Professional Identity within a Workplace Community of Practice

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Introduction

Communities of Practice (henceforth CofP) was developed by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave (1991) as a framework through which to consider group and individual identity, focusing specifically on learning and development through membership of and participation in groups. This framework has been adopted and modified by discourse analysts, often as a means by which to analyse gender identity. This study focuses on professional identity within a workplace CofP. The transcript comes from the Maintenance Weekly Review meeting between Pete and three managers of a medium-sized manufacturing company in the East Midlands. Pete, Maintenance Project Engineer, will shortly be receiving a promotion to Maintenance Manager. This essay concentrates on Pete's brokering (Wenger 1998) between two distinct CofPs, that of the maintenance staff who work on the shop floor and the managerial, as a method of affiliating himself to the managerial CofP. Pete's professional identity in transition will also be considered as well as the effects of his multimembership within the institution and how he orients to individual CofPs, thereby demonstrating the complexities surrounding identity negotiation and formation in the professional workplace before promotion.

Literature Review

The Communities of Practice framework was developed by Wenger and Lave (1991) as a means of describing and categorising groups and their members. According to Wenger (1998), for a group to constitute a CofP it must demonstrate *mutual engagement* in a certain task, a *joint enterprise* to achieve some common goal and a *shared repertoire* between members to express meaning (73-83), summarised by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1998) as 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor' (490). Wenger (1998) categorises members as marginal, peripheral and core depending on their allowed or possible level of participation or engagement within a CofP, emphasising particularly how newcomers shift from being marginalised, inexperienced members to eventually achieving full participation through learning within their new CofP (164-167). Peripheral members, or those able to participate to a certain, although not by Wenger explicitly defined, level within a CofP are viewed by Wenger and Lave (1991) as having a potentially 'empowering position' (36) whereby the member can progress through learning and development towards core membership and therefore able and allowed to participate fully.

Linked to his consideration of differing levels of participation, Wenger (1998) examines the effects of multimembership of various CofPs, drawing upon his own observations of a claims supervisor who must operate in both the workers' and managers' CofP and feels a marginalised member of both (168). Drawing on work already done by Eckert, he adapts her concept of brokering to apply to a more generalised, hypothetical CofP,

whereas Eckert had used it in relation to playground cliques (cited in Wenger 1998: 109). Like peripheral members of a CofP, brokers, those that operate across the boundaries of multiple CofPs, can also be in a powerful position to affect change and bring different experiences and knowledge to a CofP, which Wenger (1998) equates to engaging in the '"import-export"' (109) of information and capabilities.

However, a drawback to adopting Wenger's, or Wenger and Lave's, concept of Communities of Practice is that it was not developed as a linguistic framework. Linguists who have adopted a CofP framework, such as Mullany (2006, 2007 and 2010), Moore (2006 and 2010) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992 and 1998) have done so with caution since modifications must be made for Wenger's framework to be applicable to the study of genuine, recorded speech and not just anecdotes, general observation and analogies. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1998) went so far as to not only offer their own definition of a CofP but to also rename Wenger's shared repertoire as a 'linguistic repertoire' (492), restricting its definition from the vague and lengthy list of features offered by Wenger (1998), including 'routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts' (83) and locating it firmly in the field of Discourse Analysis. A CofP analysis of group interaction is especially useful when considering group as well as individual identity, differing from a collaborative floor (as used, for example by Edelsky (1981), in her attempt at modifying the transcription system for group interaction) in that, firstly, it provides fixed, underlying criteria for what must actually form the foundation of the group (Wenger's three required elements of a CofP) and, secondly, as a means of drawing attention to asymmetries within interactions rather than the harmony implied by collaboration.

A CofP approach has frequently been used to examine identity, and particularly gender identity, focusing especially on how individual members and CofPs perceive their identity as well as how it is oriented to by others. Tajfel (1978) defines identity as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (63), used also by Joseph (2010: 13) and considered in Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 25-6). Although Tajfel's definition is associated with Social Identity Theory, pre-CofP, it aligns with the examination of professional identity in this study since professional identity is here considered as created and oriented to through membership of and participation in workplace CofPs. The term professional identity is used in the same way as by Richards (2006) to indicate that part of an individual's identity that is shaped and brought to bear in an institutional setting, in this case in the workplace.

