetitive paradigm, what comes to prominence in the knowledge enabling approach is the importance of relationships. 'Knowledge enabling includes facilitating relationships and conversations as well as sharing local knowledge across an organization or beyond geographic and cultural borders' (p. 4).

2.4.1 The importance of interactions

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) had emphasized that no one department or group is exclusively responsible for creating new knowledge. In their view new knowledge arises from dynamic interaction among: front line employees - who have an abundance of highly practical information and experience; middle management - who provide a bridge between the 'what is' mindset of employees and the 'what should be' mindset of senior management; and senior management – who can provide concepts that link seemingly disparate activities into a coherent whole.

In developing the knowledge enabling framework, Von Krogh et al (2000) reiterate this stance. They place interactions in the process of meaning at the heart of knowledge creation. They emphasize the importance of using a broad range of perspectives to match concepts with strategic objectives, and they note that 'where knowledge creation is concerned, organizational structures should reinforce tacit-explicit knowledge interaction across many different boundaries' (p.177). For Von Krogh et al, management responsibilities include: drawing on many perspectives, for instance in strategy development; facilitating interaction across many different boundaries, and the somewhat less common notion of instantiating a climate of care. They state that 'In fact the whole process of knowledge creation depends on sensitive and aware managers who encourage a social setting in which knowledge continues to grow' (p.177). They term this social setting a knowledge enabling 'right context'.

2.4.2 What is a knowledge enabling organizational context?

Von Krogh et al (2000) note that 'From our perspective an enabling context is what drives knowledge creation' (p. 178). They define it as follows. 'An enabling context is a shared knowledge space, one that encourages and nurtures participation on many different levels'. They draw on Japanese philosopher Kitaro Nishida's (1990) notion of space as encompassing physical space (such as meeting rooms), virtual space (such as computer networks) and mental space (time for reflection), or any combination of these. Von Krogh et al (2000:178) use Nishida's concept of *ba* to refer to the unification of these dimensions of space, and they use Nishida's term *basho* to refer to an organization's overall knowledge enabling context. It is this *basho* - the overall knowledge enabling context of one organization - that is the subject of investigation in this thesis.

In order to investigate such a broad and abstract construct as a knowledge enabling context, it is necessary to break it down. Von Krogh et al identify two key components: first – 'It involves structures that foster solid relationships and effective collaboration' (p. 176); and second it depends on what Von Krogh et al term 'a climate of care' (pp. 45-68). Since both of these components involve interpersonal relations, and both are constructed through language, they are particularly suitable for a sociolinguistic investigation.

Although framed rather differently from the way they are portrayed in the management literature, both organizational structures and interpersonal relationships within organizations have received considerable attention in sociolinguistic research. Structure in organizations is approached in sociolinguistics through analysis of, for

instance: aspects of hierarchical structure such as power and solidarity; getting things done through meetings and directives; and social structures such as communities of practice - in particular the ways in which these are accomplished through language. On the other hand the notion of care is seldom addressed overtly. Rather it is inherent throughout as all language use comprises both a content dimension and an affective dimension.

In the next section I discuss three different aspects of organizational structure (hierarchical; physical and social) providing an overview of selected literature. This is followed by an overview of literature on collegial relations, and the section concludes with a discussion of the rather broad, abstract concept of a climate of care. Although not in itself a linguistic concept, care is an important aspect of interpersonal interaction and it is also inherent in the affective dimension of language use. As such it is an area of ongoing interest to researchers in the field of workplace interaction.

2.5. 'Structures that foster solid relationships and collaboration'

Organizational structures can function to support relationships or to inhibit them. The most commonly recognized aspect of organizational structure is its hierarchy, usually represented by the organizational chart. However physical structure (including spatiality and artefacts that facilitate connectivity) and social communities are other aspects of structure that may impact on the development of collegial relations. Each of these aspects of structure is discussed below.

2.5.1 Structure as Hierarchy

Hierarchical structures are perhaps the most commonly recognized aspect of organizational structure. They involve, for instance, power relationships which operate at all levels of the organization, such as those between managers and employees, between novices and experts in work groups, between project leaders and team members, and between meeting chair and other participants. In addition, power relationships may alter depending on context. Someone may be an expert in one organizational context and a novice in another, or be a leader in one project but have only peripheral involvement in another.

In day-to-day interaction within organizations, hierarchical relationships are enacted through the management of social factors. A sociolinguistic approach draws on four dimensions of context in accounting for the ways in which these relationships are managed (Holmes, 2001). Two of these dimensions are concerned with participant relationships and two with the setting or type of interaction. Any or all of these may exert an influence on participants' linguistic choices and discourse strategies they use in interaction. The *status scale* refers to the relative status of interlocutors – in this instance within the hierarchy. The *solidarity – distance* scale refers to how well people know each other and how close or distant their relationship is. Elements of the interaction itself also impact on the way participants relate to each other, for instance the setting or type of interaction and the degree to which it is formal or informal (the *formality scale*). And finally the *function scale* – that is the degree to which the purpose of an interaction is referential or functional (Holmes, 2001).

The ways in which managers ‘do power’ - for instance through devising rules which others must follow - is widely investigated in sociolinguistics. Studies include: the ways in which the power to impose authority is modified by consideration of ‘face needs’ of others (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003); the exercise of power and the processes involved in making both simple and complex decisions within the context of company meetings (Marra, 2003; Milles, 2005); managers’ enactment of power through directives, requests and advice (Vine, 2001, 2004); the construction of organizational identity (Gunnarsson, 2005), and professional identity (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Gunnarsson, 2005); and the use of humour in the construction of Maori leadership (Holmes, 2007).

The ways in which managers do power may be seen in overt (‘oppressive’) discourse strategies, or covert (‘repressive’) power strategies used to gain willing compliance and minimize status difference. Strategies such as issuing directives, making requests, setting agendas, summarizing the actions of others and giving approval, are overt ways of getting things done at work (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). But covert strategies such as deciding how much small talk is acceptable in given situations, as well as guiding and controlling the small talk, have been identified by Sollitt-Morris (1996, as cited in Holmes & Stubbe, 2003) as strategies that suggest power has ‘gone underground’. So in egalitarian cultures such as New Zealand, rather than being relinquished, power may simply operate from a subterranean position. One application of power which may be overlooked, for instance, is who has the power to make decisions about spatial configuration and the allocation of space within the office.

2.5.2 Physical structure - spatiality, connectivity and resources

In organizational research, although the importance of people and intangible assets such as interaction patterns, teamwork and knowledge transfer have become central issues, the influence of space as a facilitator of interaction is relatively unexplored. Von Krogh et al (2000) view it as a relevant feature of context, in the sense that space and the way it is arranged can either facilitate or inhibit interaction**.**

This view is supported by Sailer and Penn (2007), researchers in workplace environments. Investigating the relationship between space and society, they focused on the design of the physical workplace as an influence on social interaction**.** They found that spatial configuration can influence the development of a social milieu by generating a 'field of probabilistic encounter' and that physical space is an important constructive component in other sorts of spaces. It influences the way social space is constituted through its impact on links and networks between individuals. For instance, Sailer and Penn (2007) found that open-plan work areas with group leaders located in close proximity 'seem[ed] to inform dense network patterns' (p. 7). They also found that 'the more spaces someone is able to overlook directly or with little effort from one's desk, the more someone is integrated into the social networks of seeing and being seen of the whole organization' (p. 10), and conversely, compartmentalized spaces inhibit interaction.

Sailer and Penn (2007) conclude that, not only does physical space impact on social space but that it also impacts on the conceptual spaces of group identity. Their findings support the notion that physical spaces, social networks and organizational life are tightly interconnected and constitute what Giddens (1976) termed a 'doubly

hermeneutic system'. Boland and Tenkasi (1995) note that communities must have space for conversation, action and interaction in order for the codes and language to develop that facilitate the creation of new intellectual capital. For them 'It is through action within communities of knowing that we make and remake both our language and our knowledge' (1995, p. 353).

Spatiality is the focus of an emerging research stream within sociolinguistics. Blommaert (2005) notes the relevance of space for the construction of identity. 'Space can be filled with all kinds of social, cultural and epistemic attributes. It then becomes "place", a particular space on which senses of belonging, property rights and authority, can be projected' (p. 222). The spatial turn in sociolinguistic research that initially focused on linguistic landscapes, for instance Scollon and Scollon's (2003) study of language in the semiotics of signage in public places, now extends to include: the impact of physical space on the discourse of furniture movers (de Saint - George, 2004); the influence of spatiality on family talk in urban communities (Modan, 2007); and Lemke's (2000, 2004) research on virtual spaces which focuses on the development of identities in multi-user computer games.

Lemke's research draws attention to computers as artefacts which provide access to virtual space. They are a ubiquitous part of the physical environment of organizations. Perhaps more importantly, though, through the provision of intranet facilities, email and connections with other technologies, they facilitate access to virtual spaces, which are no less real in interactional terms.

Communication by email is a common feature of organizational life and one which begins to blur the boundaries between spoken and written interaction. It contributes to what Gunnarsson (2009) describes as 'the intertwinement of text and talk' (p.158). Gunnarsson draws attention to the interplay between the two media and distinguishes three categories in which spoken and written activities and processes are intermingled. These are:

1 Documents which complement a spoken main event – a meeting, seminar or conference – in the form of pre or post event documents such as invitations, notices, programmes, memoranda and minutes
2 Documents which could have spoken discourse as an alternative, e.g. letters and announcements
3 Documents that are more definitely bound to the written form – legally or conventionally - e.g. reports, lists, certificates, newsletters, balance sheets etc. (p. 159)

Gunnarsson found that the interdependence of talk and text is a normal situation with spoken and written activities interacting in a 'communication chain' regardless of which activity is the main event. What varies is the length of the chain. A short chain, for instance may involve simply an email containing a brief question that may require only a brief answer by a return email, a telephone call or an in person visit. The development of a new organizational strategy on the other hand, may take weeks or months of meetings, emails, formal and informal discussions, that comprise a chain of collaborative activities before a final version of the strategy is developed.

Gunnarsson's (2009) research illustrates the interplay between speaking and writing as two forms of discourse in which there is no clear borderline between their functions or the norms that govern them. 'The same socio-cognitive framework, the same communicative culture, governs both forms of discourse' (p.165).

Sometimes email is the primary form of communication in business relationships. In an ongoing study exploring negotiation in professional emails, Jensen (2007) found that participants were able to develop relationships of trust and conclude business online. One interesting element of email data is that it is a verbatim real time record of how interactions develop over time. Using Hyland's metadiscourse framework, Jensen found that participants were adept at employing a range of interpersonal strategies in email negotiations to both establish power relations and build trust.

An interesting feature of email is the flexibility and scope of possible participation structures. One way of including multiple recipients is through the copying function. Skovholt and Svennevig (2006) found that this facility is commonly used in networks of collaboration to facilitate multiparty interaction, to share knowledge of ongoing projects and to build up a common pool of information. They also found that writers often appoint recipients as primary or secondary participants in interaction through both implicit and explicit addressing devices. One use of this strategy was to exert social control by putting pressure on addressees to conform to norms of social conduct. Thus interactions in virtual space can be used to influence social communities within organizations.

2.5.3 Social Structure: organizational communities

A third form of structure is a social structure widely recognized within both sociolinguistics and knowledge creation theory, is the community of practice (CofP). The concept was articulated and investigated by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, and developed more fully into a social theory of learning by Wenger (1998).

A community of practice is described by Wenger (1998) as a group of people who come together to pursue a shared enterprise. Its three criterial characteristics are: *mutual engagement*; in a *negotiated enterprise*; using a *shared repertoire* that includes (but is not limited to) language. To this Wenger has added that there must be: a practice - rather than just a shared interest or passion; a commitment to the practice, and some degree of expertise in the practice (http://www.ewenger.com/communities). This conceptual framework for understanding and enabling learning is based on four premises:

> We are social beings; knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises; knowing is a matter of participating; and meaning – our ability to experience the world and our engagement in it - is ultimately what learning is to produce. Its primary focus is on learning as active participation in the social practices of social communities, and of constructing identities in relation to those communities.
>
> (Wenger, 1998, pp. 4-5)

This approach has similarly been applied in linguistic investigations of workplace talk where the focus is typically the way in which community members, through

ongoing interaction, learn to use language in ways that demonstrate they are part of the group and in turn contribute to the constantly changing repertoire of the group (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Angouri, 2007; Coupland, 2007).

The sharing of expertise and experiences between experts and novices over time suggests that CofPs are structures that can support the development of solid collegial relations. However, there is no guarantee that because a social structure has the potential to support collegiality, it will necessarily do so (Wenger, 1998). Wenger cautions that CofPs have just as much potential for developing negative relationships as they do for developing positive ones. For instance, although mutuality of engagement is a key part of belonging to a community, that engagement may entail either positive or negative relations (or both). He argues for instance that the formation of identity, as a negotiated experience of participation, can proceed either positively or negatively, influenced in part by the ways in which it is facilitated by peers and seniors. Wenger also suggests that learning trajectories open to community members depend in part on the willingness of others – seniors and those in related communities of practice - to engage them in activities and experiences that can contribute to increasing expertise and knowledge through a sustained history of mutual engagement. This stance is supported by research investigating the effectiveness of vocational training in the Swiss vocational education and training (VET) system. Fillietaz (2010) found that apprentices experienced a range of difficulties in gaining help from experts. Some willingly answered questions and others did not, or did so unwillingly. Their findings identify the importance of a

willingness on the part of experts to share with those in a position of peripheral engagement in the workplace, if practice based learning is to be effective.

Wenger (1999) views CoPs as 'powerhouses of organizational knowledge creation' and 'the fountainhead of the knowledge economy' (p. 11). Von Krogh et al (2000) also regard organizational communities as central to an enabling context. However they explicitly distinguish between CofPs and the organizational community they have identified as key to knowledge enabling, which they term *micro-communities of knowledge* (hereafter referred to as MCK). Two key aspects of their distinction involve community membership and a history of engagement. In terms of membership, a CofP is fairly stable, members have a shared history of engagement, and they learn knowledge that is embedded in the community. Members of an MCK, however, come from different functional areas and do not have an ongoing history of engagement. Von Krogh et al note that the communities they call MCKs 'have a here and now quality – which can spark real innovations' (p.180). Although the CofP framework is frequently used in workplace linguistic research, distinctions such as those suggested by Von Krogh et al have not as yet been investigated in this field.

Wenger (1998) also identifies a different aspect of community, one that encapsulates a much broader scope of engagement than the CofP. He refers to this as a *constellation of practices* (CNP) and notes that 'Such a configuration may be as large as a city or a social movement, or as small as a school or a single organization' (1998, p. 127). Viewing the organization as a constellation recognizes it as a community, whilst also taking account of important discontinuities between

individual communities. Wenger suggests a range of criteria for regarding an entity as a constellation of practices. These include:

- Sharing historical roots
- Serving a cause or belonging to an institution
- Facing similar conditions
- Having members in common
- Sharing artefacts
- Having geographical relations of proximity or interaction
- Having overlapping styles or discourses
- Competing for the same resources

The notion of the organization as a constellation is potentially relevant to this thesis since it intercepts with the concept of the overall knowledge enabling context - *the basho* - of the organization in knowledge creation theory. According to Von Krogh et al (2000) *the basho* is formed through the connections between the various knowledge creation contexts that invariably overlap in an organization. Viewing the organization as a constellation allows for both the discontinuities between types of community and the connections afforded by belonging to the same organization. Wenger (1998, p. 129) notes

> When a social configuration is viewed as a constellation rather than a community of practice, the continuity of the constellation must be understood in terms of interactions among practices, for instance: boundary objects, including individual trajectories; boundary practices,

> overlaps and peripheries; elements of styles that spread as people adapt and reinterpret ways of behaving in the process of constructing identity; and elements of discourses that travel across boundaries as people co-ordinate their enterprises (p.129).

Although the concept of CofP is widely used in sociolinguistics (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Meyerhoff, 2006; Holmes, 2006; Modan, 2007; Coupland, 2007), possible interconnections between practices as components of a wider context of a constellation have - to the best of my knowledge - not yet been investigated.

2.6 Situating sociolinguistic approaches to collegiality within the wider literature

In this section I begin with a brief discussion of discourse and collegiality, outlining a selection of relevant sociolinguistic research on the subject. Then I discuss three different aspects of organizational structure - all of which are the subject of current sociolinguistic investigation - providing an overview of selected literature. The following part of the chapter deals with the rather broad, abstract concept of a climate of care which Von Krogh et al break down into five dimensions: mutual trust; active empathy; access to help; lenience in judgment and courage. Although these are not in themselves linguistic concepts, they are important aspects of interpersonal collegial relationships which are evidenced in discourse, and have received some attention in the sociolinguistic literature. Subsequently I discuss the notion of context from a sociolinguistic perspective, and outline a number of synergies between sociolinguistic and management research that are relevant to this thesis.

2.6.1 Situating research on social talk in the workplace

Interpersonal relations in the context of work are commonly referred to as collegial relations or collegiality. According to Von Krogh et al (2000) the quality of these relations impacts on the organization's knowledge enabling context. Interactions in the workplace may be positive, negative or both, but what is certain is that they are an essential part of working life. People at all levels of organizations have to collaborate with others, in working towards organizational objectives.

Sociolinguists recognizes collegiality as a term that refers to the interpersonal relationships between people who work together. Its function is to maintain a social environment promoting co-operation and trust. Workmates 'do collegiality' by indicating mutual good intentions as they construct, maintain, repair or extend these relationships (Holmes, 2001; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003).

Sociolinguistic research has observed that one of the ways in which people do collegiality is by making time for social talk. Traditionally referred to as phatic communion (Malinowski, 1923), it included rituals of greeting and parting as well as small talk and was regarded as inconsequential and unserious. However in recent decades research has revealed the rich variety of ways in which it contributes to interaction.

Coupland (2000) describes phatic communion as 'subsuming gossip, chat and time-out talk' (p.1.). It can include, for instance, 'small talk such as the exchange of greetings, complaints about how busy life is, and promises to get in touch for lunch

and coffee' (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, pp. 97-8). Tracy's (2002) research showed that small talk occurs for instance around the coffee machine, in mailrooms, at the beginning of lunchtime conversations or telephone conversations and that it is central to building and solidifying relationships. In this sense it is anything but small and unimportant. Used in this way small talk functions to oil the social wheels and, as Tracy notes, 'A day without small talk would be strange indeed' (p.141).

Because small talk is routine in nature, and operates at the peripheries of interaction, it is often used to transition both from task-oriented to social talk, or in the other direction - from social to task- oriented talk, and it commonly occurs at the beginnings and ends of meetings. In addition small talk is often used by managers (and others) to control or influence interaction (Holmes, 2003). Whereas some superiors prefer to limit small talk, social talk and also humour at work (such as those in Levene's (1987) research), others initiate it and/or willingly participate when it is initiated by others. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) found extensive evidence of this latter situation in the Language in the Workplace (LWP) data (referred to in chapter 1), 'particularly in teams where there was an emphasis on solidarity and good team relationships, and at points where tensions needed releasing' (p. 103).

Another aspect of workplace discourse identified by sociolinguistic research as contributing to the development of collegial relations, is the use of humour. Like small talk it has been largely discounted in organizational research, but its value and functions have been identified in sociolinguistic investigations of workplace discourse. Holmes and Marra (2002a) identified three different aspects of humour

that are relevant to the analysis of interactions in organizational meetings. These are: type of humour; style of humour and amount of humour.

Humour can lighten tense moments in difficult meetings and discussions, but its most basic function, according to the sociolinguistic literature, is in building a sense of belonging to a group, team or organizational community, that is, to create and maintain a sense of solidarity. Because it is also tightly context bound, outsiders may not understand 'insider' jokes and hilarity. In this way it serves as a boundary marker of groups and communities (Holmes & Marra, 2002b; Holmes, 2006). Humour is also a component of discursive practice that contributes to the instantiation of social identity in the workplace. Identifying the norms that govern the use of workplace humour can provide insights into the distinctive culture of a workplace.

Since utterances are understood by sociolinguists to be typically multifunctional, both small talk and humour may serve several functions simultaneously. For instance, just as small talk can oil the social wheels and simultaneously make a transition to transactional work, humour can function to express solidarity, to challenge authority, or simply to pass the time or provide a distraction. Its power lies in its flexibility to accomplish any or all of these functions (Holmes, 1998).

The juxtaposition between the need to use power to get things done at work, and the need to build and maintain solid collegial relationships, suggests some of the complexities involved in managing workplace relationships. This places complex and sometimes competing demands on workplace communication, such as the need

to be proficient in both task-related and affective or care-based aspects of communication.

Although the literature discussed above shows a range of ways in which collegiality has been found to function in the workplace, to the best of my knowledge no sociolinguistic research has specifically investigated collegiality as part of a knowledge enabling organizational context.

2.7 Situating sociolinguistic approaches to a climate of care

The principal aim of this thesis is to investigate how a knowledge enabling context is enacted in a knowledge creating organization. The previous section focused on structures that may be involved in supporting the development of collegiality. This section looks at a selection of existing literature on how the notion of 'a climate of care' is enacted through discourse.

2.7.1 The affective dimension in organizational communication

Von Krogh et al (2000) identify 'a climate of care' as an essential component of a knowledge enabling context. As mentioned earlier, this broad concept may not outwardly appear related to topics in sociolinguistics. However its components: mutual trust; active empathy; access to help; lenience in judgment; and courage, are *affective* aspects of an organization's communication climate. Affect is an integral part of all language use and although inherent in sociolinguistic studies of language use in organizational settings, it is seldom a specific focus.

The enactment of Von Krogh et al's aspects of the enabling context can be investigated through the analysis of discourse strategies employed in the management of interpersonal relations. This approach to analysis is the subject of more detailed discussion in the next chapter (chapter 3). However, the introductory discussion here provides an overview of some of these elements within the knowledge creation literature, and sets the scene for the approach to linguistic analysis detailed in chapter 3.

As mentioned earlier, Von Krogh et al (2000) identify five dimensions within a climate of care: mutual trust; active empathy; access to help; lenience in judgment and courage. According to Nahapiet and Goshal (1998) the role of *trust* in organizations is that in part it makes up for the knowledge we lack. They cite Misztal (1996) who notes that 'trust, by keeping our mind open to all evidence, secures communication and dialogue' (p. 10). Other effects of trust are that: it is shown to increase the potential of a system for coping with complexity (Luhmann, 1979 as cited in Nahapiet and Goshal, 1998); it resides in the quality of the interpersonal relationships when messages are not codified, thus binding the parties through shared values and expectations (Boisot, 1995 as cited in Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998); and in a two-way interaction, trust lubricates cooperation and cooperation breeds trust (Nahapiet and Goshal, 1998). They note that 'where relationships are high in trust people are more willing to engage in social exchange in general and cooperative interaction in particular' (p. 14).

Von Krogh et al (2000) have shown that acceptance of the emotional lives of others is essential for establishing good working relationships and for gaining emotional knowledge. Thus *empathy* serves an important function in contributing to an effective workplace. It accomplishes this in part by preparing the ground for helping behavior - for instance, *access to help* is essential where the level of knowledge differs between participants (Nahapiet and Goshal, 1998; Von Krogh et al, 2000). In part, a gap in knowledge can be overcome, for example, when the novice is helped or mentored by the expert. Putting forward and testing new ideas and ways of doing things involves a considerable amount of mental and linguistic experimentation, whether this is in sharing tacit knowledge through experience, or distributing newly developed explicit knowledge throughout the organization. Mistakes, false starts and unexpected developments are inherent aspects of the risks involved. Harsh judgment in response to such outcomes can stifle knowledge creation, whereas patience, forbearance and *lenience in judgment* can encourage it. One flow-on effect of lenience in judgment is that organizational members may have the *courage* to experiment and put forward new ideas on an ongoing basis. It takes courage to expose a new idea to the judgment of others, or put forward an opinion or give feedback.

Since all language can be understood to function on two levels simultaneously – a transactional or content level and an affective or relational level (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) - the climate of care dimension of the enabling context is most concerned with the relational aspect of language use, specifically the management of social relations within the organization. Although Brown and Yule (1983 as cited in Spencer-Oatey 2008) view the two dimensions of language use as having different goals, Spencer-

Oatey argues that 'the two functions are closely interconnected, and that the relational aspect of language use is of central importance in all communication' (p. 2). This supports Von Krogh et al's (2000) claim that 'acceptance of the emotional lives of others is crucial for establishing good working relationships' (p.51). The dimensions of care rely heavily on the effective establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. The notion of care is traditionally associated with a feminine style of communication and management, so it is unsurprising that the community of practice model was initially incorporated into sociolinguistics within the area of gender research. Since the social practice of building and sustaining relationships is fundamental to engaging in collegial behavior in the workplace, shared ways of doing things together and discursive ways of sustaining relationships are inherent in such engagement, Wenger, 1998; Holmes, 2006; Nahapiet and Goshal, 1998; Von Krogh et al, 2000).

2.7.2 Relational Practice

Researchers in workplace communication use the term 'relational practice' (hereafter RP) to refer to 'the ability to work effectively with others, understanding the emotional contexts in which work gets done' (Fletcher, 1999 as cited in Holmes, 2006). Fletcher's (1999) model of relational practice identifies four ways in which relational practice is manifested, and whose realizations are often concurrent. These are: *creating team* – through activities that create the background conditions in which group life can flourish; *mutual empowerment* – involves making connections, and empathetic teaching; *preserving* – which involves often unnoticed, off-record activities that keep, for instance, a project on track, assist its progress and prevent

delays; and *self achieving* – the process of seeking growth and achievement through connection.

These categories of RP have a natural affinity with Von Krogh et al's (2000) notion of enabling context - through the management of collegial relations and care. RP involves three crucial components: First - it is *oriented to the face needs of others,* that is 'attending to people's need to feel valued and their rapport or "positive face" needs and the requirement that their autonomy be respected "negative face needs'' (Holmes, 2006, p. 75). LWP research shows that in the workplace this may be evidenced in an orientation towards appreciating people for their skills and expertise, and for their contribution to the team. Second - by considering others, RP also supports transactional functions and *advances the primary objectives of the workplace*. Third, RP is generally regarded as dispensable, irrelevant or peripheral. Its relational and interpersonal functions index RP as feminine – especially, the literature on communication and gender.

Holmes (2006) finds that although society perceives relational practice as feminine, workplace interaction evidences both feminine and masculine ways of doing relational practice. Holmes suggests that the concept of relational practice may be too narrowly conceived, and that more masculine styles of interaction – such as 'particular ways of doing small talk, contestive styles of humour and minimal ways of expressing approval' may also be acceptable ways of doing RP (p. 103). However relational practice has yet to be a major focus of enquiry in predominantly male organizations. An investigation of relationships in organizations involves the study of

language use in social context. A discussion of sociolinguistic approaches to context is therefore the focus of the next section.

2.8 Sociolinguistic perspectives on context: an overview of the literature

As an important component of linguistic investigation 'Context' comes in various shapes and operates at various levels, 'from the infinitely small to the infinitely big. It can be as small as one sound in a word, or as large as the universals of human communication, and everything in between' (Blommaert, 2005, p. 40). Its importance derives from its place in the assumptions underpinning the field of sociolinguistics. Key amongst these is the social constructionist notion that language and society are mutually constitutive. However, because context has been understood, or applied, in different ways during the history of sociolinguistics, it is important to indicate at the outset the notion of context underpinning this study.

Before the emergence of the ethnography of communication, context had been addressed within sociolinguistics through the social attributes speakers bring to talk - such as: kinship and other relationships, age, class, ethnicity, gender, geographical region (Drew & Heritage,1992). By the mid-1960s studies based on naturally occurring data had begun to show that the relevance of social attributes depended on the setting in which the talk occurred as well as the activities in which the participants were engaged, and that these may either heighten or diminish the significance of the social attributes.

The importance of a much broader consideration of context had been signaled since the 1920s. In anthropological linguistics for instance, Malinowski (1923) viewed the context of culture as important both in the level of language use and interpretation. In his view an utterance only has meaning within its context of situation. By the late 1950s however, in both sociology and linguistics the opposite view prevailed. In linguistics Chomsky (1957) had successfully argued the inferiority and unimportance of talk in interaction, proposing instead that 'linguistic analysis should focus on idealized sentences constructed by the analyst' (Goodwin & Heritage,1990 p. 285). Goodwin and Heritage further relate how 'the Austinian category of perlocution was effectively dropped from the speech act perspective' and 'speech act theorists focused on the analysis of sentences without their social context' (p. 285). In a parallel development in sociology and anthropology, theorists drawing on earlier work by Saussure 'excluded from analysis the interactional matrix that constitutes the natural home for language' (as cited in Goodwin & Heritage, 1990, p. 285). In this way talk in interaction faded from focus and with it went links between action and interaction.

Subsequently within sociology, Harold Garfinkel (1967) challenged the narrow view of context, arguing instead for the importance of the communicative and social order, and focusing on the social construction of context through the concurrent influences of setting on current action, and action in turn sustaining and modifying current context. In this view every action is both context shaped and context renewing (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990). Garfinkel developed the approach known as ethnomethodology which was applied specifically to conversation. Collaboration between Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (1974, as cited in

Schiffrin, 1994), saw this develop into the field of CA (Conversation Analysis). The CA approach seeks to discover the methods by which members of a society produce a sense of social order (Schiffrin, 1994) and focuses on what participants see as important in the course of social interaction.

Hymes' (1974) corresponding development of the field of Ethnography of Communication (to be discussed in detail in chapter 3) also emphasized the importance of a wider notion of context. His etic grid, known as the ethnography of speaking, enables a systematic analysis that includes a rich description of participants in the communicative event, together with their role relationships, and their rights and responsibilities. The analysis of context was further enriched by Gumperz (1982), who determined that any aspect of linguistic behaviour could function as a contextualization cue. This enabled links to be made between micro-features of discourse (which Saussure had designated as marginal features of language), and the more macro contexts they invoke (Drew and Heritage, 1992:8). By enabling analysts to show 'the relationship between language use and speakers' orientation to context and inference making', Gumperz proposed a view of context which was both more dynamic and more complex, and which encompassed the participant acting both as an individual and as a member of a social and cultural group (Schiffrin, 1994). This more dynamic view of context was further enhanced by Goffman's (1974) notion of frame, defined as:

> The definition participants give to their current social activity, to what is going on, what the situation is, and the roles interactants adopt within it. This

> dynamic nature of framing encompasses the idea that people can and do shift frames in the course of communicative activities.
>
> (Drew and Heritage 1992, p. 8)

Goffman calls such shifts in frame *footing*. Drawing on Hyland (2005), Jensen (2007) describes a somewhat similar strategy used as an interactional device in professional emails, in which authors project themselves into the text through self mention. Using personal pronouns *I, me, mine, we, our*, the writer takes a stance in relation to the reader. This stance can change over the course of the message in a way that is similar to the notion of footing in spoken interaction. This supports Hyland's (2005) suggestion that when people use CMC (computer mediated communication), they carry over ways of communicating from face-to-face interaction as well as exploiting the characteristics of the CMC medium. This carryover of strategies from a spoken to written medium, raises challenges for research which involves both spoken and written interaction, as it adds distinct but interrelated dimensions to the study of language use at the level of discourse, by increasing the complexity of context(s) which must be considered.

Blommaert (2005) also explores a number of challenges regarding the analysis of discourse and context. He suggests that many aspects of talk *outside* of short stretches of interaction impact on talk *in* interaction. In a critique primarily concerned with critical discourse analysis, he addresses a number of problems with traditional treatments of context in 'Schegloff's brand of conversation analysis'. He argues that the notion of context as applied within CA often does not recognize the existence of the entextualisation practices that the method brings to text, with the

result that 'socially situated events and the analytic artefacts representing them are seen as one and the same object' (p. 55). According to Blommaert the overall effect is that the meta-pragmatic framing (and hence remodeling) involved in all analysis is either not acknowledged, or not applied in the work of interpretation. Thus, he argues, analysis as a mediating link between thing and description is left out. A second problem he identifies is that by focusing on small well delineated instances of talk, that is, talk in interaction, CA analysis presents the social only at the level of co-participants in specific stretches of talk, thus 'disregarding *posthoc* [italics in the original] accounts of interaction or the way in which single instances can be embedded in larger patterns of interaction across events' (p.57).

Blommaert (2005) also proposes three other discourse phenomena, each of them macro-contexts that should be seen as contexts to texts. These are: *resources; text trajectories;* and *data histories*. He terms these 'forgotten contexts' and argues that 'their contexualising function consists in merging discourse with social structure, thus offering better prospects for critical analysis' (p.57). His first forgotten context is 'the complex of linguistic means and communicative skills usually identified as resources'. He argues that the perceived value of these resources in a society operates according to a hierarchy of functional adequacy, with proficiency in highly valued linguistic resources providing access to a different range of rights and benefits from those available to people with proficiency in least valued kinds of linguistic resources. Blommaert applies this argument to language use in society in general as one effect of globalization. He has shown it to have particular effects on asylum seekers whose minimal command of English language (including words, accents, intonation contours, and styles) may be prestigious in their home village or town, but

which has low value in the country where they seek refuge. It is easy to see how a similar situation could arise in organizations. For instance, linguistic resources available to and commonly used by workers on a factory floor may not be valued in the boardroom. Thus differentials in possession of, or competence in, valued linguistic resources, may give rise to different patterns of privilege and disenfranchisement in societies and institutions (Bourdieu, 1991; Blommaert, 2005). This is also a potentially relevant consideration for people who work in IT (and many other) organizations since they need, as part of their complex of resources, a high-level of linguistic competence in both spoken and computer mediated interaction. For them there is much connection and often overlap between the two.

Blommaert's (2005) discussion of text trajectories as a forgotten context is particularly relevant to the organization in the study in this regard. *Text trajectories*, the second of Blommaert's forgotten contexts, relates to a shifting of texts between contexts. Blommaert makes the point that 'analysis *is* entextualisation' (italics in the original) (p. 64), and is therefore part of the text trajectory. This is particularly relevant to communication in institutions, where talk 'finds its way into notes, summaries, case reports, citations, and the discussions of others' (p. 62), and in this way is *re*-entextualized. Blommaert cites Briggs (1997) and Silverstein and Urban (1996), in arguing that such re-entextualization practices involve crucial questions of power, especially as each phase of the re-entextualization may involve differences in access to valuable resources. As mentioned earlier, he argues that CA for instance is not able to accommodate the analysis of these processes, noting instead the suitability of an ethnographic approach.

A third and related 'forgotten context' is that of *data histories.* Blommaert (2005) notes that, unlike CA and CDA, 'in ethnography the history of data is acknowledged as an important element in their interpretation' (p. 64). By arguing that data are affected by the time, place and occasion of their gathering, and that many aspects of discourse, for instance narratives, only occur at certain times under certain conditions, Blommaert shows the importance of the social situatedness of research.

An even wider notion of context for discourse analysis and pragmatics is advocated by Roman Kopytko (2003), one that he terms *pancontextualism*. He describes it as 'no restrictions imposed by pragmaticians and discourse analysts by fiat' (p. 45). He advocates what he terms a non-Cartesian pragmatics rejecting the notion of either or. Kopytko also proposes that 'a systematic explanation of this complex dynamic process is a goal worth pursuing, although as maybe expected, it will take much effort and multidisciplinary research to succeed' (p. 51).

Kopytko's approach to context is reminiscent of that held by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). In their development of Knowledge Creation Theory, they too reject a logic based on either or, and following Nishida (1990), they argue for a synthesis of contextual elements (physical, mental and virtual).

Like Blommaert, Kopytko regards as consequential the fact that not all participants in verbal interaction may have equal access to contexual information. In his view, effective communication relies on actors sharing at least some contexts to a certain degree and he suggests that the contextual potential of an interaction is made up of the sum of individual perspectives contributed by language users. In Kopytko's view,

the addition of new perspectives, together with the subjective nature of individual perspectives, contributes to the contextual potential of any interaction as well as to the issue of infinite regress.

At the same Kopytko (2003) maintains that 'the relevant pragmatic context should include those elements of the (general) context that directly influence and shape the rationality of the course of discourse, both in the positive and negative sense' (p. 52). Under the pancontextual view of pragmatics, the scope of context is not limited, in that relational context is open and dynamic. Kopytko argues that contextual knowledge is both negotiated and collectively constructed, as well as being distributed between actors, and sometimes imposed upon them. Kopytko distinguishes between *intrinsic context*, comprising 'the properties, phenomena and processes which he specifies as actors' subjective individual pragmatic potentials (IPP), co-related with other mental cognitive elements and phenomena such as reasoning, self-concept, goals and emotions', and '*extrinsic context* comprising the elements of the relational context located beyond the mind/brain of the actor, who has access to them through perceptual, cognitive, affective and linguistic interfaces' (p. 53). Kopytko argues that it is the dynamic relations between the intrinsic and extrinsic contexts that give rise to the interactional context.

This holistic relational view of pragmatics and context encompassed by the pancontextual view of context emphasizes a subjective view of context and interactional processes, and does not distinguish between competence and performance. Kopytko (2003) describes it as 'a pragmatic system based on three pairs of binary relations: interactant/language; language/context; and

interactant/context' (p. 58). Important in this view is the dynamics of interpersonal communication as it concerns both the processes within the intrinsic context and the interface between the intrinsic and extrinsic context. It shows the social distribution of context and points to the processes associated with the social construction and negotiation of context in the interpretation of texts.

As will be shown in the discussion of methodological approach in chapter 3, ethnography is a particularly appropriate research tool for maximizing the holistic and subjective orientations to context, theorized by such as Kopytko and Blommaert.

In order to investigate the phenomenon of the knowledge enabling organizational context, I needed to adopt a methodological approach and analytical framework that would be sufficiently flexible to take account of aspects of context such as those discussed, as well as facilitating a disciplined approach to the study. Before describing my methodological approach in chapter 3, I conclude this chapter with a statement of my research question and its sub-questions.

2.9 Summary

Although Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) and Von Krogh et al's (2000) research identifies types of language use that occur within the various phases of knowledge conversion, and effectively locates language use at the centre of organizational knowledge creation processes and capabilities, management theories and frameworks are not sufficiently fine grained to analyze specific instances of discourse strategies and their effects in particular instances of interaction, such as the enactment of collegiality, or the ways in which the dimensions of care are instantiated in the day-

to-day operation of the organization. Contemporary linguistic theories on the other hand are well-equipped to produce fine-grained analyses, as well as detailed descriptions of very broad notions of context.

Traditionally, research in the field of sociolinguistics has focused on 'the little picture' – that is - on quite fine dimensions of context. However recent research (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Blommaert, 2005), particularly in the management of interpersonal relations (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2008; Coupland, 2007), has highlighted the need for consideration of broader dimensions of context. Blommaert (2005) also suggests that certain discourse forms (for instance narratives) only become visible and accessible at particular times and under particular conditions, which confirms the social situatedness of research.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003), note that 'the term context applies at a number of different levels of analysis. The most local context of any utterance is the immediate discourse context. The second level of contextual analysis requires attention to the relationships between those contributing to an interaction. And taking account of context also involves considering factors such as physical setting in which interactions take place' (p. 8-9). It is this broader end of the linguistic spectrum, known as applied sociolinguistics that is used in this thesis to bridge the gap between the identification of ways in which language is used, and the analysis of its moment-by-moment effects in meaning making within organizational interactions.

I conclude this chapter with a re-statement of my main research question and its sub-questions

Research Question

How is a knowledge enabling context instantiated through organizational discourse?

Sub Question One:

How are collegial relations enacted through organizational discourse?

Sub Question Two:

How is a climate of care enacted in organizational discourse?

In the next chapter I provide a detailed explanation of the methodology used to identify appropriate data for this investigation, and the analytical framework to be used in analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In order to address the research question stated at the end of chapter 2, this investigation of the components of a knowledge enabling context focuses on the social context of one organization. I use a discourse analytic approach to investigate in detail the ways in which the context is enacted on a day-to-day basis. In this chapter I bring together the range of information that comprises the methodology, aiming to support the validity and reliability of my findings with a clear description of my research practice for the benefit of other researchers in the field.

