

The Lecture Environment and its Affordances:

Student Teachers' Perspectives on the Meaningfulness of the
Lecture Form

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Abstract

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Contemporary higher education seems to be moving away from the lecture form and being replaced by student-centered education. This study attempts to ascertain in what ways student teachers experience the lecture as a meaningful educational form. The essay attempts to establish a shared system of meaning which will help determine what types of lectures are meaningful. Finally, the study also attempts to find different aspects of the lecture which are experienced as democratic.

The study is qualitative and began with a pilot study which was followed up by four interviews with student teachers who have recently completed the same AUO teachers' program.

Different theories on media by Marshal McLuhan, Neil Postman and Walter Ong were utilized together with J.J. Gibson's theories on affordances as well as Orrin Klapp's theories on meaning. Using these theories it was determined that meaning is derived from the activities that are afforded by: the utilization of different media, perceiving the value of an event or thing, and the different functions of language. It was also determined from the different theories that the lecture is a type of ecology that requires a balance of meaningful information if the affordances of the environment are to be perceived. These theories were woven together and a model was established which was named "The Didactic Pendulum". This model was used as a tool for interpreting and categorizing responses and explaining results.

The results indicate that meaningful lectures were to a large degree determined by the lecturer and their enthusiasm for the subject matter. It was also concluded that rhetoric and careful use of electronic media are also important. An important feature of the Teachers' Education Program is that student teachers learn from observing the actions of the university teachers when they lecture. Concerning democratic aspects of the lecture, lectures are perceived democratic when they afford students with the opportunity to participate, but also when students get to challenge the ideas of the lecturers. One conclusion that was drawn was that a lecture is democratic when it has the potential to lead students to democratic action. A main critique of the lecture is that they are often experienced as isolated from other aspects of the course and students are not afforded the opportunity to question the content and the authority of the teachers. Moreover a balanced educational ecology is one where the lecturer is open to feedback signals of the students and is able to alter the flow of information accordingly.

1 Introduction

With the completion of this term I will have completed my seventh year of university studies. Before studying the Teachers' Education Program in Sweden I completed a four year program at Lafayette College in the United States followed by a year and half program in Sweden. The differences between the two programs were not drastic. Both programs were somewhat traditional in that they were centered on the lecture form. Lectures on these programs could be described as quite traditional where an authority on a subject matter lectured on a material that students were responsible for learning.

The lecture, for me, stands in the center of any education. I feel that there is nothing more rewarding than being humbled by an authority whose knowledge is so deep and so inspiring that one comes to the realization that there is so much to know. Lecturers who have an intimate relation to a certain subject matter have the ability to transform the way that one views different subjects. I can think of countless times in my studies where a lecturer or teacher has completely altered the way that I have perceived a subject, which previously seemed trivial or uninteresting. By making subject matter relevant or stimulating, these lecturers have succeeded in creating an excitement in me, which in many cases became a passion that needed to be researched vigorously. I find lectures both rewarding and meaningful.

During the year and a half of studying the Teachers' Education Program (TEP) in Sweden, I began to detect a strong feeling of dissatisfaction among student teachers regarding the lecture form. It seemed that many students believed that the lecture was an archaic form which has no place in modern education. I decided to write this essay when during a group seminar all eight of the group members, not including myself, thought that the Teachers' Education Program should dispose of the lecture form, claiming that it was based on an archaic view of knowledge where democratic principles were neglected. This piqued my interest for several reasons. I am of the belief that the lecture form has the potential to be one of the most meaningful forms for learning. As a consultant I have worked extensively with presentations and as a teacher of the social sciences I will also in one way or another use the lecture form when I become a certified teacher. Therefore it would be interesting to find out how students in our contemporary culture find meaning in the lecture form.

1.1 Background

In 1997 a teachers' education committee was established to do an overhaul of the TEP in Sweden (SOU 1999:63). The 253 page document, which was produced by the committee, brought about major changes to the traditional TEP. The Committee divided up the TEP into three integrated areas of study. This essay will be concerned with the general teachers' education known as the AUO, which emphasizes that student teachers of all levels and all subjects should possess the same base knowledge (Ibid).

A basic tenant of the new education is that student teachers, instead of merely learning techniques to transfer information, learn to teach how to sift through information and make sense of it. The modern teacher, according to the committee, is a mentor and a

leader who encourages students rather than tells them facts. A major task of the modern teacher is to secure the Swedish culture's democratic values. According to the report, contemporary culture questions authority and teachers therefore have no self-evident authority like teachers of the past who simply transmitted knowledge. Teachers today earn their authority through a democratic process where authority is maintained by being perceptive and treating others ethically. Teachers earn respect through their knowledge and their personality and social competence. Students are no longer to be seen as subordinates who sit and listen. The individual student who seeks knowledge should be in the center. The result of these new kinds of students and teachers is a new relationship where a partnership and a mutual respect are formed. Teachers and students together are expected to discuss different aspects of a lesson's subject matter together (SOU 1999:63).

According to the committee, knowledge is not a transferable object but something that is acquired by an individual and is something that is built on through reflection. It is something that is created together, student teacher. The teacher's roll is to stimulate the process by making the content relevant. Knowledge has a collective nature in that it is something that is built during interactions with other humans; at the same time it has an individual context (SOU 1999:63).