That identity is subject to change and inherently malleable has been commonly accepted. The suggestion that identity constantly changes as a result of context and experiences and is therefore fundamentally flexible and unable to be solidified into one entirety has been proposed by, for example Widdicombe (1998) with her concept of the '"fragmented self"' (202), which corresponds to Richards' (2006) notion of 'the dynamic process of identity (re)construction' (3) and Drew and Heritage's (1992) proposal of identity as 'transformable at any moment' (21). This is the idea adhered to in this study and Pete's professional identity is shown to be currently in the process of transition.

The difficulties associated with negotiating or reconstructing identity before or after workplace promotion is considered by neither Richards (2006) or Drew and Heritage (1992), all of whom examined the professional identity of groups within institutional settings (although not using Wenger's CofP framework), making further research in this area necessary especially since, to my knowledge, no major research within Discourse Analysis has yet been undertaken to examine professional identity before workplace promotion. Indeed, the attention within identity research appears to centre on 'fixed' identities, whether virtually unchangeable such as gender (for example Mullany 2006, 2007 and 2010) or for the

time being stable, such as doctor/patient relations (particularly Drew and Heritage 1992) and not on the process of identity in transition as is the case in this study.

Method

The extract comes from the Maintenance Weekly Review (MWR) meeting on 16 November 2011 at a medium-sized manufacturing company in the East Midlands, renamed MANU. During this extract, Production Manager, John, Compliance Manager, Henry, and Maintenance Project Engineer, Pete, were present (Extrusions Manager, Malcolm, arrived late and is absent during this particular period). They discuss an upcoming disciplinary hearing as well as other activities relating to maintenance issues. These weekly meetings are oriented around achieving institutional goals through sharing information and experiences from the previous week and agreeing upon tasks for the upcoming week (Wenger's (1998) mutual engagement and joint enterprise). As Drew and Heritage (1992) propose, the interaction is mostly fashioned according to a 'standard 'shape' or order of phases' (43), following the agenda (see Appendix), a common characteristic of institutional interaction and especially business meetings.

This extract was chosen as being particularly revealing in terms of how Pete orients to his professional identity. Evident in this extract are how Pete tries to align himself with the managers through utilising his multimembership of two distinct CofPs, that of the maintenance staff on the shop floor and the management. Pete was told in September 2011 that he would be promoted to Maintenance Manager in January 2012. Since then he has been assuming some managerial duties alongside his role as Maintenance Project Engineer on the shop floor but currently has neither the title nor associated benefits of a managerial role. He has been attending MWRs since starting at the company in 2009, initially supporting the previous Maintenance Manager but, for the past five months, as sole representative of the Maintenance staff and future Manager.

Linguistic Analysis

Extract 1

Prior to this extract, Pete has commenced his report about maintenance actions in the past week. He has just admitted that he hasn't yet updated his figures for downtime this week and so what he has just read out is out-of-date. John interrupts to tell him to update the figures:

80. **John**:   [let's] do that tomorrow befo:re (.) Nick's review on
81. [Friday   ]
82. **Pete**: [Ye:]I used to do it on a Thursday so erm 1.3% the assembly PPMs completed was 71% (1.1)
83. and the reason being is w- erm (.) Paul was off the weekend and left Rupert on his own (0.7) and

84. Rupert was tied up doing (2.6) the: rung saw swagers (.) for the (.) just one (.) you know we

85. boxed them in at the side he was doing that so (.)

86. **John**:   [yep that's all well carry on then]

87. **Henry**:   = that was good action actually

88. **Pete**: so yeah so it's done and keeps Hugh happy but Hugh still says what about the top so

89.**Henry**:   = yep

90. **Pete**: for God's sake but as you say we ought to put Hugh in a box that'd probably (.) solve it

The participants' joint linguistic repertoire is demonstrated through the specialised, technical jargon employed and comprehended by all such as 'assembly PPMs' (l. 82) and 'rung saw swagers' (l. 84) as well as references to their group identity revealed by the third person plural pronoun. Although updating the figures is Pete's responsibility, evidenced by his subsequent turn, 'I used to do it on a Thursday' (l. 82), John orients to it as a joint enterprise ('let's', l. 80) through the use of the third person plural pronoun 'us', viewing it as a matter concerning the whole CofP since it could cause problems with Nick should he find out certain figures are out-dated. Orienting to the error as a joint responsibility also helps John perform what Wenger (1998) calls 'community maintenance' (74), thereby solidifying their group identity and mutual accountability by not reprimanding Pete, which, as his subordinate, he would have the right to do. Since John is aware that Pete will soon become a Manager, it is in his interests to maintain good working relations with him and not threaten their relationship through overt criticism of his actions with an act that could be construed by Pete as face-threatening.