I begin with an overview of ethnography as method, outlining its advantages, and challenges. This is followed by a description of the organization as a setting for the study, built from my ethnographic observations.. Next I provide an overview of the methodological design. Within this discussion I outline my data gathering approach (which follows the Language in the Workplace project) and the procedures used in this study. In sections 3.8 and 3.9 I describe my two step approach to analysis. First is the ethnography of communication, with its key interpretive model of the ethnography of speaking (Hymes, 1974) which is used to guide a preliminary review of the data in preparation for analysis. This model for examining the components of speech events is explained and applied to a data sample to demonstrate how its use reveals categories and patterns for linguistic analysis. Next, in section 3.9 I focus on a combined analytic approach including Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2008) Rapport

Management framework, and the metadiscourse approach of Hyland (2005). These two strands inform the analysis of the discourse to show how interpersonal relations are managed through Spencer-Oatey's (2008) interrelated components of interactional goals, sociality rights and obligations, and face; and Hyland's features of written discourse that reveal the interactive and interactional features within email. To conclude the chapter I provide a sample analysis which demonstrates my analytic approach.

3.2 Ethnography

> "Ethnography refers to the study of cultures and groups – their lifestyles understandings and beliefs. In doing so it tends to emphasise the importance of understanding things from the point of view of those involved" (Denscombe, 2001: 69).

The purpose of ethnography is to produce detailed descriptions of events or cultures. In doing so it offers insights to readers about the situation being studied.

3.2.1 Characteristics of the ethnographic approach

It is common for ethnographers to begin with a question or questions rather than formal hypotheses, and analysis and interpretation of the data may raise additional questions. That is the case in this thesis where the main question is:

How is a knowledge enabling context instantiated through organizational discourse?

Ethnography is one of the major traditions in applied sociolinguistic research. It is a qualitative participatory approach that requires the participation of the researcher in the research setting. With its roots in anthropology and sociology, ethnography involves the study of the characteristics of a group in the real world rather than in laboratory settings. 'It is a journey of discovery which requires the researcher to spend considerable time in the field. The mundane and ordinary, the routine and normal aspects of everyday life are just as relevant as special events.' (Whyte, 1981 as cited in Denscombe, 2007, 69). Participants' perceptions and points of view are regarded as important, and there is an emphasis on the connections between the various features of a culture. According to Malinowski, (1922 as cited in Denscombe, 2007, p. 69) the numerous aspects of a community are so interwoven that ethnographic work needs to consider the totality of the community's culture – an holistic approach that emphasizes relationships, connections and interdependency among the parts. The researcher makes no attempt to isolate the phenomena under investigation, and insights and generalizations emerge from close contact with the data (Nunan, 1992).

Ethnography is guided by two key hypotheses, firstly - the *naturalistic ecological hypothesis* – with its central tenet the belief that the context in which behavior occurs has a significant influence on that behavior. Secondly - the *qualitative phenomenological hypothesis*, central to which is the belief that 'human behavior cannot be understood without incorporating into the research the subjective perceptions and belief systems of those involved in the research' (Wilson, 1982 as cited in Nunan, 1992, pp.53 - 54). Key principles of ethnography identified by Watson-Gegeo and Ulichny (1998, as cited in Nunan, 1992, p.54) and adopted in this

study, are: the use of *holism* – taking account not only of the behavior of individuals and groups being investigated, but also the contexts in which the behavior occurs; and *thick description* (Geertz, 1973; Sarangi, 2006) – that is, taking into consideration a broad range of factors that may have an effect on the phenomena under investigation, whilst acknowledging that decisions about what is or is not relevant or salient, are subjective and relative.

Current approaches to ethnography stand somewhere on a continuum between the *idiographic* (deep and intricately descriptive one-off) accounts of a culture and the *nomothetic* (generalizing, comparative and theoretical). Critique of the idiographic approach questions the value of one-off descriptive studies which cannot offer generalization or link to broader issues. The nomothetic approach is advocated by those (e.g. Porter, 1993) who view the purpose of ethnographic research as informing theory, for instance by elaborating on it or checking whether or not it holds true in real life. The approach taken in this thesis is that the two are not mutually exclusive. I aim to provide a 'thick description' of the organization which remains true to the concrete reality of the events and interactions analysed, whilst at the same time evaluating the evidence for Von Krogh et al's features of a knowledge enabling organizational context (structures that foster solid collegial relations and a climate of care). This descriptive focus is described by Denscombe (2007) as the idiographic approach.

By providing a thick description of the organization and its culture, and concurrently examining features of an organizational knowledge enabling context (identified in Von Krogh et al's, (2000) extension of knowledge creation theory) I aim to provide

a clear picture of the social and cultural world that comprises this organization. In particular one which identifies ways in which the discourse of the organization reflects or reveals specific features of such a context that may influence its knowledge enabling capabilities. The key features of an ethnographic approach are described in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of ethnographic research

Characteristic	*Gloss*
Contextual	The research is carried out in the context in which the participants normally work
Unobtrusive	The researcher avoids manipulating the phenomena under investigation
Longitudinal	The research is relatively long term
Collaborative	The research involves the collaboration of stakeholders other than the researcher
Interpretive	The researcher carries out interpretive analysis of the data
Organic	There is interaction between questions and data collection/interpretation

Source: Adapted from Nunan (1992).

3.2.2 Critiques of the ethnographic approach

Ethnography is not without criticism, most of which concerns questions of reliability and validity (Nunan, 1992).

Reliability

Concerns expressed in this regard relate to the quantity and richness of the data and the consequence that it is generally not possible for all of it to be analysed and to appear in a public report. Thus *internal reliability* is at risk because it is difficult for other researchers to analyse it and draw similar conclusions. Adopting strategies suggested by Le Compte and Goetz (as cited in Nunan, 1982, p. 58), I have minimized the risk to internal reliability through, for instance, participant observation, and the inclusion of mechanically recorded data such as emails. Although *external reliability* can be at risk because it is difficult for other researchers to replicate the study, Nunan (1992, p. 59) notes that 'replication of the research by others can be enhanced if the ethnographer is explicit about: the status of the researcher; the social situations and conditions; the analytic constructs and premises, and the methods of data collection and analysis'. In what follows, I have supported the external reliability of my study by: making my status as researcher explicit; by providing detailed descriptions of the contexts and conditions under which the research was carried out; and by providing detailed accounts of data collection and analysis.

Validity

Le Compte and Goetz (1982) argue for internal validity as a strength of ethnographic research, based on its data collection techniques and analysis. First, participant observation over long periods provides opportunities for continual data comparison and refinement of constructs; second, interviewing participants is a less abstract method than instruments used in other research designs and third,

participant observation conducted in natural settings is likely to more accurately reflect the reality of participants' experience than contrived settings. The use of these three data collection methods assists in protecting the internal validity of this research.

Reflexivity in ethnography

A social constructionist approach is increasingly common in workplace discourse (e.g. Mullany, 2007; Schnurr, 2007; Holmes, 2006). This is the notion that the social world is constructed through action and interaction by those inhabit it, whilst that social world mutually influences its inhabitants. It creates a paradox for the ethnographic researcher in that the conceptual tools employed in the study of the community or organization cannot ever be totally objective, neutral or passive. The account of the organization therefore is my own interpretation of the events and interactions I observed, recorded and analysed. I see it as a snapshot of the organization at this time – one that I have reported faithfully through triangulation of data sources and according to my understanding of the organization, its people and the theory I sought to test. I acknowledge that other interpretations are possible and I hope that further research will shed more light on the role of discourse in an organizational knowledge enabling context. In the next section I provide some background to the beliefs, understandings and experience that I as a researcher bring to the study.

3.2.3 Researcher Background

In qualitative research like ethnography, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection. This necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions

and biases at the outset. Locke et al (1987, as cited in Creswell 1994, p. 163) note that 'the investigator's contribution to the research setting can be useful and positive'. With experience and involvement in IT development as a department manager in a health care organization, I am a member of the IT discourse community. I believe that my experiences of contact with the industry sector provide me with an enhanced awareness and understanding of the organization's socio-cultural context. Because I am a member of the speech community of the participants in the research organization this assists me in recognizing, interpreting and articulating the organization's communicative repertoire and resources.

3.3 Setting

3.3.1 Introduction to the organization

As briefly described in chapter 1, the study is set in a New Zealand based IT company I have named Phoenix (pseudonym). It is located on one floor of a central city office building, in one large open plan office. At the commencement of the study Phoenix employed less than 50 people. The formal hierarchy is relatively flat, comprising Michael, the managing director, four senior managers, then everyone else. No one has their own office, rather managers and employees all work in the large open plan space, with three small offices along one side, a reception area and a small kitchen. The three small offices at the side operate on a booking system and no one has precedence in their use.

The company is privately owned, with Michael, the managing director, the principal shareholder, and other employees also shareholders. Only employees of the company

may be shareholders. It is a predominantly (80%) male organization. It also comprises mostly New Zealanders of European descent for whom English is a first language. At the time research was conducted, there were only four non-New Zealanders and these all had native speaker competence in English.

The company's principal business is website design, system development and integration, and consultancy. It has many clients within New Zealand and overseas, ranging from individuals and small companies to large multinationals and government agencies. Many of the relationships that Phoenix has with other companies were established and are maintained via computer mediated communication (CMC). The nature of the business places high demands on employees' communication competence and skills in the use of multimodal technologies.

Spencer-Oatey comments on the suitability of institutional discourse as a setting. She draws on Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (2005) in proposing that

‘Institutional discourse has the advantage of a natural experiment: it is partly pre-structured or controlled, but by the participant's orientation to the institutional activity rather than the researcher. At the same time, unlike researcher manipulated data, institutional interaction is context embedded and socially consequential for the participants’ (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 283).

3.4 Methodological Design

3.4.1 Approach to data gathering based on the LWP project

Data was gathered over a period of two years using an approach similar to that used by the Language in the Workplace (LWP) team at Victoria University of Wellington, and recently adopted more widely. This distinctive methodology developed by the LWP team for collecting interactions as they occur in New Zealand workplaces has provided an important model in the field of workplace discourse. It has been used for instance in the analysis of male and female management styles (Ladegaard, 2008); in the investigation of gendered professional communication (Mullany, 2007); in the analysis of aspects of collaborative interaction (Richards, 2006); and in investigations of leadership discourse (Schnurr, 2009).

The stages of the LWP data gathering process are listed below:

1 Initial meeting with management

2 Volunteers record their own data

3 Feedback sessions

4 Intensive data analysis

In this study I have adapted several aspects of the methodology, to accommodate the multimodal nature of the data, and the multiple levels of organization that comprise the enquiry. These stages are given below:

1 Initial meeting with management

The initial meeting with the Managing Director was arranged by the researcher and this facilitated entry to the organization together with access to potential participants.

2 Data recorded by i) researcher and ii) participants

Meetings and interviews were recorded by the researcher, and interactions within the practice based community were recorded by participants

3 Feedback sessions

Feedback throughout the project was provided in the form of presentations at the company meeting, in particular an initial presentation providing an introduction and overview of the project, a progress presentation, as well as discussions with management. As the researcher was participant observer, management and employees were also able to ask questions at any time on days when the researcher was present.

4 Data analysis

Ethnography traditionally yields a large quantity and wide variety of data, and that was the case in this research. To manage the increased complexity arising from different kinds of data, and the need to consider different levels of context, analysis proceeded in two stages. First a preliminary descriptive framework was applied. This enabled a consistent description across data types and assisted in organizing the data for detailed analysis carried out as the second stage.

In the following two sections, I provide a more detailed account of the initial meeting with management, followed by an account of establishing the role of participant observer.

3.4.2 Initial meeting with management

Entry to the organization was negotiated with managing director (MD). At our initial meeting we discussed the objectives of the research and the kinds of data I aimed to gather. I also provided a written information sheet outlining the project as well as consent forms. After discussion with his managers and other employees, the MD gave permission for the research to be undertaken. I was introduced to employees and invited to make a presentation about the project at the weekly company meeting. Information sheet and consent forms were provided to management and employees and they were advised that they could return these directly to me if they wished to participate. (Copies of consent and information forms are provided as Appendix 1). People returned their consent forms quickly, most within two days and some, who had been off-site on project work, returned their forms within a week.

Data gathering was arranged for one full day each week with additional days if needed, and in practice I occasionally spent more than one day a week in the organization. The MD allocated me a workspace and invited me to work there as often and as long as I needed. The workspace, comprising: a desk, chair, computer and telephone, was located in the open plan office along with everyone else in the company (including the MD). I was also given a company email address and included in a range of email distribution lists.

3.4.3 Establishing the role of participant observer

According to Hymes (1974) the researcher should not be just an observer but should be immersed in the community. The task of developing a deeper understanding of the

culture needed to be balanced with a desire to intrude as little as possible in the daily work of the organization**.** In order to avoid interfering with the dynamics of a meeting or gathering it is often better to avoid taking an active part in the proceedings (Saville-Troike, 1989).

On the first research day in the company, I worked at my computer writing an overview of the company from secondary sources such as the web site and company publications, together with a general description of the office setting. I did not pre-select exactly what communicative situations to record, but initially I simply observed in order to gain a sense of what was typical. Beginning the day by writing at my desk, was a pattern common to the organization and I found that as people passed by they would often come up to talk with me, ask questions and invite me to attend various kinds of meetings and other events. This enabled a more or less seamless integration into the rhythm of the working day.

In terms of general observation of day-to-day communicative activities it would have been inappropriate to just sit and watch**.** In order to establish a presence in the organization with a minimum of intrusion, I began on day one as mentioned above, by working at the desk I had been allocated and wrote up the company background and an overview of its structure and operations. Since the whole company was located in one office on one floor (apart from people who were working on client sites), it was impossible not to notice what was going on around me. By keeping two documents open as I worked, I made notes on the day to day communicative practices that went on around me in the course of the normal working day. I also

made notes on the environment, for instance descriptions of the spatial arrangement of the office and artefacts and decoration of individual workspaces.

3.5 Data Gathering

All the data collected are 'backstage'. Actual customer service encounters and telephone calls are not included.

3.5.1 Meetings

I was invited to attend the weekly company meeting on an ongoing basis and to attend other meetings when they occurred on the days I was working in the company. In order to minimize interference in the normal dynamics I had decided to limit my participation to engaging in the general socializing that happened before meetings, and again occasionally after meetings. Apart from that, I would set up the recording equipment, take my place along with the rest of the participants and just be there (cf Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). I did not participate in discussion of agenda items as it would have compromised my role as researcher. I was a participant to the extent that I regularly attended the meetings and was involved in the social talk before and after. Exceptions were the occasions when I was actually presenting feedback as an agenda item in the weekly company meeting. Although interjections occurred in all meetings, in any one meeting there were also quite a few people who did not interject, so being a quiet attendee was not unusual. Also people were used to my being in the office.

The kinds of meetings I attended and recorded on audio tape included: the weekly company meetings (open meetings, attended by 80% - 90% of employees each

week); special purpose company meetings - such as those relating to strategy development; and project meetings. Each week, as the room was being set up for the meeting I would also set up the recording equipment at the front of the room on a side table.

3.5.2 Emails

The managing director arranged for me to be on the regular company email lists, so I received a wide variety of emails. This included: broadcast emails from all kinds of employees - for instance the company administrator, specialized work groups, project teams, senior managers, the managing director, and also from individuals asking questions and/or providing answers; interpersonal discussions; general notices which were in effect like a public diary with, for example, people advising they would be away from the office; social invitations to both office and private occasions; feedback and discussion after social occasions; and setting up workplace activities. At times the inbox count was over 10,000 and 'weeding' became a lengthy process. I eventually asked to be removed from the technical list as it simply generated an unwieldy number of incoming messages.

Email is a common way of communicating in the organization and very often emails are simply addressed to 'Phoenix' which means that everyone receives them including the researcher as observer. Email has many advantages as part of a data set. Although asynchronous, it is a real time, verbatim record produced by the 'speaker'. There is a wide range of possible responses by 'hearer'. Those encountered at Phoenix included: rapid replies by return email from one or more recipients; no visible or written (observed) response; an offer from a recipient to come over in

person; a visit from one or more recipients to continue a conversation in person; a 'shower' of responses, or a response with a more senior person cc'd in.

As 'member' of a number of email lists I was again in a sense a participant and was free to reply and/or comment on any email received. I did not participate in discussion about company matters and only replied when an email was addressed directly to me.

3.5.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with members of specialized work groups, members of project teams, senior managers and the managing director. Interviews were generally 45 – 60 minutes in length with some shorter ones for clarification and follow up, and were recorded on audio tape. These were all were face-to-face, one-to-one interviews. These were especially useful in providing some historical information. Interviews took place in one of the small offices which had been booked for the purpose. In each case I set up and controlled the recording equipment, which comprised a small, single disc recorder and multi-directional microphone. These were placed on the table between me and the interviewee. Participants were reminded that they could ask for the microphone to be turned off at any time during the interview, but no one made this request.

3.5.4 Field Notes

There were occasions when I was spontaneously invited to attend a meeting which was set up and about to begin. On these occasions I did not set up the recording equipment to avoid the potential for disruption. Instead I took notes throughout the meeting. These formed part of the collection of field notes. Often people would come

by and talk to me about the research project, or just stop by for a chat in the way that they did as a normal part of office life. Sometimes it became a sort of interview which would have to be classified as unstructured and unscheduled. On some occasions I would ask them if they minded me taking notes and if they agreed I did so and wrote the notes up later in the day.

3.5.5 Observations

The researcher in a qualitative study can be both a participant and observer or simply an observer (Nunan, 1992). As mentioned earlier, I chose the latter role, aiming to minimize researcher influence on the data. Especially, I did not want to make comments or suggestions in meetings that may influence the topics or direction of talk. Although I attended various kinds of meetings, I limited my participation to attending and audio recording these occasions. This is consistent with the LWP philosophy as described by Holmes and Stubbe (2003); and Marra (2003, 2008).

Sorting through incoming emails, describing the organization and writing up field notes meant that I was working at my desk for long periods. This provided ongoing opportunity for observation. I did not intend to observe only specific behaviours but rather to develop a sense of how people went about their daily business, to get a feel for the communication climate, to develop a sense of what it is like to 'be' in this organization and to gather examples for analysis of a comprehensive range of interaction types that occurred in the course of the working day. This method proved to be effective as observations could be recorded as they occurred and as writing was a common activity for me to be doing there it avoided the disruption of normal workplace routines.

Observation is a key method for gathering information on and gaining an understanding of the organization as an interactional setting, and according to Hymes (1974) this includes details of physical arrangement and location. The importance of location and the use that is made of physical space is the subject of an emerging stream of research in linguistics (Scollon & Scollon, 2003; St George, 2004; Modan, 2007).

3.5.6 Other data sources

Additional data sources provided a range of background information which added to the richness of the dataset. These included: charts outlining work processes (e.g. project procedures); the company web site which provided some of the demographic information on company personnel and case studies of company projects; and reports – such as annual reports and other special purpose reports.

Demographic data was obtained from participants via interview and from company documentation both in print and on the company website where there is a comprehensive section on 'our people'. Specific ages of people are not given nor were they obtained. The managing director noted that 'there are two kinds of people here - the older experienced people who have been in the industry for many years and the younger ones who tend to be new graduates.'

3.6 Data processing

Observations were written up each week 'on the spot' as I worked in the organization. They were simply written as narrative accounts. Sometimes they were well formed, and at other times they comprise brief notes in order to 'capture' what I was seeing either while it was still in progress, or whilst the sense of it was fresh in

my mind. At the end of each work day I reviewed and filed my notes and this contributed to the development of an overview of the organization.

Tape recordings of interviews, meetings and other interactions were reviewed and labeled. The mini recorder discs were copied onto audio tapes and both discs and taped copies were labeled and locked in a metal cabinet for safekeeping.

Files were set up for different types of interaction were set up in different files. For instance each whole meeting was transcribed and then personal experience narratives were copied and filed separately. Files were also set up for interview transcriptions, specialized work group interactions and emails. Each included demographic details and/or contextual information. Additional information included, for instance, summaries of strategy process from the MD and an interview supplemented by a written report. These together with the many hours of observations comprised a rich dataset.

Emails are of course verbatim as produced by the writer. The only changes made are to protect the anonymity of participants. For instance, names of people, company names, locations, dates and sometimes product names. In terms of data description the emails are grouped in categories and each category accompanied by a general description of the set in the file.

The background information I collected was also systematically processed. Case studies from the organization's website are simply filed in alphabetical order of

client. At the beginning of the file is a description of the source and the general pattern of the studies as reported by the company.

Occasional publications such as the company magazine (available in-house and to company clients) are filed in one file and preceded by a general brief overview of stated purpose and content. An original report from an employee to management, was offered to me by its author and its inclusion approved by senior management. It is accompanied by a description of the writer, their stated purpose in writing the report, an overview of the report's content.

Website information that has been printed down includes profiles of 'our people'. These provide valuable demographic material such as background, experience, length of time with the company and photographs of the MD, senior managers and subject experts within practice communities. They are kept in a file labeled web sourced demographics.

3.6.1 Selection of the dataset

The data selected for analysis represents a specimen set of typically occurring communication rather than a statistically representative selection. Representativeness was determined as a result of ethnographic work. The criteria for selection were: that the mode or medium must be be commonly used by Phoenix people in day-to-day work practice.

Table 3.2 Composition of the primary dataset

Data for analysis				
Meetings	No. 8	Location	Participants F = female M = male	Length (mins)
Weekly – whole organization	5	All held within the company	80 % of employees and managers, + MD (4 F)	(5 x 90) 450
Special purpose company	1	Main office	90% of employees and all managers + MD (5F)	90
Project team	1	Small office booked for the purpose	Project team members (7M)	50
Conversations				
Specialised work group	1	Dyad within the group	group talk	60
Emails	200	Company intranet	Various	
Ethnographic material				
Interviews	8		2F, 4M	
MD	3	60 mins	1M	180
Snr Manager	1	50	1M	50
Employees	4	50	2F 2M	200
Observations			Researcher	
In company	45		5-8hrs	270 + (hrs)
Field Notes		Written while working as participant observer	Researcher	8991 wds

Table 3.3 Composition of the Supplementary Dataset

Company documentation		Description	Source	Amount
Case studies	5	Case overview of work for specific clients	Company website	5 x (250 – 300) wds
Charts	1	Project/solution methodology	Wall chart in 'the big room'	1 x A3 chart
Written reports	1	ii) Employee to MD on concerns about rapid growth	ii) Given by employee to researcher – with management approval	2000 wds
Presentations	1	MD to company on strategy	Power point presentation at special company meeting (researcher was present and also received the presentation on CD)	15 'slides'

3.7 Analysis and interpretation

3.7.1 Approach to data analysis

Data analysis is approached using a five step process similar to that used in the SLALS Language in the Workplace Project: identify, describe, transcribe, analyse, apply.

1 Identify

Addressing the research questions required a dataset that extended beyond spoken interaction. It was clear from early observation that the most striking thing about 'interaction' in this organization is that there is a lot of it, and that it is multi-modal. To identify typical interactions and to attempt analysis of the socio-communicative

context, examples were selected and used from the data types listed in table 3.2. From this collection examples were selected for analysis and inclusion in the body of the report.

2 Describe

Hymes' (1974) etic grid, was applied as a preliminary descriptive framework (to be explained below) facilitating a consistent approach to the variety of data types.

3 *Transcribe*

Following data description from audio recordings of interactions in meetings, selected examples are transcribed in preparation for analysis. Transcription conventions used are those established by the Language in the Workplace project. Marra (2003, p. 37) notes that 'this is an interlineal system that covers basic linguistic information such as overlaps, pauses, emphasis, and relevant paralinguistic details.' (A list of transcription conventions is provided as Appendix 2).

4 Analyse

After transcription of audio tapes, review and selection of material from observations, emails and secondary data, the following step is analysis. The variety of content and form of data made this challenging. In order to make a consistent approach to the variety of data types, the analytical process proceeded in two stages. First a descriptive framework, was applied and this was followed by application of the analytical framework. The two step analytical approach is described in the next section and analyses are reported in chapters four, five and six.

5 Apply

This last step focuses on the discussion of my findings and their implications for the literature. These are presented in chapter seven.

3.8 A two step approach to analysis

3.8.1 Step one: a descriptive framework

In considering a method of analysis for this thesis it was important to select an approach which was appropriate for an ethnographic study of an organization. As choice of methodology impacts on the findings my aim was to find a framework that would be neither overly limiting nor overly broad. The basis of my study is the organization as a whole community, and its scope the members' communicative interaction in the naturally occurring context of the working day. So any useful framework had to provide not only for analysis of both aspects, but to reveal connections between them.

Although the organization is in a very real sense one community of people working together towards organizational goals, the ways in which this is accomplished by individuals and groups on a day-to-day basis may vary widely. With my aim of identifying the ways in which collegiality is fostered within the organization it was important to select an approach that enabled systematic examination (explication) of the communicative ecology of the organization and in this respect the ethnography of communication was a good fit for the needs of the study. A two stage approach was adopted. First, Hymes' (1974) ethnography of communication framework was

applied to the data, as a preliminary descriptive framework. Herring (2007) notes its usefulness in 'drawing attention to aspects of the speech situation that may assist in interpreting linguistic phenomena of interest' (p. 4). Its parameters are sufficiently broad yet at the same time focus on eight specific aspects of communication. These parameters, generally expressed as the acronym – S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. – are: setting; participants; ends; act sequence; key; instrumentality; norms of interaction; and genre. Their characteristics and application are explained more fully in section 3.9.

Hymes did not claim that every category would be relevant in every instance, nor that they should be used in any particular order. Rather, he offers them as useful categories in an investigation of the communicative repertoire of a community and advises researchers to apply those that are useful and to add categories if they are needed (Hymes, 1974).

Because my focus was 'interaction' in general, my data were multi-modal as well as multi-situational, so the ethnography of communication framework was sufficiently general to encompass all of these instances, but also specific enough to reveal or at least suggest deeper patterns. So I applied it to both my observations and participant interviews and then to the multi-modal 'conversations'.

3.8.2 Origins and development of the ethnography of communication

As indicated in my earlier discussion of context, although there was, prior to the 1960s, widespread awareness of a relationship between language and culture, the

descriptive and analytical products of ethnographers and linguists traditionally failed to account for it. Dell Hymes' paper on The Ethnography of Speaking launched the field of *ethnography of communication* as well as synthesizing the two previously separate approaches (Saville-Troike,1989). In developing the framework for the ethnography of communication Hymes (1974) notes that although 'linguistic materials are indispensable, and the logic of linguistic methodology is an influence in the ethnographic perspective, it is not linguistics, but ethnography, not language but communication which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be assessed' (p.4).

As a field the ethnography of communication draws together a number of different threads of interest including: a sociological concern with interactional analysis and role identity; the study of performance by anthropologically oriented folklorists; and the work of natural language philosophers. Hymes (1974, p. 5) notes that the linguistics that could contribute most to the new field was sociolinguistics. However, he called for a sociolinguistic approach that would contribute to the general study of communication and noted that 'there must be change with respect to a number of orientations toward language' (Hymes, 1974, p. 9). He makes a rather lengthy description of these but summarizes them as follows: 'In short the primacy of speech to code; function to structure; context to message; the appropriate to the arbitrary or simply possible; and the interrelations always essential'. He identifies the community or other social context as starting point for analysis and understanding and he states that 'in general the place, boundaries of language and other communicative means in a community be taken as problematic' (p.9).

3.8.3 Fundamental notions in the ethnography of speaking

Before discussing the identification and description of components, I will address Hymes' 'fundamental notions' of the Ethnography of Speaking.

Ways of speaking

Hymes (1974, p. 45) refers to the heuristic or regulative idea of 'ways of speaking'. This is the idea that the communicative conduct of members of a community exhibits determinate patterns of speech activity and that a member's communicative competence comprises knowledge of those patterns and their appropriate uses. Hymes points out that 'speech' when used in this sense 'applies to all manifestations of language'. This is an important consideration in a study of organizational communities, where many modes and channels are often available, and people can and do switch modes and or channels during the course of an event. 'Ways of speaking' is also an important notion in terms of the integrated approach called for by Hymes. He outlines several different standpoints from which to view the relationships which must be described and explained: i) the relationship among speech events, acts and styles; ii) consideration of the whole from the standpoint of persons; iii) the standpoint of beliefs, values and attitudes; and iv) the standpoint of contexts and institutions. This last standpoint most closely resembles my approach and Hymes (1974: 46) states that his view 'could support an alternative conception and name for the descriptive enterprise which might be expressed as the study of the *speech economy* of a community.'

Fluent speaker

Determining what makes a fluent speaker is part of the ethnographic investigation, and applies to what makes a fluent speaker in the particular community being studied. The investigation needs to determine what for that community are considered the normative notions of ability. In an IT workplace, for instance, this involves being able to use a range of computer mediated and other electronic technologies, and to be competent in face-to-face and written communication with both colleagues and clients.

Speech Community

The speech community is a primary concept that positions the unit of description as a social rather than a linguistic entity. Positioning the community under study as a social group means the task is to explore the community's communicative means as a whole. Hymes points out that the boundaries of a speech community cannot be defined by linguistic features alone and he refers to work by Barth, Gumperz, Labov, Le Page and others in stating that 'definition of situations within which and identities through which interaction occurs is decisive'(p.48). The ethnography of speaking requires the unit of investigation to be an extralinguistically defined *bounded entity*. Members of the small specialized organization that is the subject of my investigation are all members of the speech community of IT professionals. Hymes (1974) defines a speech community as 'A community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech, and knowledge as to its patterns of use. Both conditions are necessary' (p. 51). Hymes describes further notions to refine and assist in developing the idea of speech community. For instance – *speech field* – used

to describe ‘the range of communities within which a person’s knowledge of ways of speaking enables him to move communicatively’ (p. 50), and speech network – a specific linkage of persons through shared knowledge of forms of speech and ways of speaking.

Communicative Competence

Hymes’ framework specifically addresses several successively embedded dimensions of context, of which the *speech community* could be said to be the outermost one. Within this is the *speech situation.* Speech situations must be bounded in some way and serve as contexts for specific kinds of activity. In terms of organizations examples may include: meetings; retreats; social functions; product launches; performance evaluations etc. Within each speech situation occur *speech events;* these are ‘activities or aspects of activities directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech’ (Hymes, 1974). Examples of speech events in an organizational setting may include agenda items within a meeting, for instance the reading of minutes from the previous meeting. The *speech event* is the unit of analysis. Gumperz refers to speech events as ‘situations of speaking that are concretely available for ethnographic investigation’ and ‘units of interaction subject to analysis by established empirical means’ (Gumperz, in Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton, 2003, p. 215). Hymes identified 16 components that should comprise the description of speech events and developed these into the etic grid known as the ethnography of speaking arranged by the mnemonic S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. These are discussed further in the section on the application of the model.

The minimal term in Hymes' set of contexts is the *speech act*. The speech act is not synonymous with a sentence. It may be a sentence but is not necessarily so. In an organization it could be, for example, a request or a directive. Hymes (1974, p. 63) notes that 'We must bear in mind that the defining level may not be at the detailed fine grained micro-level of the texture of discourse itself, but at the broad macro-level of major groups of components.' Hymes cites an example from Bauman (1972, pp. 340-341) where, in a Nova Scotian community, 'no specific linguistic or symbolic features, genres or performance skills or styles were defining, but rather a specific scene'. I provide the whole quote here as it raises an important point.

> What is apparently going on in the culture of the Le Have islanders is that within the whole range of speech situations making up the speech economy of the islanders, the session at the store is singled out as special, isolated from the others and enjoyed for its own sake, because talking there may be enjoyed for its own sake not as art of another activity or for some instrumental purpose. In other words, the fact that this situation is set aside for sociability pure and simple, makes it special.
>
> (Bauman, 1972 as cited in Hymes, 1974, p. 63)

In this example, the fact that the *scene* is what really matters most here to the islanders - draws attention to an especially valuable aspect of Hymes' framework, its provision for an examination of context simultaneous with an examination of communicative means. Hymes also emphasizes the importance of keeping in mind the multiple hierarchies of relations between communicative means. These two factors together are important considerations in my aim of identifying the

relationships between communicative interactions and the socio-cultural context in which they occur.

3.8.4 Applying the Ethnography of Speaking

The Ethnography of Speaking guides data collection, as well as being a way of preparing data for both linguistic analysis and explanation. It also provides points of reference and questions to assist with interpretation and explanation of both linguistic and contextual analysis. Analytically as well as methodologically it proceeds in a number of phases (Saville-Troike, 1979): First - an initial period of ethnographic field work using participant observation, non-participant observation, field notes recording socio-cultural aspects of behaviour; recorded interviews; recorded meetings; and a range of secondary sources available in the organization including charts, the company website and in-house reports. In Phase two the data provided by the field work is examined to determine what - in this community - constitutes a *speech situation* and what constitutes a *speech event* - the speech event being the unit of analysis. In Phase three, speech events are analysed using Hymes' questions to identify and describe their *components*. Components of speech events are commonly arranged as the acronym S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. They are shown in Table 3.3 below. As mentioned previously, Hymes recognized that not all categories would be needed all of the time, but that they should be used as needed and likewise that further questions or categories should be added where necessary. Approaching the data from the perspective of language function, as discussed above, prepares the way for further linguistic analysis. Hymes' table showing the components of speech (which he refers to as the etic grid) is given below.

Table 3.4 Components of speech

	Component Description	Notes
S	*Setting* – time, place and physical circumstances *Scene* – distinct from setting; psychological setting, or the cultural definition of the occasion as a certain type of scene	Setting is the informal unmarked term for these two sub-components
P	*Participants*: speaker or sender; addressor; hearer, receiver or audience; addressee	Includes relevant categories such as status, or relationship to one another
E	*Ends*. Includes two kinds: i) *Purposes – outcomes* which is the expected or usual outcome of the event from a community standpoint and ii) *Purposes – goals* refers to goals of the participants which may not always be consistent with the expectations or goals of the event from the standpoint of the community	With respect to outcomes and goals, the conventionally expected must be distinguished from the situational or personal
A	*Act sequence* - the order of communicative/speech acts. Includes turn taking and overlap phenomena. Represents a level distinct from the sentence, and not identifiable with any single portion of other levels of grammar.	A communicative act may be a request; command; statement – depending on the norm(s) of interaction applied to it.
K	*Key* - Tone, manner or spirit in which the act is done. For instance – mock or serious. Signaling may be non-verbal e.g. wink, posture, style of dress. It can also be linguistic, such as vowel length or aspiration.	Significance arises from the fact that when it is in conflict with overt content it tends to override content.
I	*Instrumentalities* - includes channels and forms of speech: *Channels* – medium of transmission plus mode of use, for instance oral channel may be used to sing. *Forms of speech* – speech style, a selection of alternatives with reference to a common frame or purpose	Context of application should always be made clear.
N	*Norms of interaction: Comprised of:* i) Rules *of interaction*: The specific behaviours and proprieties proper to the event	i) They implicate analysis of social relationships and social structure in a community. Hymes (1974: 60) notes that 'Grice's

	ii) Norms of interpretation – An account of rules of interaction may still leave open their interpretation. This is especially so in communication between members of different communities	conversational postulates do not fit.' ii) These implicate the belief system of a community
G	*Genres* - Categories such as poem, myth, tale, commercial, oration. Genres may coincide with speech events but should be treated as analytically independent of them. For instance, the lecture typically occurs in an educational institution; however its properties can be invoked in other situations with humorous or other effect.	Hymes (1974: 61) notes that 'it is heuristically important to proceed as if all speech has formal characteristics of some sort as manifestations of genres.'

Source: Derived from Hymes (1974) and Saville-Troike (1989)

3.9 Step Two – The Analytical framework: Rapport management

In the previous sections I described the application of Hymes' etic (speaking) grid to prepare data for analysis. Participant observation provided a range of day-to-day activities from which to select examples for investigation and analysis. The application of Hymes' grid enabled a detailed and consistent description of the data for analysis. In this section I describe my analytical approach, using Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2008) rapport management framework together with its theoretical background in politeness theory and its application in this thesis.

The selection of a suitable analytical framework is an important decision in the research process because of its potential impact on the findings. Since each approach provides a particular lens with which to examine the interaction, and highlights different aspects of its key features, it is important to select one which is a good match for the research questions being asked (Stubbe et al 2000, p. 3).

My analytical framework needed to be able to address the issues arising from my data and observations. That is, it needed to be able to provide insights into the instantiation of *the knowledge enabling context* of the organization. In order to address this abstract concept it was important to break it down, for the purposes of analysis, into its component parts. These parts were discussed in the literature review in chapter 2 and are summarized below:

- the enactment of collegial relationships within the organization;
- the social structures within the organization that both impact on and are impacted by those relations;
- the ways in which the dimensions of care (mutual trust, active empathy, access to help, lenience in judgment and courage) are reflected in the interactional ethos of the organization.

In order to operationalize the analysis it was important to select a framework that encompassed the use of language in the relational aspects of communication. The two main functions of language are the transfer of information (transactional function) and the maintenance of social relationships (interactional function) (Brown and Yule, as cited in Schiffrin, 1994). In the workplace language is used to accomplish both of these functions on a day-to-day basis, and although Brown and Yule suggest that discourse is either primarily transactional or primarily interactional, Spencer-Oatey (2008) proposes that 'the two functions are very closely interconnected and that the relational aspect of language use is of central importance in all communication' (p. 2). Since my research questions are concerned with language use in interpersonal relations (i.e. fostering collegiality and a climate of

care), the rapport management framework was a good match for the research objectives. By adopting the rapport management framework in analysis, I aim to provide discoursal and pragmatic evidence of the ways in which the components of a knowledge enabling context are enacted in the organization that is the focus of the study.

3.9.1 Background in Politeness theory

The rapport management framework focuses on 'the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.3). Although the framework was developed to address investigations into intercultural and cross-cultural communication, I apply it in a workplace setting to study elements of the organization's knowledge enabling context that are inherently part of workplace culture. The rapport management framework draws on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory - one of the main linguistic theories that is relevant to relational communication. However the rapport management framework addresses many of the limitations for which politeness theory has been criticised. Some of these criticisms are outlined below.

Face

Firstly, politeness theory is based on the concept of face, generally referred to in Goffman's (1967) sense as ' positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact' (p. 5).

Brown and Levinson (1987) propose that face is the principle motivating force for politeness, and they see it as consisting of the two related aspects of *negative face* --

representing a desire for autonomy, and *positive face* -- representing a desire for approval. Under Brown and Levinson's view, all participants in spoken interaction emotionally invest in face and constantly consider it. However their conceptualisation of face has come under criticism from a range of researchers as being too narrowly defined. For instance, for failing to account for the social perspective on face, and instead focusing on the idea of individual autonomy and freedom (Matsumoto, 1988; Gu, 1998, as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

According to Gu (1998) this focus on individual freedom and autonomy within politeness theory, anchors it in a Western paradigm, because although these concepts exist in Eastern cultures, they are not considered face concerns.

Appropriateness

Secondly, within politeness theory certain types of expressions are characterized as inherently polite or impolite, but as Spencer-Oatey notes, 'politeness is a social judgment and speakers are judged to be polite or rude, depending on what they say in what context. Politeness is a question of appropriateness' (p. 2). Holmes (1995) argues that politeness is not something which can be unproblematically recognized by both speaker and hearer. Consequently, Mills (2006) calls for changes in the analysis of politeness, arguing that politeness needs to be analyzed at a discourse level, rather than in the sentence or phrase level. She suggests: viewing politeness as appearing over longer stretches of talk; seeing politeness within the context of, for instance, a community of practice, rather than simply as the product of individual speakers; and being aware of the possibility of conflicts over the meanings of politeness. This echoes the view of Usami (2001) who also argues for the

importance of examining politeness not only at the utterance level but also at the discourse level. Usami (2001) defines discourse politeness as follows:

> Discourse politeness is the functional dynamic, as the whole of factors (including factors at the level of utterances) giving rise to pragmatic politeness, which cannot be observed at the level of single utterances, but rather only in longer stretches of discourse.
>
> (as cited in Haugh, 2003, p. 407)

Additionally, in terms of settings for politeness studies, Lakoff (1989) and Harris (2001) propose that researchers should examine politeness in institutional settings in order to foreground different dimensions of politeness.

3.9.2 Overview of the Rapport Management Framework

Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2008) notion of rapport management refers to the management of harmony -- disharmony among people. The term has a broader scope than face management in that it examines not only the way language is used to construct, maintain, or threaten social relationships, but it also encompasses the management of sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals, thus paying more attention to a balance between self and other. From this perspective – first, *face* is concerned with personal relational social value, a sense of worth and dignity, and reputation. It can apply equally to the face of an individual or to an individual as a member of a group or community with which he or she identifies, thus meeting some of the objections of critiques advancing non-western perspectives.