When the new TEP was organized it was done so that teachers should be prepared for a culture that is in a constant state of learning where different individuals have different levels of knowledge and will choose different ways of learning. This requires the utilization of many different educational forms (SOU 1999:63).

The background above suggests that we live in an age where education is to be student-centered and knowledge is to be viewed as something that cannot be transferred, where a primary task of education is to develop democratic values. It would seem that the traditional lecture with its bias for one-way communication is not compatible with many of the ideas expressed above. Democracy defined as student participation is problematic when lecture halls contain hundreds of students. Moreover, a lecture is organized with the idea that knowledge is transferrable. With this background as a reference point, just what is a lecture's role in the TEP? What is a lecturer's role when knowledge is seen as something that cannot be transferred but something that is built together? How is the lecture form meaningful for aspiring teachers? What does a lecture offer student teachers? In other words, what are the lecture's affordances?¹

¹ The concept, *affordance*, will be developed later in the essay. However, to assist in the reading of the essay's purpose it can be said that an affordance is the *meaning* or *value* that an environment offers.

2 Purpose and Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to examine the lecture form on one of Sweden's Teacher's Education Program. It is of interest to ascertain in what ways student teachers experience the lecture as a meaningful/meaningless educational form. By interviewing student teachers who have recently completed the Teachers' Education Program and by examining their statements, this study will attempt to identify the affordances of the lecture environment. With regard to the modern view of education discussed above, which challenges the foundations of the lecture, an analysis of the lecture form and its legitimacy as a meaningful educational form seems necessary. The study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How do student teachers express themselves regarding experiences that are perceived as meaningful/meaningless?
2. What affordances does the lecture form offer aspiring teachers?
3. In what ways are lectures on the Teachers' Education Program democratic?

3 Previous Research

There have been several studies conducted which focus on the effectiveness of lecturing as compared with other forms of teaching. Moreover, studies have focused on the student's views and experiences of lecturing. Although this study does not concern itself directly with the lecture's effectiveness in relation to other forms, it does attempt to examine its effectiveness as a meaningful educational form. This section will present some of the different findings with regard to the lecture's effectiveness and also discuss studies that focus on student views of lecturing.

According to McKeachie (2002) there have been a number of studies which have compared the effectiveness of lectures to other teaching models. Discussion methods have been found to be superior to lectures in many aspects with regard to student's retention of information, ability to transfer knowledge to new situations and problem solving. However, it has also been shown through empirical research that lectures are good for summarizing information scattered over a variety of sources, adapting content to the needs and interests of the students and focusing on key concepts and ideas. Furthermore, lectures have potential motivational values in that they may challenge accepted ideas that students have previously taken for granted. In this way, lectures have the ability to stimulate further learning. Another important factor that has been brought to light is that the enthusiasm of a lecturer is an important factor in effecting student learning and motivation (Ibid). Following up the claims of these studies H.G. Murray concluded that enthusiastic teachers tend to move around and make eye contact with students. They also employ pronounced body language and utilize more vocal variation (Ibid). Regarding the lecture's affectivity, it can be said that research has indicated that lecturing is at least as effective as other methods of presenting information and providing explanations (Brown & Atkins 1988).

Studies of lectures from a student perspective have been conducted by among others Brown and Bakhtar and Brown and Daines (Brown & Atkins 1988). These studies indicate that students enjoy lectures. There is, however, no decisive correlation between student satisfaction and learning (Lowman 1984). Despite these empirical claims, other researchers, such as Cohen, claim that student satisfaction with lecturing is positively associated with learning (Ibid). Regarding student satisfaction, research shows that students stress the importance of the lecturer caring for students, being enthusiastic, generating understanding and displaying humanistic interest (Brown & Atkins 1988). According to Lowman (1984) teachers experienced as "great" demonstrate a pleasure in learning; being stiff and business-like is no guarantee for quality of instruction. The most prominent factors concerning student satisfaction, according to studies, are clarity of presentation and student teacher rapport. Clarity of presentation entails a logical presentation of information and may even include frequent use of concrete examples (Lowman 1984). Student satisfaction is also reflected in interpersonal relationships or what is referred to as student teacher rapport. Research has indicated that lecturers who show little interest in their students as persons will have a negative impact on the way students will experience the lecture. Whereas lecturers who appear to have a strong interest in students as persons will often result in students who have positive thoughts about the lecture. As mentioned above, a positive experience is associated with learning.

4 Background Knowledge

In attempting to answer my research questions a brief historical background of Western oratory as well as a background in postmodern theory will be presented. For this essay's purpose, the lecture will be viewed as a form of *oratory*. By describing the role that oratory has played in Western democracy's history, I hope to make a connection between the lecture form and its potential as a democratic tool. This will provide a definition of democracy which will help answer my third research question.

An important aspect in this essay is attempting to label "the meaningful" in the lecture experience. The second part of this section will discuss contemporary culture and the difficulties of finding meaning in modern society. This will facilitate in the understanding of what it might mean to live, work, study and above all find meaning in modern society. In addition, a background in postmodern theory will also provide a context in which the results can be understood. It will be assumed that the Swedish culture is a Western society.