However, John also orients to Pete as his subordinate. As Pete attempts to justify the low rate of completed assembly PPMs, John seizes the floor and interrupts his turn at a non-Transition Relevance Place (l. 86), urging Pete to continue his report. Despite a short pause of less than 0.5 seconds, John cannot be sure that Pete does not intend to continue his turn, especially when pausing after 'so', which can precede a concluding or summarising remark that could require a moment of thought before its utterance and, when considering that the rest of Pete's turn has been hesitant, another pause is not unexpected. John, the most senior member of the CofP, has the authority to control topic change and the order of proceedings (Richards 2006), meaning that he can interrupt other members should he feel that the institutional aim of the meeting is being lost; here, that it is unnecessary for Pete to justify low figures so extensively at the cost of sharing other statistics.

Pete's hesitancy, using lexical hedges and fillers like 'erm' and 'you know' and pausing, show his uneasiness. As the lowest-level member of the CofP, he is currently reporting to his superiors and justifying the low PPMs. Using knowledge from his other CofP, that of the shop floor workers, he provides background information to explain the numbers – one colleague was absent leaving the other overworked. He conducts what Wenger (1998) calls the 'import-export' (109) of information through brokering between the two CofPs. However, in the midst of importing information, he begins to orient to himself as a member of his other CofP when referring to maintenance tasks on the shop floor – 'we boxed them in' (ll. 84-5), placing himself deictically within the shop floor workers' CofP while literally within the managers', demonstrating the malleability of how we orient to our own professional identity when straddling the boundaries between two CofPs.

Although he identifies himself here with the workers rather than the managers with whom he is currently interacting, elsewhere in the transcript he orients himself with the managers, such as l. 105 'their action for that was the feed rollers they adjusted the drive belts'. Here he clearly distinguishes between himself and the rest of the maintenance staff – a them and us divide, which is also present when John speaks about Thomas and the union, 'we hear what they've got to offer' (l. 18) to create group solidarity against those threatening it from the outside. Pete's mixed use of personal pronouns to refer to himself as a member of two CofPs demonstrate his peripherality of both, straddling two CofPs, identifying partly with both and fully with neither, showing how his professional identity is shifting as a result of the upcoming promotion and attempts at aligning himself with the management.

Shared laughter and humour is also 'an important in-group vs out-group boundary marker' (Holmes 2000: 159). On l. 88 Pete mentions a troublesome colleague, concluding with an exasperated joke. Again, he uses person deixis, this time to involve Henry, drawing

upon their shared knowledge and experience (l. 90, 'as you say') before offering a light-hearted solution to stifling Hugh's criticism (l. 90, 'put Hugh in a box'), parodying the conventional task negotiation and problem-solving aims of the MWR. Pete brings his problem to the level of the CofP, suggesting that 'we' put Hugh in a box, echoing John's earlier implication of their mutual accountability and joint enterprise within the CofP. Pete demonstrates how his troubles become those of the CofP which they should solve together, simultaneously orienting to their group identity within this specific CofP as against non-members like Hugh.

However, his witticism is not received with laughter; it is ignored and fails to elicit a response. This also happens in the first few minutes of the transcript:

Extract 2
Pete introduces the topic of Thomas Robertson's driving ban, initiating a conversation about the upcoming disciplinary hearing:

1. **Henry**: ...two people every week from now until the end of week 50 when Greg leaves

2. **Pete**: you banned Thomas Robertson

3. **Henry**: I've sent an email to Sarah today (1.3) with regard to Thomas Robertson (.) the decision

4. ultimately is going to be hers but I've recommended that we take him [off forklift truck]

5. **Pete**:   [((laughter))   ]

6. **Henry**: [after discussing it with Barney]

7. **Pete**: [((laughter))   ]

Pete states bluntly, 'you banned Thomas Robertson' (l. 2), over-emphasising and -embellishing the situation to create shared humour; Henry has in fact just recommended that Robertson be banned from driving. Pete begins, and continues, to laugh in contrast to the professional way in which the managers talk about the situation. Godwin (1984) argues that 'laugh tokens are not simply comments by the speaker on the talk being produced but rather…may constitute invitations to laugh' (227). Laughter can therefore be viewed as an adjacency pair, similar to invitation/response, which in this case fails. Perhaps because he spends more time on the shop floor and has come into contact with Thomas as a member of the maintenance staff CofP as Maintenance Project Engineer rather than Maintenance Manager, Pete can draw upon his multimembership – he can orient towards Thomas as a fellow worker on the factory floor rather than as his subordinate – but use it as an attempt to 'create/maintain solidarity and collegiality' (Mullany 2007: 89) with the managers. Should the others have joined in the laughter, it would have created Holmes' (2000) 'in-group' (159), opposed to Thomas, an outsider and object of humour, thereby helping Pete solidify his equal membership of this CofP.