Secondly - s*ociality rights and obligations* are concerned with social experiences. Interpersonal rapport can be affected when behavioural expectations, with respect to perceived sociality rights and obligations, are not fulfilled. Perceived sociality rights and obligations have a number of bases. They are often based in contractual/legal agreements and requirements. They may also be based in the explicit and implicit expectations that people associate with particular roles and positions. Or they may be associated with the conventions and styles that people develop in, for instance, workgroups. Spencer–Oatey (2008) notes that, 'Sometimes behavioural norms and conventions are not arbitrary. They may reflect efficient strategies for handling practical demands, and they may also be manifestations of more deeply held values' (p. 16). She labels these as socio-pragmatic interactional principles (*SIPs)*, suggesting that two fundamental ones are: *equity* - the notion that we are entitled to fair treatment; and *association* - the belief that we are entitled to social involvement with others. These SIPs incorporate an evaluative element into the rapport management model because they make the management of norms rapport sensitive, and Spencer-Oatey calls for more research to explore the extent to which SIPs impact on interaction in different contexts.

> Other non-arbitrary effects on rapport arise from pragmalinguistic conventions. These relate to the ways in which pragmatic meaning is conveyed in a given context. Where there is a mismatch between the linguistic form chosen by the speaker and the pragmatic meaning they intend to convey, pragmatic failure occurs
>
> (Thomas, 1983; White, 1997 as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 42).

The third component in the management of rapport, besides face and sociality concerns, is *interactional goals*. Both the relational and the transactional goals of interactants are important, as frustration and annoyance can arise when these goals are not achieved. Within the rapport management framework these three components - face; sociality rights and obligations; and interactional goals - are interconnected. As well as expanding the conception of face as traditionally used in politeness theory, the combination of these three components contributes to a focus on interlocutors rather than just the speaker. The rapport management framework develops this effect further by extending the analytical categories to include additional domains as discussed below.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) suggests that rather than particular speech acts being inherently threatening, interpersonal harmony can be threatened in three main ways: through face threatening behavior; rights threatening/obligation-omission behaviour; and goal threatening behavior. Spencer-Oatey and Xing (1998, 2004, 2008) and Matsumoto (1989, as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.20) contend that politeness is managed through a number of related domains of language use rather than just the illocutionary domain. These include:

The illocutionary domain which concerns the rapport threatening/ rapport enhancing implications of performing speech acts

The *discourse domain* which concerns issues such as topic choice and management and the impact on harmonious relations

The *participation domain* which concerns procedural aspects of an interchange such as turn taking rights and obligations

The *stylistic domain* which concerns, for example, choice of genre appropriate lexis and syntax

The *non-verbal domain* such as gestures, body movements and eye contact

By taking account of these additional domains of discourse, in particular the participation domain and the discourse domain, the framework accounts for participants other than the speaker, as well as expanding the analysis to the level of discourse, rather than confining it to the utterance. Although this greatly increases the complexity of analysis**,** it also increases the potential richness of the analysis. Spencer-Oatey (2008) also notes other influences on the management of interpersonal rapport. These include: communication style and interactional ethos, 'a manner of language use that exhibits clusters of co-occurring features' (p. 28). She notes that all aspects of language use, from prosody and paralinguistic behaviour, to spatial relations and touch, can be reflected in style.

Influences on strategy use

The discourse strategies that people use in interaction to manage interpersonal rapport are influenced by a range of factors. One factor concerns contextual variables - such as relations between participants. This aspect includes the sociolinguistic dimensions of power and distance, and the inter-relationship between power and distance; message content; social interactional roles; activity type; as well as the SIPs and pragmalinguistic conventions mentioned above.

Another factor influencing strategy use is rapport orientation. Within politeness theory it is generally believed to be in participants' best interests to maintain each

other's face - that is they adopt a mutual support orientation. However a number of theorists including Turner (1996) and Culpepper (1996, 2005 as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 32), have shown that this is not always so, and they argue that a theory of 'politeness' needs to account for those occasions when people do attack other people's face. Spencer-Oatey suggests four types of rapport orientation which speakers may hold: *rapport enhancement* orientation - where interlocutors desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations*; rapport maintenance* orientation - where people simply want to maintain the current quality of the relationship and level of rapport; *rapport neglec*t orientation - where interlocutors show little concern for the quality of the relationship; and finally a *rapport challenge* orientation - in which interlocutors desire to challenge or impair the harmony of the relationship.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) views rapport threat and rapport enhancement as subjective evaluations that depend on a combination of: the message; people's interpretations of the message and the people's overall evaluation of context. Like Matsumoto (1989) and others, she also considers that all use of language can potentially affect rapport. By taking account, then, of a wide range of contextual variables, and by extending the analysis beyond the illocutionary domain, to the level of discourse, the rapport management framework can be used to analyze the management of interpersonal relations not only across ethnic cultures but within and across workplace groups and communities. Spencer-Oatey's framework has typically though not exclusively been used for interpreting spoken data (e.g. Spencer-Oatey and Xing, 1998). Since discourse in organizations commonly comprises both spoken and written forms, within my dataset I include both spoken and written data. While Spencer-Oatey's

approach can be used for interpreting both modes, some of the nuanced features of written discourse may be underplayed.

In order to provide a richer interpretation, I also draw on Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse framework for analyzing interactional resources in written communication – in this case emails, which comprise a substantial component of communication in the organization studied. As Hyland (2005) notes:

> Managing social relationships is crucial in writing because a text communicates effectively only when the writer has correctly assessed both the reader's resources for interpreting it and their likely response to it. This is achieved in part through metadiscourse (p. 11).

In particular Hyland's framework offers tools for the identification of writers' projection of shared context and the analysis of both interactive and interactional features of writing. By attending to written components of metadiscourse, the analysis reveals something of the writer's understanding of and engagement with the audience.

Hyland's (2005) model recognizes two dimensions of interaction. The *interactive dimension* is concerned with the organization of discourse and conveys the writer's awareness of the participating audience. It may include for instance frame markers (e.g. my purpose is) which can reveal the extent to which the text is constructed with the needs of the reader in mind. The *interactional dimension* of the framework on the other hand, conveys the writer's textual voice or community recognised

personality. Writers can for instance align with and engage readers by expressing solidarity (e.g. through attitude markers such as - I agree); or explicit author reference (eg. I, we, my, our).

In order to demonstrate how these two approaches can be used together I provide a sample analysis and interpretation. This draws on both Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework to account for the management of the interpersonal relationships, and Hyland's metadiscourse framework to account for the ways this is achieved in written communication.

The analysis is presented here step by step to explicate the relevant factors. In analyses presented later in the thesis these steps (for instance the table of domains) are excluded. While they have been integral to my interpretation, for ease of reading I have presented a more processed analysis. Both approaches build on Brown and Levinson's (1979) politeness theory (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Hyland, 2005) and thus they have the potential to work well in combination.

3.10 Applying the Analytical framework

In order to demonstrate the application of the rapport management framework, I include an example analysis and interpretation of a broadcast email. Data collection together with ethnographic work identified 'broadcast emails' as a common form of interaction at Phoenix. I use this term to describe emails that are sent by one person to everyone in the organization. This is achieved simply by the use of the company name - Phoenix - in the *To*: line of the email.

Example Analysis

Context: Ian the IT manager (one of four senior managers) sends a meeting announcement by broadcast email inviting wide participation in an online meeting.

Line	
1	**To:** Phoenix
2	**From:** Ian McQuade
3	**Sent:** (Date)
4	**Subject:** Meeting of the Borg
5	Dear Phoenix Collective Consciousness
6	I am hosting a meeting to prophesize on technology futures on **Wednesday**
7	**21 October at 9 AM in Office 2000** [*Bold in the original*]**.** The purpose is
8	to have a 'group think' on what the future of specific technologies may be
9	in 5 to 10 years.
10	This exercise is to support the Information Systems Strategic Planning
11	Project at the office of [*names government department*]. Part of this process
12	is to propose what the IT strategies may be in the 3, 5, and 10 year time
13	frame. I would like your help in envisioning the future especially in some
14	specific technology areas as advances in these may alter their strategies.
15	They are.

16	Display (3D, miniaturisation, eLink, ePaper, etc; Wireless (ultrawideband and
17	beyond); Computer portability (wrist-top, wearable, stick-on, implantable,
18	etc); Document and information, sharing, publishing; Biometrics (esp with
19	regard to authorization/authentication. And any other areas you think may
20	be salient. We'll use mind mapping in the maybe more than one session.
21	This should be fun so please play along if you can. For anyone who can't
22	make the meeting, I'd welcome your thoughts via email or a phone call.
23	Cheers and thanks in advance
24	Ian
25	[*Followed by organization name and contact details*]

The Borg, as depicted in the Star Trek film series, are a fictional race of cybernetically enhanced humanoids organized as an interconnected collective (including a collective consciousness). The Borg's purpose is to achieve perfection through the forced assimilation of individuals and technology and they are portrayed as an invincible collective against whom resistance is futile. So although the subject line (Line 4) frames the message as an announcement and invitation, it is also inherently a directive, since all members of the Borg *must* contribute as interconnected parts of the collective.

I begin the process of analysis with an overview of the domains through which interpersonal rapport is managed. This supports Spencer-Oatey's claim that rapport is managed through a range of discourse domains (rather than just the illocutionary domain), and that it involves more than the consideration of face sensitivities. In this

instance the message appears to invoke several of the organization's SIPs (socio-pragmatic interactional principles).

Table 3.5 An overview of domains through which interpersonal rapport is managed in the sample analysis

	Domain and description
	Illocutionary Domain Strategies used include: *Summons.* The address line signals that everyone should attend to the message. In a sense it could be said to function like the ringing of a telephone *Announcement*: In the subject line the purpose is stated creatively using metaphorical language, *Meeting of the Borg*. Together with other factors this adds nuances of meaning (see also stylistic and phatic domains). The announcement includes the virtual location *office 2000* and the purpose *to prophesize on technology futures* *Request:* for help in developing a plan for technology futures. *Promise(s*) This should be fun; We'll use mind mapping *Suggestion/affirmation:* That the purpose is *important to support the systems Strategic Planning project* of a client organization *Imagination* suggested by the purpose *a meeting to prophesize*
	Participation domain The technical properties of email mean that although this message is initiated by the meeting convener, potentially any and all members of the organization may have a turn in response. Consistent with the medium effect of email, this message functions as one long turn but it is a turn that invites and anticipates other turns.

	All members of the organization are potential participants
	Discourse domain The writer has control of the topic within this message, but clearly invites recipients to contribute topics with his statement *and any other areas which you think may be salient.* This open invitation has the potential to elicit responses either within the context of the actual meeting on 21st of October or *via email or phone call* for those who cannot participate on the day.
	Non-verbal domain The smiley face emoticon could be seen as a non-verbal assurance that no offence is intended. There is also another sense in which a non-verbal message is conveyed. The message is expressed in an inclusive and egalitarian style. This is in part due to the manner in which inclusiveness is expressed, but importantly everybody is assumed to be part of the *group think* on *the future of specific technologies*. This could be seen as contributing to the SIP of equity as discussed in the interpretation
	Stylistic domain *Informal tone* (despite formal purpose); *Humour* conveyed by the subject *Meeting of the Borg* *Framing* creative framing as an obligation of the collective *Creative and playful language*: beginning with *Meeting of the Borg*; form of address *Dear Collective Consciousness*; and the invitation to *play along*
	Phatic domain *The greeting* Dear Phoenix Collective Consciousness positions all recipients equally and includes the writer as a member of the 'collective consciousness'.

The table above shows [suggests] something of the complexity common in the day-to-day management of interpersonal rapport, supporting Spencer-Oatey's (2008) claim that it is achieved through more than the illocutionary domain. This example like others in the dataset also displays a range of metadiscursive features that convey the writer's awareness of his audience and his efforts to accommodate their understandings. The analysis below integrates the two frameworks by looking at the strategies used in the management of the three bases of interpersonal rapport, and simultaneously takes account of the interpersonal characteristics of the email as a written text.

The metaphorical subject *Meeting of the Borg* and the form of address *Dear Collective Consciousness* invokes a sense of a collectivist culture. This is supported by ethnographic evidence, which reveals a strong expectation of not just attendance at but engagement in a wide range of organizational activities including meetings. This supports Spencer-Oatey's notion of a high level SIP (socio-pragmatic principle) - a deeply held value with which members of a culture are expected to conform/identify. The expectation is reiterated in the form of address 'Dear Collective Consciousness' (Line 5) which serves to increase the strength of its illocutionary force. This is further increased by the bolding of the time place and (virtual) venue of the meeting, and the writer's stance as its 'host' (Line 6), He positions himself as controller, but he also identifies with readers and frames the task as fun and an opportunity to exercise imagination. As the message unfolds, Ian mitigates the strength of the directive by framing the task as fun and potential attendees as players – *this should be fun so please play along if you can.* Ian's efforts to achieve wide participation in the strategy planning exercise show his use of a

range of written metadiscursive resources contained in Hyland's framework. These are now discussed below.

In his aim to achieve wide participation The writer (Ian) employs a range of metadiscursive resources to achieve his interactional goals. From the organization of the text to the use of the Borg analogy, Ian's use of interactive and interactional resources displays an awareness of his readers as a participating audience. The use of the Borg analogy (line 4) suggests that he knows it will engage readers' interest (ethnographic work identified a widespread affection for the starwars films). Ian frames the content almost as an agenda, providing details of the meeting time and place early in the text (lines 6-7) and clearly stating its purpose 'to have a group think' (lines 7-8) and its focus 'to envision technology futures...'(line 6). He also explicitly informs readers of the broader purpose of the actual task: 'this exercise is to support the Information Systems Strategic Planning Project...' (line 14). The commas (together with the and) between items in the list (lines 16-19) function as transition markers linking the items into a concise but comprehensive package of technologies for consideration.

Ian's approach is both collegial [solidary] and authoritative. As a manager and initiator of the meeting announcement he speaks with a voice of authority and in this sense could be likened to the voice of the 'hive mind' of the Borg but with a sense of tongue- in- cheek. At the same time his somewhat authoritative stance is slightly mitigated by the solidary address form 'dear collective consciousness' framing the meeting as a responsibility of the collective including himself. His use of interactional resources includes frequent *self mention* which creates an explicit

author presence throughout the email for instance by frequent use of the first person pronoun – 'I am hosting the meeting' (line 6);' I would like your help' (line 13); 'I'd welcome your thoughts' (line 22). By explicitly addressing readers in this way Ian seems to create an impression of authority and credibility. The more inclusive third person 'we'll use mind mapping' (line 20) aims to engage readers as active participants and the modal *should* in 'this should be fun' (line 22) invokes another important value at Phoenix – that work should be enjoyable. In acknowledging that some people will not be able to 'attend' (remember the meeting is a virtual one) he nonetheless creates a sense of expectation that they will participate by addressing them directly and suggesting two ways they might do so - email or phone call – (line 21-22).

The tenor of the email is typical of the rather direct and informal communication style that characterizes Phoenix. It shows a rapport maintenance orientation - for instance through Ian's direct approach to the topic and the use of community recognised analogies which suggest an established relationship with readers. This is supported by Ian's attention to readers' positive face, for instance by framing the meeting as a request for help with the important task of strategy development for a client company, and by specific mention of 'any other areas you think may be salient' (line 20).

The interactional goal of the message is clearly laid out for readers – as a request for help in developing a strategic plan for the information system of a client organization. The writer admits that this is a risky business requiring 'envisioning'

technological developments ‘3, 5 and even 10’ years into the future – a long time given even the current pace of advances in technology.

At one level the only participant is the writer, in the sense that no response is required, but at another level all readers could be seen as participants, as potentially any and all of them respond to the message. In the discourse domain, topic control is obviously with the writer, but the invitation to contribute to ‘any other areas which you think may be salient’ addresses all readers as potential participants not only in the forthcoming meeting but as people who may also have ideas to contribute beforehand. Together with the request for help and the implication that it will involve both fun and imagination, the framing of the message suggests both an opportunity to contribute to an interesting and fun activity but also a strong expectation to engage with an important, serious and rather challenging task.

Projecting technology futures in a 3, 5 and ten-year time frame for another organization entails a considerable degree of risk – especially for the longer 10 year time frame. This is because technology advances very quickly and during a 10 year period unforeseen developments could result in the need for significantly changed strategies. A fact which Ian explicitly suggests (line 14).

The message satisfies what Spencer-Oatey (2008) refers to as the high level sociopragmatic interactional principle (SIP) of *equity* – that is the expectation that we will be treated fairly, not unduly imposed upon and not taken advantage of or exploited (Spencer-Oatey, p. 16). By framing recipients of the message as equally part of an invincible ‘collective consciousness’ whose contribution to an important

task is valued and offering an experience which ‘should also be fun’, Ian offsets the *cost* of attending the meeting with the *benefit* of involvement in an important and potentially enjoyable task.

As the meeting will be held ‘in Office 2000’ - a computer mediated virtual meeting space - it might be assumed that participants would have only virtual contact. However since everyone is situated in one large open plan physical office, participants also have visual contact with each other. This means that, potentially, non-verbal communication such as gesture, eye contact and expression, could contribute to the interaction in the virtual meeting.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter I have described the organization that is the setting for the study, and described the methodological approach to the study. I have also explicated the theoretical perspective and the practical processes with which I have approached my data. Together with the previous two chapters, it establishes the foundation upon which my investigation is based. It suggests some of the challenges and complexities involved in the analysis of rapport management at the discourse level, and it also highlights some of the advantages in extending analysis beyond the illocutionary domain.

The following three chapters comprise the analysis. The next chapter – Chapter 4 focuses on email communication.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPLORING COLLEGIAL RELATIONS IN THE ORGANIZATION AS A WHOLE

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I described Spencer-Oatey's (2008) bases of interpersonal rapport - face sensitivities; sociality rights and obligations; and interactional goals - as the analytical foundation for examining the establishment of collegiality and a climate of care as part of an organizational knowledge enabling context. In this chapter I begin the analysis by exploring the communicative ecology of Phoenix as a setting for interaction. I focus on two key components of a knowledge enabling organizational context (mentioned earlier), 'organizational structures that foster solid collegial relations', and a 'climate of care' (Von Krogh et al, 2000). Both of these components are concerned with the affective aspects of interaction inherent in the day-to-day management of collegial relations in the workplace, and they form two concurrent strands of this investigation.

According to Von Krogh et al (2000), organizational structures can either arrange for interactions to happen, or they can hinder interaction. First I explore three interconnected aspects of organizational structure as a setting for interaction. These are: physical; hierarchical; and social aspects of structure. They are separated here only for the purposes of analysis, and I focus on each one separately with the aim of identifying the ways in which collegial relations are enacted within each one.

The second strand of the enquiry focuses on identifying whether and if so to what extent the dimensions of care (mutual trust, active empathy, lenience and judgment, access to help, and courage) are evidenced in day-to-day interaction between people in the organization. For Von Krogh et al (2000) this involves more than just the exercise of collegiality between peers. Rather it encompasses a communication style that shows sensitivity to the needs of others, together with a balance between flexibility and control in the enactment of management.

Brown and Levinson (1987, as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008) point out that people's choices of communication style influence interactional ethos, which they describe as

> the *affective* [my italics] quality of interaction characteristic of members of the society. In some [positive politeness] societies interactional ethos is generally warm, easy-going, friendly; in others [negative politeness societies] it is stiff, formal, deferential (p. 28).

The notion of interactional ethos seems closely aligned with both strands of this investigation, as collegial relations may comprise either (or both) negative or positive elements, and the notion of a climate of care is strongly focused on affect. Spencer-Oatey 2008) refers to 'the generalized manner of interaction known as communication style' (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Clyne, 1994; Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Fitzgerald, 2003; House, 2003; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009 as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 28), describing it as:

> A manner of language use that exhibits clusters of co-occurring features. All aspects of language use and interactional behavior, can be reflected in style..... as well as non-verbal behavior (e.g. ..... gestures, spatial relations and touch).

Although there is at present little consensus on the ways in which these features cluster, Spencer-Oatey notes that they are often expressed as dichotomous options such as: positive politeness - negative politeness; (Brown & Levinson, 1987); involvement - independence (Scollon & Scollon, 1995); and her own terms, associative expressiveness - restraint. (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Scollon and Scollon (1995) propose that every time we communicate, we consider both aspects, seeking to include each aspect in a suitable balance. These dichotomies – or continua, illustrate some of the challenges involved in the management of face sensitivities. When referring to communication style in this thesis I use Spencer–Oatey's term associative expressiveness – restraint.

Another aspect of communication style is the threefold distinction between directness and indirectness. From a linguistic perspective this distinction relates to explicitness and implicitness: from a pragmatic inferential perspective it relates to communicative strength and clarity, and from an interpersonal perspective it relates to bluntness. Its relevance as a consideration in analysis is that 'from a rapport management perspective, assessment of the other person's directness and directness is usually relative to their expectations' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 31). Spencer-Oatey suggests that researchers should consider all three perspectives. Although this

increases the complexity of analysis, I attempt to take account of these different perspectives.

I begin the analysis in this chapter with three aims in mind:

- to identify the ways in which collegial relations are facilitated by and enacted within the physical, hierarchical, and social structure of the organization
- to identify elements of a climate of care that may occur in the enactment of collegial relations
- to gain insights into the ways in which communication style influences the interactive ethos at Phoenix

I begin by describing the physical structure and layout of Phoenix as a setting for interaction. Next the analysis focuses on aspects of social structure as an influence on the enactment of collegial relations. Then I focus on hierarchical structure, in particular, the ways in which power is enacted on a day-to-day basis. In each of these aspects of structure I aim to identify the ways in which collegial relations and a climate of care are enacted through language use at the level of discourse.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) notes that, 'In all languages every level of language use can play a role in each of the rapport management domains' (p. 21). For instance in the illocutionary domain, paying attention to the face needs of others, involves attention to both positive politeness or solidarity oriented functions (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003), as well as the ways in which people 'do power' through for example requests and directives (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Vine, 2004), and decision-making in meetings (Marra, 2003). Stylistic elements such as tone of voice and choice of lexis, together

with participation domain effects, such as who is included or excluded from an interaction, can have a powerful impact on workplace interpersonal relations (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

4.2 Analysis and Interpretation

4.2.1 Physical setting and interpersonal rapport

In many organizations, offices are located on numerous floors of a high rise building, with the most important people in large offices near the top. The Managing Director of an organization usually occupies a large, individual office on an upper floor of a multi-story building, accessible only through an ante-room occupied by a personal assistant (PA), who acts as a gatekeeper and monitors access to the MD. Such offices are usually found several or many floors above 'the workers' or physically distant from the main office area. Senior managers also tend to have large offices in prime positions, and a secretary in an adjoining office through whom appointments must be made to speak to the manager. Phoenix by contrast, is located on one level of a central city office building with all employees, including senior management and the Managing Director sharing one large open plan office.

At one corner of the room there is a 'chill-out zone', furnished with several comfortable couches, a television and water cooler. It is a place where people can go to think about a problem, chat with a friend, play video games, or just relax with a coffee. In several places throughout the room there are tall irregular shaped tables - too high for sitting at, but suitable for standing at, to talk with someone or to collaborate on a task. Desks in the open plan office are arranged in seemingly

random order throughout the office. On each desk there is a computer workstation, a telephone, and a small curved screen which provides a degree of privacy for each person, but which is also small enough to be seen over and around. So Phoenix employees have both computer connectivity and the richness of visual and auditory cues only available through face-to-face communication.

According to Von Krogh et al, (2000), spatial aspects of organization can arrange for interactions to take place or it can inhibit them. At Phoenix both the structure (located on one floor) and spatial configuration (the open plan layout) increase the opportunity for unscheduled interaction, that is, conversational interactions that may be less likely or unlikely to occur if people were separated by individual offices located on different floors. In the open plan office there is generally a low hum of conversation, and people can see each other and can hear detail of conversational interactions that take place in close physical proximity to them. Much of the time people are working at their computers, but from time to time they talk together either across spaces between desks, or move to a colleague's desk to continue a conversation. They may also sense both the general mood or climate of the office, and the individual moods of those who are near to them.

There are often several small group meetings taking place – either at someone's desk, at one of the tall 'standing tables' or in one of the small meeting rooms booked for the purpose. This supports Sailer and Penn's (2007) findings as reported in chapter 2. They draw on space syntax theory in arguing that the relational structure of built form, such as the layout of the floor plan, actually shapes patterns of human movement. Under this view social behaviors such as encounters and gathering are

defined as a by-product of movement. Thus by encouraging or inhibiting movement and interaction, spatial configuration can influence the emergence of the social milieu.

4.2.2 Social Structure and Interpersonal Rapport

Work related interaction

Although the configuration of the office and the provision of artefacts such as computers (and the connectivity they facilitate), can provide opportunities for interaction, they cannot guarantee either the occurrence or quality of interaction. It is the use that people make of them that creates and sustains the organization as a social community.

At Phoenix people are connected electronically via the computer network, so as well as being able to see each other by being physically co-present, they have a rich variety of visual and auditory cues usually only associated with face-to-face communication. Since everyone can see the office as a whole they can quickly become aware of anything unusual that may be happening in the environment. In an open plan office people coming in and out of the area can provide a distraction to work. In the e-mail message in 4.1 below Emma lets everyone know that she will be having a visitor.

Example 4.1

Context: Email advising client visit

From: Emma

To: Phoenix

Subject: *Client at Emma's desk from 2.00 — 2.30 today*

Emma's message attends to what Spencer-Oatey (2008) refers to as the high-level SIP of *equity* – the expectation that we are entitled to consideration from others (as discussed in chapter 3). As a colleague in a shared open workspace, Emma's message demonstrates affective involvement in the form of care and concern for the interests of others, by meeting their social expectation to be informed of the visitor's presence. It may also suggest that their meeting should not be interrupted.

This expectation or value is further demonstrated in the email below, sent by an employee who was working on a project in another company when the presence of a longer term guest (the researcher) was announced and discussed in a company meeting. Erin who had not yet met me, noticed me working at 'Peter's old desk'.

Example 4.2

Context: Email enquiring about the presence of a stranger in the office

From: Erin Smith

To: Phoenix

Subject: There is someone sitting at Peter's old desk (behind Dion)

Anyone know any details?

Broadcast e-mails such as this are frequently used at Phoenix to supplement face-to-face communication. Their use is an accepted rule of interaction, as is the informal and rather blunt style, reflected here in the absence of the phatic element of greeting and the directness of the question.

Skovholt and Svennevig (2006) found that one of the ways writers of emails categorise readers is through the form of address. By simply using the address form Phoenix, Erin categorises everyone in the company equally as potential participants. The subject line, which is seen by anyone who scans through their email inbox, conveys an expectation of being informed – a high level SIP in Spencer-Oatey's (2008) sense, in this instance about the stranger at Peter's old desk - the specific 'someone' who is sitting 'behind Dion'. And the very brief body of the message makes an explicit request for information – 'any' information from 'anyone'. This is inconsistent with the organizational norm of minimal imposition of other people's time and potentially almost 50 people could respond. Instead she could have simply turned to the person next to her and asked directly. The three responses listed below in Example 4.3 arrived within five minutes of her request.

Example 4.3

Context: Responses to Erin's email in 4.1 above

i) **From**: Darrel Everton

Is that the person studying inter-office communication? ☺

ii) **From:** Nigel Trent

It is the person doing research from Vic University

iii) **From:** Michael Brown

I'll come talk to you Erin

Mike

Erin's interactional goal of gaining information about the stranger is satisfied to an extent by all three responses. Darrel, in response (i) responds with a tentative answer expressed as a question, accompanied by a smiley face emoticon, whilst Nigel (in response ii) does not name the stranger but does provide some information about why the person is there.

Mike however (response iii) takes a different approach, by simply stating that he will come and talk to Erin. Mike may have decided to close down the possibility of a flood of e-mails as Erin was one of the few people who had not yet met the researcher, and many others may have responded with explanations, thus making a greater imposition on the members of the general e-mail list by taking more of their time to read and reply. From a linguistic perspective Mike's response is only explicit with regard to his intended action, and at the same time somewhat implicit regarding the reason he is coming over. Continuing his response face-to-face implies that there is more to explain than he can say by email. It is a collegially supportive gesture that attends to Erin's face sensitivities since she is unaware that her e-mail question has also been received by the stranger. Simultaneously Mike considers his colleagues by avoiding an ongoing string of email responses. His action could also be interpreted as

attending to the face sensitivities of the researcher who could potentially have been embarrassed.

Example 4.4

Context: Erin's acknowledgement of email replies to her request for information

From: Erin Smith

To: Phoenix

Subject: Mystery resolved

Thanks everyone – all clear now ☺

Erin's response 'thanks everyone', acknowledges all who replied, The inclusion of a smiley face emoticon suggests an expression of wry humour on finding that she is one of the few people who were unaware of the reason for the researcher's presence.

In a large open plan office, people can see not only the arrival of guests, but they can also see when colleagues are absent. Keeping colleagues informed of one's whereabouts is both a way of expressing solidarity and a social obligation at Phoenix. Although it is common in workplaces for people to show consideration for colleagues by advising their department or group of an absence, at Phoenix people simply advise the whole company. Example 4.5 shows how colleagues at Phoenix utilise e-mail for this purpose.

Example 4.5

Context: Emails sent by people advising they are or will be away from the office

From: Employee name

To: Phoenix

Subject: <<<< Message >>>>

1. Beanpole gone for a haircut – will be back in an hour a neater smarter Chap
2. PJ @ the murder house for next hour and a half
3. Tina at the vet with Cat again … in at 10 or so
4. Barb gone to get mop chop, back by 2.45
5. I'll be in a little late this morning as I just dropped my brother off at the airport, depending on traffic I should be in about 9.00am
6. Ozzy got tricked by trains will be in about 9.30
7. Beanpole is on leave from this afternoon till Monday 15 October
8. In Christchurch all day Tuesday
9. Tom and Paul @ (company name) much of this week
10. I will be out of the office for the next 30 mins – avail on cell as usual

As with examples 4.1 to 4.4, all the messages in this example adhere to the company's e-mail norm of addressing the message simply to Phoenix. Skovholt and Svennevig (2006) identify forms of addressivity as one way in which writers categorize readers into participant roles. Although their research specifically refers to email copies in which writers find ways to cast readers into *different* categories of participants, the notion of audience categorization is relevant here. The writers of these emails use addressivity in the opposite way, as a device to cast all recipients as

equal. As an address form, simply using the company name - Phoenix, is an inclusive and solidary strategy that engages the attention of the organization as a community. It categorizes all readers equally (with no special deference to senior management who also receive the emails addressed in this way), and it casts them all as potential participants. It suggests too, that low power distance may be a feature of the organization. This will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

In each case the message is placed in the subject line between a set of left and right facing arrows. In workplace email communication, placing the message in this way signals that this is the entire message and the e-mail does not need to be opened and read further. The arrows serve to frame the messages almost as entries in an in-house public diary. The location and placement of the messages function as interactional resources in Hyland's (2005) sense, conveying an attitude of consideration. Additionally, the brevity of the message ensures that it can be read quickly, thus achieving the interactional goal of the writer(s) whilst minimizing the imposition on readers by intruding as little as possible into work time.

In all but one of the messages, writers use self mention as an engagement marker that draws on aspects of community recognized identity, either nicknames (e.g. Beanpole; Ozzy) or shortened forms of given name (e.g. PJ; Carrie). These interactional resources function to bring the writer's personality into the text, connecting with readers not simply by providing propositional content as required by the norms of Phoenix as a community, but by using associative expressiveness to engage with readers in a light hearted, informal and friendly manner. They convey a sense of friendly familiarity typical of people who interact regularly and frequently.

The writers also connect with readers by advising not just their absence, but most also advise *where* they will be (1-4, 7-9) and often why. Some also disclose personal information (1-5). Two (5, 6) explain lateness, one by providing personal information, the other with the use of humour. This connection with readers, is maintained through informal language: 'a neater smarter chap'; 'in at 10 or so'; 'got tricked by trains'; through colloquial terms: 'murder house' (for dentist); 'mop chop' (for haircut); and self-disclosure: through: 'at the vet with the cat again'; to 'just dropped my brother off at the airport'.

The messages overall are characterized by associative expressiveness, and as well they satisfy two aspects of Phoenix social expectations: of being informed, and of not being unnecessarily interrupted (and which Erin contravened in example 4.3). The absence of greetings and introductory preambles in the examples in this section, together with the direct and informal style and level of self disclosure, is characteristic of communication between close friends or colleagues who not only interact frequently but who share a level of mutual trust.

Socializing

In many organizations, socializing with colleagues focuses mainly on obligatory events structured around work focused functions. At Phoenix social events are common both inside and outside of work, and both are characterized by high levels of participation. At work socializing includes:

- Socializing for around 15 minutes before the company's weekly Friday meeting
- A partners evening held once each month – which is the weekly Friday meeting with a difference – partners of all employees are invited (and many attend)
- An annual client Christmas party to which all clients and all Phoenix employees are invited
- Monthly social evenings for clients (with food and drinks provided) to inform them of new/planned/upcoming developments and obtain feedback and answer questions or queries.

Social events outside work but organized by the social club include:

- an evening of indoor bowls arranged as an organizational outing by the social club
- the annual weekend away – when the MD provides a holiday weekend for all the company together
- an evening of go-karting

Company documentation specifically markets the organization as 'a fun place to work'. Outings like the one in Example 4.12 are common and are well attended. Partners are always included in invitations, and they frequently do attend.

Example 4.6

Context: Broadcast email from the Phoenix social club inviting people to an evening of go-karting

To: Phoenix

From: Mark McKenzie

Subject: Social Club

Has anyone been go-karting at the indoor track on Old Hutt Road lately?

I have heard one or two of you may be interested in a night of go-karting. This is always a great night (especially when J and M fight it out for fastest lap) – who won last time?

If this is of interest can you please confirm with voting buttons. If you cannot see them I need to know if you are a) keen and b) planning to bring your partner.

I was planning this for either the last week in October, or the first week in November on either a Tuesday or Wednesday night

M

Generally a bus is hired for company outings, and bookings need to be made both for the bus and for the bowls venue, so the sender needs people to respond to indicate numbers attending. This email too, reflects the generally informal style of email

interaction at Phoenix, with a brief informal greeting or no greeting at all and direct entry to the message.

Colleagues are often invited to private social events such as the one in Example 4.7 below, an invitation to a private home to view the city's annual fireworks display. Each year on Guy Fawkes evening (November 5), the city hosts a public display of fireworks. The display is based on a barge in the harbour around which the city is built. Many suburbs are built on the hills, and those near the inner-city harbour have a spectacular view of the display. The invitation is typical of the friendly inclusive culture of Phoenix and people often bring partners, friends and family members to such gatherings.

Example 4.7

Context: Invitation to Guy Fawkes display

From: Paul Thomas

To: Phoenix

Subject: Guy Fawkes fireworks this Friday

Hi All,

If you would like to have a fantastic place to watch the fireworks from this Friday (inside or outside is good), you are invited to come up to our friend E's place at 52 The Lane, Roseneath, Mt Vic. Show starts at 9.00 pm, but turn up from 7.00 pm to

share drinks etc. There will be a BBQ there if the weather is good, so feel free to bring something to cook or something to share.

It's best to get there early as the traffic comes to a standstill by 8.30 pm. Parking is a bit limited, so again, get there (or wherever you are gonna watch from) early. E's place is down the driveway, and along the footpath a few feet (2nd house on the right down the driveway).

Friends welcome of course.

P [P also provides his Mobile number]

General invitations such as this show that workplace relationships are sufficiently solid and well established to carry over into private socializing. As well as including colleagues' friends and partners, the writer shows consideration to potential guests by not only giving clear directions but by warning of possible parking problems associated with what is always a very well supported public event.

As well as socializing between colleagues carrying over into private events, private events carry over into the workplace. The example below is a light-hearted broadcast e-mail focusing on the arrival and naming of an employee's new baby.

Example 4.8

Context: Announcement of the arrival of an employee's new baby. Both parents are employees

From: Paul Price

To: Phoenix

Subject: Evan Patrick? Symonson

The first picture -- a fuzzy phone one. Talked to Peter and he sounds really stoked.

Birth all went well -- Karen was a champion apparently, and she'll probably be out of hospital this afternoon.

First name of Evan is confirmed, but still some debate around middle name (s).

Paul

As a broadcast e-mail from senior manager Paul Price, the message is addressed in the customary way simply to Phoenix. However he begins and ends his message with his first name written in full. Senior managers generally do not use nicknames or simply initials. He then begins the message directly, maintaining engagement with the audience throughout the e-mail using a number of interactional resources. The tenor of the e-mail is one of good news telling and excitement. The subject line 'Evan Patrick? Symonson' functions as an engagement marker, drawing the readers into the discourse with reference to shared knowledge. As both parents are employees of Phoenix everyone has been aware of the baby's impending arrival, so by simply announcing the baby's name Evan Patrick? Symonson, the subject line conveys the news that the baby has arrived, and that it is a boy.

The first paragraph of the body of the message reads almost like an excited telephone call, with a series of short, clipped phrases that function as attitude markers conveying a sense of excitement and good news telling, as if to family and very close friends. The first 'fuzzy phone' picture, the delight of the father who is 'stoked'; and 'Karen was a champion', function as boosters that maintain the sense of excitement, and maintaining reader engagement with direct reference to each family member - Peter, Karen, and Evan. This also conveys a sense that the event is still unfolding, in the statements: 'she'll probably be out of hospital this afternoon'; and Paul's announcement that the baby's middle name is still to be decided. This prompted a rapid response in the form of a stream of suggestions from a number of employees. Some of these are shown in example 4.9.

Example 4.9

Context: Responses to the email in example 4.8. Each person responds adding their own surname as a middle name of the new baby

From: [Senders Name]

To: Phoenix

Subject: Evan Smith Symonson

1 Evan Smith Symonson sounds pretty cool

2 Evan French Symonson is a good option as well

3 Don't be silly!! You can't have that as one of your middle names !!

So it should be:

Evan, Francis, Martin, Leicecester, Stewart, Reid, Benseman, Haywood, Fletcher, Matthews, Brown, Blake, Scott, Clark ..... (the surnames of many other people in the organization follow)

Von Krogh et al (2000) identify ‘acceptance of the emotional lives of others’ (p.51), as a feature of a caring organizational context. These collaboratively constructed humorous naming suggestions by colleagues reflect not only acceptance but direct interest and engagement with the news of the new baby's safe arrival and the excitement around this as a celebratory event for Karen and Peter. The direct mention of the surnames of everyone in the organization (including the researcher) projects the identities of colleagues into the message as caring well-wishers, and conveys a sense of Phoenix almost as an extended family, a term often used by members of the organization when talking about the Phoenix culture (ethnographic evidence – interviews).

Another aspect of socialization is that between Phoenix and client companies, and although the researcher did not record any interactions with clients, information about an evening social event for clients nonetheless finds its way into the broadcast chat of the day. Example 4.10 illustrates what Blommaert (2005) refers to as the forgotten contexts of *text trajectories.* In this instance face-to-face interaction at a social evening for clients finds its way into a broadcast e-mail as gossip.

Example 4.10

Context: information sharing the day following a social evening with clients

To: Phoenix

From: Jason

Subject: RE information/gossip from the party

Did anyone learn anything interesting from the party last night?
I discovered from Mark? That (company name) IT is undergoing a major shakeup -- cost reductions through the indoor consolidation, being an investment in a new IT services next financial year.
Jas

A number of people responded with further 'gossip', adding their comments to the original message, so the email stream grew as each response was added.

Example 4.11
Context: Responses to Example 4.10

I heard that Richard (Public company name) enjoyed project managing us and is now looking for senior pm. work in Wellington (on his wife's instructions).

Heard that Peter Britton (formerly MD at (company name) until screwed by an uprising of netizens) is still in Singapore and is now DR. Britton

Heard that Marion from (company name) is about to start her OE -- via Asia and then Europe, but that she's got a partner!!! ☹

I learned that (company name) love working with us and have a few more irons in the fire to partner up with us

Heard that PK is sorta retired

The writer's (Jason) interactive approach addresses everyone in the organization as a participating audience, who either attended the social function (party) he refers to, or at least knew about it. By writing information/gossip as the subject, 'gossip' functions as an engagement marker (Hyland, 2005; Jensen, 2007), aimed at focusing the reader on participation. The use of both 'information/gossip' together increases

the strength of the invitation to ‘talk’, as well as inviting more personalized comments or ‘gossip’. The responses in example 4.11 include: compliments, comments on the possibility of forthcoming work, news of what's going on a company which are not yet clients, and more personal news about other individuals in the IT sector.