4.1 Oratory and Democracy

Since the advent of the spoken word, mankind has used public speaking as a process vital to the survival of the group. Before the advent of writing, story-tellers conveyed *narratives* that provided the community with a sense of meaning and coherence (Ong 1982). These narratives are expressed in the Trojan War stories of the ancient Greeks and the coyote stories of the Native American Indians (Ibid). The telling of these narratives can be described as a form of oratory. Tribal life, however, often consisted of a two-way dialogue where tribal leaders were dependent upon group consensus in a kind of *tribal democracy*. Seen from this perspective, democracy is a kind of universal phenomenon (Dahl 1989). The tradition of public oratory continued into ancient Athens where the Sophists, who were professional educators, toured the countryside and taught citizens how to speak and present different points of view. This could be made possible through the implementation of rhetoric (persuasion) and dialectics (speaking). It was assumed that presenting arguments and counterarguments in a series of exchanges would lead to a better view of truth. To learn to speak and persuade were seen as important tools that lead to success and personal freedom (Herrick 2001). According to Herrick, Western cultures' concept of education can be traced to ancient Athens and the Sophists.

The tradition of oratory and public debate can also be seen in the *contio* (public meeting); which took place in ancient Rome. This was an indirect form of voting where the public assembled and could be politically involved by interacting with the ruling class (Morstein-Marx 2004). Citizens were exposed to varying degrees of opposing views on similar topics and had, at least in an indirect way, influence over the legislative process (Ibid). It was characterized by rhetorical oral presentation. As Gronbeck (1991) notes, it is this tradition of public discourse that has been inherited and implemented among the educated in Western civilization for nearly two Millennia.

Approximately a thousand years after the pinnacle of Rome, the primary orators of the time became Christian Priests (Gronbeck 1991). The practices of Aristotle and the Sophists were adopted by ecclesiastical leaders and challenged rivaling doctrines to such

a degree that it became known as the Christian era (Britannica). A lecture became distinguished from oratory when in order to ensure the hegemony of Christianity, monasteries served as schools where Priests or *lectors* read selected verses from the Bible; thereby educating students on scripture (Britannica). Oratory, from an educational perspective, suddenly became a *reading* experience rather than an oral experience (Palmeri 1991). The medieval university that took form carried on the tradition of reading from texts and established the tradition of the lecture; coming from Latin's *lectare*, meaning 'to read aloud' (Britannica). The oratory derived lecture was transformed into a kind of literary-oratory (Postman 1985).

Perhaps emulating its Roman ancestors, 17th century America had its own form of *contio* known as "stump-speeches" (Postman 1985). This entailed that ordinary citizens would take the 'stump' (remains of a chopped down tree) and convey political ideas. These oral events were epitomized in the Lincoln-Douglas debates which were performed in large public arenas, such as carnivals, in front of live audiences. Debates consisted of well structured rhetorical performances that served as important social events. They were made up of people who lived democratically by taking part in the presentation of ideas. This oral tradition carried on the tradition of literary-oratory that was established during the Christian era. 17th century oratory was characterized by claim and counterclaim, by argument and rebuttal following the Sophist tradition (Ibid). 18th century elocutionists were concerned with oral delivery consisting of reading from a text. Ancient orators, on the other hand, were concerned with the oral creation of speech (Palmeri 1991). Barzun (1993) explains that lectures during the 18th and 19th centuries were characterized by their linear form and often did not break for student questions. Conveyance of order and connection among parts were deemed essential and great emphasis was put on rhetorical effects as well as delivery. (Barzun 1993).

Modern communication techniques have moved oratory away from the text based message back to what Ong refers to as "secondary orality" (Silverstone 2001, p. 148). Consequently, the lecture has lost much of its formality and linear structure that once dominated it and has today turned into a quasi-seminar characterized by casualty and informality. Modern lecturers tend to speak from memory and the heart (Barzun 1993).

The concept of oratory has been an important medium in the contemporary democratization process. Some important examples are Cicero in ancient Rome who used public oratory to indict the despot Mark Antony (Britannica) and Booker T. Washington, who through his friendly demeanor and tactful rhetoric helped emancipate the African-American (Champion 1979). Oratory has also played an important role in contemporary education with highly esteemed instructors such as Ruth Benedicto, Alfred North Whitehead, Christian Gauss and Hannah Arendt (Lowman 1984). What is most striking about these personalities is the level of personal and intellectual impact they had on their students. As Epstein notes, each had their own style and made use of "Socratic teasing...sympathetic discussion; passionate argument, witty exposition, dramatics...and sometimes even bullying" (Ibid, p. 5).

4.1.1 Democracy

A definition of democracy will be developed which will establish a framework in which to answer my third research question. The definition that will be developed in this section will not be limited to one perspective but will be developed with regard to the oratory phenomenon elucidated above. A good starting point for a definition of democracy can be found in Alexis de Tocqueville's description of democracy which entails "the

principle of civic participation” (Postman 1995, p. 13). This kind of “participation”, emanates from what Dahl (1998) refers to as “the logic of equality” (p. 10). Equality, according to this perspective, is a natural process that comes about as a result of a group of people living together over an extended period of time, where making decisions together is a matter of survival. These two concepts, *civic participation* and *equality*, will serve as the foundation of the definition of democracy in this essay.