What Mullany defines as the refusal to acknowledge that a joke or similar has occurred (2006: 87), or failed humour, is discounted by Holmes (2000) and Richards (2006) from their examinations of workplace humour. Here, it is potentially initially unclear that Pete intended to be humorous. Henry certainly doesn't orient to Pete's utterance on l.2 as being amusing. Instead, he responds as though to a request for more information or to clarify that Thomas isn't actually banned. Pete begins to laugh, interrupting and overlapping Henry's and subsequent turns, implying that preventing Thomas from driving is amusing and encouraging the others to view it the same way. That the disciplinary hearing, union

involvement and workplace accidents are serious subjects means that Henry and John have a vested interest in discussing the matter together seriously as potentially forming the basis for any future consultations they have with the union and Thomas and provides a reason for not acknowledging Pete's attempts at trivialising the situation.

Interference from the shop floor CofP could be a factor since such banter (l. 2, 'You banned Thomas Robertson' and l. 90, 'put Hugh in a box') could be a feature of community maintenance and solidarity on the more informal shop floor but further research would have to be done within the company to prove this. Brokering between these two CofPs in this way demands multiple identities, that of Project Engineer and future Manager, but, in this extract, Pete appears to have a blending of the two rather than the distinct parts suggested by Widdicombe's (1998) 'fragmented self' (202). Pete's goals within the MWR are a blend of social, professional and long-term; he uses humour and other strategies as a means of encouraging group solidarity and gaining acceptance as a future manager rather than the short-term, institutional aims of the managers.

Extract 3

33. **John**: and even after his last disciplinary (.) he still continued to have accidents so

(2.3)

34. **Pete**: yeah (1.2) and he drives as well (xxxxxxx)

35. **Henry**: yeah well I've made that I've made that point in my email to Alex erm I just wanted to
36. make sure that I wasn't setting a precedent that there wasn't anybody <u>worse</u> than Thomas still
37. driving forklifts I'm assured by <u>Greg</u> that there isn't

38. **Pete**: yeah

Contrary to Extract 1 and the second half of the transcript where Pete participates fully in the interaction, informing and collaborating with other members, his participation in the early stages of the interaction is limited. Pete's position within the CofP becomes increasingly marginalised as John, who controls the floor, tells an extended narrative of his involvement in Thomas's case through a multi-utterance turn (Goodwin 1984: 226). Indeed, from ll. 1-70 Pete makes only eight verbal contributions and from ll. 42-60 neither initiates nor responds to a turn and is completely silent. As Pete isn't yet officially a manager, he cannot contribute to the conversation since he has neither the authority nor knowledge to inform the others like John nor, as a fellow manager, the option of showing his solidarity and vested interest like Henry; Pete becomes marginalised as a result of his lack of knowledge and authority as a non-manager.

Pete does manage to contribute to the interaction, albeit briefly, taking advantage of a pause in the midst of John's multi-utterance turn. Pete's 'yeah' (l. 34), performs two functions, which Wooffitt (2005) terms an 'economical utterance' (7); it allows him access to the group interaction without interrupting John's narrative and demonstrates his allegiance to this CofP through explicit agreement with John's behaviour and actions against Thomas. He orients to John's previous turn, left incomplete but which, after a two second pause, Pete deems intentionally so, supporting John's justification that Thomas deserves another disciplinary. Another pause follows where it is uncertain whether John will continue his narrative or Pete is expected to elaborate on his agreement with John perhaps through his own experience of working in closer contact with Thomas. Pete does continue, brokering between the two CofPs through utilising his multimembership and flexible professional identity to further justify John's decision for a disciplinary, adding that Thomas 'drives as

well' (l. 34). Pete would most probably have seen, or at least heard stories, of Thomas's driving and accidents on the shop floor and is able to provide him with incontrovertible first-hand evidence. Pete validates the need for further action against Thomas, an outsider to their group, firmly aligning himself with the management decision and indeed lending support to it himself, proving that he is committed to what becomes the joint enterprise of the CofP to gather evidence against Thomas and ensure a disciplinary hearing in their favour.