Social evenings (such as the one in which the comments in 4.10 and 4.11 originated) are held at least monthly. Their purpose is to maintain a relationship between clients and the company, such that the responses to products (such as web site design), company service (e.g. consultancy) and people (e.g. project teams) can be discerned in the low-key and friendly manner. They contribute to what Von Krogh et al (2000) term ‘listening to customers with care’ (p. 47) as part of a care based organizational context. According to Von Krogh et al, face-to-face social talk generally involves dyads or small groups, and at social occasions small snippets of personal information are interwoven with more business focused information.

Picking up on Blommaert’s (2005) insight mentioned above, Jason's e-mail about a party gossip intitiates a text trajectory that brings information gained through face-to-face spoken socialization processes into a form which is both written and is rapidly distributed throughout the organization. Tiny snippets of information are transient in the context of a social occasion. Whilst engaging at the time, they may soon be forgotten in the subsequent day- to-day operational ‘busyness’ of the workplace. By drawing them into workplace talk through the electronic medium of e-mail, these small snippets of information are not only widely shared, but together they constitute

a much larger chunk of information, organized together as a package and explicitly linked to the context of its emergence through the subject line.

Another property of the e-mail is that it represents the externalization of individual social knowledge, which when written down, shared throughout the organization, and linked to its originating context in this way, becomes social explicit knowledge. Furthermore, the context in which the knowledge emerged is one which all employees were either engaged in, or aware of.

In its trajectory from spoken snippets to a written package of social knowledge, the 'information/party gossip' also acquires the property of persistence. This means that because it is in written form and can be retrieved from an electronic system, it is available for later reference. This is not to suggest that people keep gossip files, rather that some of the information shared may be helpful in the context of other current or forthcoming work. Additionally people remember such things as compliments (for instance what clients really like about the company), and sharing these around the company can support individual, group and organizational identity. News of other IT professionals' movements within or between companies also serves to keep people in touch with the wider IT community. Phoenix hosts functions for clients both regularly and frequently, and small fragments of information gained in this way, rather than being lost, can build over time into a richer and more nuanced understanding of clients.

Finally, the writer's self mention by commenting on his own question and offering the first piece of information/gossip, is an interactional strategy that, by projecting

the writer into the text, (Hyland, 2005) overtly aligns him with readers and invites them to respond to the unfolding text, thus expressing solidarity with readers, who in this case are potentially everyone in the organization. So in this sense the overall collaboratively constructed text both supports collegiality and contributes to the development of shared social knowledge at the organizational level. This also illustrates Gunnarsson's (2009) claim that

> In modern professional life writing and talking are often strongly intertwined. Both media contribute to the form and content of the other, and gradually the functional distinction between oral and written discourse is disappearing and both forms of communication are becoming more important in the formation of professional cultures (p.18).

The management of interpersonal rapport in the workplace not only involves doing collegiality through solidarity and support, but it also involves the ways in which people 'do power' (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). The next section focuses on an analysis of the ways in which management power is enacted in the day-to-day activities of the organization, to identify ways in which management's approach impacts on collegial relationships and a climate of care.

4.2.3 Hierarchical structure: 'Doing power' - the enactment dimension of management

The organizational structure most associated with power is hierarchy. Representing different levels of power and control, hierarchies are generally thought of as making divisions or separations, rather than connections between people with different

degrees of power and seniority. Von Krogh et al (2000) argue that an enabling context is not established with an organizational chart. Rather, the manner of implementation and managers' ability to allow structures to shift and evolve according to the business circumstances and the people involved, is what really matters. They further argue that a key element of management is a proper balance between flexibility and corporate control. For them 'the key to the whole process of knowledge creation is sensitive aware managers who encourage a social setting in which knowledge continues to grow' (Von Krogh et al, 2000, p. 177). They suggest that even the most creative organization will accomplish nothing if personal relationships are poor.

The challenge inherent in achieving such flexibility is for managers to achieve a balance between instrumental goals of achieving organizational objectives, identity goals of establishing or maintaining an assertive image, and relational goals of maintaining interpersonal rapport within the sociolinguistic dimensions of both power and distance (Jensen, 2007; Putnam & Wilson, 1990; Von Krogh et al, 2000).

The hierarchy at Phoenix is relatively flat, its three levels comprising the Managing Director, Michael Sheppard, four senior managers, then everyone else. However, keeping a hierarchy flat can be challenging, and one of those challenges is management tasks with a broad scope. The excerpt from an interview with Michael, the managing director in example 4.12 describes the way in which one such challenge was met.

Example 4.12

Context: Excerpt from an interview with Managing Director Michael

Michael - The easy way to manage this organization is to create hierarchies, the hard way is to maintain a non-hierarchical structure with everybody co-operating, but if everybody wants it and everybody works towards it, then we can succeed. I believe a lot of it is communication. It's understanding and telling people + you know + we had a challenge um David Walker had to do the performance reviews 45 of them. Now the easy way out is to say, well that's not gonna work so let's put in place a second level of management and assign some people under those and there we are, problem solved. You have five reports and each one of those has eight people to look after, so there we are problem solved. But what we did was we took some people out of umm the senior team league, which is kinda more like a support committee than a second level of management, and said well some of those people are well suited to doing performance reviews, and some of those people had worked with different people at different times, so what we said was well, where appropriate we'll delegate the performance reviews to those people and um so that we can get it done in a short time and then David put in place a programme of having a half hour meeting with each of those people spread out over a longer period of time, so they'll still get their review but we're able to condense the time. So that works. That means we can cover off 45 performance reviews in a short period of time just by effectively spreading the workload in a low key kind of a way, and the people doing the reviews don't by default become the managers of

those people, all they're doing is acting on David's behalf doing the reviews and report back to him.

The 'senior team league' that Michael refers to, comprises people who have worked in the organization for a long time, who have subject expertise and who also have considerable experience of working in project teams, and some have worked with the people they are allocated to 'review'. By explicitly stating that 'the people doing the review don't by default become the managers of those people', Michael shows his intention to maintain a relatively flat hierarchy. By using the inclusive pronoun *we*, a solidarity marker, he indicates that he and David worked collaboratively to find a suitable solution to the challenge. The solution satisfies David's social expectations of being treated fairly by enabling him to accomplish the large number of performance reviews within a short time frame.

However – those who stand to be affected by the new policy do not appear to have been consulted, and the fact that someone is simply appointed to do the performance review and will then report back to David may potentially cause them concern or anxiety. The principle concern of the MD appears to be to get the reviews done in a short time and this could be interpreted as counter-productive by employees whose performance is being reviewed. They may feel unvalued or sidelined by the process.

In Example 4.13 below, a continuation of the interview in example 4.12, Michael does show an awareness of the potential threat to rapport that may arise from the changed process. And he empathizes with those employees who may be concerned

about the change in the review process, and considers their likely reactions to the change.

Example 4.13

Context: Providing for alternatives in the performance review process. (Interview data)

Michael - If for some specific reason they especially want to see David – they can - Yeah because some people – um some people walk up at any time and say *um I have this problem*, and some other people think *right – I'm having my performance review in three months time – in three months time I'll address this issue* and what we didn't want was to say to those people you're now talking to somebody else and not David cause they'll go- they'll freak out because they've been waiting three months to talk to him so we're saying if you *want* to have your review with David and not the person whose been allocated – a different person - then we can accommodate that.

Since the decision has already been made, the only way of seeing David is to feel strongly enough about it that a special request must be made and then it will be accommodated. It is possible that the kind of people who naturally just wait for the normal review time to speak to David about issues they may have, will feel that making a special request is too much of an imposition so in this sense they may be disadvantaged by their normal tendency to be patient, whereas those who are naturally more vocal will not hesitate to voice their preferences. Although the MD's

focus is on accommodating David's time constraints he does show his awareness of possible problems as described below.

By articulating his understanding of the way some people approach performance reviews, 'I'm having my performance review in three months time -- in three months time I'll address this issue', and by paraphrasing the likely reaction of some employees to having their review delegated to someone other than David, 'they'll freak out because they've been waiting three months to talk to him', Michael demonstrates his recognition of the threat to rapport that this change in practice may represent. He shows active empathy with employees, in addressing what he understands to be the interactional wants of those being reviewed, by stating that they can be accommodated. At the same time Michael shows solidarity with David, through the use of the inclusive pronoun *we*, 'we can accommodate that'. Nonetheless, although Michael and David have collaborated to develop a policy that appears to address both David's time constraints and employee opportunity to talk with him personally, it is David who has to implement the policy. His pragmatic approach to the issue is presented below as example 4.14. below.

Example 4.14

Context: Email from senior manager (David) regarding the process of performance reviews

To: Phoenix

From: David Walker

Subject: Performance Reviews

Hey folks

Yep, it's that time of year again ... performance review time.

The format this time round will be slightly different, as the team has become sufficiently large and geographically dispersed as to make it impractical for me to meet with everyone over such a short period. 45 people in a week? Not easy!

So the plan is to involve some senior team members for the competency evaluation and career counseling part of the process, and for me to catch up with people on a regular basis throughout the year. I'll be picking1-2 people at random every week to just have a general catch-up with, to provide a forum for discussion and feedback, and for ongoing career counseling.

The intention is that you meet with someone that you have been working with for at least a part of the last 6 months, or who has a good handle on what challenges you have been facing, and is in a position of experience to be able to provide counseling. If you do not wish to meet with the person nominated as being your counselor for the review, you can request to meet with someone else.

On Tuesday next week I will let people know who they have been assigned to, so please let me know ASAP after that if you wish to meet with someone other than the person nominated. Otherwise you will receive a meeting request from the person nominated as your counselor during the latter part of next week.

The aim is to have all reviews completed by the end of next week.

D

The subject line ‘performance reviews’ conveys the formal nature of the message. And although the greeting appears informal, it functions as a summons when considered with the subject. Changing an established formal procedure can cause apprehension and may be felt as a threat to sociality rights. However David attempts to downplay this threat with a downgrader, noting that the format will be *slightly* different. He then engages the reader by projecting himself into the message as having a problem to solve.

In announcing the plan that separates the process into two parts, David acknowledges that this may be felt as a threat to sociality rights and he attempts to mitigate this in two ways. First - he commits to ‘having a general catch-up with 1 to 2 people each week’; and second, he gives an assurance that the delegated reviewers will be ‘someone you've have been working with for at least a part of the last six months’.

A notable aspect of this message is the writer’s shift along the continuum between associative expressiveness and restraint (as previously mentioned in Spencer-Oatey’s (2008) re-working of positive and negative politeness). Paragraphs often begin with restraint by avoiding the use of personal pronouns and dissociating the writer from readers for instance:

'The format this time round…'

So the plan is…'

The intention is…'

On Tuesday next week…'

'The aim is…'

These function to dissociate the writer from readers by not using personal pronouns, and instead making a general statement which disassociates and distances the writer from readers. However – as some paragraphs proceed – the style becomes more associatively expressive such as:

a) *'…impractical for me to meet with everyone over such a short period. 45 people in a week? Not easy!'*

b) *'…I'll be picking 1-2 people each week just to have general catchup with…'*

c) *'…you can request to meet with someone else.'*

By using personal pronouns David attempts to draw readers closer. In *a*) he appears to seek empathy from readers with his solution to the challenging task of achieving many performance reviews in a short timeframe ('45 people in a week? not easy!') by asking a rhetorical question, and immediately providing an emphatic answer in the negative emphasized with an exclamation mark. In *b)* above, David increases associative expressiveness by indicating that he will ensure as at least some people each week are able to have a 'general catchup' with him. At the same time however, he maintains an authoritative stance; by explicitly stating 'I'll be picking 1-2 people....' he makes quite clear that he is in charge of the process. This implies a

more low-key, informal and friendly aspect to a process which some people find intimidating. And in *c)* David works to jointly with readers to construct the text by offering them an alternative ('you can request...') if they prefer not to be reviewed by the person allocated to them. However, he avoids committing to doing such reviews himself by assuring readers that they will be able to see 'someone else'.

Referring to the reviewer as counselor foregrounds the mentoring function of the process as opposed to using terms like reviewer or appraiser, which would imply a stronger focus on the evaluative aspects of the review. Employee's face sensitivities seem to be further considered by ensuring that if they are not happy to meet with the person who is delegated to them, they may request to meet with 'someone else'. This seems to mitigate somewhat the threat to employees' sociality rights inherent in the changed policy. And by signing himself simply as D, David attempts to return to a more collegial stance consistent with his greeting - 'Hey folks'.

The overall nature of the message as a directive is emphasized in the last paragraph, through which he encourages readers to 'note' that he needs to know 'ASAP' (emphasizing urgency) if they wish to meet with 'someone other than the person nominated'. The acronym 'ASAP' meaning 'as soon as possible' written in capitals, strengthens the illocutionary force of the utterance. And by referring to 'someone other than the person nominated' he clearly reaffirms that he prefers them to choose someone other than himself.

David has had to balance the sociality rights of employees with his own need for associative restraint in order to meet the tight time frame allocated to the task of

accomplishing the performance reviews. His achieves this assertively by adopting a strong management voice in making both his objectives and the reasons for them explicit. This example highlights what may be seen as one of the challenges of everyone working together in one open plan office. That is - where there are solid collegial relationships with employees, together with relatively low social distance, having to announce what could be an unpopular change of procedure may be felt very keenly by both parties.

Overall, as well as conveying a general sense of authority David's email gives a clear sense that he prefers people do *not* ask to talk with him. From the relatively informal greeting 'Hey folks', which also acts as a summons, to the last paragraph in which he implies that if people do not wish to meet with the person *he* allocates to them they can talk 'to someone other than the person nominated', his preference is clear. He does not offer readers the opportunity to talk with him. However, this rather blunt style is normal for David, who is nonetheless widely liked and respected (ethnographic evidence, researcher observation).

Example 4.15 an excerpt from an interview with Michael, illustrates another aspect of the challenge associated with employees and management working closely together and developing low social or communicative distance despite high power differences.

Example 4.15

Context: Excerpt from an interview with the managing director: Interview on workplace culture.

Michael - Yes there's all sorts of challenges because sometimes people take things the wrong way, but the only thing we can do to counteract that is to have the appropriate culture where if a person is upset by anything they're able to say what – what they think about it. There are lots of challenges, I mean we have a very *friendly* approach and people don't get told off for doing things wrong but what that means is that if we do ever need to pull somebody in its very difficult because it's so out of character, it could be something quite small but because it never happens it becomes a really big deal.

In the interview excerpt (example 4.16) below, Michael provides a specific example to illustrate this point.

Example: 4.16

Context: Company protocols around working from home (Continues from Example 4.15)

Michael – It's also very difficult for us to manage people - and every once 'n a while we have to do it is to say to people – we're saying to people. If you're gonna be sick its not good enough to just get up in the morning and to send an email to everybody

saying you're not coming in – and not come in. Now 90% of the time you can trust people to make their own decisions about if they're sick or not but as with everything it just gets too easy and lots of people just start broadcasting – I'm not coming in today. So we're trying to say – you have to actually telephone the person and say that you're not coming in, you can't just send a broadcast email. That's a very difficult thing and it's not the first time. We do it probly about once every twelve months. And then it happens for a while and then it kinda drops off. My preferred approach is to say look it's just common decency, you to your peers (Interview continues).

Michael has noticed the erosion of practice relating to employees' sociality obligations to colleagues. This highlights an organizational value associated with the SIP of equity. Although it's obviously acceptable for people to stay home when they're unwell, using a broadcast e-mail to advise of this is not acceptable here as an organizational practice, and constitutes rapport threatening behaviour. People are expected to telephone their manager to advise in person that they will not be in. So although broadcast e-mails are commonly used for many purposes there are clear organizational values associated with their use. One of these uses is issuing requests and directives.

As well as being the organization's Managing Director, Michael is also a qualified accountant and he is proactive in ensuring finances stay on track. When they are not working on client projects employees can focus on work that is internal to the organization and this includes creative work within their own specialty area.

However, they can become so engrossed in this that they may pass up or postpone opportunities to take up incoming chargeable jobs as he notes in Example 4.17.

Example 4.17

Context: Michael uses broadcast e-mail to give a directive addressing work priorities

From: Michael Sheppard

To: Phoenix

Subject: Every hour counts!

Importance: High

The pressure is off at present. The great thing about this is that we are no longer having to work huge hours to meet challenging deliverables. The problem is that we have swung too far back the other way. Although now is a good opportunity for us to catch up on some internal activities we must remember that these cannot be at the expense of revenue opportunities. We need everyone to be focussed at present. You can't rely on everyone else to be chargeable you need to hunt out chargeable time. Its even more important that we are all focussed on maximising our own chargeable time. Please don't let opportunities pass you by. If someone comes to you with some chargeable time, park your internal project and do the chargeable. I know that internal projects are important but for now the focus must go fully back onto chargeable time.

Michael

MD

Company Name

Address

Contact Details

Confidentiality statement

Thomas (1995, p. 179) relates pragmatic choice to discourse goals and notes that people employ indirectness when their communicative goals conflict. In this case the shift from informal and collegial, to authoritative and directive can be seen very clearly. His message does not begin in the usual informal style of emails between Phoenix colleagues. Instead his full name appears in the From line. The importance of the message is further signaled in the Subject line with the declarative *Every hour counts!* The illocutionary force of this is increased by the inclusion of the Importance line, and further emphasized by the close 'Michael' followed by 'MD'.

Michael accomplishes the competing discourse goals of collegiality and authority in a variety of ways including: footing; the use of bald FTA; and mitigation. He establishes the usual direct style characteristic of Phoenix and of communication between close colleagues, by launching directly into the message. Beginning from a position of solidarity he uses the inclusive pronouns *we* and *us* in '*we* are no longer having to work long hours' and 'now is a good opportunity for *us* to catch up on some internal activities'. The solidarity continues through the following line: 'Its even more important that *we* are all focused on maximizing *our* own chargeable time'. However the next statement, '*we* need everyone to be focused at present', is

rather different in that it achieves two things simultaneously. In one sense, it maintains the stance of solidarity, whilst at the same time introducing a shift in position towards '*we* the company'.

In the following statement this shift, in Goffman's (1967) sense of footing, is complete, with Michael now taking an authoritative stance to issue a directive. He switches to the non inclusive pronouns *you* and *your*. According to Hyland (2008) these *reader pronouns* 'imply a separation between participants, rather than seeking connections' (p. 11). Michael increases the illocutionary force of this directive by giving it in four different iterations, each one focusing on a slightly different aspect: self reliance; pro-activeness; taking all available opportunities; and prioritizing chargeable time:

i) ***You*** *can't rely on everyone else*

ii) ***you*** *need to hunt out chargeable time*

iii) *Please don't let opportunities pass* ***you*** *by*

iv) *If someone comes to* ***you*** *with some chargeable time, park* ***your*** *internal project*

Now Michael seems to be addressing different audiences: 'you', 'someone' and 'everyone else'. This resonates with Skovholt and Svennevig's (2006) work using Sack's notion of *recipient design*. However, in this case recipient design is achieved quite differently. Skovholt and Svennevig found that writers categorize different kinds of participants through the use of the copy function, denoting some as primary recipients and others as secondary recipients. Here, however, Michael uses the

address function to include everyone equally, but differentiates categories of readers within the message itself. He appears to be addressing several kinds of readers: those who may be relying on others to find chargeable work; those who are proactive in bringing it to their attention, and anyone who may be so engrossed in their special interest project that they are simply unaware of the ongoing need to keep profit in mind.

The increase in illocutionary force achieved by repeated iterations has the effect of delivering not just a strong request but also a direct admonition to those who have let the balance between chargeable and unchargeable time get out of hand. Michael's use of the politeness marker 'please', seems in a sense a bid for co-operative behaviour, but with the co-text 'don't' it actually functions also - or perhaps exclusively - as an intensifier (e.g. House & Kasper, 1981; Holmes 1995).

Towards the end of the e-mail Michael makes another discursive shift. This time he adopts an empathetic and almost paternal voice, signaling his understanding of employees' preference or passion for their own specialty area, 'I know internal projects are important', and he closes with a reiteration of the required focus, using the modal form ' must' to indicate obligation and priority, 'for now the focus must go fully back onto chargeable time.'

Michael manages shifts in position between authority figure and empathetic colleague partly by acknowledging and responding to an active audience (Hyland, 2008). He acknowledges their preferred focus by saying 'I know internal projects are important', and he offsets the *cost* of the obligatory focus on chargeable time, by

implying that there may be later opportunities to refocus on internal projects, thus issuing a forceful directive whilst at the same time making an effort to reduce possible threat to rapport by addressing the SIP of equity.

Despite addressing emails simply to 'Phoenix', Michael also effectively orients to at least four different categories of participants. Although all are addressed with the term 'you' they are different kinds of you: those who 'rely on everyone else'; those who 'need to hunt out chargeable time'; those who may 'let opportunities pass them by'; and those who must 'park their internal projects' when asked. Skovholt and Svennevig (2006) note that readers form hypotheses about what is being said and how. Despite no one person or group being explicitly targeted the readers of this email will likely be quite clear about which 'you' they should identify with. What emerges from the analyses of these interactions is a sense of an interactional style which is generally linguistically direct, somewhat blunt and stereotypically masculine. These examples also illustrate senior management, and Michael in particular, drawing as far as possible on the authoritative resources available to them, whilst still maintaining a relatively low distance and a climate of care.

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4.3 Discussion

The two components of a knowledge enabling organizational context explored in this thesis are: structures that foster solid relations, and collaboration, which I have termed collegial relations and a climate of care respectively.

In exploring structures that may support solid collegial relations I have focused on three strands of organizational structure – spatial, hierarchical, and social. These are separated only for the purposes of analysis. This discussion addresses each of them in turn, to illustrate their influence on the management of interpersonal rapport through which collegial relations are enacted at Phoenix.

Spatial Configuration

Sailer and Penn (2007) claim that the emergence of a social milieu is influenced by the reciprocal interaction between spatial configuration and human habitation. The analyses in this chapter support this claim and suggest that this comes about through the influence of spatiality on the management of interpersonal rapport which underpins the development of collegial relations in the workplace.

The open plan office not only facilitates interaction by increasing opportunities for serendipitous encounter, but physical co-presence in one office, together with virtual connectivity via CMC, means that CMC is accompanied by the richness of visual and auditory cues normally associated only with face-to-face communication. Both employees and managers demonstrate a high level of willingness and ability to effectively utilize the affordances of both modes.

As a result of everyone seeing and being seen, frequent interaction and virtual connectivity, a 'sense of we-ness' in Gunnarsson's (2005) sense extends to include the whole organization, so the 'group' within which sociality rights and obligations apply appears to extend to all members. Spencer-Oatey (2008) draws on Casey (2001) and Relph (1976) in describing places as simultaneously physical and

historical, social and cultural. They have meaning and are characterized by beliefs and values, which contributes to a relation of 'constitutive co-ingredience', a relation which strongly connects place with self. This appears to contribute to the development of an interdependent construal of self, an aspect of identity that influences facework. According to Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008 p.271) 'the communication behavior of high interdependents is guided by the self-in-relation, and is reflected in "we-identity facework'''. This can be seen in the communication behavior associated with the social obligation to account to the whole organization for lateness, absence or visitors, for instance in the use of broadcast email as kind of open diary (example 4.5) and) and Emma's notification of a visiting client (example 4.1). Here the we-identity facework includes providing information to satisfy social obligation of informing whereabouts as well as minimizing the imposition on readers' time by both brevity and text location within the subject line.

Similar effects can be seen with regard to the social expectation of being informed, for instance in Erin's email question about the identity of the stranger at 'Peter's old desk' (example 4.2). Mike's attends to 'other-face' concerns by noticing and taking action to minimize Erin's (and possibly also the researcher's) potential embarrassment in a vulnerable situation. The influence of spatial configuration on interactional goals is less direct. It appears to influence the way people go about achieving them rather than the goals themselves. For instance Mike uses both email and physical presence to achieve his interactional goal, and writers use the interactive strategies of brevity and text location to satisfy their goals whilst simultaneously minimizing imposition on readers' time. Thus, spatiality influences to a greater or

lesser degree all three bases of interpersonal rapport (interactional goals; sociality rights and obligations; and face sensitivities) through which collegial relations are established and maintained. Furthermore, since managers have the power to decide how the space will be configured and how resources will be allocated, they have a direct influence on its construction as a setting for interaction in the making of meaning.

Hierarchy

The relatively flat hierarchy and the integration of managers within the open plan office influences the contextual variable of participant relations in that it facilitates ease of interaction across hierarchical levels by creating a 'field of probabilistic encounter' in Sailer and Penn's (2007) sense.

The office is characterized by a low hum of conversation as people from all levels of the hierarchy talk in the process of collaborative work across adjacent desks, or at the high tables where people often stand together for brief meetings or discussions (ethnographic evidence – observation). Frequent face-to-face interaction is complemented by frequent email communication in which both managers and employees use the solidary and inclusive address form 'Phoenix'. This categorizes all recipients as equal participants in interaction (Skovholt & Svennevig, 2006) and thus supports the development of a sense of community.

Frequent interaction, engagement in joint tasks and discussions, together with a sense of like mindedness as IT professionals, contribute to an impression of low distance despite power asymmetries. Such an environment also presents potential challenges,

such as people feeling watched by managers, or managers finding it difficult to take an authoritative stance towards those they work with so closely. It does seem to extend the scope of sociality rights and obligations as previously described under spatiality. It also appears to influence the enactment of management.

The rather direct, blunt and stereotypically masculine way of enacting authority is one that is likely to only be acceptable to people who interact regularly and have an established and comfortable rapport. For instance, David's statement - 'the format this time round will be'. Using the emphatic form 'will' leaves no doubt about the firmness of the intention (example 4.14). Likewise Michael's use of the dissociative pronoun 'you', together with the emphatic form 'can't' in directing everyone to ensure a focus on chargeable time ('You can't rely on everyone else to be chargeable…' in example 4.17), is not only blunt, but also conveys considerable illocutionary force.

At the same time however, management style reflects an awareness of the sensitivities of others that aligns more closely with the affective orientation of stereotypically feminine communication style. In mitigating potential threats to rapport, although his main concern appears to be the need to accommodate a senior manager's time constraints, Michael's expression of empathy (example 4.13), acknowledges those who will 'freak out' if they cannot speak directly with David for their performance review. And despite his emphatic directive to focus on chargeable time in example 4.17, Michael again expresses empathy with employees by acknowledging the value people place on their internal projects, 'I know that internal projects are important' (example 4.17).

Shifts between solidary and authoritative stance in management emails are conveyed in a richly interactional style, drawing on a range of metadiscursive strategies that engage readers as active participants. For instance pronouns such as ‘you’, ‘your’ and ‘we’ meet readers’ expectations of inclusion and solidarity by addressing them as participants in an argument (Hyland, 2005), anticipating objections and guiding interpretations as with David‘s announcement of changes to the performance appraisal process. These strategies also position the audience, pulling them in at critical points through questions or directives, using for instance obligation modals such as ‘must’, and references to shared knowledge such as ‘we are no longer having to work huge hours to meet challenging deliverables’ (example 4.17).

Thus hierarchy impacts on collegial relationships by contributing to a balance between flexibility and corporate control, and by reflecting dimensions of care in the management of participant relations. These characteristics are consistent with Von Krogh et al’s account of sensitive aware managers. Opportunities for interaction across hierarchical levels influence the development of collegial relations through their impact on power distance, creating a context where high status difference is accompanied by low power distance.

Regular meaningful dialogue was identified by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) as the trigger for externalization phase of knowledge creation – the sharing of ideas that can lead to the development of new knowledge in the form of new services, products, or new ways of doing things.

Phoenix as a social community (structure)

The many occasions for socialization, provided both at work and out of work, foster as well as reflect solidarity. They reflect a sense of closeness arising from frequency of contact, which appears to support and be supported by a combination of: visibility provided by physical co-presence; the widespread use of broadcast e-mail for interaction; and an organizational value of inclusiveness.

Organization wide invitations to private social events, together with ethnographic evidence showing wide participation in these, show that workplace relationships are sufficiently close that they carry over into private life. However, this could also be seen as the blurring of boundaries between the work life and personal life of employees. Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) contend that identity work is a significant medium of organizational control. They note the concerns of those working in the critical and interpretive traditions of organizational analysis regarding the 'negotiated and problematical status of allegedly shared meanings, values, beliefs, ideas and symbols' (p. 4). In this regard one particular high level SIP at Phoenix is of interest – that is the strong expectation that employees will participate in all social events provided by the company. These are both regular and frequent, and include: a weekly meeting (which all employees and management are expected to attend); at least one evening per month to entertain client companies; social club events outside of work hours (at least once a month); an annual weekend away; and a range of private social occasions to which people generally issue a company-wide invitation.

So although the analyses suggest solid collegial relations they also draw attention to what might be termed a dark side of wide participation in organizational life – the

fact that employees may be so involved with the company that most aspects of their lives are intertwined with it. Nonetheless there is a genuine sense of what Gunnarsson (2009) terms ‘we ness’ in the office accompanied by a generally positive climate.

The spatial configuration of the office and the computer network, combine to create an environment in which there are many opportunities for interaction, accompanied by both a high degree of visibility and a high degree of computer connectivity amongst all members of the organization. Although people occasionally move across the room to engage in face-to-face talk, a substantial amount of interaction takes place by broadcast email. There is a sense in which this could be seen as a double-barreled connectivity. In the workplace people commonly have face-to-face contact with those in their workgroup or department, and email contact with those located in distant offices or buildings. However at Phoenix both mediums are more closely integrated and in an office containing almost fifty people, this appears to increase the felt potency of cues available through co-presence.

4.3.1 Collegial relations through the management of interpersonal rapport

Interacting participants are constantly negotiating meaning and in the process reproducing or challenging the larger social structures within which they operate (Holmes, 2006, p. 15). This chapter has focused on Phoenix as a whole, the broadest dimension of analysis in this thesis. In this dimension of organization, sociality rights and obligations appear as the most prominent component in the management of

collegial relations. This is not to suggest that considerations of face and interactional goals are unimportant, rather that the observance of sociality rights and obligations frequently takes account of these components too. For instance, in attending to the social obligation of keeping colleagues informed, the combination of brevity and text location of the many messages advising absence from, or visitors to the office, also attend to face sensitivities of all recipients by minimizing imposition on their work time.

Where face sensitivity became more prominent (in Example 4.2) it was dealt with in a face-to-face dyadic interaction. Its management was simultaneously straightforward and many layered. Spencer-Oatey notes that 'participants in interaction do things not only with words but also through non-linguistic semiotic resources and interrelated forms of interactional organization' (p. 285). Erin's broadcast e-mail enquiring about the presence of the stranger, resulted in a flurry of e-mail responses. But one person, Mike, took action to avoid embarrassment to both Erin and the stranger, by going over to talk to Erin personally. This move simultaneously: changed the participation structure (from 1 to many; to 1 to 1); switched modes (from e-mail to face-to-face); connected talk with action; and minimized what Mike recognized as a possible face threat to two people (Erin and the stranger). Additionally, co-presence facilitated by the spatial configuration, enabled amused glances to be exchanged between parties and as well enabled everyone in the office to *see* the way face was attended to. This amusement was soon reflected through an emoticon included in Erin's thank you message and sent to all as a broadcast e-mail. The emoticon could be interpreted as a wry expression of the recognition that she was about the only person who didn't know who the stranger

was. This illustrates the subtle yet powerful interconnections between talk and action and the simultaneous and reciprocal influence between online talk and off-line talk. Erin's social expectation of being informed about the visitor, highlights the impact of visibility on the observance of social obligations, in this case the Phoenix convention of advising colleagues of visitors to the office.

The ease of interaction facilitated by physical co-presence in the open office together with the connections provided by CMC, appear to foreground awareness of and attention to not only face sensitivities but also sociality rights and obligations of both employees and management. The many employee e-mails advising absence from or visitors to the office, express solidarity in a number of ways: by addressing the message simply to Phoenix, writers identify with the organization as a community; by using nicknames or shortened forms of the names they draw on community recognized identities; and through the location and brevity of the message they enable it to be read simply by scanning the subject lines of incoming e-mails, thereby showing consideration for colleagues and minimizing the threat to face sensitivities by minimizing the imposition on their time.

4.3.2 Communicative style, interactional ethos and a climate of care

Spencer Oatey (2008), notes that all aspects of language use and interactional behaviour, including spatial relations, can be reflected in the more generalized style of interaction referred to as communication style (p. 28).

Although the examples in this chapter largely comprise e-mail communication, they nonetheless reflect elements of an organization wide communication style. The

emails are characterized by informality, evidenced in part by the absence of preliminaries, direct entry to the message, and a sense of familiarity arising from a consistent thread of associative expressiveness, even within transactional messages comprising directives. The sense of familiarity derives in part from linguistic directness to the point of bluntness, evidenced in both social and transactional e-mails. From a pragmatic inferential perspective, directness is reflected in the explicitness of transactional content, combined with a sensitive implicitness in the relational content, for instance, Mike's email response to Erin (in example 4.3) by saying simply 'I'll come talk to you'.

Writers employ a wide range of interactional resources identified by Hyland (2005), to engage with readers. For example they project their identity into the message through self mention, and engage readers as participants in an argument using reader pronouns such as *you*, or in discussion by using the inclusive pronoun *we*. Messages that attend to sociality obligations (such as advising colleagues of absence from the office) often enhance the engagement function of the emails by self mention using community recognized identities such as nicknames (e.g. skinny).

Managers sending directives by broadcast email use complex combinations of resources such as: identification with readers; contrastive connectives and modals to help maintain a balance between authoritarian and affiliative stance. For instance the MD's directive in example 4.17: 'I know that internal projects are important *but for now* the focus *must* go fully back on to chargeable time'.

Interactional ethos

Brown and Levinson (1987, as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008), note that 'societies, or sub-cultures within societies, differ in terms of what might be called ethos, the affective quality of interaction that characterizes members of a society. In some [positive politeness] societies an interactional ethos is generally warm, easy-going, friendly; in others [negative politeness societies] it is stiff formal and deferential' (p. 28).

Noticing the reactions of others, and attending to their face sensitivities and social expectations, conveys an interactional ethos characterized overall by positive affect. And despite, or perhaps because of the direct, almost blunt communication style evidenced in emails, there is a sense of familiarity, consistent with employee and management descriptions of Phoenix as a 'village culture' where everybody knows everybody else, and knows what they can do. Through a combination of discourse strategies (e.g. softening directives through identifying with readers' wants; using message placement to minimize imposition on colleagues' time) and actions (e.g. empathising with employees' feelings when developing policy; and attending to a colleague's face sensitivities by going to talk to her rather than simply sending another email), both management and employees attend not only to sociality rights and obligations, but they also support the maintenance of a generally positive affect by showing sensitivity to the feelings of others.

As well, active empathy with special events in the lives of colleagues is shown for instance, by widespread and enthusiastic engagement in the humorous and

collaboratively constructed debate around the middle name of an employee's newly arrived baby.

A general attitude of inclusiveness at Phoenix, together with a high level of participation in a wide variety of social events, contributes to an apparent ease and openness of communication especially in day-to-day CMC 'talk'. This draws attention to an important aspect of context identified by Blommaert (2005) that is the 'forgotten context' of text trajectory - in this instance the text trajectory of social individual knowledge. The individual social knowledge gained in face-to-face interaction at a party for clients, is entextualised through collaboratively constructed e-mail interaction and meta-discursive comment, into a package of socially explicit knowledge that, through company wide distribution and the persistant qualities of email, becomes part of the organization's knowledge base.

4.4 Summary

This chapter described the general communicative ecology of Pheonix, and identified a number of ways in which three aspects of structure combine to foster collegial relations. In particular, the spatial configuration of the open plan office, together with the computer network, provides a context for interaction in which employees and management effectively utilise the richness of visual and auditory cues that accompany physical co-presence in one large open space, together with the affordances of the computer network. The open space can be seen to facilitate movement and interaction in a number of ways: as people occasionally go across the room to join in conversations they can see and hear nearby or in the distance; or join

colleagues to work at tables placed throughout the room. However people also utilise the computer network to ‘talk’ across the open space to colleagues they can see in the distance.

A distinctive feature of communication in the organization as a whole is the use made of broadcast e-mails addressed simply to ‘Phoenix’, reflecting the organization as one co-present and visible community. These broadcast emails often feature strings of responses which together form a complete discussion or argument, for instance as the party gossip conversation in examples 4.10 and 4.11. In addition to active engagement as a community, these discussions often show considerable associative expressiveness and a high level of positive affect. Organization-wide collaboratively constructed humour, such as the ‘baby naming spam fest’ in examples 4.8 and 4.9, shows not only collegial support, but here writers also identify with the emotion of joy and excitement associated with a special event in the personal life of their colleague. Collegial relations are sufficiently strong that there is frequent socialization outside of work, for instance the Guy Fawke’s evening invitation in example 4.7.

Writers utilise many meta-discursive interactional resources, particularly engagement markers (e.g. self mention) and attitude markers (e.g. conveying the writer’s point of view such as ‘now is a good opportunity’), to engage with readers as co-participants in interaction. The open office together with the computer network combine to foster collegial relations by forming a tightly interwoven physical and virtual environment which offers many opportunities for interaction by multiple and often simultaneous means. This combination of online and off-line talk and action displays both

solidarity and a concern for the feelings of others. Mike's action in particular, shows active empathy with Erin's position.

The hierarchy (in particular the managing director) supports collegial relations through the use of legitimate power. By choosing the spatial configuration of an open plan office, through the allocation of space and resources, to integrating themselves amongst employees rather than in separate offices or on different floors, management enacts aspects of the egalitarian culture that it claims. Getting things done through, for instance, directives is achieved through the use of explicit discourse strategies and a relatively direct style. However directives are also softened or mitigated by affectively oriented meta-linguistic resources (e.g. giving or seeking empathy), that show writers identify with readers' wants or feelings.

The environment appears to impact on the management of interpersonal relations by increasing both awareness of and attention to face sensitivities, which supports Spencer-Oatey's (2008) suggestion that face management norms seem to be number sensitive. Additionally, at Phoenix the combination of network connectivity and physical co-presence, and the richness of cues this provides, appears to increase both the awareness and observance of sociality rights and obligations. For instance through the potential of noticing visitors to and absences from the organization as a whole, and the potential to notice both the day-to-day enactment of management as well as employee reactions to it.

In the next chapter I look more closely at interactions within the two kinds of organizational community to identify the ways in which they may support the

development of solid relationships between people who work together. In the case of one community, on a daily basis, and in the case of the other - a different kind of community - on a more intense and short term basis.

CHAPTER FIVE

COLLEGIAL RELATIONS IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNITIES

5.1 Overview of the communities

The analysis in Chapter Four found evidence of solid collegial relations and elements of a climate of care in Phoenix as a whole organization. These were evidenced in and supported by spatial, hierarchical and social elements of organizational structure.

In this chapter I explore the bases of collegiality in two different kinds of organizational community to identify the ways in which they support the development of collegial relations, and evidence a climate of care. The analysis of naturally occurring interactions focuses on the management of interpersonal rapport between members of the communities in day-to-day practice-based activities. The examples are taken from interactions in three of the organization's component communities; one based on a specialty practice area within IT; one project team; and a task-based group. The various communities listed below in Example 5.1 were identified by ethnographic evidence as well as by the 'From' line (and in one case the subject line) of broadcast e-mails.

Example 5.1

Context: From Line of emails indicating distinct organizational communities

- From: Creative studio (speciality practice based)

- From: Professional Services (specialty practice based)
- From: Technology Services (specialty practice based)
- From: Project Leader – Barker-Lewis Project (project based)

- From: Michael Managing Director (task based)

  Subject: Strategy Development teams

The first three of these are communities based on a specialty practice within IT, the fourth is a project team, comprising members from various specialty fields within IT, and the fifth – a task based group, also comprises members from various specialty IT fields.

As discussed in chapter 2, for Von Krogh et al (2000) organizational micro-communities are at the heart of the knowledge enabling context. They describe these as small (5 to 7 members), and they distinguish them from communities of practice. In this chapter I undertake a closer investigation of the communities that comprise Phoenix, with three aims in mind:

- to identify the ways in which each community fosters the development of solid collegial relations
- to identify the distinguishing characteristics of the different communities
- to gain insights into their role and contribution to the organization's knowledge enabling context.