From an oratory perspective civic participation is exemplified in many of the examples above. In the *tribal democracy* example, democracy entails taking part in important decisions concerning group policies. In the *contio* of ancient Rome and the stump speeches of early America, civic participation entailed voicing opinion through shouts of approval or disapproval, which potentially influenced the actions of political rulers. In the case of the *contio* this may have entailed citizens seizing control of the speech by booing and refusing to attend to the speaker’s message (Morstein-Marx 2004). Another aspect of democracy, in this regard, is reflected in what Dahl (1998) refers to as *enlightened understanding*. In such cases as the stump speeches, equal opportunities are provided for the audience to understand the effects and consequences of different political perspectives. By gaining an *enlightened understanding*, participants are empowered. This enables them to take part in discussion and deliberation, which directly or indirectly can affect group decisions. Dialogue and deliberation can be said to be the cornerstones of what has become to be known as the *deliberative democratic model*, where language and communication play an essential role in democracy. The German political scientist Jürgen Habermas (1996) claims that open communication entails not only listening to others’ perspectives but also being able to see life from opposing perspectives. According to this model, a healthy democracy is dependent on a vibrant civil society where public spheres exist so that intelligent people can form opinion through discourses. By engaging in a democratic debate people learn to share and understand the needs and interests of others. These debates should be comprised of a communicative rationality, which entails providing evidence, challenging assertions and examining opposing perspectives. In this way, power is asserted by claims within the discourse, or what Habermas calls *the better argument*. With the help of *the better argument* citizens attempt to persuade one another of the best way to organize their collective lives. This is reflected in Michael Walzer’s contention that in democracy “what counts is argument among the citizens. Democracy puts a premium on speech, persuasion, rhetorical skill...the citizen who makes the most persuasive argument –gets his way” (Mansbridge 1996, p. 50). This seems to be what the Sophists had in mind in their advocacy of argument and counterargument mentioned above. It is also illustrated in the above examples with Cicero and Booker T. Washington who were able to move the masses with their ability to persuade; with *the better argument*. Concern for the well-being of others and the community at large as well as a sense of solidarity between participants are essential aspects of this perspective (Habermas 1996).

Political scientist Iris Marion Young is critical of the deliberative process and claims that common interests cannot be achieved through rational argument alone. Young (1996) advocates a communicative democracy where *greeting*, *rhetoric* and *storytelling* are also of importance. *Greetings* concern preliminaries in which the parties establish trust and a feeling of equality of “polite acknowledgement of the Otherness of others” (Ibid, p. 130). Young’s perspective on *rhetoric* is similar to Walzer’s view above. One problem with rational communication, explains Young, is that it tends to favor the educated and well spoken. *Story telling* in the form of narrative, on the other hand, tends to be egalitarian,

since “everyone has stories to tell...each can tell her story with equal authority” (Ibid, p. 132). In addition, narrative reveals experiences that cannot be shared by those situated differently; experiences that must be understood if justice is to be done to others (Ibid).

In summary, democracy has been defined as civic participation where individuals take part in a democratic debate which is based on *the logic of equality*. As Benjamin Barber implies, listening is as valuable as speaking in a healthy democracy (Young 1996). Finally, the power that moves people to action is determined by the best argument; in other words by the argument that is most rational and persuasive.

The next section will provide a background on contemporary culture which has been termed *postmodernity*.

4.2 Postmodernism

The concept of *postmodernism* was coined by the post-structuralist philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1987), who in addition to viewing postmodernism as a perspective, also viewed it as a condition in which mankind presently finds itself. The former perspective has been referred to as *postmodernism* and the latter as *the postmodern condition* or *postmodernity*. The postmodern condition does not require a postmodern perspective, rather an understanding of what it means to be modern. For the purpose of this study both terms will be used to describe contemporary society.

Frisby (1985) describes modern society as in a state of chaos and confusion. Postmodernity, according to him, is “a quality of modern life inducing a sense of the discontinuity of time, the break with tradition, the feeling of novelty and sensitivity to the ephemeral, fleeting and contingent nature of the present” (Ibid, p. 3). These ideas are even echoed in the education philosopher Kennert Orlenius’ (2001) description of postmodernity. According to Orlenius, contemporary humans live in a state of confusion where modern man has difficulty in making sense of the vast amount of information which is available to them. The postmodern condition is also characterized by a break with tradition, which is described by Lyotard (1987) as the erosion of the meta-narrative (e.g. Trojan war stories), where meta-narratives have traditionally provided humans with important ontological explanations; giving life a sense of meaning.

McLuhan (1964) and Postman (1985) explain that all cultures in a specific context are a direct reflection of the communication technologies (media) that they make use of. The dominant medium of the 18th century was the printing press which was reflected in Western cultures’ bias for literary-oratory (Postman 1985). The text message is characterized by uniformity, continuity and linearity. A text has a beginning and works toward a certain point. This was reflected in public oratory (Postman 1985) as well as the traditional lecture during this period (Barzun 1993). It was an extremely rational public discourse which separated intellect and feeling (McLuhan 1964).