Although the nature of Thomas's accidents isn't defined, it is clear that an accident-prone individual is not best suited to driving forklift trucks, something which Pete, as part of the maintenance staff, would have a vested interest in avoiding happening. Pete's second 'yeah' (l. 38) acknowledges the shared experience and knowledge within the managerial CofP, Henry's second-hand from Greg, Pete's from experience working on the shop floor and engaging with the maintenance staff CofP. He also supports the absent Greg, confirming that from his own knowledge and experience there are no other unsuitable forklift truck drivers on the shop floor. Pete's current role as broker puts him here in an advantageous position – he has been able to contribute to the discussion through utilising his knowledge and experiences from the other CofP whilst simultaneously showing his allegiance to and support for the managerial CofP, making his voice heard whereas before he was marginalised.

Discussion

Wenger and Lave's (1991) Communities of Practice framework has been used to show how Pete brokers between two distinct CofPs in an attempt to align himself with the managerial CofP but also as demonstrating how identity, specifically professional identity, is inherently malleable in this case as a result of an upcoming workplace promotion.

However, the criticism levelled frequently at Wenger that his lack of detail when defining key concepts such as peripherality and brokering (for example, Davies 2005 and Moore 2010), which, taken solely from his own works, are verbose and unspecific, has been found to be the case in this study. Indeed, Pete moves between various levels of participation, which cannot be simply answered for as a whole by Wenger's peripherality. He is initially marginalised during John's narrative but, near the end of the extract, is able to participate fully when discussing problems with style punch material and rollers. Balancing these two seems to correspond with peripherality, which is mid-way between marginal and core participation, but, instead of being consistently peripheral, Pete's participation shifts within the same CofP, something which Wenger does not consider. The analysis of this interaction, therefore, demonstrates the inadequacies of his examination and categorisation of peripherality.

The lack of genuine, recorded stretches of discourse used within Wenger's work cause difficulties when adopting his framework for use in Conversation Analysis (CA), which utilises naturally-occurring speech rather than the generalised observations, analogies or hypothetical situations used by Wenger. Consequently, it was necessary to adapt Wenger's framework with research done in CA, specifically regarding institutional interaction, and to analyse short extracts of real talk within the meeting rather than view the interaction and the CofP as a whole and make broad statements. Research by Drew and Heritage (1992), who took a CA approach to institutional interaction, was consulted, for example, to make Wenger's framework relevant to the study of interaction within a business meeting, particularly through supplementing the CofP framework with terminology used, but not coined, by them such as institutional aims alongside Wenger's concept of joint enterprise and considering humour research especially by Holmes (2000), specifically her interpretation of humour as an in-group marker as a means of considering Pete's attempts at affiliation.

When adopting a CofP framework, the researcher approaches the analysis with background information; in this case, through speaking with and knowing the participants

before the recorded meeting, especially Pete, and knowing also about the company itself, therefore having contextual information which would influence the analysis. A similar criticism is levelled at Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); that the analysis is shaped by the researcher's own preconceptions (Wooffitt 2005: 144). This would be avoided if adopting a pure CA approach especially when analysing identity, which is problematic for CA researchers since, if a participant does not implicitly make reference to their identity, or form thereof, then the researcher has no clear-cut evidence that identity is indeed relevant to the interaction. This causes difficulties when balancing a CofP approach, reliant upon contextual information and generalisations, with a CA analysis concentrating on the micro-level of interaction and speaker intention rather than what the researcher wants to examine. Adopting a pure CA framework would have made analysing professional identity problematic since most of what has been evidenced as demonstrating Pete's changing identity is down to my own inference about speaker intention – he does not explicitly say during the recorded interaction that he is brokering between two CofPs or that his professional identity is changing, although this is expressed in the follow-up interview.

A hybrid of CA and Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), concentrating on identity as implicitly stated by the participants such as l. 23 'from a health and safety perspective', offers a different view of Pete's professional identity since the notion of operative identity states that one can have multiple, complementary identities simultaneously and removing the considerations of brokering and multimembership which have been the focus of this study. When approaching the data using CA, a CofP framework, despite its inherent generalisations and lack of concrete detail, was deemed to offer a more complete evaluation of identity in transition rather than the development of a new identity and the membership of various groups within the workplace itself.

However, there are still problems with the CA/CofP approach used since 'while speakers may be peripheral to a given CofP, it is unlikely that such a designation accurately depicts their whole identity' (Moore 2010: 124). Likewise, although Pete may have brought to bear more than one part of his professional identity in the MWR, in another context this may not have been the case and his professional identity could have been more stable, showing the problems of using just one extract to attempt to account for an individual's professional identity, or parts thereof, as a whole.