The examples in Section 5.2 are extracts from interactions in the community of

web developers. The analysis of naturally occurring interactions in the day-to-day work of the community focuses on language use in the management of interpersonal rapport during a teaching learning session. Within the management of interpersonal rapport the analyses highlight participant relations with respect to the enactment of power and solidarity - the two key components of collegiality. The description preceding each example is developed from the preliminary analysis of context based on Hymes' (1974) etic grid for the ethnography of speaking.

The analysis in the following sections apply this same approach to the analysis of interactions in two different task-based communities: first (in section 5.3) a project team; the second (in section 5.4) a strategy development group. The discussion in section 5.5 compares and contrasts the characteristics of these communities, identifying distinctive features that suggest they are two different kinds of community. The discussion also identifies the relationship between the two communities and suggests their unique contribution to the organization's knowledge enabling context. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

5.2 The community of web developers

5.2.1 Description

Members of the various IT specialties sit in close proximity to each other in the open plan office. An outsider would not notice them as the different communities run together in the sense that where one ends the next begins, in a physically seamless manner. The community of web developers comprises James – the senior expert, David, and Mitchell who is a relative novice. Power in this community is based on expertise and James the most expert is the core member of the community. The

community's purpose is to undertake all of the organization's web development work, so at any one time they are developing a number of different sites. The community is anticipated to exist and be central to the organization's operations throughout the lifetime of the company and its work is closely aligned with the long term goals and objectives of the organization. Members of the community have different levels of expertise in the same sub-specialty of IT, with the most experienced member having the highest status and power within the community. As a long-term community working simultaneously and collaboratively on many similar tasks, the CofP requires a relatively settled location for its day-to-day activities. As with the other specialist communities throughout the office, novice and expert members sit together in close proximity, within what could be termed the community's 'home space'. And reflecting the egalitarian philosophy of the MD, each individual member has a similar allocation of space and resources, regardless of seniority.

When people work closely together on a day-to-day basis in pursuit of the same enterprise, strong bonds of collegiality can develop but this is not necessarily so. Such conditions can highlight both positive and negative relationships between people. Where positive relationships exist they nonetheless need to be maintained. This involves managing both status difference and distance.

5.2.2 Analysis and Interpretation

The interaction in Example 5.2 shows how, in an established collegial relationship, both participants take account of these two dimensions in maintaining interpersonal rapport.

The setting for the interaction is the community's 'home space' within the open plan office. The goal of the activity is a teaching/learning session in which Mitchell will begin the process of learning how to apply a recently released technology to be used in a number of websites under development. The participants James, the senior expert, and the less experienced Mitchell, sit at their adjacent desks, each working separately to complete the current tasks before the teaching session begins. James finishes first and is ready to begin the teaching session. As the senior expert within the community, James's role-based social obligations include sharing his knowledge and expertise with the novice. The current website development on which the session is focussed, is subject to extremely tight time constraints, and James is eager to begin. Mitchell however is trying to complete his current task.

Example 5. 2

Context: A Teaching/learning session within a community of practice. James is the senior expert and Mitchell is by comparison a novice.

1	James	o' right – how 'bout I start with showing you what we've got to the ---
2		[low tone] [*then silence apart from clicking keyboard*]
3	Mitchell	we're gonna have four for play station tonight
4		[*more clicking keyboard and office background noise*] … its noisy eh?
5	James	yeah - Looks like we're gonna have two conversations recorded
6		[chuckles] we should probly start
7	Mitchell	[*clicking keyboard for 3 more minutes*] Whoosh
8		[*more keyboard clicking 4 minutes- James and Mitchell working separately*]
9	Mitchell	all done
		[10-13 – *are all said very quietly*]
10	James	i have a REAL problem with people exTRAPolating [confiding tone]

11	Mitchell	whadaya mean?
12	James	[*James confides in Mitchell his concern about a negative comment someone has made about him (James) to a senior manager*]
13	Mitchell	[*Low volume makes actual words inaudible*]
14	James	right – so I've set up a very basic uh web-site =
15	Mitchell	= is this to start – is this to play with? [enthusiastically]
16	James	uh well this is just to start. its just the project structure for these two
17		these / /two projects\ this is just TWO projects out of
18	Mitchell	/sure sure \\
19	James	//potentially three or four\
20	Mitchell	/for sure for sure\\
21	James	i did this more around a - so that we can get something going now and
22		b - so that we can get the (auto-builder) going =
23	Mitchell	= so it's all set up? =
24	James	= yep ++ so we've got a pretty good few links here on the Barker-Lewis site =
25	Mitchell	= yep =
26	James	so we've got the build log viewer so but those two there are projects building =
27	Mitchell	= yep yep ……. (interaction continues)

In workplace interaction the discourse marker *Right* - in utterance initial position (line 1) – is frequently used as a call to order (Holmes, 2003; Marra 2003). James uses it here to get Mitchell's attention, and in his directive which follows, he attends to Mitchell's face sensitivities by framing it as a suggestion 'how 'bout I show you'. This conventionally indirect politeness strategy attenuates the illocutionary force of the directive. It shows consideration of Mitchell's negative face, by acknowledging his right to complete the current task before beginning the next one.

Although the pronouns – 'i' show 'you – position James as the senior expert, with the power to both set the agenda and to require Mitchell's compliance, he downplays

his authority by using a suggestory formula ‘how ‘bout’. By waiting whilst Mitchell completes his current task, he shows consideration for Mitchell’s face sensitivities, and acknowledges Mitchell’s obligation to complete one task before beginning another. His calm low key tone indicates that despite the need to begin the teaching session, James can see that Mitchell is going as fast as possible and so he waits patiently, thus maintaining their good relations. The researcher’s desk was located near to James and Mitchell and this interaction was observed as well as recorded.

Mitchell too attends to maintaining their collegial relations, and although he keeps typing he also maintains communication with off-topic small talk ‘we’re gonna have four for play station tonight’ (line 3). The inclusive pronoun *we’re* supports the interpretation that their collegiality and friendship are both solid and established, because despite the fact that they work together on a daily basis, they still make opportunities for non-work related, joint social activities.

James’ use of the modal *should,* shifts the focus of the suggestion to their mutual obligation to get the teaching session underway. It suggests a little more urgency, and implies that Mitchell needs to finish as soon as possible, in order to begin the teaching session. Mitchell however types quickly on as if to say - I need just a few more minutes - and again James carries on working as he waits. Despite the fact that he has the right (as senior expert) to insist that Mitchell stops what he is doing, James patiently waits and carries on with his own work. Bearing in mind the very tight time frame for the development of this particular website, (researcher observation from presence at relevant meetings) this shows that he too places a high value on maintaining their established collegial relationship.

When Mitchell eventually exclaims ‘all done’ (Line 9), James does not go straight to the business of teaching, but instead confides in Mitchell that someone has been making negative comments about him to a senior manager. Mitchell’s response tone is supportive but the content is unclear, because of very low tone (almost a whisper). James then moves quickly to the teaching session, clearly marking the transition by saying ‘right’ (line 14).

The second phase of the interaction (lines 14-27) focuses on the transactional business of the session, the role based and mutual obligations of the teaching / learning process. James’ teaching style continues to show an orientation to the maintenance of a positive and established rapport. He continues to attend to Mitchell’s face needs in a number of ways. Although he is doing the actual work in this instance, he explains what he is doing as he works ‘so I’ve set up a basic website’ (Line 14). Mitchell knows this is their first really challenging application of a recently released technology, and he is very keen to use it. His eagerness to actually engage with the site is shown by his enthusiastic tone as he asks ‘is this to start is this to play with?’ (line 15). James however cannot allow this. The site is being developed as part of a very challenging major project which not only has a very tight time frame, but throughout the project live financial data are being used at all stages, so only the most senior experts have been appointed to actually undertake the work (ethnographic data – researcher presence at the relevant project meeting).

Throughout lines 16 to 19 James continues to minimize the impact of his (implicit) refusal. Most obviously he mitigates the threat to Mitchell’s face by avoiding

explicitly saying no. As well, he downplays the importance of this particular instance of working with the new technology by using the downtoner *just* (i.e. 'this is just to start, this is just the project structure for these two projects'), framing this as *just* one of several projects this technology will be used for, and implying that Mitchell may well be able to 'play' with one of the other (less risky) developments. In this way James shows associative expressiveness by continuing to empathize with Mitchell's desire to have hands on experience with the new technology.

James' reluctance to refuse Mitchell's request can be seen in his hesitation marker 'uh' followed by 'well'. In this instance *well* fulfills two of its main uses as a discourse marker (Schiffrin, 1987). First, insufficiency: it shows that James is aware that this is not the answer Mitchell was hoping for, but he is not in position to say yes to Mitchell's request. Second it may also be a delay tactic (Jucker, 1993) to give him a moment while he thinks of how to best offer an alternative, and in this way minimize the potential threat to face, of a refusal. Mitchell's response 'sure sure' (line 18) shows that he accepts the situation, and this together with his supportive tone, conveys a sense of empathy with James' situation. His reiteration of support 'for sure for sure' (line 20) seems as if he is saying – 'no problem, I understand. James continues to explain what he is doing as he works on the site, using a discourse marker 'so' (lines 19-27) to link each utterance to what has gone before, thus building his explanation into a cohesive account. The backchannel tokens 'yep' and 'yep, yep' in lines 25 and 27 function as turn continuers (Schiffrin, 2003), that show Mitchell's attentiveness and continuing engagement in learning from James' expertise, which is the focus of the session.

Throughout this interaction both James and Mitchell demonstrate a rapport maintenance orientation as defined by Spencer-Oatey (2008, p. 32), 'the desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations between them'. This supports the interpretation that their collegial relations are solid and well established and are something which they both value and actively protect - James through his low key approach to doing power, and his consideration of Mitchell's need to complete the current task, despite very tight time constraints on his own work; Mitchell through his consideration of James' positive face by maintaining communication through off topic small talk, until he can engage in the teaching session. Throughout the interaction in example 5.2, the communication style is casual and informal, and both participants show mutual consideration of each other's face sensitivities. They attend to the dimensions of both solidarity and power in maintaining positive rapport. The interaction continues in Example 5.3 with a switch to the transactional business of the session.

In addition to collegial management of power relations, Example 5.3 shows James' supportive teaching style. James and Mitchell are immersed in the business of the teaching/learning session. In his role of expert, James explains to the less experienced Mitchell how to apply the new technology being employed in the development of this website.

Example 5.3

Context: James and Mitchell engaged in a joint task - continues from Example 5.2

1		sniff
2	James	so we 're supposed to ( ) So – if you look at U C 0 1 ++ U C 0 1

3 4		and then we've got our flow so username prompt into there + so user name password into there and then we've got a set of ultimate flows based on/
5	Mitch	/where's the goal initial ?
6	James	the er isn't that the user case description? to get to the site?
7	Mitch	so. so the goal is to get to ( ) to become an authenticated /user
8 9 10	James	/to get to the site yeah to authenticate yourself to the site. so that's pretty much what its saying + identify themselves to the system and then access areas appropriate to their role
11		(15) silence except for the clicking keyboard
12		is that how it works ( ) to the site ( )=
13 14 15 16 17	James	=well they do within the concept of er Barker-Lewis.co.nz sorry Barker-Lewis.funding.nz is the informational site and then underneath that so they navigate to that site web to the site web where the portal is hosted. well maybe it'll be a different url altogether and they'll /click a link on this
18 19	Mitch	so the enormous home page is not ( ) well that's just not public + it's just a stat web/ page
20 21	James	yes i think we should just treat it as a stat web page and then it will link to the portal+ then the first page of the portal is the live //one yep?
22 23	Mitch	/yep\\ so when the user navigates to the portal which is the website it prompts them to use the password?
		….interaction continues…….

James grounds his teaching in their overlapping knowledge of the field in general, and packages new information in small chunks. The content of the utterances, their closely connected and sometimes overlapping turns, together with the absence of elaborate politeness strategies, shows a high level of engagement in the transactional business of the teaching/learning session. This together with the absence of introductory preamble, and turns following closely with no gaps between, supports the interpretation that James and Mitchell are accustomed to working together on a regular basis.

Within several turns the discourse marker *so* precedes each element of James' explication (lines 2- 4, 8, 14), and used in this way it functions almost like numbers in a list (as if to say - first we do this, second we do that, next we do this), connecting each utterance in a meaningful sequence. By constructing his turns as sequences of small informative utterances linked with the turn continuers *so*, *then* or *and then*, James not only explains what he is doing, but his explication confirms and supports what Mitchell can actually *see* he is doing. By simultaneously packaging new information in small chunks, and by grounding the words in the accompanying action, James provides effective scaffolding for the visual demonstration of the process. Furthermore, by packaging his explication of a rather long and complex process into manageable chunks, he shows an intuitive understanding of good teaching pedagogy. This is further demonstrated when Mitchell asks a question (line 5) 'where's the goal initial?' James seems about to provide the answer but hesitates saying 'the er' and instead prompts Mitchell to think it through himself - 'Isn't that the user case description to get to the site?' When Mitchell responds by suggesting the answer, James confirms that it is correct and adds further information as well. This seems to give Mitchell confidence, as seen in his turns beginning in lines 18 and 22, he poses rhetorical questions, thus proactively suggesting an answer whilst at the same time leaving open a possible need for correction.

Mitchell's turns often begin with 'so' or 'yep so' (lines 7, 18, 22), serving to connect the idea units from the previous turn, as he signals his understanding of what has been said. This supports James' strategy of ensuring that each piece of the explanation leads on from the previous one, and procedurally relates each statement

to the previous one as suggested by Fraser, (1990, 1998). In this way the interaction proceeds smoothly. James and Mitchell's collaborative and supportive engagement in the teaching/learning activity in Examples 1 and 2, with the absence of introductory preambles, transitions between turns that are both smooth and rapid, contribute to a sense of a familiar and comfortable relationship. The participants are clearly at ease with each other and accustomed to engaging in shared activities.

5.2.3 Characteristics of the community based on specialty practice within IT

Clearly this *community* meets Wenger's (1998) criterial characteristics for a CofP. The analysis shows community members *mutually engaged* (working collaboratively) in a *negotiated enterprise*, a teaching/mentoring session that proceeds through question and answer sequence that directly contributes to the work of the community, using a *shared repertoire* of technical terms.

The community also satisfies additional criteria provided on Wenger's website (http://ewenger.com/communities): a *domain* - rather than simply an interest; a *practice;* and *accountability* to that practice. The web developers' work is within the *domain* of IT, as well as within their shared specialty sub-field of web development; and the participants demonstrate an *accountability* to their *practice*, James through his teaching and sharing his expertise with the novice, and Mitchell through his engagement in the learning process. As well - their work is for a specific output, for a specific community purpose. The mentoring and instruction assist the course of the novice's identity on an inbound trajectory towards greater expertise.

We can see that the CofP is characterized by an established collegiality, based on: regular frequent (daily) contact; mutual interest in the specialty; and engagement in collaborative tasks. By taking account of each other's face sensitivities, and the social expectancies of the respective roles of expert and novice, James and Mitchell demonstrate a rapport maintenance orientation**.** James takes particular care in the exercise of power, using discourse strategies of suggestion to attenuate directives and requests. He also suggests alternatives, implying that there will be other opportunities, in dealing with Mitchell's request to 'play' with the website, thus minimizing and softening the face threat of a refusal. James also exercises patience whilst he waits for Mitchell to complete his current task.

Mitchell, too, *shows* by his actions (typing very quickly) that he is hurrying as fast as he can to finish his current task and comply with James's directive - framed as a request - to begin the teaching session. He also attends to the maintenance of rapport by showing appreciation for James's patience, as he maintains communication through small talk and references to a social activity in which they may both participate. James and Mitchell clearly value their collegiality and make explicit efforts to maintain and support it.

As mentioned earlier this community comprises three members: Mitchell, James and David, all with different degrees of expertise in this same sub-field of IT. Together, the members comprise the tacit knowledge base and expertise that the company draws on for all web development solutions over the whole range of its projects and consultancies. Thus it can be seen as a deep source of knowledge. Its depth could be

expressed abstractly as equal to the sum of the number of members, times the sum of their individual expertise in web development.

The members of this community have a relatively stable identity as specialists in their field (although James is the core expert, and Mitchell is the novice whose identity is on an inbound trajectory towards greater expertise). The community itself has a long-term life cycle. It is expected to last for the lifetime of the organization, and its purpose is directly tied to the organization's long-term aims and objectives through being responsible for all the organizations outputs in this field.

Several of the characteristics that underpin the nature and strength of the CofPs distinguish them from Von Krogh et al's *micro-communities of knowledge.* For instance the CofPs are clearly *not* cross-functional (cross functionality is a basic criterion for MCKs) and the members *do* have a sustained history of engagement over time. In the next section I analyze interactions in two communities that do satisfy Von Krogh et al's criteria for an MCK.

5.3 Project-based micro-communities at Phoenix

In contrast to the community of practice discussed above (and others based on different IT specialties), other micro-communities at Phoenix do satisfy Von Krogh et al's criteria for an MCK. These communities are primarily task or project based. Two of them are discussed and sample interactions from them are analysed in section 5.3.2: first a project team; and second task-based group.

5.3.1 Description - The Barker-Lewis Project Team

Although the MCK members all share the common overall domain of IT, each member is an expert in a different specialty sub-field and is drawn from a different CofP, hence the team meets the first criterion identified by Von Krogh et al (2000) the criterion of *cross-functional*ity. Second the members have not worked together in this combination before, so as a group they *have no history of engagement over time,* thus they meet a second criterion. Two other distinguishing characteristics of MCKs are also present. First, some *members* (in this instance two) *will come and go throughout the project*; and second, the team *will disband when its purpose* (the project) - *is accomplished,* so in this sense it is a transient community.

The purpose of this community is the design and implementation of a new web-based finance system for a client company that provides financial services to many (more than 100) companies around the world. The needs and requirements of the client company are a primary consideration and the details of the project brief, largely developed by them govern the project. This means that the project team's purpose has a dual alignment and a dual responsibility, to both Phoenix and to the client company. As well, the project must be completed in a very short time frame, and at the conclusion of the project the team will disband. This, together with the other demands and constraints of the project brief, will challenge the technology, as well as the processes and the expertise of the team members. (Ethnographic evidence – the researcher was present at the project meeting.)

Such an undertaking requires a team of people who can deal with any and all aspects of the task, skilled and experienced people drawn from the range of different fields of

IT that are relevant to this project. All members of the team must have very high levels of expertise and must be able to 'hit the ground running'; this community is not a context for learning the trade. As well as being cross functional, the team comprises members with relatively similar degrees of expertise. So in contrast with the CofP where members share the *same sub-specialty* but with *different degrees* of expertise, the MCK (project team) comprises members with *similar degrees* of expertise but in *different sub-fields* of IT. As well, since project team members each come from different CofPs, they do not have an established home space, rather they meet regularly in the Phoenix 'board room' (formed by removing the partitions between two of the small offices). The team also spends several days each week in the client company.

The purpose of this community is quite different from that of the CofP. Although the project is part of the core business of Phoenix, and as such is closely aligned with the organization's long term interests, it is also a formal – contract based - agreement with a client organization and is driven by the client's project brief. This project brief is of course aligned with the goals and objectives of the client organization. As a result the MCK has a dual focus. Although the result of the project impacts on the reputation of the organization and adds to the knowledge and experience of MCK members, the day-to-day work of the community, throughout the project, is driven by the project brief and is therefore aligned with the goals of the client company.

The community's purpose also dictates its membership, in that members must bring to the community all the various types of expertise necessary for the needs of the project. Furthermore, each member must have a high level of expertise, to ensure that

the demands of the brief can be satisfied to a high standard within the given time frame. In this instance a very high level of expertise in each subfield of IT needed for the project is crucial. The members have not worked together in this exact combination before and so as a community they have no sustained history of engagement. This also means that as a team they do not have an established collegiality arising from long term engagement on a day-to-day basis. Rather - they will have to establish and maintain collegial relations throughout the course of the project.

Within the project team, power resides in the legitimate role-based (and temporary) power of the project leader. Although all individual members of the team have high status within their communities of practice, within the project team they have relatively equal status and all are subject to the role-based power of the project leader. Since they have no previous history of engagement, team members must establish a collegiality that will see them effectively through the period of the project. Example 5.4 shows how they go about this.

The setting for the interaction in Example 5.4 is the 'board room' described above. Participants are all experts in their respective fields, so apart from the project leader they have relatively equal status within the context of the project. The project leader (PL) has been appointed and although he is not the most senior person in the team - in terms of position within the organization's hierarchy - he is responsible for coordinating the project and keeping it on track and within the constraints of the project brief. There are also two members who will come and go throughout the course of the project. First - Michael the Managing Director (MD) of Phoenix, who

will take the role of senior analyst. He designed the original Barker-Lewis system which is now out of date to the extent that it must be completely rebuilt. Second – Mitchell, who though not sufficiently experienced to be a core member of the team, has offered himself as 'dogsbody' (his term) so he can learn as much as possible about both this project and the application of the new technology.

The goals (***E**nds*) of this meeting include: first - the introduction (by the project leader - Philip) of the project brief which forms the basis of the agreement between Phoenix and the client company; and second – the formation of the members into a project team.

5.3.2 Analysis and Interpretation

The interaction in Example 5.4 is an excerpt from an early meeting of the Barker Lewis project team. Its purpose is to ensure all members of the group are familiar with and understand the project brief and its challenges and constraints, and all team members are expected to be present before the scheduled start time. The purpose of the activity is formal and this is reflected in the more formal style of the presenter. The rules of interaction for this genre at Phoenix include: the presenter speaks first; the presenter's turn is followed by or interspersed with questions from 'the audience'; the presenter decides when (and if) to accept questions, and generally announces a preference for one or other before beginning.

As team members arrive to participate in the meeting, they take a seat in a semicircle around one end of an oval table. A data-show and screen are set up at the front of the room. Philip, the PL has been standing near the door as people arrive, and as he turns

to go to the front of the room to begin the presentation David comes in, sees Philip and quietly asks him a question about a key project date. David is one of the firm's four senior managers and the most senior person at the meeting.

Example 5.4

Context: The Barker-Lewis project team meeting – where's Mitchell?

Line	Name	Act sequence and description
1	**David**	the umm the go live licenses will be march+ right?
2	**Philip**	there's no time frame other than other than an indication - a strong
3		indication that it's going to be march. until Michael confirms+unsure as to
4		the understanding (2) the client's understanding+ that we will be going live
5		on that date+ so a bit of a heads up there+ the framework will be finished
6		done released + the framework will be final+ its imPORtant it IS important
7		[*Philip moves to the front of the room to begin the presentation and notices*
8		*Mitchell is missing*]
9	**Philip**	where's Mitchell?
10	**Terry**	he's playing games
11	**Philip**	i'm. i'm a bit disappointed in the lack of commitment
12		[laughter]
13	**Terry**	it's alright he's just in the middle of saving his location on the x-box
14		[laughter]=
15	**Terry**	= obviously a very important point in the game
16		[*general chatter about x-box*]
17	**Philip**	i'm ah i've just managed to get back into the role of the master chief - after

18		killing the heretic and ‘is two little spawn hologram things
19	**Terry**	you only have to kill the heretic
20	**Theo**	yes yeah + ya just have to kill that one guy + ya just have to jump on and bash im=
21	**Terry**	= it’s pretty easy really =
22	**Philip**	= yeah+ once you work out what you actually have to do
23		[*Mitchell arrives at this point. He closes the door and pulls a chair up to the table*]
24	**Philip**	glad you could join us
25		*[it’s now around five minutes after meeting was scheduled to begin*]
26	**Terry**	what’s all this garbage about having to save. ( )
27	**David**	well you have to save it quick otherwise it starts you at the beginning /of\
28	**Mitchell**	/i’m\ more worried about someone else just picking up my character an ya
29		just don’t want somebody ( ) do ya?
30	**Philip**	RIGHT + forgive the poor ( ) documentation it’s still a work in progress.
31		but this will give us the general gist of what we’re doing here+first of all
32		WELCOME everyone to team barker-lewis+YAY team barker-lewis
33		dotnet+barker-lewis 2 the return. Return of the broker
34		[laughter]
35		So our three month mission is stated up there [*pointing to the slide*] we’re
36		gonna RECREATE THE PREMIUM FUNDING SYSTEM dot net two.
37		jumping the gun a little bit on dot net two by getting in early and releasing
38		the application essentially a *week* after the framework goes live + i
39		understand. that’ll be very cool for us very exciting
40	**Terry**	i just wondered briefly what’s the premium funding system?
41	**Philip**	i’m going to show you very shortly. um the program flow

42		and user interface are to be consistent with their existing
43		system. **(** **)**
44		over three HUNDRED thousand so um so a big question that *they* had to
45		ask was ‘do we want to spend this extra money?’
46	**Terry**	hopefully returned in ease of maintainability in the future
47	**Philip**	the return on investment can be measured in a few ways but I’m not going
48		into that right now if you want to know just come and ask me
49	**Terry**	cool [curt tone]
50	**Philip**	um a lot of it’s sensitive information and that’s ANOTHER thing whatever
51		we’re gonna talk about within this group and within Phoenix ah is covered
52		by the standard non-disclosure agreement we will be dealing with LIVE
53		data during the development of this which is live FINANCIAL data very
54		sensitive to the over 100 companies that are in the system. we’ll be using
55		THEIR LIVE DATA to test our calculations and to make sure everything
56		balances as with the existing system so we’re gonna find out how much
57		some rather large companies in Europe and New Zealand are earning and of
58		course that does NOT go um beyond Phoenix’s four walls ( )
59		Mr Knight is the man what he says goes
60		
61	**Terry**	= OR influence our share purchasing decisions
62		[General laugher]
63	**Philip**	Umm+ not too sure what the laws are on our share purchasing decisions.
64		but can find out if you’re interested

The analysis in Example 5.4 illustrates how these rules of interaction play out in the project briefing meeting, and reveals additional insights into both the characteristics of MCKs and the ways in which this community ‘does collegiality.’ The interaction shows the complex socio-pragmatic skills of team members as they manage the

challenges of establishing this community. Philip has to position himself as leader, and team members must establish an effective collegiality that will enable them to accomplish the demands of the project within the quite considerable constraints of the project brief.

At one level, David's questioning of Philip at the beginning of the extract is a legitimate question and Philip appears to do his best to provide an answer. However at another level his response (lines 2-5) could be seen as somewhat defensive and evasive, suggesting he may have felt David's question as a threat to his yet to be established leadership. Given this interpretation Philip appears to avoid answering the question - deferring to Michael's (the managing director) and the client's confirmation, thus simultaneously aligning himself with those who are 'in the know' and distancing David from that information. The sense of tension is added to by his emphasis on the significance of the project as he stresses 'this is important, it IS important' - the repetition acting as an intensifier (line-6).

David asks no more questions and goes to sit with the others. As Philip goes to the front of the room to begin the presentation and notices Mitchell hasn't arrived, he asks rather tersely 'Where's Mitchell?' (line 9). Terry's response, 'He's playing games' (line 10) makes light of Mitchell's absence and prompts general laughter. Humour often occurs at strategic points in workplace meetings (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003) and like phatic communion and small talk, it can defuse tension. Here it reduces the tension around Mitchell's lateness. The remark is also rather provocative though, especially given the sequence that follows. Although Philip needs to establish his leadership by calling the meeting to order, he somewhat hesitantly - by

hedging (line 17) - joins in the exchange of talk about x-box. Terry and Theo, however, collaborate in a subversively humorous exchange (lines 19-23), inferring that Philip knows less about the game than the rest of them. This kind of jocular abuse is part of the Phoenix organizational culture and here the members draw on it to help establish group solidarity and maintain interaction. By needling Philip, Theo and Terry draw attention away from Mitchell. However, when Mitchell arrives, Terry changes his stance - footing in Goffman's (1974) sense - to express solidarity with Philip instead and challenging Mitchell by saying 'what's all this garbage about having to save?' (line 26). David steps in to defend Mitchell, who begins to explain himself, but Philip interrupts (line 31) with 'RIGHT' - calling the meeting to order.

Philip smoothes the transition to the transactional business of the meeting with a slightly humorous 'Welcome to Barker-Lewis 2 the Return' (line 32). This example illustrates some of the complex ways in which natural discourse operates simultaneously at a number of levels (Schiffrin, 1994). As the presentation proceeds Philip moves quickly to assert his leadership, pressing on with the serious business of describing '*the mission*' of the project (lines 36-39), and deferring questions until some unspecified later time (lines 41- 42; 47- 49).

An important part of Philip's role as project leader is to keep the team working together as a unit, and his orientation to this role can also be seen throughout the presentation. He emphasizes a sense of team solidarity throughout, with his use of inclusive pronouns. So unlike the CofP - where collegiality is solid and well developed – here it must be established quickly and maintained effectively for the duration of the project. The beginnings of this work can be seen in the example

above through group members' use of discourse strategies, such as shared, and sometimes subversive, humour, that emphasize solidarity, downplay tensions around Mitchell's lateness, and accommodates to Philip's possible nervousness around establishing his leadership position. Philip does not specify when or even if he intends to take questions, and defers those that do occur. Despite some initial nervousness and tension around Mitchell's lateness, once the transactional business of the meeting is underway, Philip asserts his leadership by firmly taking charge of the meeting, and deferring answers to questions and hurrying on with the business of the presentation.

Another feature of the interaction in Example 5.4 is the alignment of its purpose. In contrast with the CofP this community's purpose is – in the first instance - aligned with the goals and objectives of a client company. Projects are of course part of the core business of Phoenix so in this sense they are an important part of its long term business. But the day to day work of the team - their joint enterprise - is focused outside any one CofP and in this instance the focus is external to Phoenix. Here too the alignment of the group's purpose conditions the interaction. Throughout the presentation Phillip orients to this external alignment by explicitly stating constraints inherent in the project brief. For instance: the short time frame of three months (line 35); the need for 'consistency with their existing systems' (lines 42 – 43); the sensitive nature of their information (line 50); the fact that they will be working with live financial data (line 54), and the overarching influence of the owner of the client company (line 60) 'Mr Knight is the man + what he says goes'.

5.3.3 Discussion- The project team

In contrast to the CofP in Examples 5.2 and 5.3, where a solid collegiality is already established, this community is working to build it. This can be seen in participants' rapport enhancement orientation throughout the meeting. For instance as team members work to reduce tension around Mitchell's lateness, they first express solidarity with him as a legitimate peripheral member of the group, by speaking for him until his arrival. Such expressions of solidarity with an absent member of the group have been identified by other scholars, (e.g. Schiffrin, 1994). Then once Mitchell arrives, Terry's shift in stance as he challenges Mitchell, works to support Philip. Another indicator that collegiality is still forming is that the rules of interaction are still being worked out. For instance, it is quite usual at meetings in this organization for people to interject and ask questions when they wish to, a practice that is normally interpreted as an active interest in and engagement with the proceedings. But here Philip clearly wants to move on with the presentation and defers questions till 'shortly' (line 41) and 'not right now' (line 48). The fact that he did not specify his preference in advance appears to have resulted in members assuming the default status that questions would be welcome or at least permitted.

The use of humour in this example reduces the tension around Mitchell's late arrival, and its collaborative construction expresses solidarity between team members. Once Mitchell arrives, however, team members shift their support to the project leader. They challenge Mitchell with 'what's all this garbage about having to save?' Team members show considerable skill and experience in building solidarity. Through the use of humour to reduce tension and anecdotes that refer to common interests (e.g. x-box) they rapidly begin to 'create team' in Fletcher's (1999) sense. By first

supporting Mitchell in his absence, they make a clear statement of solidarity with him. Even though he has nominated himself as ‘dogsbody’, their stance clearly signals the legitimacy of his peripheral participation (as defined by Wenger, 1998) in the team. However, once Mitchell arrives, by switching their support to Philip, team members also quickly and effectively signal their solidarity with him as project leader, a supportive stance that positions all of them including Mitchell as a project team ready to commence the task at hand.

The strategies employed throughout this example show both considerable skill and an awareness of the importance of establishing esprit de corps. And despite the initial rapport neglect orientation by Philip in the early stages, the orientation begins to shift to rapport enhancement is the meeting proceeds.

5.4 Task based groups

5.4.1 Description

Other communities at Phoenix that satisfied the MCK criteria of cross functionality and no previous history of engagement, were the strategy development groups. Everyone in the organization participates in this process. A range of key issues to be incorporated in the strategy was developed (with employee input). Groups (numbering 5-6) were comprised of members from different CofPs. The purpose (**e**nds) for each group was to discuss and coordinate feedback on one key strategy issue (which had been allocated to the group). So, as with the project team, its purpose is aligned outside any one CofP - with direct application to the big picture. Here, too, because the groups are temporary they have no ‘home space’ so the members gather round desks or tables in the open plan office. The genre is again a

meeting, and although the purpose is formal the interactional style is quite informal. A busy hum of conversation accompanies the discussion in Example 5.5. I was participant observer in the group whose topic was 'The Phoenix culture – how do we address that in the formulation of new strategy?'

5.4.2 Analysis and Interpretation

Early in the excerpt discussion focuses on the notion that the customer is always right - more of a customer service issue than a close focus on Phoenix culture. Paul, a member of the group and one of Phoenix' four senior managers, notices this happening and at first he says only 'mmm' (line 7) as he waits to see if they will get on track.

Example 5.5

Context: Strategy development group discussing 'How to maintain our culture'

1	**Andrew**	giving them um a+ giving them an expectation shouldn't be a problem
2		[*general muttering*] it can be conflicting if it's done the wrong way i
3		s'pose is what i've' been tryin te say.
4	**Ben**	if your managing the customer's expectations it shouldn't be a
5		problem (2) i mean.coz we're just talkin about pushing back onto the
6		customer and like how that's not bagging the customer
7	**Paul**	mmm
8	**Charles**	if they've met you a few times =
9	**Ben**	=and they respect you as well then they'll respect you as well.
10	**Dan**	they'll know your ability as well
11	**Lily**	and customer is king doesn't necessarily say yes customer.+we'll do that
12		customer
13		[*general contribution from everyone at this point - everyone talks over*
14		*each other so the actual words are unclear*]
15	**Charles**	sometimes its+attitude towards++
16	**Lily**	yeah its more if there's an issue+ ya gotta talk through it and yeah and

17		you'll meet a satisfactory conclusion yeah so as long as you work through
18		the issues and that's what they want so the customer is ah still king=
19	**Paul**	[*very low key tone*]
20		I think there might have been another angle with er as well which is + not
21		how do we maintain an internal culture where the customer is king? its
22		how do we maintain OUR culture? And when people(2) like an example
23		is+like Scott+ the day he joined er joined immigration he wis+he came
24		back here Friday evenin an n that was it basically+we talk about the
25		Phoenix culture and how important it is+an because he's sort of working
26		on site+.because customer is king and that's where they wanted the work
27		done+e wis never able to be imbued or surrounded by the Phoenix culture
28		+i think its how to PHOENIXIZE the way that we work on a client site or
29		when we're all down in the stats room or something+or at arms length
30		from everyone else + because it means part of the Phoenix culture+um
31		being able to bowl up to anyone for help+isn't so readily realizable in a
32		client situation+ 'n so I think one of the things about it is+ uum even
33		though we're not physically together mm we can make sure that when
34		we're working on a client site +that people have access to (im)+ that e can
35		sort of get back here to access internal resources+ that's the really
36		important thing of our preconditions for working on the site+that people
37		DO have access to information and to communication channels

Although Paul is one of Phoenix' four senior managers, he does not attempt to set up the discussion nor does he stop the other participants when they begin to go off track. He appears to want to say something but hesitates – instead just saying 'mmm' (line 7) and he appears to be waiting to see if the others find their way to the core issue by themselves. But the discussion is quite animated and continues to focus on the notion the customer is always right. Eventually Paul takes a turn, but he does this very carefully. By not discounting the contributions of other participants and by framing his contribution as simply an additional way of looking at the issue, 'I think there might have been another angle as well' (line 20) he acknowledges and sustains the

enthusiasm of the others, and downplays his status. Rather than saying their focus is wrong his suggestion simply introduces another option, and in the process shifts the focus towards the core issue – which is how to maintain the Phoenix culture that everyone says they value highly. Paul's turn becomes an extended one as he recounts a real instance of someone (Scott in line 23) being on site at a project and away from the Phoenix culture where there is always access to help both by 'being able to bowl up to anyone and ask for help' (line 31) and 'to get back here and access internal resources' (lines 34-35). By framing his suggestion as a story he both acknowledges the point they are making (the customer is always right) and shows that confining the discussion to the notion that the customer is always right, can actually work against a core value of Phoenix – which is ensuring that regardless of where people are they are not isolated from Phoenix' resources.

When Paul gets to the main point that he wants to make, 'I think it's how to PHOENIXIZE the way we work on a client site' (line 28), his use of inclusive pronouns expresses solidarity with other participants in the discussion at the beginning of the example, which suggests that although the customer is king that does not mean that everything else becomes less important. 'Even though <u>we're</u> not physically together, <u>we</u> can make sure that people can sort of get back here… …to access internal resources' (lines 32-35). The key point of his suggestion is that access to help from Phoenix 'is the really important thing of preconditions for working on the site' (line 36). Thus the organization's stated value of care is actually supported by or embedded in policy.

5.4.3 Discussion – strategy development group

In terms of collegiality this group differs from the project team. Although they do not have a history of previous engagement as a group, the purpose of their meeting (organizational strategy development) concerns them all equally. Although each participant is from a different CofP, their rapid engagement with each other and with the topic, early in the discussion, is unsurprising given their interest in and knowledge of Phoenix. Paul's low key approach, emphasizing the Phoenix culture as something they jointly own, enables him to guide the discussion towards the key issue whilst still supporting the collegiality of the group. So here too this small and transient community fosters collegiality. Paul's handling of the key issue shows a rapport enhancement orientation. His position in the organization gives him legitimate power to set the discussion on the right course from the beginning, but by standing back and letting the others establish the discussion, and by not asserting his position at the outset, he shows a desire to build positive relations. The conditioning effect of this alignment can be seen in Paul's emphasis on 'OUR culture' (line 22); 'the Phoenix culture' (line 23); and 'Phoenixizing' the way we work on a client site (line 28), and his insistence in adhering to the Phoenix tradition of team members spending one day a week in the organization, show that Paul is keenly aware of and actively works to support the Phoenix image and identity. This form of what is known as internal marketing – is similar to that described by (Gunnarsson 2005, p.81). It involves what Gunnarsson refers to as 'a purposeful endeavour to create a positive company spirit' and it supports Gunnarsson's finding that 'considerable effort was given to internal marketing, and the construction of the organization as a unique and interesting place to work' (p.81).

As with the project team in Example 5.4, this group is cross functional and although the members do not, strictly speaking, come and go from the group, which meets primarily over the course of one afternoon, they do have input into other strategy topics, and people from other groups can make later contributions to their discussion. These are to be coordinated by the group and integrated with their overall feedback on the topic. The short time frame also installs a 'here and now' feeling in the group (noted by Von Krogh et al as a feature of MCKs). As with the project team collegiality in this group is fostered by a rapport enhancement orientation. In both instances this facilitates the quick establishment of a working collegiality that enables effective progress with the task at hand.

5.5 Rapport management and distinctive features of the Phoenix communities

In the discussion that follows I draw together the various aspects of the analyses and comment on the issues raised through the identification of two different kinds of organizational communities, looking at: their similarities and differences; the interconnections between them; and their roles in and potential contributions to the knowledge enabling context of Phoenix.

5.5.1 Similarities between the two kinds of community

Both CofPs and MCKs satisfy Wenger's (1998) three criterial characteristics for a CofP. (mutual engagement; a negotiated enterprise; and a shared repertoires). Both also satisfy the additional criteria listed on Wenger's website (a domain; a practice;

and a commitment or accountability to that practice). Participants share a commitment to the *domain* of IT; both are *communities* in which members engage in joint activities, help each other and share information; and both communities comprise *practitioners* with a shared repertoire of resources pertaining to their domain.