20th and 21st century Western culture has been dominated by electronic media (i.e. telegraph, photograph, TV) which fragment information by removing information from its context (McLuhan 1964). Traditionally, the information that has been available has always afforded humans with the ability to act. In the age of electronic media, humans are faced with an abundance of often irrelevant information that affords no opportunities for action (Postman 1985). According to Postman (1985), television as the dominant medium of communication, is the primary cause of the fragmentation and the break with tradition described above. Television has a bias for short messages that are often disconnected from each other; what is said on TV today is not necessarily relevant

tomorrow. Television makes the past in modern society irrelevant because there is “no murder so brutal that it can’t be wiped out by the words ‘Now this’” (Ibid, p. 99). “Now this” emphasizes the ephemeral nature of the present and implies that the past is always irrelevant in comparison with what will be heard next. The Postmodern condition can be described as a “great media shift” where the bias of a written text; i.e. uniformity, continuity and linearity, are replaced by the biases of television; i.e. fragmentation, lack of coherency, and lack of linear analysis (Ibid). These biases spill over into all aspects of life creating a kind of “peak-a-boo world” where information that affords no possible action is presented momentarily only to disappear into irrelevancy (Ibid). The postmodern condition can be summarized as a crisis of meaning (Klapp 1986).

5 Theory

As the purpose of this essay is to a large degree focused on the concept *meaning*, this section will provide some different theories on how humans experience and create meaning. It should be recognized that meaning is something highly abstract and subjective. Despite this I will attempt to build a model of meaning using the theories of McLuhan, Postman, Gibson and Klapp who discuss such concepts as communication, affordances and language. I will attempt to merge these theories into a simplified model, which will attempt to define *meaning* and serve as a tool to interpret and explain student teachers' experiences of the lecture form.

5.1 The Medium is the Message.

This section will give a brief explanation of the major components of communication theorist Marshal McLuhan's theory "the medium is the message". This theory will serve as the main perspective in this essay and will be used to illustrate how humans generate meaning through different communication technologies.

McLuhan's (1964) idea begins with the Marxist belief that humans are distinguished from animals in their ability to develop and employ tools (Roberts & Sutch 2007). Vygotsky explains that tools are resources that humans utilize when interpreting and acting in their respective environments (Säljö 2000). Tools can be physical objects with a tangible *hardware* nature (e.g. bowls, clubs) or intellectual tools with a *software* nature (e.g. theories, philosophical systems) (McLuhan & McLuhan 1988). The anthropologist Edward Hall (1990) hypothesizes that these so-called tools are not merely useful objects but are extensions of mankind's organisms. "The computer is an extension of part of the brain, the telephone extends the voice, the wheel extends the legs and feet" (Hall 1990, p. 12).

Marshal McLuhan (1964) is concerned with the way in which meaning is generated from the use of these different extensions. McLuhan refers to such extensions as *media* since when such technologies are utilized they always carry their own message or meaning. Postman (1985) explains that "[a] technology...is merely a machine. A medium is the social and intellectual environment a machine creates" (p. 84). "The medium is the message" because it is the medium (tool), that "shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (McLuhan 1964, p. 24).

It is important to develop and distinguish between two aspects of this theory. On one level it is important to note that different media convey different messages and therefore carry different meanings. McLuhan (1964) explains, for example, that the content of a thought translated into the spoken word (software tool), and the spoken word translated into the written word (hardware tool), contain entirely different messages and entirely different meanings (e.g. the words of a written letter vs. the words of a personal meeting). Each medium is like a separate language that redefines and alters the messages content (McLuhan 1964).

On another level, each new medium introduced into the human cultural environment always alters the cultural environment (McLuhan 1964). As ecologists know, a change in environment is rarely a linear or an additive experience. "What you have is a totally new

environment requiring a whole new repertoire of survival strategies” (Postman & Weingartner 1969, p. 7). This can be exemplified with the introduction of the written word which ultimately subverted memory; the printing press created the individual and nationalism, subsequently destroying the tribe as a family (McLuhan 1964). The clock (bell) created *regular production*, which has become the pillar of capitalism and modern science, subsequently undermined Christianity’s hegemony (Postman 1995). Media are both additive and subtractive and always effect the environment into which they are introduced.

In summary, (1) conveying a message through different media entails alternate meanings; (2) the introduction of a new technology into a human environment creates a new environment. The next section will further develop the concept *affordance* which was introduced in the background. This is a central concept in establishing a framework for understanding how a lecture environment can be meaningful.

5.2 Affordance and Meaning

The psychologist James Gibson is concerned mostly with visual perception and its relationship to the learning process. According to Gibson’s (1979) theory, the world is filled with objects and events that contain different meanings and/or values. *Affordance*, then, is a synonym for these meanings and/or values that are found in all environments. Gibson (1979) explains: “[t]he affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill” (p. 127). In other words, affordances are the meanings or values that are perceived in an object, place, or event. The concept *affordance* comes from spatial perception where certain objects *afford* certain actions or behaviors (E.J. Gibson 2002). People do not perceive ‘chairs’, but rather ‘a place to sit’. To detect the affordances of a ‘chair’ is to detect its value. This concept also includes verbal actions where certain words afford certain actions (Gibson 1979).

Affordances are neither subjective nor objective and cannot be separated from the animal – environment relationship. An environment is comprised of people, surfaces, objects, places, media etc... (Gibson 1979). A box may afford storage space for an adult but may be a hiding place for a child or a home for a homeless person. Different environments and different animals within those environments will change the affordances of ‘the box’ (my example).