For the purpose of triangulation, a follow-up interview was conducted with Pete:

Extract 1

1. **Interviewer**: erm how do you think that the managers treat you now that they know you're going
2. to become a manager is it different to when you went along to the meetings with the other

3. Maintenance Manager

4. **Pete**: I think they always treated me as an equal it was difficult for me to be seen for me to believe
5. that I was equal but but erm I'm gradually getting used to the idea and I <u>think</u> yes I-I'm perceived
6. as an equal it's just just me really obviously they were my peers* at one time whereas now they're
7. not so it was a bit of a difficult transition from say working with the people on the shop <u>floor</u> to

8. suddenly working alongside who <u>were</u> previously my peers so erm yes I've got used to it and I'm
9. definitely treated as an equal (.) and I also make sure that I am

* By peers, Pete means his superiors

Agreeing with Richards' (2006) aforementioned notion of 'identity (re)construction' (3), Pete remarks upon his changing professional identity, especially crossing the boundary between

the shop floor workers' and managerial CofPs. He repairs his response from the present progressive, l. 5, 'getting used to', to the past tense on l. 8, 'got used to', suggesting a completed process, signifying that although he says he is now accustomed to the situation, it may not actually be true. As Peräkylä (2011) has noted, 'one key question of validity is whether the views expressed by the interviewees reflect their experiences and opinions outside the interview situation' (366); Pete's own intentions and wishes to present himself in a certain way could undermine the validity of the interview data or, alternately, lend weight to the conclusion arrived at in this study that his professional identity is changing as a result of attempts at affiliating himself within the managerial CofP.

Pete did, albeit indirectly, support the theory that interference from the shop floor workers' CofP, namely banter and joking, could influence how he spoke to the managers:

Extract 2

1**. Interviewer**: ok and and is it different when like how you talk to people on the shop floor to how you speak with the managers in that meeting

2**. Pete**: err yes you have to be very factual with the managers whereas the shop floor people it's a
3. little more light-hearted

…

4. **Interviewer**: would you say it's quite a formal environment then in that meeting
5. **Pete**: e:rm that wasn't particularly formal no but they they can get formal it depends if let's say
6. for instance one of the directors attended the meeting then it would be completely different
7. again because obviously they would be trying to play up to their peer group

Despite believing, or at least saying, that interactions within the MWR are normally serious, it is Pete himself who initiates light-hearted comments and interludes within the extract. This is perhaps the reason why he mentions that the meeting I attended was unusual, possibly because of my presence or the tape recorder. He could be unconsciously influenced by speech styles in his other CofP since he is aware of a difference in register in the MWR yet still uses linguistic features more common to the shop floor like jokes. Pete's implication that he plays up to the managers by asserting that the managers would 'play up to their peer group' (l. 7) should a Director be present reinforces the subordinate/superordinate divide present within businesses and implies that he still views himself as a subordinate.

Indeed, a CDA approach to the interaction would have foregrounded Pete's marginalisation and inferior status, especially in the first half of the meeting where his participation is limited, as revealing the repressive power structures within the institution (Wooffitt 2005: 138). Pete's attempted turn at l. 13, which is not adhered to by John, would be considered by CDA researchers as enforcing his non-participation in an interaction controlled by the management. Similarly, that John tells an extended narrative, irrelevant to the agenda for the meeting (see Appendix), yet Pete is interrupted and ordered to 'carry on' (l. 86) after digressing briefly, but still on-topic, highlights again the 'direct relationship between status and role, on the one hand, and discursive rights and obligations, on the other' (Drew and Heritage 1992: 49).

It would be unfair, however, to label this interaction as completely dependent upon power asymmetries, as revealed, for example, when John guesses the top three on ll. 92-103, shifting from professional manager to a more relaxed and casual approach of interacting with Pete and showing that subordinate/superordinate status does not control the entire interaction although it formed a small part of the Linguistic Analysis. This also demonstrates the flexible nature of institutional interaction; a business meeting need not only be formal but can also

include aspects of informality. It can also be seen merely as a way in which the participants inject some entertainment into their meeting thereby 'causing relief from business talk' (Richards 2006: 104) while still achieving institutional aims, providing another interpretation for Pete's motives for humour.

Conclusion

The focus of this study has been on professional identity in transition – how the soon to be promoted Pete brokers between two CofPs whilst simultaneously attempting to affiliate to and maintain good relations with the other participants of the MWR with whom he will shortly be of equal status. Further research, especially into other cases of professional identity in transition, would be useful in validating the interpretations and theories suggested in this analysis and ascertaining whether they are worthy of being transferred to other similar workplace interactions.