5.5.2 Distinctions between the two communities

Despite these macro-level similarities, key differences also emerge at this level, in terms of purpose, goals, kinds of members that are required, life cycle and the bases of power and interpersonal rapport. These differences support Von Krogh et al's (2000) claim that MCKs are in fact different entities from CofPs with respect to organizational knowledge enabling contexts. Although only MCKs satisfy Von Krogh et al's criteria of cross functionality together with no sustained history of previous engagement, the analyses in this chapter, identified a number of additional distinguishing characteristics. These are summarized in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Summary of distinguishing characteristics of CofPs and MCKs

	Community of Practice	**Micro-Communities of Knowledge**
Location or locus of operation (Setting)	'permament' home space within the open plan office A stable mostly settled community	Various spaces and locations – most commonly: i) temporary meeting room at Phoenix; ii) on-site at client company A transient and in a sense nomadic community
Members (Participants)	All members specialize in *same sub-field* of IT but have *different degrees of expertise* and experience	Each member is a specialist in a *different sub-field* of IT, but with *similar degrees of expertise.*
- Leadership	Long term Most expert and experienced	Short term Appointed to co-ordinate processes

	member Basis of power – expert power	Basis of power –legitimate (temporary) based on coordinating ability
Purpose (Ends)	To provide the knowledge and expertise for all the organizations many projects and tasks in the sub-field	To fulfill the requirements of one project or task
- Alignment	Internal to each CofP as it relates to the long term goals and objectives Phoenix	External to any single CofP Project based MCK : Dual alignment. Immediate goal – to satisfy the client company's brief. Task based MCK: the outputs of task as part of the organizational big picture.
- Life-time	Long term – for the life of the company 'Permament'	Short (to medium) term – disbands at completion of the project or task. 'Transient'
Activities	One-to-one interaction within the community home space	One-to-many group meetings Boundary crossing as a group – often work in client organization.
Rapport orientation	Rapport maintenance	Rapport challenge (project leader) and rapport enhancement (group members)
Nature of collegiality	Solid established collegiality	Collegiality in process of development. Effective working relationships essential for the duration of the project

The summary of characteristics in Table 5.1 provides an overview of key differences between the two kinds of communities at both macro and micro levels. The application of ~~the~~ Hymes' (1974) etic grid identified the more *macro* differences between the communities - such as: purpose, membership, setting, and norms of interaction. The analyses using Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2008) rapport management framework identified differences in: rules of interaction and norms of interpretation; in the management of interpersonal rapport; style; goals of participants; and power relations. Researcher observation, through attendance at meetings at which both

projects and policies were discussed, together with access to company documents, identified aspects such as duration of the group, external vs internal focus of the work of each community and its duration or lifetime.

Specifically CofPs have a different *purpose* (**e**nds mnemonically) from MCKs. As CofPs are long term communities which undertake all the organization's work in one sub-field of IT, they require a relatively settled locus of operation or 'home space'. This settled environment and focus on work in one field supports the development of individual members' identities on an inbound trajectory from novice towards expert. This is achieved in part by learning through, for instance, collaborative work and the sort of mentoring that can be seen in example 5.2. The alignment of the CofPs' purpose (internal to the organization) and the nature of their work – daily engagement in the same field – with expert and novice working in close proximity is an ideal setting for long term learning and the development of solid collegial relationships, and this can be seen in the rapport maintenance orientation, as described by Spencer-Oatey (2008), of the interactions in examples 5.2 and 5.3. This combination of features makes the CofP a setting that supports the development of the community as a rich source of deep knowledge. The established collegiality of the CofP established by the daily practice of working together on collaborative tasks, mentoring, and a common interest and membership of a sub-specialty of IT, is a solid relationship that has developed as a result of regular and frequent interactions over time. This can be seen in shortcuts to communication such as Mitchell not complying with a request from a senior, but typing on whilst also initiating off-topic talk in the midst of a task. These are strategies that would threaten rapport in a less well established relationship. In this case the relationship between James and Mitchell is a

positive one, but it need not necessarily be so. It is easy to imagine a quite different interaction in which people must work together regularly but do so despite a much more negative relationship.

The features of the MCK suggest some of the reasons why solid relationships are important, and why the quality and depth of relationships may be so important for a knowledge enabling context as claimed by Von Krogh et al.(2000). Solid relationships may better withstand the challenges arising from suddenly having to work with a different or new combination of people to accomplish specific requirements within tight constraints of time and resources. And where solid relationships are also positive and involve high levels of trust, knowledge sharing may be more likely to occur.

In contrast with CofPs, the purpose of the MCKs are aligned externally from any CofP and often externally to the organization. Together with their cross functional membership, and time constraints (such as those typical of a client project), they form a dense field of interaction, in which members have both the opportunity and the obligation to interact with those from other sub-fields of IT. Cross functional membership and a dense field of interaction (such as the project meeting; and the strategy development meeting attended by the researcher) are specifically referred to by Von Krogh et al (2000) as features of a micro-community of knowledge. And as the analyses in this chapter illustrate, they place different demands on participants' skills in the maintenance of interpersonal rapport.

Participants in MCKs must establish effective working relationships for the period of the task or project they are engaged in. Although they are people from the same organization and the same profession, they are not people who engage in collaborative tasks on a day-to-day basis. Some of this work can be seen in the project meeting in Example 5.4, where the rules of interaction within CofPs suddenly do not apply. Adherence to the agenda is required. The project leader is newly appointed for this project as opposed to the long term position of leader and expert (e.g. James), so his leadership must be established quickly and effectively if the project is to be effective and completed on time and within budget. So solid relationship built within CofPs are a valuable resource as these may be tested within the MCK environment. Mitchell's behavior in being late for the initial project meeting receives a quite different response from his tardiness in complying to a request in the CofP whilst working closely with James. Fellow participants' supportive behavior may also suggest a carryover of loyalty through regular (though less close) interaction in the open plan office, over time.

Temporality is another difference between CofPs and MCKs. MCKs are transient in both the temporal and the physical senses. The business of the community is conducted largely through meetings, and because they have no 'home space' the communities meet in a variety of different settings. For short, task based purposes (such as the strategy development groups) this may simply be a desk or table in the open plan office. Longer term (e.g. project based MCKs) meet in the board room - made from removing partitions between two of the small offices. But they also spend time at the client site, thus crossing an external boundary. External projects, which must often be accomplished within considerable constraints of time, funding and

other resources, place multiple and sometimes conflicting demands on MCK members and they must be sufficiently expert in their respective fields to accomplish the technical and knowledge outputs. However they must also have the communicative skills to manage the establishment of effective collegial relationships across sub-disciplines and across organizational boundaries. The interactions in example 5.4 show the rapid formation of a stance of solidarity amongst skilled and experienced group members, as they first align themselves supportively around the latecomer (Mitchell) and once he is engaged they move to support to the project leader. Their use of subversive humour to reduce tensions, supports the findings of other researchers regarding the ways humour is used in the workplace (Holmes and Marra, 2002b; 2002c) and it shows a rapport enhancement orientation by easing the initial tensions around the latecomer, and beginning to establish collegial relations.

5.5.3 Interdependence of the communities

I believe the differences between CofPs and MCKs are sufficient for them to be regarded as different entities. But paradoxically this does not mean that they are mutually exclusive, for they are deeply interconnected and inter-related. The interdependence includes such aspects as: first – MCKs are comprised of members drawn *from* CofPs and so in a very real sense depend on CofPs for their existence. Second - the level of expertise developed in each CofP governs the level of knowledge and expertise in each field that is available for any MCK. Third – the relational and communicative skills developed within CofPs may influence (either negatively or positively), each member's ability to develop effective working relationships within the MCK.

Interconnections between the two forms are important in relation to the various stages of the knowledge creation process. For instance, CofPs are learning contexts where specialist knowledge and expertise is developed over time, most often on a one-to-one and face-to-face basis. In other words, knowledge in, or *internalization*. It should be noted that in the case of the data set obtained from this organization the relationships involved in that learning are generally positive but that is not necessarily the case elsewhere, and it may not always be the case in this organization.

By contrast, MCKs are high density, pressured contexts, where a high level of knowledge and expertise must be applied to both the anticipated and unanticipated challenges involved. In other words this could be thought of as knowledge out or *externalization*. The two kinds of communities are also connected by knowledge in the abstract sense. Just as the knowledge from each CofP is applied within the context of the MCK, the experiential learning gained from each MCK is 'returned' (as new and/or enhanced knowledge and perspectives) to the CofPs.

5.5.4 Rapport Management: participant relations

Power and Identity

Within CofPs the basis of power is expertise, comprised of knowledge and experience in the field of that practice. Individual members' status aligns with their degree or level of expertise and the most expert person in that sub-field is usually the most senior member. So the inbound trajectory of identity within CofPs could be depicted as an inbound spiral with members positioned along it at various intervals with the senior expert at the innermost point as the core member.

By contrast, expertise within the MCK is relatively equally distributed. The members each have similar levels of *different* fields of expertise (i.e. different knowledgeabilities). Their status within the MCK is relatively equal to that of other members. This kind of community could be seen as a collective of different experts positioned on a single orbit around the central figure of (in the case of the project team) the Project Leader. The project leader may not have a higher level of expertise than everyone else and may not have a higher status in the organization as a whole, but within the project team and for the duration of the project, the project leader has the legitimate, though temporary status of leader. S/he is responsible for coordinating the activities and outputs of the various experts, and to an extent is responsible for managing the relationships between them. So, as individuals move from CofPs to MCKs, their status changes relative to others. Their knowledge is positioned differently to that of co-members, and there is a shift in interactional context. Essentially – and in a very real sense, the members are operating in a different dimension of organization, a dimension which is short term, transient, and boundary spanning. It is both a rich and dense field of interaction at the front line. This means for instance that it would not be possible to assemble an effective project team MCK without a strong collection of specialist CofPs, whose members have both the in depth knowledge and experience to meet the multiple challenges of the client's brief. As well – when a project is complete and the MCK disbands, the members can take the new knowledge gained from their experience back to their respective CofPs. Depending on what that knowledge is – it may enhance or even radically change ongoing practice in the CofP.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) notes that ‘contextual features can play both a ‘standing’ and a ‘dynamic’ role in influencing language use’ (p. 39), and these effects can be seen in the communities that are examined in this chapter. At the level of the community itself, the most influential ‘standing’ influence arises from the community’s purpose. The purpose (field of expertise, or task focused) determines the required membership (members with similar or different fields of expertise and experience), what is suitable as a setting or locus of operation (a permanent ‘home space’ and resources, or meeting rooms where the whole group can gather) and to a large extent, the duration or life cycle of the community (long term - for the life of the organization or short term and transient disbanding when the task is complete). Furthermore because the community’s purpose strongly influences the kind of activities that will be undertaken by the community, it also impacts on dynamic aspects of context such as participant relations. Some of these effects arise from shifts in identity of individuals as they move from CofPs to MCKs. For instance, power relations are differently balanced in CofPs and MCKs, and participation structures differ because of the different types of activity through which the day-to-day work of the community is conducted.

Contribution to the organization

One of the aims this chapter was to gain insights into the role and contribution of these two types of communities in the organisation's knowledge enabling context. Ethnographic fieldwork identified CofPs at Phoenix as relatively stable long-term communities comprised of members with different levels of a similar kind of expertise. These are communities characterized by *depth* of knowledge and experience comprising the combined knowledge and experience of the members.

Each community of practice therefore comprises the company's principle resource for that particular subfield of IT knowledge and experience. This supports Wenger's (2000) claim that communities of practice are powerhouses of organizational knowledge creation. At Phoenix they comprise the bank of expert knowledge on which the organisation must draw to form micro-communities such as project teams and strategy discussion groups.

As well as being a knowledge resource communities of practice are sites of relationship development over time. Von Krogh et al (2000) identified the quality and depth of relationships as integral to a knowledge enabling context. Example 5.2 shows a collegial interaction on a collaborative task that reflects a solid and established relationship characteristic of close friends or close colleagues, for instance through informal style (e.g. 'o'right how 'bout I start with showing you'); through the interweaving of task-based and off topic talk and talk of possible joint attendance at a social activity ('we're gonna have four for playstation tonight'); and through the sharing of a confidence ('I have a REAL problem with people exTRApolating…') in lines 10-13.

For individual members CofPs offer an inbound identity trajectory towards the development of increasing expertise over time, supported by mutual engagement in collaborative tasks, teaching, mentoring, consistent exposure to and engagement with other like-minded practitioners and the opportunity to participate in activities outside of the CofP (such as Mitchell's peripheral involvement in the project team) to broaden experience and learning. Such external experience provides opportunities to

not only increase the knowledge of the individual but, by bringing that knowledge back into the CofP, it can add to the depth of knowledge of the community.

In contrast, MCKs are relatively short-term communities, characterized by diversity, with members having similar levels of different kinds of expertise (ethnographic evidence – researcher presence in project and strategy development meetings). The work of the MCKs both demands and challenges expertise and requires that application of rather than simply fostering effective collegial relations. Working together with people from other specialties, who bring different perspectives to very challenging tasks governed by external requirements as well as strict constraints on time and other resources, can put a strain on relationships. Relationship building skills developed within communities of practice, together with frequent social interaction in the organization as a wider community, appear to carry over into the project MCK through, for instance, expressions of solidarity and collaborative humour, used by group members (in example 5.4) to defend Mitchell's lateness. Although Mitchell should not have been late for an important meeting especially as the peripheral team member, the fact that he was playing computer games and the subsequent collaborative humor in his defense, reflect the high value placed on fun and imagination in the organization, both of these are ingredients of a knowledge enabling context as well as being integral to knowledge creation processes. Von Krogh et al (2000) cite Sartre (1987, p. 267:) in talking about imagination 'For consciousness to be able to imagine it must be able to escape from the world by its very nature, it must be able by its own efforts to withdraw from the world. In a word it must be free'. When the imagination runs free people can easily lose track of time, so it may have been the case in this instance. Whatever the reason, his senior

colleagues' solidarity - an example of care through active empathy - suggests that Mitchell's lateness was not regarded as entirely irresponsible.

Participation at many different levels is seen by Von Krogh et al as integral to a knowledge creating context. As well as daily work in their own communities of practice Phoenix people regularly participate in company meetings, project teams, consultancy work, many social events, and daily interaction across hierarchical levels within the open plan office. They are also expected to engage in the strategic planning process, financial decisions, and helping their colleagues as and when required. So that when people come together in an MCK, although they may not have worked together in that particular combination before, they do have a variety of experiences of working with others in many different contexts, and rapport management skills developed and used in these other contexts appear to carry over into the MCK for instance in the management of Mitchell's lateness.

For the organization, they could be seen as the public face of the organization's expertise, and for team members they offer opportunities to practice their specialty whilst also viewing it in relation to perspectives of other practice specialties. Participation and MCKs provides people with opportunities for leadership as well as testing their relationship skills in managing a diverse group of professionals with differing perspectives, all of whom must work together towards a common goal.

As dense fields of interaction, at the front line in the case of the project team, or engaged in important internal projects such as strategy development, the MCKs at Phoenix support Von Krogh et al's (2000) claim that MCKs are sites of knowledge

creation. The project team must develop a new financial management system that will test the limits of the recently released technology they are using; and the strategy development team is directly engaged in the creation of a new organizational strategy.

5.6 Summary

The analyses in this chapter suggest that although interdependent and inter-related, the two communities - CofPs and MCKs - are quite distinct, and that although both are structures that foster collegiality, they do so in different ways. The long term, specialty focused CofP, whose members have an ongoing history of engagement, were shown to have, despite status difference, a low distance and a well established and solid collegiality. By contrast the transient and task focused MCKs, whose members have relatively equal status, show a greater distance between members, which means the project leader must quickly establish an effective collegiality to enable them to work together to accomplish the requirements of the project.

The CofP is a site of long-term established and in this case positive relationships, whilst the MCKs and in particular the project team places short-term demands on these relationships. So the quality and depth of established relations in CofPs together with relationship building skills developed in the wider organization, can support the work of the MCKs by enabling effective relationships to be quickly established. But it is easy to see how an organization characterized by divisive relationships could struggle to develop or maintain effective relationships in MCKs.

As part of a knowledge enabling organizational context, both kinds of community illustrate solid collegial relations: the CofP as a site that fosters such relations through collaborative tasks; frequent daily interaction over time; teaching/learning; and a shared interest in the same specialty practice within IT. And by contrast the MCKs, in particular the project team, illustrate the need for solid collegial relations in practice, in a cross-disciplinary team where a working relationship must be quickly established despite different perspectives. Just as all members of the project team must immediately be able to bring a high level of expertise to bear on the problem at hand, they must also have the relational competencies to establish and maintain a working collegiality both throughout the term of the project and within its many constraints. The skilful management of a peripheral member's lateness demonstrates the competence of Phoenix people in this regard.

Connections to the wider organization

The examples in this chapter show both an established collegiality in the CofP and emerging collegiality in the project team MCK. However what can also be seen is that within the MCK a sense of collegiality develops very quickly. There seems to be what could be called an imported sense of solidarity that influences members' ability to establish collegial relations. In the next chapter I investigate a range of activities at the level of the organization as a whole, to identify ways in which this wider sense of solidarity is developed, and to see the extent to which the organization as a whole functions as a structure that fosters collegiality.

CHAPTER SIX

THE WEEKLY MEETING: SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION-WIDE COLLEGIALITY

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Five I looked at the two communities that comprise the organization of Phoenix: the long term, stable CofPs based on the subfields of IT, and the transient, task or project focused MCKs. Although both of these communities were shown to foster solid collegial relationships they did so in different ways. The CofP showed a collegial relationship that was both solid and well established, whereas the MCKs showed that collegiality had to be established in these communities, as each MCK is comprised of members with no previous history of engagement as that particular combination of people. However, the MCK, showed members very quickly adopting discourse strategies of solidarity in their talk. These often reflected the rules of interaction that are commonly found in the wider dimension of the organization as a whole, suggesting an already developed wider collegiality that is imported into the MCKs and that helps the rapid establishment of solidarity within the smaller group. The aims of this chapter are twofold, first – to identify ways in which the organization as a whole fosters collegiality, and second, to identify the extent to which and the ways in which the organization as a whole exhibits the dimensions of a climate of care.

To operationalize these aims, this chapter focuses on the analysis of interactions in a context that involves the organization as a whole - a weekly meeting to which

everyone in the organization is invited and which generally achieves an attendance rate of better than eighty-five percent. I explore the ways in which collegiality is evidenced in this context by analyzing participants' management of rapport across the three dimensions identified by Spencer-Oatey (2008): face; sociality rights and interactional goals.

Meetings are common activities in organizations. They are contexts in which a great deal of organizational business is done. They may involve just two people (a dyad), small groups, larger groups or several departments, or the whole organization. It is not uncommon for organizations to arrange activities that involve everyone in the organization. Such occasions can support the development of a strong organizational culture and a sense of organizational identity. They can also bring together people who may otherwise be unlikely to meet, and they have the potential to create both an extended sense of community and enhanced opportunities for learning. In many organizations such occasions often occur annually or perhaps several times throughout the year. However Phoenix may be somewhat unusual in the sense of both the frequency and regularity with which this happens. The range of such occasions includes: in-house social evenings for clients - focusing on product and service support; product launches; several Christmas parties including one for Phoenix staff and their families and one for clients and their families; an annual weekend away for the whole Phoenix company; various sporting activities; a bi-annual 'State of the Nation' meeting and a weekly company meeting. The analyses in this chapter examine sample interactions from the last of these – the weekly meeting, which is held late in the week and late in the day (beginning around 4.30 and

finishing around 6.00pm). This activity was chosen because of its frequency and its immediate connections with day-to-day practice of the organization.

Section 6.1.1 comprises a description of the meeting as context, including a brief overview of the agenda. In Section 6.2 I focus on the analysis of interactions from within the various agenda items, and the conditioning effect of the template agenda on these interactions. Section 6.3 is a discussion of the ways in which the weekly meeting both contributes to and reflects interpersonal relations in the wider community of the organization as a whole. It draws together the particular combination of contextual factors and artefacts that underpin collegiality at Phoenix. The chapter concludes with a brief summary in 6.4.

6.1.1 Description of the weekly company meeting as context

Wenger (1998, p. 74) notes that the work of community maintenance is an essential part of any practice. By bringing together people from all CofPs, MCKs and all levels of the organization on a regular and frequent basis, the weekly meeting provides opportunities for the development of collegiality at the level of the whole company through regular, frequent mutual engagement in the activity of the meeting.

Setting and scene - The setting for weekly meeting is 'the big room', created by removing the wall partitions between the three small offices. The room is set-up with a whiteboard, datashow and computer at one end. Chairs are arranged in rows facing the front and packed quite tightly as the room can only just fit enough chairs for about eighty-five percent of the people (the last arrivals sometimes have to

stand). Two large tables placed at one side are set with glasses, drinks and bowls of nibbles.

The meeting is open and *participants* are anyone in the company who can attend at that time. Attendance rates average eighty-five percent or better and include people from all CofPs, project teams, the MD and senior managers. Each week two different people share responsibility for organization of the meeting, one as chair and one as convener. Together they organize contributors for each item, prepare the room - including the refreshments - and clear away after the meeting. The chair manages the progress of the meeting according to the agenda.

The 'stated' *purpose (ends)* is to keep people informed of what's happening throughout the company and to give them the opportunity catch up with people they haven't seen during the week (MD - interview data). So although the purpose is formal, this meeting is not a forum for decision making, rather its focus is primarily on information sharing and maintaining interpersonal relations.

The *key* of the meeting is relatively informal, characterized by a relaxed casual style. The aspect that Hymes terms '*instrumentality*' is face-to-face (one to many), with various speakers supplementing their talk with power point slides – ranging from just one or two for a feedback or review item, to a dozen or more for a 'personal presso.' The *act sequence* conforms to the norm of meeting procedure with the chair initiating the turn and relevant speakers responding according to the agenda item. The informal style reflects the Phoenix culture, and the *rules of interaction* permit interjections. These occur quite frequently and are interpreted as interest in and engagement with

the item to hand. The chair has power to manage proceedings and initiate or terminate turns. Topic content must be appropriate to the agenda item in which it is offered. Inappropriate contributions may be sidelined.

In accordance with the activity of meetings the agenda governs the order of proceedings. However a distinctive feature of this meeting is a template agenda that features the same categories of items in the same sequence each week. The analysis in this chapter includes investigation of the role of this template as an artifact that exerts both a dynamic and a standing influence on the interactions that comprise the weekly meeting. Table 6.1 below provides a brief overview of agenda items and presenters.

Table 6.1 Structured template arrangement of agenda items for the Phoenix weekly meetings

	Social chat and nibbles as people gather (catch up – personal and individual focused)	Everyone
	Agenda Item	**Presenter**
1	Introduction and overview	One (or both) of the conveners for the week
2	What's new and cool? (announces, celebrates/ values individuals' events and or achievements)	Pre-arranged and/or spontaneous item by anyone who wants to speak
3	'The personal presso', one person's talk each week.	Arranged in advance by offer or request
4	Sales	A member of the sales team
5	Progress reports from each specialty sub-field and project team. Individuals and/or project teams (PTs) report on their progress (or not) during the past week. Not all CofPs or PTs report every week – but always	One person (or more) from each CofP. Then one person from each project team (or MCK)

	there are at least two or three reports given here).	(often but not always the PL)
6	Management. Management reports every week. This may be any or several of the four senior managers, and the MD, who gives a report on finances, expenditure, income.	Senior managers and/ or MD in no particular order.
7	Awards	Chair (s) and others
8	Announcements	Chair and/or others

The pre-meeting socializing accompanied by food and drinks is regular and substantive (15-20 minutes). It is a valued cultural convention, making it as much a part of the meeting as the agenda itself. The informal style and animated interaction as over forty people crowd into the relatively small room establishes an almost celebratory atmosphere, and sets the tone for the meeting itself.

6.2 Analysis of selected examples

As 4.30 approaches, people continue talking but move to take their seats on chairs packed tightly together in rows facing the screen at the front of the room. The meetings always start on time and generally begin with the chair and/or convener simply interrupting the animated pre-meeting social chatter with an informal call to order signaling the start of proceedings. Conveners usually introduce themselves, then either provide a brief overview of specific topics and presenters for each agenda item, or having written the names of conveners, presenters and agenda topics on a white board or a power point slide, simply move straight to the first agenda item, as is the case in Example 6.1, which shows an almost seamless shift between socialization and the commencement of meeting procedure.

Example 6.1

Context: The beginning of the weekly company meeting, showing the call to order, the first agenda item and 'participant management'

		[*Interrupting the social chatter*]
1	Chair	Woah - Lets start the meeting.
2		Can we do new and cool anything new and cool please new and cool nominations anything new and cool?
3	Tom	Sam's done his MCSD=.
4	Chair	=MCSD Really?
5	Tom	yes
6	Chair	ConGRATulations [*Everyone cheers*]
7		Anything else new and cool – babies?
8	Tom	Response to the launch? +vodka?
9	Chair	Vodka?
10	Mich	Quite amazing – at the launch we had a whole lot of Phoenix people and a
11	(MD)	whole lot of customers and all the customers left their ePi server box on the
12		desk+/ and all the Phoenix people took /theirs
13	Chair	And\ contrary to popular rumour the Swedish Government did not choose
14		orange just to match Phoenix as heard. [laughter]
15		So what else is new and cool?
16	Sam	Nigel's new house
17	Chair	has he got one?+Nigel you got a house?
18	Nigel	Yeah+it's a week/ old=
19	Chair	=FANtastic
20	Sam	Well he\ made an offer and the offers been accepted=.
21	Chair	=Wo ho in mega property development mode
22	Nigel	Yep
23	Chair	Okay next on the agenda is Dan's presentation+ Dan this is your life your
24		chance to tell us.

The Chair's 'Whoa – lets start the meeting' (line 1) is a typical of the informal style of the meeting. It reflects a familiarity arising from regular participation in this

frequent gathering. As people are already engaged in interaction, the chair simply steers the proceedings towards the start point making an almost seamless interface between the socialization and the start of proceedings. He interrupts the social talk, signals the start of the meeting, and invites the topic for the first agenda item all in one short sentence (lines 1-2).

By positioning ‘What’s new and cool’ as the first item rather than beginning with transactional business, the agenda both supports the seamless interface and facilitates the carry over of the rather celebratory tone from the pre-meeting socialization. With its focus on a notable event, either for the company or (more commonly) for an individual, ‘What’s new and cool’ imparts both a sense of fun and a sense of expectation, as until that point, no-one knows exactly what the specific topic content of the item is.

Tom’s announcement (line 3) that Sam has completed a qualification is both an appropriate topic and typical of the kind that customarily appears in this space. The news is greeted with applause and cheers, supportive expressions of celebration and solidarity that ‘give face’ to Sam by publicly acknowledging his attainment of this professional qualification. This supports a sense of belonging by helping to celebrate a new facet of Sam’s professional identity and confirm his collegial position within the community. The announcement also serves to fulfill the information sharing purpose of the meeting by keeping everyone in the loop regarding ongoing professional development.

The chair's next request - a prompt for news of new babies (line 7) - seems rather unusual in the open forum of a company meeting in a predominantly male organization, but in fact at least one Phoenix family's new baby was expected around this time, making it an appropriate topic. This is also consistent with the Phoenix culture, which members often describe as a family or village. It indicates empathy and solidarity through a genuine interest in and concern for the events in the life of a former colleague who recently left to have a baby and whose husband also works in the organization.

No news is forthcoming, however, and Michael the MD stands up and begins to talk about something he feels is exciting (line 10) - the launch of a new product called ePi server. Although a product launch is new and cool for Michael as the company's MD, it is something that would customarily appear as a topic within the management item later in the agenda. Sudden or inappropriate topic changes may be interpreted as a threat to the maintenance of rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) and Michael's contribution seems to have been interpreted in this way as the chair effectively closes it down. Using humour (lines 13-14) as an appropriate strategy to mitigate the face threat of interrupting the MD, he jokingly refers to the Swedish government's choice of Phoenix's company colour for one aspect of their website branding. In this way the chair preserves harmonious relations and at the same time invites more appropriate contributions with his request in line 15 - 'so what else is new and cool'?

Sam supports the shift back to the 'legitimate' focus (line 16) by announcing Nigel's purchase of a new house. This functions both as a solidary strategy of support for the chair and at the same time rekindles audience engagement with comment and

questions about what stage the process is at. The chair encourages ongoing engagement with the topic by seeking confirmation from Nigel directly (line 18). As Nigel hesitates, Sam speaks for him - noting that he has made an offer that has been accepted. Together with the chair's supportive response 'wo ho in mega property development mode' this maintains the somewhat celebratory mode and individual focus of what's new and cool.

People who frequently participate in joint activities as a collegial community and who share a communication ethos, have a tacit understanding of that community's rules of interaction. The crisp, pacy style characterized by rapid transition between turns, overlaps and the absence of preliminaries, imparts a rather direct, no-nonsense quality to the discourse of the meeting. By signaling the end of 'what's new and cool' with the discourse marker *okay*, announcing the next item and giving a low key, informal welcome to Dan, the next presenter, all in one short sentence (lines 23-24), the chair swiftly achieves the transition to the next agenda item. As well as being typical of the Phoenix interactional style, this reflects the need to effectively manage a very full agenda within a tight time frame.

The focus on the individual continues with the agenda item 'personal presso' as it has come to be known. This was initiated with the explicitly collegial aim of supporting a culture in which everyone in the company knows everyone else. Each week one person gives a short presentation about themselves. This provides an opportunity for people to learn about others they do not work with on a day-to-day basis, as well as maintaining the information sharing goal of the meeting.

The ‘personal pressos’ have evolved into a generally similar pattern - a personal experience narrative relating aspects of a journey, usually beginning with some commentary on early life, introducing family members, describing common family activities. They also tend to feature an adventure or unusual happening, and some form of explicit identification with Phoenix - either as a story of how the person came to be there, or identification with some aspect of their role in the company. Excerpts from two pressos presented in Examples 6.2 and 6.3 below are typical.

Example 6.2

Context: Excerpt from ’personal presso’. Dan, the presenter, is one of the ‘Creatives’. Ian is an interjector.

1	Dan	This is a very strange exercise to be going through and I don’t have those photos
2		but what I’ve sort of done is a sleight of hand and padded it out a little bit
3		[Laughter]
4	Ian	You could’ve touched up the baby photos [General laughter]
5	Dan	Life for me began in Dunedin and I think when I was about 6 months old we
6		moved to Levin +++ [*Shows more photos on power point*]
7		my first day in the third form my/ first pet
8	Ian	Hey\ Dan
9	Dan	Yeah?
10	Ian	What’s this about the hamster? [Much laughter]
11	Dan	So anyway when we got back to Dunedin I went to high school+
12		Sports at school [*Shows a slide of himself dressed for skateboarding*]
13		I didn’t really get into rugby or tennis or + or cricket or anything but because we
14		moved near the beach I sort of grew up surfing and skateboarding. I was a much
15		better skateboarder than I was a surfer. I got sponsored for a couple a years
16		skateboarding so that was really cool
17		[*More laughter as the next photo comes up showing Dan in his skate board gear*
18		*with a sponsors logo and jingle printed on his sweatshirt*]
19	Dan	umm that photo was actually taken when I was meant to be at school + and it

20		ended up in the paper the next day. But I didn't get into trouble + and it landed in
21		the school magazine as well.
22		[*Changes to the next slide*] That's St Clair's beach in Dunedin
23		At school I was interested in art obviously and I was encouraged to go to art
24		school. I got accepted into art school but didn't really see a viable commercial
25		use of it at the time. So I decided to go to varsity and study graphic design and
26		art history +also got an opportunity to do psychology and marketing which is
27		really cool+um when varsity finished a mate o mine named James++said he was
28		coming to Wellington and he said that I should come too+so I thought cool+I
29		jumped in the car with him…
30		I landed this job with child youth and family doing physio diagrams
31		[Laughter] a little bit related to my degree. Then one night out on the town I met
32		a guy called Chris Wright who'd started a company called Phoenix+ yes um and
33		I thankfully took up a job at Phoenix when the opportunity arose and I've been
34		here ever since.

After signaling he is not entirely comfortable about doing his presentation, 'This is a very strange exercise to be going through' (line 1), and apologetically noting that he doesn't have the usual (number of) photos, Dan clearly displays his identity as a creative. Where he doesn't have a relevant photo, he uses humourous cartoon-like pictures noting 'I've done a sleight of hand and padded it out a little bit' (line 2). These draw laughter from the audience, simultaneously supporting his identity as a creative and helping to establish rapport with the audience. Ian's teasing interjection (line 4) contributes to audience engagement with an expression of solidary humour. Dan's stereotypically masculine style - for instance his account of sporting prowess (lines 14-15) and risk taking in the truancy escapade (line 19-21) emphasize mateship with the predominantly male audience.

Dan leaves the picture of himself and the dog at the beach on the screen, while he tells the story of how he came to be at Phoenix (lines 25-34). The theme of the

journey to Phoenix emerged in several ‘personal pressos’, functioning almost as a coda affirming a sense of belonging**.** As well as supporting his identity as one of the community of ‘creatives’, Dan’s presentation throughout demonstrates his identification with the meeting participants as trusted colleagues (through his disclosure of personal history and family life) and Phoenix as a place he is happy to be. ‘Thankfully I took up a job at Phoenix when the opportunity arose and I’ve been here ever since’ (Lines 33-34). The inclusion of the ‘personal presso’ in the meeting agenda was the idea of employees, as was the weekly meeting (ethnographic evidence - interview with CEO). It is consistent with the several aims of the meeting which include sharing information and getting to know others, for instance new members of the organization. It is also one subject the speaker knows more about than anyone else and from that perspective is less stressful than set or required topics. It also provides an opportunity for people to show as much or as little as they choose of themselves as more than simply employees. Johnstone (2003) in her discussion on personal narratives cites Rosen (1985, p. 640),

> Being asked to talk about oneself appeals to “the autobiographical impulse” – the human need to make sense of ourselves both as individuals and as members of groups, and as a shared way of telling stories it also helps to achieve group coherence.

The examples that follow illustrate this point, for instance with collaborative humour and interesting examples of relational practice. Senior managers are not exempt from the personal presso round. In Example 6.3 Matt, a senior manager and clearly

accomplished presenter, also tells his story from a family perspective, a focus which downplays his organizational status and helps him to identify with the audience.

Example 6.3

Context: Phoenix weekly meeting agenda item: Matt's 'Personal Presso'

1	*Matt*	right moving on+ as you can see trendy icons+ fashionable Mum and Dad (3) as you
2		can probably guess that's my Mum and Dad Ed and Dell and they got married in late
3		1970 and very shortly afterwards moved to this very prime location [*smiles wryly as*
4		*he shows a slide of a rather plain New Zealand suburban house*]
5		(3) that there is (2) and that there is a kind of a dairy and i went to school not too far
6		down the road (2) that's me + don't know how old i was+i wish we could pan down
7		a bit further+because Paul as we discussed last week you know we mentioned the old
8		sandals and I seem to have gone through a few cycles and i've got fairly stocky old
9		legs at this stage
10		it's funny you know+ when you're a kid you sort of trail through various places and
11		funnily enough this particular bench unit [*the bench is red formica mottled with*
12		*white- typical of the era*] still exists in my parents place. the room got decorated and
13		there's the little stand in front of the cabinet [laughter]
14		right and movin on
15		actually one thing i used to do a lot when i was young is [laughter] is+is cycling and
16		interestingly enough+parents who have kids would recognize this and typically
17		enough we would pack up our bags+panier bags and just head off up country and i
18		was 13 or 14 the first time and we sort of made that an annual event and sort of over
19		Christmas we'd sort of saddle up and spend two weeks cycling round the place and
20		we didn't go terribly far and he's (dad in the picture) sort of obviously proud of this
21		one and we've sort of hacked our way all the way up to the Rimutukas and that's the
22		Rimutuka summit Tea House and we sort of rode over to Lake Ferry so we did a
23		lotta that and this sort of dead cow [*he shows the picture*]is one of a lot of things we
24		saw on the way(2)we stopped there and there was quite a lot of flies and quite a nasty
25		smell so we stopped there and kinda waded through them and then [*general grimaces*
26		*and groans*] and yes and yeah [*speaker grimaces too as he looks at the picture*
27		*seeming to recall the smell*] the cow had died of bloat.
28	Dav	how many did you get off it?

29	Matt	i dunno+ i wasn't goin near that i can tell ya+that was nasty.
30	Dav	Nowadays they cut a hole in the side of it and put in a big ah valve on the side of the
31		cow and you can actually let the gases out
32	Matt	Dunno how long that thing had been lyin there. [laughter]
33	Matt	Movin on +growing up a little bit my dad there on the right hand side and my sister+
34		my sister Megan **…** these are sort of relations we've got in Australia, and my
35		brother and Mum tucked in the back and me in there and my Mum I have to admit it
36		is actually Australian and I guess we spent quite a bit of time – I guess every second
37		year when we were growing up we spent around two months over there……
38		*[story continues…..*]

According to Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992), the ways in which individuals tell their personal story – for instance their stance and what they emphasize - establishes a relationship between themselves and the audience. By presenting himself as an ordinary New Zealander, growing up in an ordinary neighbourhood and engaged in a low key family holiday activity, Matt downplays his status within the organization. The power point slides showing old family photos help to involve/engage the audience and create rapport. As Matt speaks there is a continuous low murmer of conversation, as if people recognize many elements from their own childhood in the pictures and events of New Zealand family life: the photos of him in the back yard with the bicycle; with friends of family; and the 1970s décor and clothes. Matt also builds rapport by using the solidary discourse strategies of referring to an earlier conversation with Paul (line 7); by generalizing from his own experience of moving house - 'when you're a kid you trail through various places' (line 10); and by referring to cycling as an activity common to 'parents who have kids' (line 16).

By recounting the sequence of events leading up towards finding the dead cow, he keeps the suspense building: ‘packing up the panier baskets’, ‘heading off up country’, ‘hacking our way up the Rimutukas’, and at the same time his use of hedges and mitigators (lines16-30) keeps the talk low key, ‘we’d *just* head off up country, we ‘sort of’ made that an annual event’ and there was ‘quite’ a lot of dead flies and ‘quite’ a nasty smell (lines 24 - 25) and we ‘kinda’ waded through them (line 27). Interestingly this use of attenuating hedges and mitigators is a feature of stereotypically feminine discourse. Used in this way, in this context, it functions to downplay any social distance created by Matt’s seniority in the organization.

Showing family photos of early childhood, schooldays, and special moments in lives of family members, is quite intimate content, as well as a high level of personal disclosure in the context of a company meeting. Since inappropriate topic choice and management can threaten the maintenance of harmonious relations (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), this suggests a high level of trust between speaker and audience, and supports the frequently heard descriptions (from both employees and management) of the Phoenix culture as a family or village culture. This claim is further supported by the informal style of the presentation, the frequent use of humour by both speaker and interjectors and the positive responses to speaker strategies aimed at gaining audience involvement.

The end of the personal presso each week marks the shift to the more transactional (business focused) part of the agenda, in this instance an overview by a member of the sales team of work to hand. Keeping people informed of what is happening in the organization supports a sense of belonging. Sharing important information on

finances and the state of current and emerging contracts is something that is only done with insiders, conveying a sense of trust in employees and supporting a sense of company insideness and solidarity. The brisk informal style, with minimal formalities and rapid pace, shows engagement in a well established routine – something people expect and are comfortable with. In Example 6.4 the Chair's minimal introduction Sam's away, Barry's away and Bruce has had to go home and Nat's going to speak for Bruce' (line 1), simultaneously accomplishes the topic change, provides relevant apologies and introduces the next speaker. As Nat shares information by reviewing current and developing contracts with the company's various clients, people interject with comments and questions, maintaining the informal participation structure and interaction style.

Example 6.4

Context The weekly meeting third agenda topic – sales. One of the team presents an overview of current and developing work along with expected income. There are several interjectors - indicated by I (i) ---I (vi).