Information can be described as a kind of structure or pattern about the world that specifies itself to human beings (Gibson 1979). It specifies objects, places and events and lets the perceiver know how to act or behave. A chair’s information, for example, lacks affordance and meaning if a perceiver does not know that it is an object used ‘for sitting’. However, when its information is recognized its affordance is recognized. The process of learning then becomes “from indefinite to definite” (E.J. Gibson 2002, p. 54) where “[we] learn to perceive more qualities or features of things, and they become more distinctive” (p. 71). Learning is recognizing invariables, structure and distinguishing features in objects, events and places (Ibid). Gibson (1979) claims that there is no difference between what one perceives and what one remembers.

This way of thinking about perception has been coined the ecological approach. In the animal kingdom, explains Gibson, “an animal is a receiver of the environment and behaves in it, in accordance with what the environment affords it; reciprocally, the animal’s behavior changes the environment” (E.J. Gibson 2002, p.97). Animals learn to

detect information that is useful to their performance; it is the environment's job to provide useful information (Gibson 1979).

From an educational perspective, Swedish professor Tomas Englund also emphasizes the importance of generating meaning in different learning environments. These meaningful environments are seen as an important aspect of both education as well as the democratic process (Englund 2004). Englund (2000) emphasizes the importance of socialization and communication with regards to a meaningful learning experience. From this perspective, education is viewed as an 'act' where human communication is a mutual exercise of dialogue and participation. An education (or lesson) will therefore be characterized by, on the one hand, premeditated plans of action where certain content is chosen, while on the other hand, remain open for unforeseen actions which arise in the student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions and dialogues (Englund 2004). This aspect of communication, according to Englund (1997), will maximize on the affordances of education. In other words, environments which afford students and teachers the space to act, or interact, are those that afford a sense of meaning.

According to Englund (1997), the essential aspect of a sound education, or ecology, is not the actual information or content that is conveyed but rather how the information or knowledge is problematized; that is, the opportunities that are afforded to the questioning, assessment and reflection over the information in question. This is described as a democratic relation to knowledge (Englund 1995). This social 'act', as he describes education, demands that teachers make certain choices as to what forms will be used to present information.

To sum up this section, it can be said that affordances are the meanings or values stored in an environment that offer animals action. From an educational perspective meaningful environments are those that afford students with the possibility to participate and discuss content. This combined with knowledge or information that has been put into context will enable both teacher and student to create a meaningful experience. This raises some interesting questions: does more dialogue in any environment necessarily lead to more meaningful experiences? Does the mere problematization of content lead to meaningful experiences? The theories of Neil Postman et alli (1969) and the American sociologist Orrin E. Klapp (1986) will attempt to shed some light on these questions.

5.3 Meaning and Ecology

Cultural critic Neil Postman's theories can be viewed as a bridge between McLuhan's theories on media and Gibson's theory's on affordance. Postman and Weingartner (1969) contend that the educational environment controls the dominant perceptions and attitudes of those who participate in them. "The environment is the message" (Postman et alli 1969, p.19). The 'message' in this case is the perception that one is allowed to build; the things that one learns to see, feel and value within a certain learning environment. In other words, the educational form will dictate the affordances that are perceived, which in turn dictates what actions will take place in the environment. What an environment allows one to *do* is what one learns, as Dewey might explain it (Ibid). Postman et alli claim that the content is often perceived to be what the student is there to 'get' while the method or form is how the content is 'mediated'. "The medium is the message" implies that there is no separation between content and form. "The critical content of any learning experience **is the method or process** through which the learning occurs" (Ibid, p. 19. My boldface). This is compatible with Gibson's view of knowledge, where knowledge is

something the brain is *doing*, rather than something contained in the brain; knowledge is a process (Gibson 1979).

Like Gibson's (1979) ecological perspective, Postman and Weingartner (1969) explain that a learning environment is also a type of ecology. Ecology, explains Postman et alli, "is about the rate and scale and structure of change within an environment. It is about how balance is achieved..." and means "all things in moderation" (p. 17). An educational ecology contains nothing good in itself; everything depends on some opposing force which keeps it in balance. This opposing force is manifested in "feedback". Feedback is the oppositional complement that when functioning effectively, keeps an ecology balanced. A lack of feedback results in a collapse of the ecology's homeostasis (Postman et alli 1969). An example of this is reflected in Englund's belief expressed above where educational environments should consist of teacher-student interactions characterized by participation and the problematization of knowledge. By problematizing knowledge students give feedback, which reduces the development and growth of potentially dangerous ideas. This is necessary in any balanced ecology since "[t]here is no change, development, or growth you can think of-at any level of organization-that will not soon turn lethal if there is no countervailing tendency in the system" (Postman et alli, p. 18).

As it has already been implied above, an environment whose information is not detectable is an environment that lacks affordances. For information to be detectable a balance of perceivable information must be achieved. The remainder of this section will attempt to explain this balance and identify different ways in which information gains in meaning and ways in which it degrades.