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<u>Transcript</u>
Side A of the tape. 5 minutes 55 seconds into the Maintenance Weekly Review meeting on 16th
November 2011
Length: 6 minutes 11 seconds
Participants: Henry (Compliance Manager), John (Production Manager) and Pete
(Maintenance Project Engineer)

**Prior to this extract, Henry has been saying how refresher training for forklift truck drivers has been
running on-schedule so far:**

1. **Henry**: ...two people every week from now until the end of week 50 when Greg leaves

2. **Pete**: you banned Thomas Robertson

3. **Henry**: I've sent an email to Sarah today (1.3) with regard to Thomas Robertson (.) the decision

4. ultimately is going to be hers but I've recommended that we take him [off forklift truck]

5. **Pete**:   [((laughter))   ]

6. **Henry**: [after discussing it with Barney]

7. **Pete**: [((laughter))   ]

8. **Henry**: [xxxxxxx   ]

9. **John**: [you see the decision the decision isn't Sarah's]

10. **Pete**: [((laughter))   ]

11. **John**: erm what will probably happen in the disciplinary (0.9) cos I've landed it for some strange
12. reason

(1.8)

13.. **Pete**: erm is that [the]

14. **John**:   [you] you take into account all the evidence so anything you you put in

15. recommendations in writing Sarah will read (1.2) you have to listen to Thomas's side and if he
16. brings in a representative with him which he probably will do because he's in a union

17. **Henry**:   = yep mhmm

18. **John**: then we hear what they've got to offer and then and then after making decision (.) and

19. Sarah (.) usually agrees or (2.4) we we find some common ground to

20. **Henry**:   = yeah

21. **John**: to give a level of warning or not (.) that's appropriate so (.) erm (1.0) it's always interesting
22. to see what the intern party brings in because sometimes you get a surprise

((clearing throat))

23. **Henry**: yeah I've just (.) I've just given her my er <u>advice</u> from a health and safety perspective yeah
 24. from the health and safety perspective of people who may be affected by his actions and (.) the
25. [content]

26. **Pete**: [((laughter))]

27. **Henry**: [of it as well mate]

28. **Pete**: [((laughter))   ] everybody

29. **Henry**: but er to be honest she's gotta bring to it erm the human resource element (0.8) and is
30. what we doing (1.0) ok

31. **John**: because the history is Thomas's had (.) <u>huge</u> amount of accidents over the years

32. **Henry**: yeah

33. **John**: and even after his last disciplinary (.) he still continued to have accidents so

(2.3)

34. **Pete**: yeah (1.2) and he drives as well (xxxxxxx)

35. **Henry**: yeah well I've made that I've made that point in my email to Alex erm I just wanted to
36. make sure that I wasn't setting a precedent that there wasn't anybody <u>worse</u> than Thomas still
37. driving forklifts I'm assured by <u>Greg</u> that there isn't

38. **Pete**: yeah

39. **John**: So erm I'm reasonably comfortable (.) with what I've done erm to say

40. **Pete**: is that worldwide or (0.6) is it just [((smiles)) MANU wide]

41. **John**:   [((laughter))   ] just MANU wide the only thing
42. that Thomas may erm throw at us is

43. **Henry**:   = yeah

44. **John**: erm after he had an accident or two accidents (.) earlier in the year

45. **Henry**:   = mhmm

46. **John**: one of which caused actual damage he never even got called to a disciplinary

(1.4)

47. **Henry**: right

48. **John**: so that that that the only thing he could say is ok I might be the worst driver (.) but other
49. people having accidents and

(1.3)

50. **Henry**: ye:ah

51. **John**: where's their disciplinary

52. **Henry**: yeah you because you always throw them up don't you you always look at other people
53. and this is yeah who you knowingly

54. **John**:   [that's what the union will do so that actually]

                                              [xxxxxxx   ]

55. **John**: there they'll bring surprise they'll bring a whole list of scenarios might even say there's
56. been twenty accidents in the last two years how come Thomas's the only one that's had two
57. disciplinaries

58. **Henry**:   = yeah

59. **John**: so I'm you know we'll just have to wait and see they might come with nothing

60. **Henry**: ok

61. **Pete**: ok who finds all that information out

62. **John**: we don't go looking for it the union will bring it in his defence (1.6) or they might not

((clears throat))

63. **Henry**: just out of curiosity did Fred have refresher training when he had his two accidents

(3.8)

64. **John**: I would have thought <u>Greg</u> would have done because he's quite consistent like that but

[xxxxxxx   ]