1	Chair	Sam's away and Barry's away and Bruce has had to go home and Nat's
2		going to be speaking for Bruce.
3	Nat	apparently this week we've won [*company name*] they've given the go
4		ahead to develop their website and er that's thirty ks worth of work
5		[*cheers and applause*]=
6	Mich	= we had to watch Bruce doing his victory dance again this morning
7		+and apparently the [*names government department*] web site is going
8		ahead. that starts in December that's about a hundred and twenty
9		thousand+and Barker-Lewis and that's about 300 grand [*approving murmers*]
10	I(i)	OOOOH woo HOO
11	Nat	that has to be done by 31st March./and
12	I(ii)	that'll \keep us busy=

13	Nat	=and *[names government dept*] is seriously looking at the
14		redevelopment of the administration system+ there's about seventy
15		thousand in that+ its going upstairs to get the rubber stamp on /that
16	I(iii)	how\ much is that?
17	Nat	ah seventy=
18	Mat	=we've pretty much signed off our first super-site [*client name*] are
19		meeting on Thursday to kick the process off and hopefully sign the
20		contract +/so.
21	Mich	and\ we've been asked to supply the contact details for
22		references for that job we bid for in Australia.
23	Chr	Australia ? ooooh
24	I (i)	fanTAstic
25	Chair	right that's sales done.
26		completed projects anybody got any? (5) just a quick one?
27	I(iv)	projects we wish we were doing=
28	I(v)	=projects we wish we hadn't started /[laughter]
29	I(vi)	or ones \we've had enough of [laughter]
30	Chair	now management+who's management this week?
		[*Meeting continues in Example 6.5*]

Throughout the example participants show a high level of engagement. Turns that run directly on from the previous one without pause (lines 5/6; 12/13; 17/18; 28/29), frequent interjections (lines 10, 12, 16, 21, 24, 27-28) and supportive comments are clearly acceptable rules of interaction in this context. In terms of content, it seems there is no need to elaborate on each client company, which suggests that meeting participants have been kept 'in the picture' through previous updates or reports. Neither Nat, nor Mat who chips in at line 18, are members of the sales team as they are speaking in place of Bruce. But they both use the inclusive pronoun *we* in the sense of we the company 'we've won (name of Government department)' (line 7); 'we've pretty much signed off our first supersite' (line 18); 'we've been asked to supply the contact details for that job we bid for in Australia' (line 22), expressing

solidarity with the audience by framing sales successes as attributable to the combined efforts of the company as a whole.

The informal style, together with the succinct descriptions and short turns, maintain the fast pace of the proceedings and the chair draws the item to a close (line 25) as if ticking off an item on a list. There is no response to the request for project reports, so he waits for a moment and after his prompt 'just a quick one', three interjectors make wry comments (lines 27-29) which serve to fill a possibly awkward pause before transition to the next topic.

In Example 6.5 the chair continues in his rather brusque style – 'Now management who's management this week?' This is management's 'official spot' in the agenda and Michael the MD who is the week's nominated speaker for management takes the floor - coming to the front of the room. He gives preliminary feedback on the recent strategy development meetings in example 5.5 of the previous chapter.

Example 6.5

Context: Weekly Meeting Agenda Item Six – Management feedback on strategy development

1	Chr	now management + who's management this week? + now
2		probably Wayne um Wayne's late this week + Michael? + or Patrick?
3	Mich	i won't go through what Wayne did at the management meeting coz its all sales
4		stuff and you've had enough of that probably. um last week we had our um er
5		workshops for the strategy and I have got as far as going and collating
6		everybody's information and putting all of the feedback under the questions
7		and um reading through it all. i haven't got as far as um analyzing those and
8		determining any um clear strategies. there's an interesting+couple of interesting
9		themes that came through+um one of the themes was that um er from the

10		requirements+from more than one team was that we should spend more time on
11		our current sites um a bit more time with our clients um so that's er a little bit er
12		contrary to what a lota people feel but er when faced with um some of these um
13		er i guess challenges that came through as a solution a few times+ um they were
14		um saying things like um er the sales team shouldn't be allowed to talk at the
15		weekly meetings / [uproarious laughter]
16		and er a few other things like that\ but + so that process is progressing and I um
17		as i say the information is all being collated and er the leadership team's
18		looking through it at the moment. i've just sent a half a dozen emails to tell
19		them to look at it so that's where we're at with that + um and the other thing
20		that i'm s'posed to talk about here is the methodology+um we +the
21		methodology development um hasn't gone away um we are we're still um we're
22		making actually very good inroads into er collating all of the um
23		methodological artifacts …. [*continues for several more minutes*]
24		…….
25		i know there's something really interesting happening behind me because
26		everybody's + everybody's absolutely GLUED to the screen. [Laughter] it must
27		be SO entertaining/
28		[laughter]
29	Dav	Michael are\ we going to have regular sort of updates as part of the Friday
30		meeting just to keep people up-to-date and focused on the methodology
32		stuff / n
33	Mich	on\ the methodology? +yeah we will+hopefully the updates will be the actual
34		launching of the things rather than just standing up and saying were still
35		working on it and one day you'll get to see something+and we're actually
36		getting close to there being some more visible stuff which is why we're talking
37		about it right now.
38	Chr	[*quietly*] ok+ anybody else?
39	Patr	one of the visible outputs is the project milestone review work that Kelly's been
40		doing and that's going to translate in terms of being applied to two projects next
41		week+ Mitchell's going to be facilitating one of those… and i'll be facilitating
42		the other one and we'll feed back the results of those at the Friday meeting as
43		well
44	Mich	we're also doing some work on um more consistent tracking of project
45		financials as well which hopefully will make life easier for project managers in
46		particular to know where we're up to in respect of budgets and (change)

47		controls and all those sorts of things++
48	Chr	is that it?
49		[*watching for indications that someone else might want to speak*]
50	Cvnr	apparently

Michael acknowledges that this task is not complete (lines 5-8). His frequent use of filled pauses 'um' and 'er' is characteristic of his presentation style and suggests he is thinking on his feet - in this case to recall and summarize the range of issues emerging from the strategy groups' discussions. As mentioned in chapter 5 each group had considered a list of questions on themes to be considered in the development of new organizational strategy. His pause and self–correction 'There's an interesting+couple of interesting themes that came through' (lines 8-9) followed by an assurance that they came from more than one group, shows his awareness of how they may be received. He appears to put the least unpopular recommendation first 'we should spend more time on our current sites' then runs straight on to the less popular one 'um *a bit* more time with our clients'. Phoenix people already attend twelve evenings a year specifically for clients, and clients may also come to the office to visit and consult with Phoenix people whenever they wish. Together with organizing and attending the Christmas party for clients and their families, many may feel this is unduly demanding, especially since there is a steady stream of new clients coming to the organization and very little room in the office to accommodate more employees. In fact employees sometimes jokingly refer to it as a 'sweatshop' (observation, field notes, company documentation, interviews and email). Michael acknowledges this, minimizing the possible unpopularity 'so um that's a *little bit* contrary to what a lota people feel'. And he makes light of it by referring to suggestions from some people that 'the sales team shouldn't be allowed to present at the weekly meetings'. This balances some tension around increasing workloads, and

the previously silent audience, intent on listening to Michael's feedback, erupts into uproarious laughter, as having too many clients is a problem most businesses would envy. Having delivered the unpopular news he refers the ongoing work on the task to the whole leadership team, shifting humourously to an authoritative stance as he says 'I've just sent a half dozen emails to tell them to look at it' (researcher presence at the meeting).

As Michael moves on to talk about methodology, he presents an overview of processes in hand, and again it is a rather long list of things: that 'we're working through at the moment'; that are still in progress – 'being collated' (line 17); and that 'we're making good inroads into' (lines 21-24), and after several minutes of this he loses audience interest. Noticing that people have turned their attention to the screen behind him as the convener prepares power point for the next presenter, Michael accepts the drift in attention with good humour. Rather than asking directly for their attention, he comments wryly on the '…. SO entertaining' things happening behind him (line 28). Thus he maintains the low distance between himself and the audience.

However Michael's long list of things underway threatens to overrun the time allotted to management for their turn in the agenda, and the meeting chair does not step in to control the turn as he might have done if the speaker had been anyone other than the MD. David - one of the senior managers - comes to his aid and addresses Michael directly with an explicit request for specific information. 'Michael – are we going to have regular updates as part of the weekly meeting'? (lines 29-30). By taking control of the turn he regains the focus but also shows the less experienced chair how to keep the meeting moving. At the same time he demonstrates that in this

context it is acceptable to interrupt the MD, as he like everyone else must keep to time in a late afternoon meeting with tight time constraints. But Michael who is focused on the longer term, and has a date by which he wants the strategy developed, (interview data and meeting) doesn't let go easily. He acknowledges that the audience want something more definite and notes that 'visible stuff' is close, but holds his turn by justifying 'that's why we're talking about it right now' (lines 36-37). The chair's quiet 'OK – anybody else? (line 38), is somewhat hesitant as though he takes Michael's stand as admonishment, and in fact Michael did not seem to appreciate being interrupted (researcher observation).

Part of the culture of the organization is an expectation of meaningful information sharing, and people become adept at providing brief summaries to meet this expectation within the short time frame. The brief extracts below, from the CofP of 'techies', are typical:

Example 6.5a

Context: Weekly Meeting feedback from the 'techie department'

1	Mitch: for those of you who didn't know I took a trip to Sydney to a technical
2	intelligence course+ it's basically a technical preview of what's coming
3	out for business intelligence.
4	basically it's just a five day course demonstrating all the new
5	technologies that are coming out + yeah with the bells and whistles'
6	Sam: i went too and put together an overview of what it was.
7	so I've basically pulled out the generic stuff which is more relevant to us
8	in NZ [proceeds with the overview]

Sharing information and experience helps to build community coherence by including others by keeping them up-to-date with what's going on throughout the organization.

Included in the transactional focus of the meeting is the recognition of achievement each week, with awards being presented for the most outstanding work and the greatest number of productive hours worked. The method of nomination and the informal presentation of a small prize are shown in example 6.6.

Example 6.6
Context: Presentation of the award for outstanding work for the week

	Patrick	Kelly for the stuff she's done on her project milestone review + she's kept on trucking till the end + till her last day. [*Several other nominations are proposed, each accompanied by cheers*]
	Chair	Any other nominations? [*One is chosen and award given*]
	Michael	Um this week and from now on well for a while anyway we have a choice between movie tickets and passes to the Karori wildlife sanctuary. If we run out of movie tickets before we run out of wildlife sanctuary tickets then you won't have a choice anymore/ [laughter] what are you gonna choose? [*response inaudible against the laugher*] \

It is not uncommon for recognition of achievement or excellence to feature in organizational meetings, but it is less common to hear an account of mistakes made or things that could have been done better. An expectation of sharing this kind of information is an integral part of the Phoenix weekly meeting and rather than being a source of trepidation it is treated with humour. Lenience in judgment is one dimension of a climate of care and framing the mistakes, things that could have been

done better, and near disasters, as humourous, positions them as lessons learned rather than as a source of potential punishment. Such a climate of confiding in trusted colleagues in a serious but supportive context can give people the courage to speak out. Holmes (2005) refers to a similar approach at Video Arts, the world's largest production company for films on interpersonal skills training, which focuses on humour as a way that people can identify and present mistakes without getting defensive about them.

The principle of speaking out, as well as lenience in judgment underpins the agenda item called the Blues Awards, given each week to a team or individual who have discovered something they could have done better, or have made a mistake and put it right, or perhaps even narrowly avoided a disaster. Some of these are described in Example 6.7. As the stories are told there are cheers, shouts or laughter.

Example 6.7

Context: Weekly meeting: agenda item – The Blues Award

	Chair	blues award
	Tom	yeah we've got one – its part of a demo - its only funny if you actually see [*switches to the power point*] [*some inaudible comments followed by laughter as he scrolls to the slides he is searching for. As he finds them he says*]. today I was actually in the process of setting this up on the production environment today so I could check them (3) i was sitting at my desk and looking this through and I had a phone call from Gemma Lewis who's one of the comms subs people there and she said "oh you know that FAQ link where people can ask questions that's on the bottom of the home page?" i said+just a minute I'll bring that up+ so anyway I logged onto the site n+oops where's the mouse? (2)[murmurs] I'm just gonna have to flick through [*goes*

		through several more slides] so anyway I brought it up and I found (2) THAT! [*Shows a funny but rather rude question to- much applause and laughter*]. So i guess+i mean+whatever you do NEVER+EVER put ANYTHING like that into ANY system that the customer's gonna see+coz eventually it'll fall through the cracks and you'll end up with egg on your face. …[*continues*] yes well the lesson is whatever you do+ no matter how far away from production you think it is don't put stuff like that in because it ALWAYS ends up falling through the cracks.
	Mich	not even in your comments in pracman on your time sheet [laughter]
	Tom	and if you REALLY have to write something then find a piece of paper and write it down. then screw it up and put in the bin+or burn it.

Once all the 'stories' have been heard, votes are taken by the announcement of each 'item' whereupon everyone cheers and applauds. The item that receives the most enthusiastic or loudest applause wins the award.

Sharing information about potentially serious mistakes or errors in judgment, in a company-wide meeting, takes courage and the fact that this item is a normal feature of the agenda highlights a focus on learning (in this case from what could have been done better). Tom's example is accompanied by a demonstration. 'So I logged onto the site and found THAT': as he shows the pre-launch site. He also gives an account of how it actually was detected: 'i had a call from Gemma Lewis who's one of the comms subs' [communications sub-editor] people there, and she said, 'oh you know that FAQ link where people can ask questions that's at the bottom of the home page?' The frequently asked questions (FAQ) section of a website is potentially one of the most used locations on a website, so to have a rude joke on a client's web site at all, but especially in such an important location, is very serious indeed and could have done considerable damage to the company's reputation and credibility.

The advice that follows is rather obvious ‘so I guess WHATEVER you do NEVER EVER put anything like that on ANY system that the customer’s gonna see, coz it’ll always fall through the cracks and you’ll end up with egg on your face..’ Although this could have been dealt with as a private reprimand, to just one individual, airing it as a cautionary tale makes it available to everyone else, and shows exactly how it was found by a client’s employee looking through the site as something to take great care to avoid.

Although the potential seriousness of these admissions is not underrated, the award acknowledges the *courage* shown in speaking out. It also shows a degree of *lenience in judgment* by management and colleagues (despite what they may have been thinking) and it both reflects and supports a sense of *mutual trust*, each of which are dimensions of care identified by Von Krogh et al (2000) as part of a knowledge enabling context.

A farewell speech for one colleague who is leaving and then several notices follow the awards, and the meeting concludes ending as it began, with a further brief period of social chat before people disperse for the week. The chair and convener clear away the food and drinks and return the room to its previous configuration of three offices.

6.3 Discussion

The information sharing purpose of the meeting is in itself somewhat collegial. However collegiality is not achieved simply by a stated purpose, rather it is supported by process, and in this instance, the process is governed by the template

agenda. Its influence is reflected in the dynamics of interaction throughout the excerpts from the meeting described here. As well, the template exerts a more pervasive organizational influence over time. First I discuss its role in the dynamics of interactions seen in the examples in this chapter, focusing on the domains of language use. Then I discuss the standing influence of the agenda on the weekly meetings over time, focusing on its impact through the three sociolinguistic variables of face, participant roles and relations and interactional goals.

6.3.1 The template agenda as an influence on interaction

As an open meeting everyone is welcome and the socialization beforehand is an unwritten agenda item – a long standing convention – which encourages interaction among participants. The influence of the template agenda in achieving the information sharing purpose of the meeting can be seen throughout the interactions, across several domains of language use identified by Spencer-Oatey (2008) as discussed in chapter 3. In the *participation* domain, all sections of the organization (CofPs; MCKs) are able to speak each week and they each nominate one person as speaker for that week. Week by week the pattern is the same, with socializing followed by 'what's new and cool?' first; then the 'personal presso'; next is feedback from every CofP and MCK; then management, and finally awards and presentations followed by brief social talk before everyone departs and conveners clear away the food and drinks and return the room to its workday configuration as three offices.

At the level of *discourse*, the agenda reflects the information sharing purpose of the meeting through the wide range of topics covered: news, personal accounts and trivia; sales; contracts achieved or in progress; management feedback (which from

time to time features summaries of financial position); celebration of work well done, acknowledgement of mistakes identified; brief informal ceremonies to mark important events such as a farewell to a valued colleague; and finally general notices.

Although the purpose of the meeting is formal, the *style* is informal and a sense of fun is maintained throughout. Fun is a valued part of the Phoenix culture and it threads through the meeting from the socialization at the beginning, the 'what's new and cool' item with its almost celebratory focus, the supportive humour in the personal pressos, and again for instance in the wry comments on projects 'we wish we were doing', 'wish we hadn't started' or 'have had enough of' in Example 6.4 (lines 28-30). In the acknowledgement of mistakes made or potential disasters averted, their seriousness is not ignored but the focus is on their value as opportunities for learning and as cautionary tales for others. The courage in speaking out is recognised by the Blues Award and accepted with humour even though it is the one everyone least wants to receive.

The *illocutionary* domain provides evidence of collegiality through participant strategies that reflect both high solidarity and low distance. For instance the audience shows solidarity with the presenter (s) through their use of supportive humour, and by asking questions and making supportive comments, as well as through laughter and applause. High status speakers reduce the social distance of their positions by identifying with the audience - for instance, Matt's focus on doing things that may be common to many of those present, such as low key family holidays doing ordinary things like taking a picnic and cycling in the New Zealand countryside, and Michael's avoidance of using directives in the context of the meeting. Throughout

the meeting, the linguistic strategies used by participants display a rapport maintenance orientation – the desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations. This suggests established collegial relationships which participants generally work to support and maintain.

There is a general sense of informality and friendliness supported by everyone, apart from the chair and convener, being randomly distributed around the room. Speakers generally stand up where they are to talk (unless they are seated at the back, in which case they come to the front so people don't have to turn right around). This together with the tone of the talk and the informal style of the interaction provide *non verbal* evidence for both management and participant claims of a friendly culture.

6.3.2 The standing effects of the template agenda

Spencer-Oatey (2008) asserts that contextual features 'can play both a "dynamic" and a "standing" role in influencing language use' (p. 39) and the findings here support that claim. The purpose of the activity (regular weekly company wide information sharing) exerts a general and pervasive influence on the meeting as a context for interaction, not just in one meeting but in every meeting. It does this through the template agenda as an artifact that governs not simply the proceedings, but other important features of context as well. The Phoenix weekly meeting is somewhat unusual in the extent to which it both facilitates and fosters collegiality. For instance, it facilitates a subtle shift in power relations for the duration of the meeting; it balances what Spencer-Oatey (2008) refers to as cost-benefit considerations (p.16) of item content. It does his by providing for participants to take a wide range of social interactional roles over time, thus satisfying the SIP of equity

referred to below. The agenda also fulfills the conventional function of controlling the sequence of items and regulating turn taking and topic control. But it also connects with the socialization beforehand by placing the 'what's new and cool' item at the forefront of items for discussion, and in this way it enables a sense of celebration and fun to carry over into and weave throughout the transactional part of the meeting.

Collegiality and socialization

The substantial period of socialization before the meeting, accompanied by food and drinks, supports the development of interpersonal relations by providing time for people to catch up with others they may not have seen in the hectic pace of the working week. Facilitating interaction between people from all levels of the organization and across CofP boundaries, on such a regular and frequent basis, supports friendly relations and helps to avoid people becoming anonymous in a rapidly expanding company. The ordering of events in the template agenda continues this affective focus into the meeting proper. The early focus on news and individuals frames colleagues as people rather than just as employees, and the impromptu component of the content facilitates the carry-over of a sense of fun and of expectancy into the transactional part of the meeting. This focus on affect is consistent with Von Krogh et al's (2000) description of a knowledge enabling context as one which includes a climate of care.

Collegiality through the management of sociality rights and obligations

The simultaneous concern for self and other inherent in the management of rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), highlights the relevance of power and distance as important

variables in collegial relations. Participant roles within the weekly meeting function to support solidarity, reduce social distance and minimize the impact of status for the duration of the meeting. Rotating the role of chair to include people from all levels of the organization ensures that everyone has the opportunity as well as the obligation to learn how to manage both the proceedings of a large meeting (adhering to the agenda, and managing contributions within items) and the additional practical tasks associated with it (preparing the room and refreshments and clearing away afterwards). Having a convener as well - a role that also rotates - both provides support and shares the responsibility. The chair of a meeting is also the role with power, so participants with lower organizational status, whilst in the role of chair, have some temporary legitimate power over those of higher status, and do not hesitate to exercise it – for instance in Example 1 when the chair 'shuts down' the MD's topic that he feels is unsuitable within the 'what's new and cool item'. However it can be challenging as can be seen in example 6. 5 when Michael the MD clearly demonstrates his reluctance to yield the floor.

Another aspect of the template agenda that reflects in a shift in power dynamics is the relegation of management reports till late in the sequence of events - after reports from the CofPs and project teams. According to Spencer-Oatey (2008) conventions relating to turn taking and the right to talk reflect deeply held views about hierarchy and what is socially appropriate for given role relationships. As discussed in chapter 2 these are termed *sociopragmatic interactional principles* (SIPs), of which two fundamental ones are *equity* and *association* (explained in chapter 2). In taking the role of more ordinary participants, management are expected to observe the associated sociality rights and obligations, and the convention in reporting to the

meeting is to overview what has been achieved. So when Michael the MD presents the management report by providing a list of what is not yet done or is just underway, rather than what has been accomplished (in contrast to the reports from CofPs), in a sense he decreases his association and involvement with the audience. As a result he quickly loses their attention. Management colleagues step in to support the chair who struggles to call Michael to order: David by explicitly addressing Michael with a question aimed at getting him on track with audience expectations; and Patrick by reminding Michael of audience expectations by providing more specific details of 'something visible'.

Collegiality through the consideration of face

The weekly meeting 'gives face' to employees in a variety of ways. It supports their sense of worth and dignity by providing multiple opportunities for the development of respect, reputation and competence. 'Face is closely related to a person's sense of identity or self-concept: self as an individual (individual identity); self as a group member (collective identity); and self in relationship with others (relational identity)' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 14). The period of socialization before the meeting proper provides people with the opportunity to develop and maintain their relational identity beyond the scope of day-to-day practice which is focused on their particular practice specialty. In this way it extends their group identity beyond membership of particular CofPs to members of the organization as a wider community.

The right and the obligation to take up a variety of roles within the company meeting gives face to employees and managers alike by supporting the development of competence in the many roles inherent in meeting procedure. It supports the growth

of both competence and confidence in a supportive environment. In taking the role of chair or convener, people learn the practicalities of large meeting management, from the overall event to the management of individual contributions within agenda items. This supports what could be termed 'public face' as an important organizational competence and one that is reflected in the reputation of Phoenix people as being able to step up to any professional task at more public occasions such as product launches and industry sector events. Thus through supporting organization-wide competence in public speaking the company supports organizational face.

Presenting in the 'personal presso' item provides an opportunity to allow others a glimpse of the presenter as an individual, a family member and as member of a particular practice specialty (or whatever other aspect of their identity they wish to convey). Each week different individuals are responsible for presenting the feedback from their particular CofP or project so they have the opportunity to succinctly articulate the current work of their practice community. And by taking a relatively back seat, management foregrounds the competencies and achievements of employees. This provision of both access to and voice in such an important contextualizing space as the weekly meeting also contributes to employee confidence by 'giving face' on a regular and frequent basis.

Collegiality through the mutual achievement of interactional goals

A major goal of the meeting is regular information sharing with colleagues throughout the organization, and the template agenda ensures a wide range of information is shared. It includes social information, small talk, insights into

employees as individuals, accomplishments (or not) of all CofPs and project teams, management issues, sales, the state of company finances, excellence in performance and blunders made or almost made that others can learn from. Taken together, these provide employees with a snapshot of the organization at a point in time, and because this happens every week it functions to keep everyone in the company up to speed with where the company is at, on a regular basis. This not only suggests that generally everyone in the organization is 'in the loop', but it draws attention to other important effects of the template agenda as a semiotic artifact.

6.4 Summary

The weekly meeting as part of a knowledge enabling context

The analyses in this chapter have illustrated some of the ways in which the weekly meeting contributes to Von Krogh et al's description of a knowledge enabling organizational context, by supporting the development of solid relationships and by displaying some of the dimensions of a climate of care.

A meeting is hardly an organizational structure, but as a company-wide activity that occurs 50 times per year, the weekly meeting facilitates the development of solid relationships and collaboration in Von Krogh's et al's (2000) sense. It does this in the first instance through the socializing that precedes the meeting proper, which encourages interaction between different levels of hierarchy and allows people a chance to catch up with others and to meet new members of the organization.

Rather than one person presenting all the items and speaking on behalf of contributors, each group presents their own content, which means that the material is

presented from their perspective. This not only ensures that the various perspectives are encountered each week, but people seem to have a sense of belonging to the organization, of knowing where they fit and of the contribution they make (researcher observation and field notes). This common engagement in creating the organization as a community appears to contribute to the development of a sense of mutual trust, one of Von Krogh et al's (2000) dimensions of care. It can be seen in part through the level of self disclosure evident in the 'personal pressos', as well as the courage involved in speaking out about mistakes made or narrowly avoided, as well as the inclusion of personal topics in the 'what's new and cool' agenda item.

The meeting process together with the format of the template agenda and the content, combine to create a snapshot of the overall organization each week. Furthermore it is one which the company as a community constructs together. Overall the weekly meeting contributes to a sense of wider community and appears to create a sense of collegiality that carries over into relationships within the component communities especially the MCKs, which may benefit from skills learned in the weekly meeting. For instance learning how to manage challenges to rapport such as having to exert temporary authority over a more senior person, is a similar challenge to one that might be encountered in an MCK where the project leader must manage a number of senior experts within the multiple constraints of a project brief. This supports Von Krogh et al's observation that caring for others helps them learn.

In the next chapter I draw together the threads of the knowledge enabling context as identified at Phoenix and discuss the ways in which they work together to support the

knowledge creation capabilities of the organization. I also suggest a number of implications for linguistic research and management research and practice.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The main question asked at the beginning of this thesis was:

How is a knowledge enabling context instantiated through organizational discourse?

Inherent in this question, are two sub-questions through which the enquiry was addressed in relation to a specific organization:

How are solid collegial relations in the organization fostered through discourse?

How is a climate of care enacted through the discourse of the organization?

As a conclusion to this thesis this chapter draws together the findings and considers their significance for the knowledge enabling context of the organization studied. An enabling context does not in itself comprise any one dimension of organization, rather it is the something that connects the physical, virtual and mental elements of organization, and unifies them into an overarching social context for advancing individual and/or collective knowledge. This 'something' is variously referred to by Von Krogh et al (2000) as comprising: a network of mutual obligations and shared experiences; a 'shared knowledge space' that encourages and nurtures participation on many different levels. This 'shared knowledge space' can encompass the provision of appropriate physical spaces or cyber connections and the promotion of interactions among organizational members.

The thesis explored two key components of a knowledge enabling context identified by Von Krogh et al (2000): *structures that foster collegial relations* and a *climate of care*.

Adopting a broadly sociolinguistic perspective, the analyses focused on the management of interpersonal rapport as manifested in the discourse of the organization - evidenced in both language and action, in naturally occurring day-to-day interaction. The exploration of these two components was operationalized first, by applying Hymes' (1974) etic grid to the data as a preliminary descriptive framework, and second, by applying Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management framework to the detailed analysis of the collegial relations through the three interconnected bases of rapport: face, interactional goals, and sociality rights and obligations. The rapport management framework enabled the analyses to take account of the participant relations variable comprised of power and distance, and encompassed consideration of communication style as an influence on the organization's communicative ethos.

By considering the communication style of Phoenix as located on a continuum of associative expressiveness to associative restraint, the analyses identified a generally positive and friendly interactional ethos, characterized overall by an associatively expressive style. These features are conventionally indexed as feminine. However in this predominantly male organization the features co-occur with an interactional style which is conventionally indexed as male, that is - linguistically direct, pragmatically explicit, and interpersonally blunt.

I begin by reviewing three aspects of organizational structure and the ways in which each of them influence collegial relations. These three aspects are: spatiality; hierarchy; and the social communities that comprise the organization. For each of these, the discussion looks at the management of interpersonal rapport, taking account of the influence of power/status and solidarity/distance in the development and maintenance of collegial relations. I focus first on spatial configuration in combination with computer connectivity and their significance for the management of face, sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals in the organization as a whole, looking at general interaction in the open plan office. Next I discuss the impact on collegial relations of the relatively flat hierarchy and the integration of management and employees in one office. Then I look at the social structures, focusing first on the weekly meeting as an activity that binds the organization together as one community, connecting across the various practice boundaries and levels of hierarchy to form a tightly held constellation of practices. A focus on the components of this constellation, CofPs and MCKs, completes the discussion of social structures as an influence on collegial relations. The characteristics and purpose of each type of community combine to influence collegial relations in multiple and distinctive ways.

The focus of discussion then shifts to the second sub question of the thesis - How is a climate of care instantiated in the organization? Here I consider Von Krogh et al's (2000) five dimensions of care that are evidenced in action and interaction throughout the organization, drawing them together under the domain of

communication style and interactional ethos. The next section considers the impact of methodology, and implications for the literature arising from the findings of this thesis. A brief summary of the thesis concludes the chapter.

7.2 Structure as an influence on collegial relations

7.2.1 The influence of spatial configuration

As argued in chapter four, the spatial configuration of Phoenix as an open plan office provides opportunities for the development of collegial relations by generating 'a field of probabilistic encounter' (Hillier et al 1987, as cited in Sailer and Penn, 2007, p. 15.), in which, for instance, people can see conversations taking place in other parts of the office, and often move across the room to join in. Ease of movement throughout the room and the physical co-presence of everyone in the organization are direct consequences of spatial configuration, and although this cannot determine interaction, it does facilitate it.

According to Sailer and Penn (2007), physical space not only impacts on social space, but impacts also on conceptual space and group identity. At Phoenix, people interact as if they are one community. The open plan office together with the connectivity provided by the computer network comprises an infrastructure of communicative means characterized by the richness of visual and auditory cues inherent in physical co-presence, together with the affordances of CMC (e.g. scope, reach, speed, participation structures) available through, for instance, e-mail. The characteristics outlined above combine to form what Sailer and Penn term 'an emergent social milieu'.

As a setting for interaction this aligns with Von Krogh et al's (2000) criteria for a shared knowledge space - one that encompasses the provision of appropriate physical spaces or cyber connections and the promotion of interactions among organizational members. It also reflects the legitimate power of the managing director to decide the spatial configuration and the allocation of resources. As a component of a knowledge enabling context, however, it is the use made of these affordances, in the day-to-day management of interpersonal relations, that creates and sustains solid collegial relations.

The physical co-presence of almost fifty people in the open plan office means that everyone can see and be seen. This together with the likelihood of client visits, appears to increase the scope of norm based sociality rights and obligations. In particular there is an expectation of being informed and an obligation to inform, with regard to advising lateness, absences from the office and visitors to the office, and these are advised to everyone rather than simply to those working in close proximity. However the participation structure afforded by email, allows these messages to include everyone by simply using the collective address form 'Phoenix'. As well as attending to sociality rights and obligations, writers of these messages simultaneously consider readers' face sensitivities through message location and brevity (i.e. reducing imposition by placing the whole message in the subject line). Additionally, they engage readers by drawing on meta-discursive interactional strategies, for instance engagement markers such as self mention, using nicknames or short forms of names. In this way, they not only project author presence into the text, but adopt the solidary strategy of referring to community recognized identities.

7.2.2 Hierarchy as an influence on collegial relations

The relatively flat hierarchy and the integration of managers and employees throughout the office, fosters collegial relations by facilitating interaction across hierarchical and practice boundaries. It also reflects two organizational values of Phoenix: an egalitarian philosophy, enacted for instance in the allocation of space and resources; and a collectivist approach, reflected in the provision of many occasions for socializing, together with the strong expectation that these occasions will be well supported. Both employees and management describe the organization as a 'village' or 'family' where everyone knows everyone else and knows what they can do. The analyses support their description through the identification of a range of socializing practices and activities that encourage and support participation on many different levels. The analyses also identify ways of 'doing power' that effectively achieve management goals of getting things done, whilst also supporting a strongly collaborative workplace environment.

In this dimension of organization, that is, in the day-to-day interaction within the open plan office, legitimate power, in the sense of the exercise of authority, is the most visible, through for instance directives (e.g. the MD's email directing that the focus must return to chargeable time), and announcements (e.g. the manager's email announcing the new procedures around performance appraisal).

Management claims of an egalitarian and friendly culture create expectations around the ways employees expect to be treated in day-to-day interaction. In their email interaction with employees, managers can be seen to attend to these expectations at

the same time as attending to their role based management obligations. They demonstrate a balance between flexibility and corporate control by shifting between associative expressiveness and restraint (footing in Goffman's sense). For instance, in his email directive to focus on chargeable time, the MD takes an authoritative and somewhat distancing stance, rhetorically positioning the audience to accept his point of view, using the modal *must* in his directive: 'for now the focus must go back on chargeable time' (in example 4.17). However, he also draws on a range of meta-discursive interactional resources described by Hyland (2005) to balance this associative restraint with associative expressiveness. These include implying that there may be other times for working on internal projects; using self mention to project his identity into the message and to empathize with them ('I know internal projects are important ...'); and showing solidarity with readers by using the inclusive pronoun *we* to identify with them: (e.g. 'we are no longer having to work huge hours....'), thus drawing them into the discourse and rhetorically positioning them to see his point of view.

Similar meta-discursive strategies are used by the senior manager, David, when announcing new procedures around performance reviews (example 4.14). 'The plan' is clearly and somewhat bluntly explained, the actual explanation being couched in associatively restrained terms, avoiding the use of personal pronouns. But he too balances this restraint with associative expressiveness, by prefacing his explanation of the details with a request for empathy, seeking readers' understanding of the time constraints he must work under. In both instances the authoritative and expressively restrained stance in the central part of the message is 'bookended' with associative

expressiveness using meta-discursive strategies that express solidarity and convey a generally positive affect.

This supports an interpretation of the open plan office as not just a vector of interaction but as having a conditioning effect on sociality rights and obligations. Since reactions to directives and announcements can be *seen* by management, and management is in a real sense immersed in the daily life of the office, this appears to increase the awareness of and sensitivity to the feelings and reactions of others.

The spatial configuration of the open plan office, the integration of management and employees in the same space, and the egalitarian allocation of space and artefacts, discussed above, contribute to a sense of low social distance between people, despite high power difference. The frequency of interaction, informality of style and generally positive affect adds to this sense. As well as day-to-day interaction in the course of transactional business, frequent engagement in a wide range of social activities provides many opportunities for interaction across hierarchical and practice boundaries.

7.2.3 Social structure and collegial relations

'The Weekly Meeting'

The weekly meeting emerged as a significant communicative event in the Phoenix repertoire, as discussed in chapter 6. The egalitarian philosophy of Phoenix carries over into the weekly meeting. It is an important activity involving the whole company for almost two hours each week, and although the MD and senior managers obviously retain their status, their legitimate power is backgrounded in two ways.

First, like all other participants they are (for the duration of the meeting) subject to the role based legitimate power of the meeting chair. Second, although all CofPs, project teams and groups have a turn at presenting feedback to the meeting, management's turn is last.

The template agenda, which specifies the sequence of items being presented, evolved in the early days of the meeting (interview data). It is an interesting and powerful artefact that influences the building and maintaining of community, and it reflects many core values of Phoenix. Its form, as a template with always the same order of topics, ensures that the meeting proceeds in the same way each week, whilst at the same time leaving open the actual content of each agenda item. This means that despite the fact that there is a different convener and chairperson each week, there is a consistency in procedure. It also ensures minimum disruption to the day-to-day workplace practice of those whose turn it is to organise the meeting, since they only have to confirm who will be speaking for each agenda item. It is the responsibility of each CofP, practice team and of management to arrange both the content of the presentation and the presenter for each meeting, and for those who are less experienced in chairing and convening meetings, the task is less daunting as they have each other for support. Additionally the agenda embodies the sociality rights and obligations inherent in the purpose of the meeting: the obligation on all communities within the organization to inform others on a weekly basis, and the reciprocal expectation of being informed. This ensures that every CofP and project team as well as management, is accountable to the organization in a practical way, for feedback on progress and information sharing on a weekly basis.

Organizational values are also reflected in the actual sequence of agenda items, with socializing prioritised as well as supported with the provision of refreshments. The first agenda item, 'what's new and cool?', focusing on something that is exciting or celebratory in the lives of employees, reflects the 'village' culture of the organization, the high value placed on fun, and a generally holistic approach to interpersonal relations between colleagues.

The frequency (i.e. weekly) and regularity (i.e. 50 times per year) of the meetings, ensures that participation in the *practice* of being an organization - a single organizational community - is second nature to all members of the organization. Meeting participants *engage* in organizational practice by developing and utilising key organizational competencies through for instance: developing or refining presentation skills; taking their turn at the 'personal presso'; presenting feedback for their community of practice or project team; or by chairing or convening the meeting. By providing feedback to the organization on a weekly basis, in a way that is accessible to people from all the various practice specialities present, each CofP, project team and task group and management, is also *reflecting* on their practice, and at the same time is exposed to the perspectives of other groups and specialist practice areas, so that each one develops a sense of themselves as part of a larger community.

The weekly meeting also provides strong support for the formation of identification, the process whereby employees see themselves as members of the organization as a community. Identification with a group or collective enhances concern for collective processes as well as the actual frequency of co-operation (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998). Over time, through its frequency, regularity and inclusiveness, the weekly meeting

has become a process in which all organizational members are invested. By encompassing the personal, relational and transactional aspects of organization, and by supporting the interconnectedness and interdependence of both individuals and the organization's communities, it creates bonds that reify the organization's component groups and CofPs into a tightly held constellation of practices (CNP) in Wenger's (1998) sense. This constellation exhibits Wenger's (1995) criteria of: having related enterprises; sharing historical roots; facing similar conditions; having members in common; sharing artefacts; having a configuration characterized by relations of proximity and interaction; and sharing access to (rather than competing for) the same resources (p. 127). Participation in the meeting keeps people in the loop and up-to-date in both personal and transactional matters throughout the organization, from the arrival of a new baby, or who has bought a new house or completed a qualification, through reporting on an overseas conference or technical training trip, to the state of finances of the firm. The regularity, frequency and extent of engagement in the weekly meeting supports the development of relationships both within and across levels of hierarchy and practice specialities as well as supporting the development of norms of cooperation.

Perhaps the most powerful or important impact of the weekly meeting is its role in developing and maintaining the organization's discursive resources. In Blommaert's (2005) sense, it functions as a discourse phenomenon that performs the contextualising function of 'merging discourse and social structure' (p. 57), and it also encompasses two of Blommaert's *forgotten contexts*. First, it facilitates the development and maintenance over time of the complex of linguistic means and communicative skills that underpin the organization's knowledge creating context. It

supports the development of collegiality by facilitating regular social engagement across both practice and hierarchical boundaries. And by providing a forum for practice in essential organizational skills, such as public presentation and meeting management, the weekly meeting increases the functional adequacy of organizational members by providing them with communicative skills, resources and competencies that are transportable and highly valued in the industry sector and in business generally.

A second way in which the weekly meeting functions as one of Blommaert's forgotten contexts, is in the development of *data history* as a resource. Each weekly meeting provides a snapshot of the organization as a whole. Furthermore, each part of the snapshot comprises a kaleidoscope of perspectives, as it is presented by the group or person actively engaged in a specialist practice or activity. Since there are 50 such meetings throughout the year, they combine to provide a living history of the organization over time. Additionally, those who have the greatest interest in that history have played a part in its construction. It is a naturally occurring, dynamic and collaboratively constructed oral history of the organization, which is both meaningful and relevant to all participants.

As part of a knowledge enabling organizational context, it is not something that is immediately obvious to competitors. As well, it is almost non-imitable, since it rests on a foundation of a particular management philosophy and an organizational culture based on values which are often discounted in the hypercompetitive environment of the current economic paradigm.

Communities of practice

Members of communities of practice are located in close physical proximity within the open plan office. Their interaction is primarily face-to-face and oriented to maintaining an already established rapport. Collegial relations are fostered through members' ongoing mutual engagement in the shared practice of a specialty area, collaborative engagement in joint tasks, and a commitment to and responsibility for all of the outputs the community contributes to the organization. Expert power is foregrounded in this context, and the status of each member within the community is derived from their degree of expertise and experience. Rapport is managed within the interactional goals of the community's day-to-day activities, the role based sociality rights and obligations inherent in the identity of the expert as teacher and mentor, and within the identity trajectory of the novice towards greater expertise through practice based learning.

Additionally, contract based obligations, such as the requirement to complete the development of a challenging website within a very tight timeframe, impact on the interactional goals of the teaching session described in chapter 5**.** The short timeframe of the contract for which the website is being designed, together with the challenging nature of the website, put pressure on James to simultaneously undertake the development, to teach the novice through instruction and observation, and to avoid letting the novice 'play' with the new website, as the client company's live data is being used throughout. Both novice and expert invest in maintaining their established close relations, which they have developed over time and which are characterized by generally positive affect. The expert (James) manages face sensitivities with care, downplaying power and exercising patience and forbearance.