American sociologist Orrin Klapp (1986) claims that information is either perceived as a form of *redundancy* or *variety* where both types have a 'good' and 'bad' aspect. *Bad redundancy* and *bad variety* both lead to what he calls *noise* and *banalization*, which results in boredom and meaninglessness; whereas, *good redundancy* and *good variety* lead to a warm experience of discovery and meaning (Klapp 1986). "The meaningfulness of institutions [i.e. environment], then, can be judged by how far in ensemble they balance good variety by good redundancy...and hold noise, banality and boredom to a minimum..." (Ibid, p. 125). If an experience is to be perceived as meaningful, then, an environment must afford both redundant information patterns in the form of good redundancy and diverse information patterns in the form of good variety. When there is too much variety then redundancy needs to be perceived. When there is too much redundancy, then variety needs to be perceived. This can be said to be the essence of balance in a healthy and meaningful ecology.

The concepts redundancy and variety will be developed below and used to interpret interviewees' responses with regard to their experiences of the lecture as a meaningful/meaningless educational form.

5.3.1 Redundancy

Klapp (1986) explains that '*good*' *redundancy* serves four purposes: (1) *Continuity* is concerned with what is already known. It is "good" in the sense that it surrounds us "with familiar cues assuring us that things are, and will continue to be, what they seem: that people are known and reliable" (Ibid, p. 72). This is reflected in ritual and language, which serves to preserve themes of meaning in a culture. (2) *Aid to communication* concerns the importance of clichés, narratives, slogans, aphorisms, jokes and even stereotypes that make communication possible (Ibid). (3) *Identity*; Klapp contends that a loss of good redundancy is really a loss of identity. Good redundancy warms the heart

and tells people who they are and who they were. Souvenirs and ceremonies mark certain parts of people's pasts and feel good when they can restore meaning for people. (4) *Social resonance* can be described as a kind of attunement or a feeling of active engagement. Familiar information "call[s] one into a performance that matches the pattern or rhythm of another in a nicely responsive way" (Ibid, p. 76). Resonance can be referred to as a 'we' feeling, camaraderie, rapport, where members of a group are attuned. Resonance then is not mere arousal but a common form of familiarity that is necessary for humans to create meaning.

On the other side of the continuum, Klapp (1986) explains that there is a kind of 'bad' redundancy which leads to *banalization*. Banality can be defined as something which is devoid of freshness or originality. The best way to banalize something is to multiply it endlessly. As Postman (1992) notes: "One picture...is worth a thousand words. But a thousand pictures, especially if they are of the same object, may not be worth anything at all" (p. 166).

If good redundancy brings *continuity*, then bad redundancy disrupts it. For example, when meaningful ritual is replaced by formalism (Klapp 1986). If good redundancy *aids communication* then bad redundancy breaks it down. This type of redundancy acts like a filter keeping communication from coming through. Such a filter supplies no feedback and is sterile and uncommunicative. People want to know that "someone is at the other end of the line, who has something to say to us, even whose mistakes are interesting" (Ibid, p. 78). If good redundancy reinforces *identity* then bad redundancy weakens identity, stripping people of their bond of solidarity. Finally, if good redundancy enhances resonance, then bad redundancy distorts it. Klapp hypothesizes that the chief cause of bad redundancy is the insertion of any mechanical element into a living environment. Mechanical systems ignore individual variations and become stale, mechanical and formalistic (Ibid). The give-and-take message that makes life meaningful disappears in the mechanical message, which cuts off feelings from the experience.

5.3.2 Variety

Good variety stimulates and challenges the mind (Klapp 1986). Complexity is often preferred to the concept of simplicity, since complexity has something deep to reveal. With good complexity there is hope that one has a chance of putting the complexity into a coherent whole. People need challenges (Ibid).

Klapp (1986) contends, however, that even variety can be boring when it approaches randomness and has nothing to say. Like *bad redundancy*, *bad variety* also degrades information and becomes *noiselike* when there is an overabundance of it. Meaning formation has always taken root in different forms of oral discourse whether it be debate or chat and "slowness characterizes most talk compared with mere information transmission. Deep discussion...takes hours, even years or decades to reach meaning other than superficial" (Ibid, p. 113). An overabundance of information does not afford individuals with the necessary time to create meaning.

Klapp (1986) presents four types of *noise* which are relevant to ways in which a lecture could be experienced as less meaningful: (1) *Disconnectedness and irrelevance* is information that is too disconnected and thus becomes like a big puzzle where the pieces do not fit together (Klapp 1986). (2) *Bad complexity* promulgates confusion since it has no pattern and does not afford the opportunity of deciphering the meaning. (3) *Channel clutter* occurs when too many senders try to use the same medium at the same time (Ibid). The result is many messages which create shallow attention and engagement,

subsequently leading to a meaningless experience. Finally, (4) *sheer overload* is a phenomenon where perceivers are swamped with information (Ibid).

5.3.3 An Ecological Model

The above summary attempted to show how information can be degraded and thereby hinder the creation of meaning. What can be concluded, then, is that the lack of meaning lies on both ends of a continuum, from redundancy to variety. An experience which moves too far either way entails a meaningless experience. Below, a model will be presented that brings together the above thoughts. The model includes four key concepts: (1) *information (meaning)*, (2) *entropy*, (3) *redundancy*, and (4) *variety*. These concepts are divided into pairs with meaning (information) being on the opposite end of entropy, and redundancy being on the opposite end of variety. Entropy is the opposite of meaning in that entropy is defined as a tendency towards confusion or randomness. In this model, a gain in *entropy* is a loss of *meaning*. The other continuum consists of: *redundancy/variety*. There are both meaningful and boring aspects of both redundancy and variety as described above. In other words, there are two ways of having a meaningless experience. The first being too much information that tells nothing new; redundancy, and the other is an overload of info that is so *noisy* that it is impossible to discern a meaningful pattern. On the other side of the continuum, there are also two ways of having a meaningful experience. The first is information that is so familiar, communicative and useful that it evokes warm memories; *good redundancy*, and the second is information that is so interesting that it leads to learning, discovery and progress; *good variety*. This is exemplified below.