65.**John**: [because] <u>Fred</u> didn't report to me then

66. **Henry**:   = yeah I'll check [my]

67. **John**:   [I   ] don't know

(3.6)

68. **John**: good point actually

69. **Henry**: yeah

(1.2)

70. **Pete**: hmmm

71. **John**: right is that ok on the safety

72. **Pete**: <u>yeah</u> yeah I'm happy with that (.) if you are Henry

73. **Henry**: yep

74. **Pete**: right may as well do hhh assembly (.) pointless doing extrusions at the minute

(1.1)

75. **John**: ok [so   ]

76. **Pete**:   [down]time last week 1.3% (1.7) not updated that yet that's week 45 we're on [week]

77. **John**:   [we   ]

78. need to redraw that then

79. **Pete**: yeah it's just we're gonna end up doing [that]

80. **John**:   [let's]do that tomorrow befo:re (.) Nick's review on
81. [Friday   ]

82. **Pete**: [Ye:]I used to do it on a Thursday so erm 1.3% the assembly PPMs completed was 71% (1.1)
83. and the reason being is w- erm (.) Paul was off the weekend and left Rupert on his own (0.7) and

84. Rupert was tied up doing (2.6) the: rung saw swagers (.) for the (.) just one (.) you know we

85. boxed them in at the side he was doing that so (.)

86. **John**:   [yep that's all well carry on then]

87. **Henry**:   = that was good action actually

88. **Pete**: so yeah so it's done and keeps Hugh happy but Hugh still says what about the top so

89. **Henry**:   = yep

90. **Pete**: for God's sake but as you say we ought to put Hugh in a box that'd probably (.) solve it

91. ((clears throat)) erm (.) right eh so hhh your top three <u>were</u> (.) you must have an idea

92. **John**: top three last week (.) right rung swager extension

93. **Pete**: <u>no</u>

94. **John**: aaaagghh

95 **Pete**: go on then three ways [sti:le   ]

96. **Henry**:   [ways stile]

97. **John**: of course I've got it wrong

98. **Pete**: right three [ways stile punch]

99. **John**:   [eeeeh you've   ] not let me finish I was gonna say s-style punch

100. **Pete**: ye:ah oh sorry

101. **John**: and then err

102. **Pete**:   = there is a swager in there

103. **John**: er what else went wrong (.) loft swager probably

104. **Pete**: yeah yeah yeah right the three way stile punch material's sticking <u>again</u> (1.0) and this (.)
105. well their action for that was the feed rollers they adjusted the drive belts (1.1) but there <u>is</u> a
106. problem with the way the material's been through the roller because it's a polyurethane roller
107. on aluminium

108. **John**:   = hmm

109. **Pete**: been sprayed with oil <u>liberally</u> (.)

110. **Henry**: yeah that's [gonna roll on the aluminium]

111. **Pete**:   [and it's just skidding away   ] yeah so what happens it gets stuck so they
112. spray it with oil it gets stuck and they put more and more on so we just (.)

113. **Henry**:   = yeah

114. **Pete**: but anyway what what's hopefully what's going to happen if Eamon releases the money is
115. erm Star Manufacturing are gonna provide us with new rollers new bottom rollers but the
116. problem is the polyurethane (.) with having a <u>coating</u> on and it's it's literally like the surface of a
117. table tennis bat you know how it's dimpled

118. **Henry** or **John**:   = hmm

119. **Pete**: well it's one of those but he's assured me the oil will not attack it because we've had the
120. manufacturer in (.) he said at the moment the cheapest option is to do it (.) to put it on and you
121. vulcanise it over with a with a soldering iron it's easy to do so I'm just gonna <u>try</u> that and if it
122. does work

123. **Henry** or **John**: = yep

124. **John**: so you use an existing roller

125. **Pete**: I can do I can have them rollers turned down put this on just to smooth them off <u>or</u> I can
126. use the new ones we've a great box full of new rollers upstairs (1.2) so I just want to try it and if
127. it works (1.0) we'll have more made of this

Transcription Key:

(0.7)	timed pause (in seconds)
(.)	pause of less than 0.5 seconds
hhh	audible intake of breath
=	latching
a:nd	lengthened vowel sound
[yes]	
[yeah]	simultaneous talk
<u>or</u>	emphasis on word
((laughing))	extralinguistic feature
xxxxxx	inaudible – unable to be transcribed

A follow-up interview was also conducted with Pete on 12th December 2011. This is on Side B of the tape, 4 minutes 20 seconds into the recording, after the MWR finishes (there is a brief pause between the two). It lasts 6 minutes.