He does this by using suggestory formulae rather than blunt directives as he endeavours to begin the teaching session despite the dual pressures of time constraint and the complexity of the website development. The novice also manages face sensitivities with care, hurrying as fast as possible to complete his current task whilst also maintaining communication with off- topic small talk and references to forthcoming shared, non-work activities.

As part of an organizational knowledge enabling context, CofPs comprise resources characterized by *depth* of knowledge and experience developed over time. This depth comprises the sum of the collective knowledge and experience of the members. CofPs represent specialised banks of knowledge on which the organization can draw to apply to the various aspects of the products and services by which Phoenix defines itself, hence the CofPs comprise an important part of the organization's overall knowledge creating capabilities. And since the depth and quality of knowledge and experience available to the MCKs is directly dependent on the knowledge and experience embedded in these relatively stable, long-term communities, Wenger's description of CofPs as 'powerhouses of organizational knowledge creation' is especially appropriate.

'Micro-communities of knowledge'

MCKs *require* rather than simply foster collegial relations. Effective collegial relations need to be established quickly and maintained throughout the course of the project. Project outputs require a high level of skill and expertise in each of the specialty areas relevant to the project brief. This presents project team members with a number of challenges. First, membership of the team involves a shift in both the

power and status of members relative to each other. Although each team member is a highly skilled expert and core member of their CofP, with the expert power and status that implies, within the project team their expert power and status are to some extent neutralised as they do not have power over each other. Legitimate power in this context resides in the role based position of the project leader.

When a group of experts come together to collaborate on a jointly produced output, they each bring with them the perspective of their own discipline or specialty area, so that each expert's view of both the process and the completed output will be coloured by their specialty perspective as well as by previous experience on other projects. Diversity of views can be very productive of new ideas, especially at the beginning stages of product or service development. But diversity can also lead to disagreements which challenge the relationship building skills of team members. Each expert is accustomed to building or maintaining relationships over time within their CofP. However these are based on like mindedness arising from frequency of contact and immersion in the same specialty area. Project team members by contrast have a limited time to establish and effectively maintain relationships across disciplinary boundaries.

The role of project leader also requires considerable relationship building skills, and because some team members have a higher status than the project leader, within the organization as a whole, the project leader must have the confidence to actively manage not only relationships across practice boundaries, but also across status levels. Furthermore although the project leader's power is legitimate it is also temporary, lasting only for the duration of the project. This combination of demands

and constraints makes the role of project leader rather daunting. However in the context of Phoenix, project team members have a rich vein of experience on which to draw. Engagement in the weekly meeting provides them with opportunities to both observe and to practice these skills. Every week they must listen to presentations from all specialty perspectives in the organization and similarly they must present feedback from their specialty perspective. This enables both groups and individuals to develop a keen sense of how their role in the organization is interconnected with others. Additionally, taking a turn as the weekly meeting convener provides the experience of coordinating input from a range of different communities and teams, also within a tight timeframe. Chairing the meeting provides an experience of managing a diverse group of presenters as well as a highly interactive audience, with tight constraints on both topic sequence and time. Thus where social relations between team members have been established and maintained in other dimensions of the organization, they may positively impact the ability of individuals to develop the working relationships required in MCKs such as project teams.

Team members' collaborative humour around Mitchell's late arrival at the project team meeting, shows the rapid adoption of solidary strategies that empathize with Mitchell, who is a peripheral but nonetheless legitimate member of the team. By identifying with him the team members demonstrate care and concern for the junior member of the team.

The next section looks more closely at key relational skills evidenced in the Phoenix communication style, to identify the relationship between contextual variables, the

interactional ethos of the organization, and their impact on the organization's knowledge enabling context.

7.3 A summary of participant relations

As has been argued, the key contextual variable in this study is participant relations – This is a group of factors which are important through their influence on interpersonal rapport, and in this case collegial relations in the workplace. The management of its two component dimensions, power/status and distance, influences the management of rapport at all levels of the organization. Although they are discussed separately here, they are of course integrated in practice and for each organization subtle nuances in their management and expression in interaction combine to create a unique interactional ethos.

7.3.1 Power

Power is usually expressed - within sociolinguistics - on a vertical scale ranging from superior or high status and power, to subordinate or low status and power. In workplace relationships power may involve the ability to: control others; to accomplish one's goals; to impose plans and evaluations on others; and to define social realities (Holmes, 2001; 2006). The varying bases of power - legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, referential (French & Raven, 1959) highlight its nature as a relative concept, which can vary according to context. The analyses in this thesis show that different bases of power are foregrounded within different organizational contexts.

Although there are substantial power differentials between senior management and employees, these are effectively downplayed at Phoenix - in part through an absence of symbolism. The managing director for instance, has both reward and coercive power (control over positive and negative outcomes); expert power (more than two decades as a professional analyst together with more than two decades as a finance professional); legitimate power (as managing director and owner of the firm); and referent power, derived from a high level of admiration and respect of other managers and employees. Senior managers also have the first four kinds of power. These create an asymmetric relationship between employees and management.

In organizations, the asymmetry of this relationship is commonly accompanied by a range of symbolic representations of power, such as separate, often large, offices on different floors from employees, differing amounts or quality of workplace artefacts, such as computers and furnishings, reserved and/or labeled car parks, separate social spaces, such as corporate dining rooms, separate meeting areas such as boardrooms reserved only for senior managers, and sometimes different styles of dress. These arguably contribute to the asymmetry of the relationship between management and employees, by creating a mental distance between them, which non-verbally but overtly emphasizes the status distance between the two. The absence of these symbolic aspects of power at Phoenix, contributes to a congruence between management's stated claims of an egalitarian workplace culture, and employees' day-to-day perception/experience of this as a reality.

Interaction within communities of practice foregrounds expert power, through the role of expert as teacher and mentor. Within the MCKs, however, and in particular,

the project team, long-term bases of legitimate and expert power are temporarily subjected to the legitimate, role-based power of the project leader. This can present a challenge for the project leader, who must establish leadership quickly and maintain it effectively throughout a project.

Within the weekly meeting, power shifts to the legitimate role of the meeting chair. Although this power is temporary - that is, only for the duration of meeting - it is substantial. The exercise of power within the different dimensions of the organization places a different combination of demands on the management of interpersonal rapport. Generally at Phoenix status is downplayed and authority is exercised directly. However this does not explain the quality of interpersonal relations at Phoenix – which employees often describe as like a village or family. A closer look at the variables of power and distance provide some further insights into a context they describe (ethnographic interviews) as 'special'.

7.3.2 Distance

In workplace relationships distance is usually referred to using the term solidarity. The variable has a number of other labels including social distance, closeness, familiarity, and relational intimacy (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 35). It is usually expressed within sociolinguistics on a horizontal scale ranging from intimate, or high, solidarity, to distant, or low, solidarity (Holmes, 2001). It is possible to have an ongoing relationship in terms of regular collaboration within the workplace, which is at the same time distant, in the sense that although people may have to work together on a daily basis, this does not necessarily result in close friendship. A number of pragmatic studies, as cited in Spencer-Oatey (1996, p. 36), identify a list of possible

strands involved in what it means to have a relationship that could be described as 'close' or 'distant'. These are given in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 Components of close or distant relationships

Component	**Identified by**
Social similarity or difference	e.g. Brown and Gilman (1960, 1972)
Frequency of contact	e.g. Slugoski and Turnbull (1988)
Length of acquaintance	e.g. Slugoski and Turnbull, (1988)
Familiarity or how well people know each other	e.g. Holmes (1990)
Sense of like-mindedness	e.g. Brown and Gilman (1960.1972)
Positive/negative affect	e.g. Baxter, 1984

Source: Adapted from Spencer-Oatey (2008, p. 36)

The discussion that follows shows how a number of these components combine to maintain a generally low distance and associative expressiveness across the various dimensions of the organization.

7.4 Climate of Care

The five dimensions of Von Krogh et al's 'climate of care' occur throughout the data in chapters four, five, and six. First, handing over all aspects the company meeting to employees involves *trust* by the MD. This trust is justified and reciprocated in the way the meeting is managed. Although the template agenda prioritizes the social and personal (in keeping with the Phoenix philosophy) it also ensures that all the organization's component communities contribute to the

transactional business of the meeting every week. And second, *courage* is shown in publically talking about mistakes made or almost made as required for the 'Blues Award', which involves blunders, things that could have been done better, or narrowly avoided disasters. Third, the self disclosure involved in bringing these into the open is justified by *lenience in judgment*, as well as bringing them into a forum where advice and support is likely to be offered from many perspectives. By presenting these, however briefly, in the relatively public form of the company meeting, they can serve as a caution, helping others to avoid similar 'blues'. Fourth, managers show *active empathy* in introducing new performance appraisal procedures, by explicitly acknowledging likely feelings and reactions of employees and taking action to accommodate them. And fifth, *access to help* is built into project contracts, ensuring that all project team members are able to spend one day each week at Phoenix (rather than on site in the client company), so that they can 'bowl up and ask anybody for help'. These and other instances show the presence of a general attention to care in the organization. This reflects an underlying ethos characterized by positive affect, which is evidenced in communication style.

7.4.1 Communication style and interactional ethos

Communication style relates to a generalized style of interaction arising from patterns of choices made by participants in interaction (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). These are often expressed as dichotomies, or continua. In linguistics for instance, this is often referred to as directness-indirectness (House, 2003 as cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 28). However, Spencer-Oatey (2008) notes three different perspectives on directness-indirectness: explicit-implicitness (the linguistic perspective); the extent to which a message is clear or ambiguous (the pragmatic inferential perspective); and

bluntness – the extent to which a message is softened or mitigated (the interpersonal perspective), and she suggests that when considering communication style, researchers should take account of the three perspectives. Viewed in this way, the informal and rather direct Phoenix style of communication could be described as generally linguistically explicit; pragmatically clear; and interpersonally somewhat blunt. These features are also characteristic of interaction between family members and close friends, whose relationship is sufficiently developed that directness and bluntness are not necessarily interpreted as threats to rapport.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) approaches communication style using the notion of associative expressiveness-restraint adapted from Scollon and Scollon (1995). This is a useful perspective as it encompasses the many nuances of an interaction which combine to develop an overall character that could be described on a continuum between as associative expressiveness and restraint. Viewed in this way, despite its direct and rather blunt character, the overall communication style at Phoenix is characterized more strongly by associative expressiveness. This can be seen in both spoken and e-mail interaction. Table 7.2 below lists a range of linguistic strategies of associative expressiveness and restraint, and the discussion that follows identifies a number of these in the Phoenix interactions, using illustrative examples from chapters four five and six.

Table 7.2 Linguistic strategies of associative expressiveness - restraint

	Linguistic strategies of associative expressiveness	**Linguistic strategies of associative restraint**
1	Notice or attend to hearer	Make minimal assumptions about hearer's wants
2	Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with hearer)	Give hearer the option not to deviate
3	Claim in-group membership with hearer	Minimize threat
4	Claim common point of view, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, empathy	Apologize
5	Be optimistic	Be pessimistic
6	Indicate speaker knows hearer's wants and is taking them into account	Dissociate speaker/ hearer from the discourse
7	Assume or assert reciprocity	State a general rule
8	Use given names and nicknames	Use family name and titles
9	Be voluble	Be taciturn
10	Use hearer's language or dialect	Use own language or dialect

Source: Derived from Spencer-Oatey (2008, p. 29)

In the 'what's new and cool' item of weekly meeting for instance, the chair and the audience show an *exaggerated interest* in Nick's purchase of a new house with their approving 'woo hoos'. The party gossip email has an optimistic tone, including comments on the likelihood of additional work from satisfied clients. Mike's noticing Erin's situation of potential embarrassment in her e-mail question 'who is that sitting at Peter's desk?' and his action in going to talk with her face-to-face, is a rather unusual instance of *noticing and attending* to the enquirer.

In giving directives or making announcements, managers generally balance associative restraint with expressiveness. For instance, the MD's e-mail asking

people to focus on chargeable time *claims a common point of view by* empathizing with employees' desire to work on their favourite projects. Then he softens his directive to focus on chargeable time, by saying '*for now* the focus must go back onto chargeable time', thus implying that there may be a later time when people can again focus on their favourite projects. In a sense then, the MD bookends his directive with associative expressiveness. Similarly, when David announces the new policy and processes around performance reviews (by email), although he dissociates himself from readers by *stating the policy as a general rule*, 'the procedure this time around will be....', he too balances or offsets the distancing effect of this restraint by *seeking empathy* from readers with his rhetorical question '45 reviews in a week? -- not easy'. Associative expressiveness is also shown in the use of short forms of *given names and nicknames* in the e-mails advising absence or lateness etc, and in the *voluble* e-mail exchange – termed 'baby naming spamfest' - around the naming of one employee's new baby.

The informality of the Phoenix communication style, with its lack of preliminaries, its linguistic directness and its associative expressiveness, supports claims by management and employees of a friendly village or family culture. Collegial relations are generally positive, solid and well-established, and colleagues are sufficiently comfortable with each other that they adopt discourse strategies which are at the same time linguistically quite explicit, pragmatically unambiguous and interpersonally rather blunt. Such strategies are typical of close colleagues, friends or family members. Although this is the case in the organization as a whole and within the communities of practice, participation in the MCKs challenges collegial relations. Because the group has to establish a working relationship, members have to draw on

their relationship building resources, including previous experience of working with others. This relationship needs to be formed quickly and to be sufficiently robust to ensure effective collaboration across specialist boundaries. Additionally it involves at least two dimensions. First team members must collaborate with each other effectively, and second, despite their status they are subject to the leadership of the project leader. In this sense, MCKs such as the project team, are a test of members' relational management skills and experience**.**

Linguistic and ethnographic evidence, client feedback, and an ever increasing demand for Phoenix services, show that members of Phoenix project teams are consistently able to build and maintain effective working relationships. These relationships are underpinned by organizational structures and practices that facilitate, encourage and support participation on many levels. Furthermore access to this participation is not only available to, but is expected of, all organizational members.

7.4.2 Relational practice and interactional ethos

Clearly Phoenix people have developed an ability to work effectively together both within and across all levels of the organization. It is a workplace characterized by an informal communication style and generally positive affect. Spencer-Oatey (2008) notes that affect is considered by some researchers to be a different variable or at least a different aspect of the variable of distance. Von Krogh et al also distinguish affect by identifying a climate of care (comprising the five components of mutual trust, active empathy, access to help, lenience in judgment, and courage), as a significant feature of a knowledge enabling organizational context. Evidence of

these five dimensions of care appear intermittently throughout the analyses in chapters four, five and six. Each on its own may appear unimportant, but together they constitute an ongoing thread of care that is woven throughout all levels of the organization. Care is often overlooked because of its often subtle and background nature. The analyses in this thesis support the findings of emerging streams of research in both linguistics and organizational studies, that recognize relational practice as a significant factor in effective workplace relations.

The ability to work effectively together is the specific focus of Fletcher's (1999) concept of relational practice. It extends Spencer Oatey's (2008) more general notion of communicative expressiveness-restraint by encompassing participants' understanding of the emotional context in which work gets done, and since both management and employees at Phoenix consistently show consideration for the feelings of others in day-to-day interaction, it is a useful way to discuss this aspect of the findings of this thesis. As just mentioned, Spencer-Oatey (2008) draws attention to the suggestion by several researchers (Slugoski & Turnbull, 1988; Brown & Gilman, 1989), that distance and affect should be considered as separate parameters. She also notes that there is little consensus as to how the variable should be split. In this discussion I am not splitting it as such, but rather I draw on Fletcher's concept of relational practice to encompass a facet of interaction that has emerged as significant in this workplace.

Relational practice was introduced at the end of chapter 2. To briefly recapitulate, it facilitates the achievement of workplace objectives by oiling the wheels of interpersonal relationships (Holmes, 2006). The common sense notion of RP is 'any

aspect of workplace behaviour oriented to an individual's relationships with work colleagues' (Holmes, 2006: 75). Fletcher (1999, as cited in Holmes, 2006: 75) distinguishes three components:

1) RP is oriented to the face needs of others
2) RP serves to advance the primary objectives of the workplace
3) RP practices at work are regarded as dispensable, irrelevant, or peripheral

Four distinct but often concurrently occurring themes have been identified in RP. Holmes (2006: 76-92) discusses three of these. *Preserving*, which primarily advances workplace (e.g. project) objectives, may include, for instance, facilitation and mitigation. These include, for instance, anticipating problems and taking steps to manage potentially conflictual situations, or using unnoticed behaviours to protect or enhance the progress of the project. *Mutual empowering* assists in furthering workplace goals through, for instance, making connections, effective networking for the benefit of others, and empathetic teaching. *Creating team* also involves behaviours and activities which foster group life and the development of team spirit. This includes discursive strategies such as: anecdotes, small-talk, humour, social talk and giving approval. Creating team advances workplace objectives by for instance: networking to creating new workplace relationships, maintaining solidarity between team members, listening and responding empathically to others.

Like the concept of care in organizations, RP is culturally indexed as feminine behaviour, and like Von Krogh et al's dimensions of care, RP occurs as a consistent thread throughout the discourse of Phoenix, a predominantly male organization. In

chapter 4 for instance, Mike's quietly taking the trouble to go over to Erin and answer her question personally, attended to the face sensitivities of both Erin and the researcher. It served to advance the primary objectives of the workplace, by nurturing good relationships and pre-empting a flurry of follow-up broadcast e-mails that could have imposed on everybody's time. Creating team typically includes unobserved, behind-the-scenes behaviours, and although Mike's action may not have been unobserved, it was off-line and interactionally outside, or peripheral to the broadcast e-mail exchange that potentially involved everybody in the organization. In this sense it could be seen as creating team at the level of the organization as a whole, as all were party to the e-mail.

The ‘party gossip’ e-mail, also in chapter 4, comprises what could be regarded as snippets of trivia, in particular, those relating to individuals’ travel movements or relationship status. It contributes to workplace objectives by *mutual empowering* in two related ways. First it reflects the opportunity for networking inherent in the social evenings with clients. Second, via the text trajectory of a collaboratively constructed broadcast e-mail, various elements of that networking are shared organization wide, thus nurturing connections and supporting the organization’s ‘village’ life.

Holmes (2006) identifies a number of implicit ways of empowering others, such as allocating responsibilities which will stretch others, and modeling appropriate ways of behaving. A notable feature of the Phoenix environment is the number of implicit ways in which management empowers employees. The frequency and variety of social activities provide multiple opportunities for networking; and the weekly

meetings challenge both employees and management to develop or refine key organizational skills in public presentation and meeting management. Phoenix people are highly regarded for their ability to socialize, to effectively manage any aspect of a wide range of events, and to establish and maintain effective client relationships.

Within the CofP (in chapter 5), James and Mitchell create team by each investing in low-key but consistent attention to maintaining their good relations within the community: James, through his patience and forbearance as he waits for Mitchell to complete his current task; and Mitchell, by maintaining communication with off-topic small talk, and by listening to James' concerns. By contrast, creating team in the MCK (project team), is accomplished not so much in the background, but on different levels. Team members' immediate support of Mitchell, despite his lateness and his status as peripheral member, firmly signals their solidarity with him as one of the team. At the same time, their needling of the project leader through collaborative and contestive humour suggests that he should leave *them* to deal with the latecomer, which in fact they do by just as quickly showing similar support for the project leader. Despite Phillip's explicit reprimand, 'glad you could show up', they express solidarity with Philip's leadership position, challenging Mitchell with 'what's all this garbage about having to save'?

This is an example of *preserving*, a relational practice primarily aimed at advancing the objectives of the project. Participants rapidly and skilfully create team, by taking steps to defuse the potentially conflictual situation arising from Mitchell's lateness, which threatens Phillip's obligation to begin the meeting on time. Despite their stylistic directness, team members nonetheless achieve indirectness in the discursive

domain, through topic choice and management. They use collaboratively constructed off-topic humour and small talk, to both minimize the tension and draw Philip into the conversation while they wait for the latecomer. In this way they are able to simultaneously attend to Philip's face sensitivities, whilst supporting Mitchell in his absence, and then shift their support to Philip once Mitchell has arrived.

The consistent attention to relational practice at Phoenix, together with the informal and direct communication style characterized by a generally associative expressiveness, combine to create an interactional ethos characterized by positive effect, low distance and care.

7.5 Implications of the study

This thesis has explored the knowledge enabling context of Phoenix, focusing on two key aspects identified by Von Krogh et al (2000): structures that foster solid collegial relations; and a climate of care. Taking account of both spatial and social aspects of structure enabled the identification of some distinctive connections between the two at Phoenix. The combination of the open plan office and computer network supports collegial relations by providing a setting in which the richness of visual and auditory cues available through physical co-presence in an open plan space is combined with the affordances of the CMC medium. This provides an interactional context in which people can both see and interact with others at a distance. The spatial configuration of the office acts as a vector of interaction in Sailer and Penn's (2007) sense, facilitating movement and serendipitous encounter.

Employees frequently ‘talk’ to each other via e-mail, and while this is not unusual, the Phoenix context is distinctive in that this talk is done by simply using ‘Phoenix’ as the addressee; thus they ‘talk’ to all employees and managers at once by broadcast e-mail. Managers, too, use e-mail to give directives and announce policy. This is a context in which people leverage the affordances of both face-to-face and CMC mediums to manage interpersonal rapport in an office configured as one large open space. A good example is Mike’s simultaneously receiving an e-mail question and noticing the enquiring gaze of the sender, followed by action that discreetly attends to the sender’s face sensitivities. Similarly the utility of the short diary entry messages arises from the increased awareness of sociality rights and obligations created by the high visibility arising from the office configuration. Here too the affordances of the medium are maximised in attending to face sensitivities. This begins to blur the boundary between spoken and written interaction, between face-to-face and CMC modes in some organizational settings. The rapid emergence and widespread adoption of a range of new technologies in many workplaces is likely to blur this boundary further, a point which deserves further comment.

Herring (2007), notes that ‘Biber (1988) has challenged the validity of the spoken/written language distinction, proposing that discourse types be situated instead along multiple continua’ (p. 4). Whilst this may help researchers to deal with the current level of multimodality in workplace research, the complexity arising from the sheer number and variety of emerging technologies may soon render such an approach unworkable. I suggest that the interactional goals of the activity, and the purpose of the immediate community in which it takes place, are relatively more important than simply removing the distinction between spoken and written modes.

The ways in which participants manage the instrumentality of the interaction are relevant, but only in terms of the context in which it takes place.

E-mail interaction is characterized by the typically direct Phoenix communication style, and writers use a range of meta-discursive interactional resources to engage with readers, to project their identity into the message, and to manage interpersonal rapport in a manner that conveys a generally positive affect.

The study demonstrates that a climate of care, which may sound unfashionable in a highly competitive environment, is not only achievable but a source of potential competitive advantage through its support of collegial relations. The management of collegial relations in the organization studied shows not only a generally positive affect but the foregrounding of relational practice. Relational practice is culturally indexed as feminine. Since Phoenix is a predominantly male organization, further research is needed to provide further insights into the combination of relational practice and conventionally indexed masculine communication style.

Despite considerable status differences between senior managers and employees, the social milieu is characterized by both low distance and relatively high affect. At Phoenix this appears to be influenced by the frequency and variety of opportunities for socializing, and to strongly support collegial relations developed in the organization's communities and activities. Further linguistic research on the relationship between socialization and collegial relations could potentially benefit both linguistic and organizational research.

The findings of this thesis have implications for research in the fields of applied linguistics and management. Within applied linguistics their relevance is to the field of workplace communication. The relevance of Blommaert's (2005) notion of *forgotten contexts* can be seen in two particular instances. The first is the *text trajectory* that transforms snippets of social tacit knowledge, shared face-to-face at a social gathering, into social explicit knowledge shared amongst the whole organization via the medium of email. In the process the knowledge changes from transient easily lost fragments, to a small but valuable and jointly constructed package of knowledge about clients which is meaningful as a social resource in the longer term. This is enabled by the quality of persistence of the email medium, but also and more importantly it is activated through a willingness to share the fragments in the first place. This appears to be strongly influenced by regular and frequent interaction at a social level such that knowledge sharing has become almost second nature and deeply ingrained as a cultural value within the organization. The pervasive use of email and of other technologies in the workplace opens a fascinating area of research into text trajectories accomplished by language use across multiple modalities. This is potentially productive of further insights into various areas from knowledge enabling organizational contexts to the complexities of twenty-first century workplace literacy.

Email has become an established area of research in workplace communication. It was for some time considered not only as a lean medium, but one which was principally used for conveying information. The analyses in this thesis, however, show it being used for a wide range of purposes including: giving directives; making social invitations; making requests; explaining changed organizational processes;

announcing personal news; collaborative construction of humour; and interestingly – as an in-house public diary.

A second instance of Blommaert's (2005) forgotten contexts is *data histories.* The most significant instance of this is the face-to-face, real time, collaborative construction of a weekly snapshot of the organization. Through its frequency and regularity over time, the weekly meeting builds into a shared oral history of the organization, a living data history which becomes part of the tacit knowledge base of the individuals who have participated in its creation. By virtue of the competencies developed, and their experience of the interactive processes involved in sharing both transactional and personal knowledge, individuals can refine the relational skills that contribute to knowledge sharing. These are transportable skills that can easily be drawn on in other contexts.

The organization as a whole benefits by having a deep pool of social knowledge rich in the relational skills required for effective knowledge sharing. This deep pool is more than the sum of their individual social knowledge, since it extends to their potential for interaction in a range of in-house and public social contexts. This is consistent with Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) claim that knowledge is more than simply the sum of its parts. However it is not the weekly meeting in isolation that achieves such a social resource, but rather this in combination with a wide variety of social occasions and with the strong expectation of participation that is a cultural value at Phoenix. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) as well as Von Krogh et al (2000) both emphasize the importance of externalization as a crucial (and relatively unexplored) phase of knowledge creation. Applied linguistic research is a potentially

rich source of further insights into various kinds of social interaction in the workplace, and its role in the overall interactional context of the various kinds of organizations.

The findings of this thesis also suggest the potential value of further research into the role of spatiality in the development of organizational contexts for interaction, especially in relation to the role of spatial configuration as an influence on perceptual space, as well as the possible role of social activities in connecting perceptual spaces.

Implications for management research

The findings of this thesis support Von Krogh et al's (2000) claim that a climate of care is an important component of a knowledge enabling organizational context. They also suggest that such a context is not what might be termed a soft option, but rather a challenging and many-faceted approach to context that focuses on social and relational aspects of organization. Areas that could be explored using qualitative approaches and/or a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches such as those available in applied linguistics include for instance: relationship or connections between socialization and competitive advantage; dimensions of care in the day-to-day enactment of management; and the relational competencies of effective leaders.

Implications for management practice

Organizations often spend vast sums on employee training. One useful finding of this thesis is that training can be productively integrated with social and transactional activities in the day-to-day operation of the organization. An activity such as a

weekly meeting can provide employees and management with regular and frequent opportunities (and obligations) to develop and refine a range of essential competencies, including public speaking, event organization, meeting management, communication across hierarchical levels, and experience in managing shifts in power relations. This not only has potential to increase effectiveness of funding allocations, but more importantly to develop a rich pool of social knowledge which can be applied to knowledge sharing and which can be expected to impact positively on the knowledge creation resources of the organization.

7.6 Thesis Overview

Chapters 1 to 3 formed the foundation for the exploration of the knowledge enabling context at Phoenix by locating my research within a wider context of workplace communication, and by describing the methodology and theoretical framework.

The main research question (i.e. how is the knowledge enabling context instantiated in the discourse of the organization (Phoenix)), was addressed through two sub questions: 1 - How is collegiality instantiated in the organization, and 2 - How is a climate of care connected in the organization. To address these questions, chapters 4 -6 focused on the management of interpersonal rapport with particular attention to participant relations of power and distance. The analysis in chapter 4 identified the influence of spatial configuration, physical co-presence, and network connectivity on the management of interpersonal rapport and in particular the awareness of and attention to sociality rights and obligations. Chapter 5 explored interactions in two different kinds of organizational communities. The analyses showed the community of practice to be characterized by a rapport maintenance orientation, aimed at

upholding the solid and established collegial relationship between community members. In contrast, a different kind of community - similar to the micro-community of knowledge, described by Von Krogh et al (2000) - demands rather than simply fosters collegial relations. Participant's exhibited considerable skill in building team and establishing an esprit de corps. The analysis in chapter 6 focused on interactions within the weekly meeting, an organization wide activity that supports collegial relations throughout the organization, and supports the development of relational skills that participants draw on when interacting across disciplinary boundaries. Chapter 6 also identified the weekly meeting as a context in which management and employees contribute to a collaboratively constructed overview of the organization each week. This not only supports the collegial relations through information sharing and interaction across hierarchical levels and practice specialties on a weekly basis, but over time contributes to what could be termed an oral history of the organization.

Finally throughout this thesis the goal has been to explore the micro-level instantiation of an organizational knowledge enabling organizational context, previously described in only macro-level terms. As illustrated, Nishida's notion of the *basho* as a 'space' that combines physical, mental and virtual elements, adequately describes the knowledge enabling context in the example organization. Within it collegiality is fostered through: a spatial configuration that facilitates interaction, a hierarchy characterized by spatial and social integration with employees, and social structures that both cultivate learning and challenge expertise. This is supported by the socialization processes and the interactional ethos which draw together the elements of the knowledge enabling context into an effective and

perhaps not easily imitable whole, since relationships are unique to the particular combination of individuals involved, interacting on a day to day basis in the particular combination of various elements of structure that comprise the organization.

The analyses presented here highlight the importance of a micro level analysis developing our understanding of the organizational knowledge enabling context, and demonstrates the need for methods of discourse analysis that accommodate simultaneous use of multiple modalities (such as e-mail, face-to-face interaction and action), and multiple levels of context.

In closing I refer to Von Krogh et al (2000) who state that a knowledge enabling organizational context is one in which the various sub-contexts of the organization - the virtual spaces of the intranet; the physical spaces; and the mental spaces - are linked, creating an overall knowledge enabling context which they call 'the basho'. At Phoenix the connections between these various contexts are made through the management of interpersonal rapport in a culture which places a high value on socialization, knowledge sharing, and social rights and obligations including not just participation but engagement at many levels of the organization. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) observed that 'organizational culture orients the mindset and action of every employee' and at Phoenix the cultural value placed on information sharing in both social and transactional contexts is reflected in all aspects of organizational discourse both through language (in terms of talk and text), and in activities that both foster and demand ongoing development of relational competencies. Interaction

at Phoenix is also permeated by a climate of care which is nonetheless embedded within a highly competitive and extremely demanding organizational environment.

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http://www.ewenger.com *Communities of practice.* What are communities of practice?

Appendix 1

Consent form

Victoria University of Wellington
Consent to Participate in Research

Name:

I understand that I have been invited to take part in a study of the place of email interactions in my firm's incidental communication processes. The outcome will assist the researcher - Jeannie Fletcher, in her quest to research organizational communication within and across the various departments of a selected number of companies operating within New Zealand.

The researcher has provided me with clear information about the study. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any stage.

Additionally I have been assured that my rights as a participant will be respected.

- ☐ I agree to participate in this study and I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the research supervisor.
- ☐ I understand that the results of the study may be published and that such publications will not identify me nor my opinions.
- ☐ It is my right to withdraw from the study at any time before analysis is complete.
- ☐ If interviewed, I agree to the interview being audio taped and have the right to have the tape turned off at any stage during the interview. I understand these tapes will be stored securely and that the tapes will be destroyed when the research is complete.
- ☐ It is my right to request deletion of material I have provided. If I do so, this material will be returned to me forthwith, and will not be reproduced in any way.
- ☐ I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed. Yes No
  (Delete the one that does not apply)
- ☐ I agree to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signed: Date

Appendix 2

LWP Transcription conventions

YES	Capitals indicate emphatic stress
[laughs] : :	Paralinguistic features in square brackets, colons indicate start/finish
+	Pause of up to one second
(3)	Pause of specified number of seconds
... //.....\ ...	Simultaneous speech
... /.....\\ ...	
(hello)	Transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance
?	Rising or question intonation
-	Incomplete or cut-off utterance
. …	Section of transcript omitted
XM/XF	Unidentified Male/Female
=	Turns which carry on from the previous one without pause

All names used in examples are pseudonyms.

Appendix 3
Changing spaces – altering spatial configuration to accommodate interactional purpose

The three Phoenix offices differently configured for each interactional purpose

i) As three separate offices for use on a day-to-day basis using a booking system

ii) As one office (available for small meetings) plus 'The Board Room'

iii) As 'The Big Room' used for the weekly meeting, other meetings involving the whole company, and functions where clients are invited

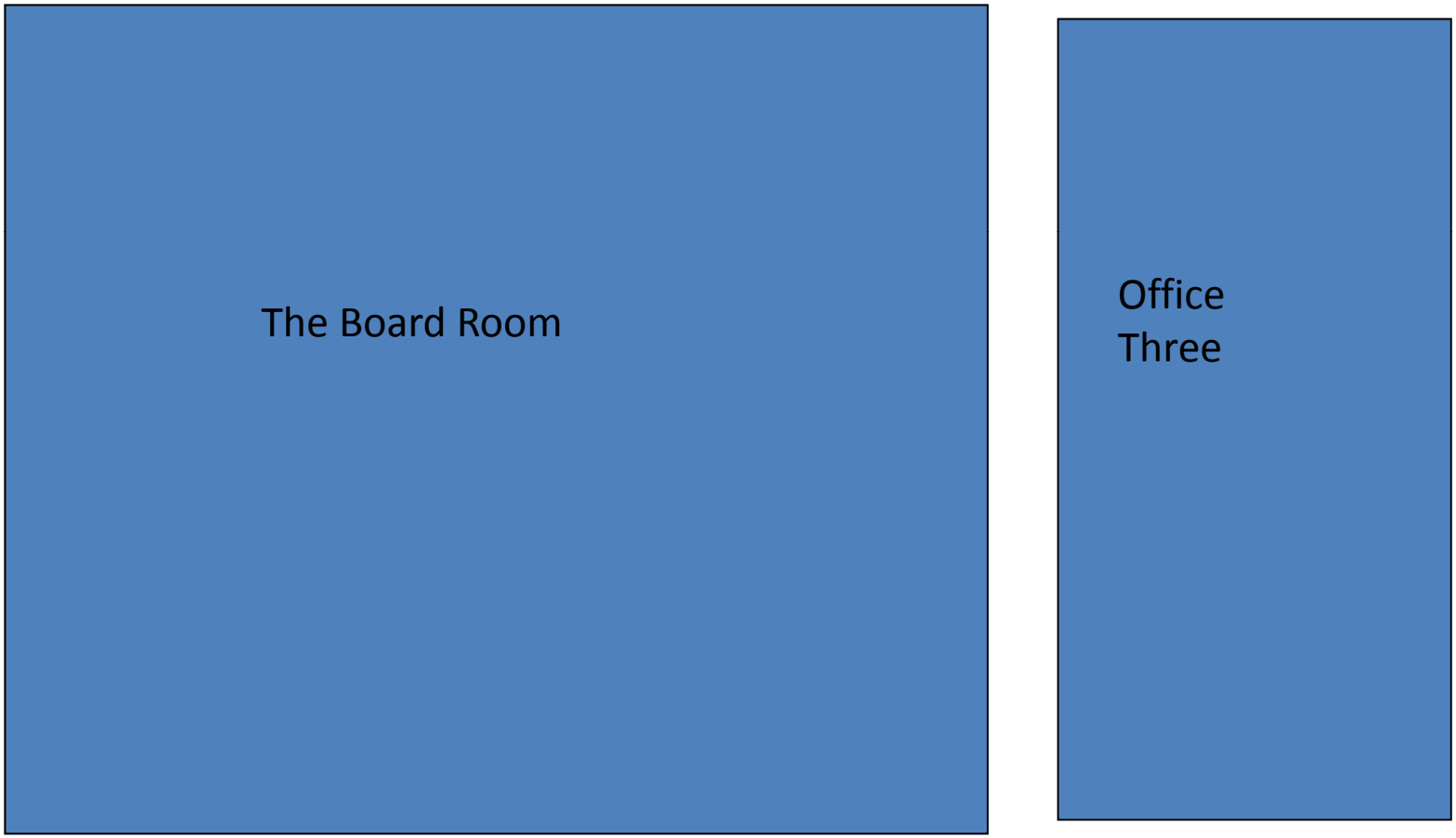
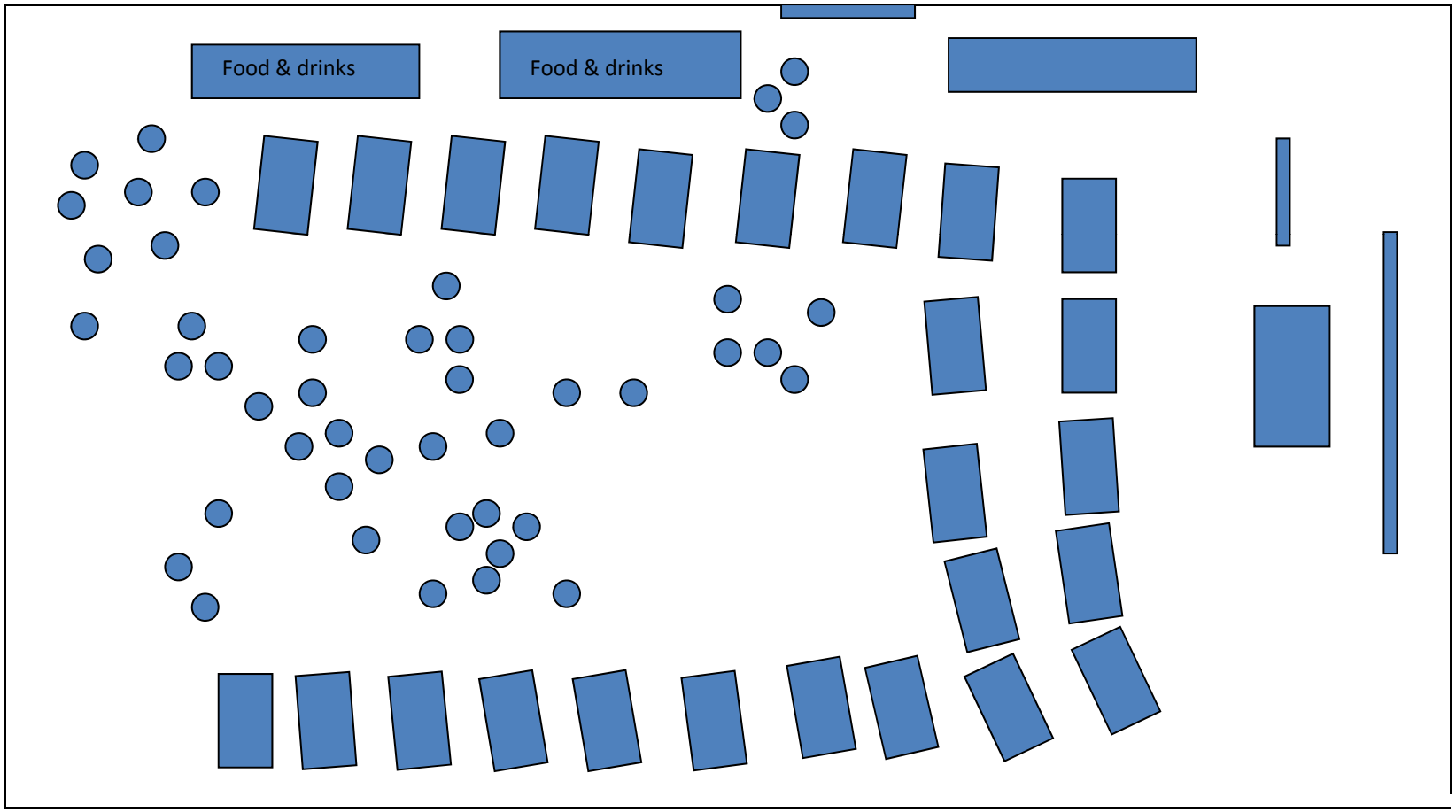
The Offices

Office One

Office Two

Office Three

The Board Room



‘The Big Room’