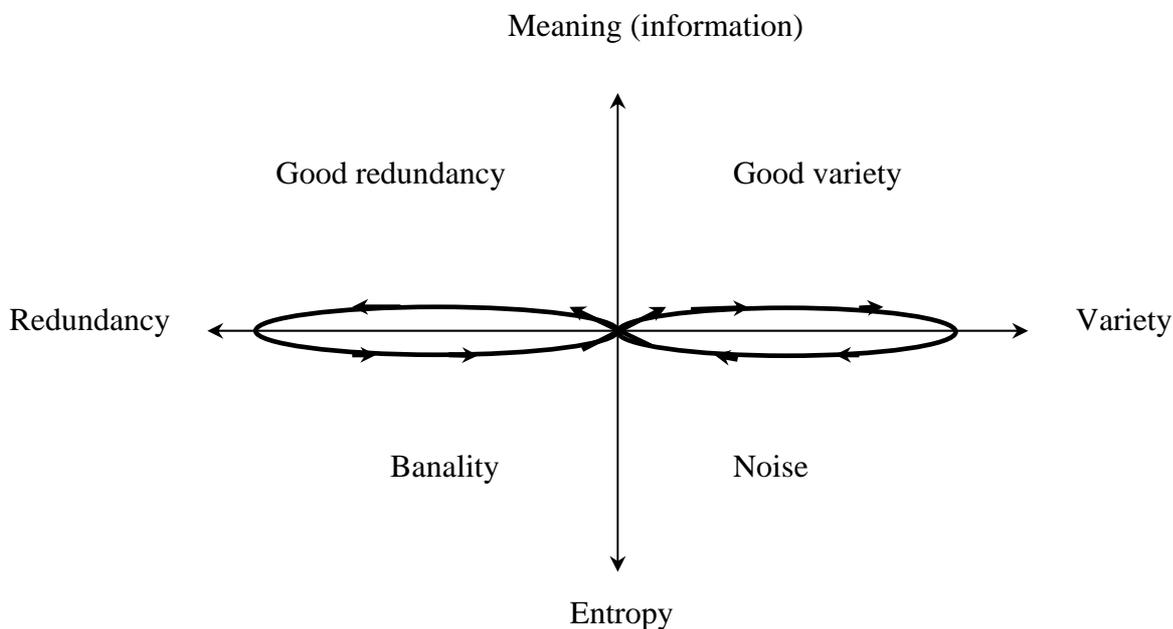


Figure 1: Balance of Meaningful Information
 (Adapted from “Chart of Information Search” Klapp (1986), p. 120)

Making use of Gibson’s and Postman’s terminology, the above model describes how an educational environment might seek equilibrium. In this model, there are two opposing

forces operating. The first being a need for information and meaning; the second being the force termed entropy, which is working as a tendency toward disorder and meaninglessness. To escape meaninglessness, the environment must supply students with information that will move them in the opposite direction of the present situation. If too much noise is experienced, then the environment must provide students with redundant information so that they can find meaningful patterns. If too much banality is experienced, then the environment must provide students with variety, which will produce a break in the monotony.

To sum up what has been covered in this essay thus far, McLuhan's theory on media has been presented where it was contended that each medium conveys its own view of reality by altering the meaning of a message. It was then hypothesized that when the meanings of events and/or media are perceived, they then afford human beings with the opportunity to act. Actions can be said to be a kind of feedback, which if read correctly by participants in the environment, create a meaningful and balanced ecology. For an environment to be meaningful it requires that humans perceive the information that the environment offers. To perceive information, the information must be detectable. Klapp (1986) contends that for one to detect information, an environment's information must contain a balance between *variety* and *redundancy*. When an environment's information is not detected then its affordances are not perceived. This leads to actions that do not contribute to the ecology and result in a breakdown in feedback. This ultimately renders the environment devoid of meaning.

The next section will describe that which defines how humans experience meaning; language and its functions.

5.4 Language, Culture and Communication

Perhaps the most important aspect of meaning is a human technology which makes all of these theories, and even this essay possible; language. In McLuhan's model above it has already been hypothesized that language is the extension of human thought. However, language is not only a medium for our thoughts that we communicate to other humans. According to McLuhan's theory it also controls the way individuals and their culture view reality. "We see the world as it [language] permits us to see it" (Postman 1995, p. 83). By constructing sentences, humans are actually constructing a world view (Ibid). For this essay's purpose, the concepts *language* and *culture* will both be viewed as broad terms. By *language* it is meant all Western languages, where a sharp distinction will not be drawn between Swedish and English. This is based on Postman's (1992) claim that languages of Western society have a "scientific outlook" (p. 124). This means that Western languages have a bias for logic and decisive division of terms. Languages of the Far East, such as Japanese, do not generally make use of logic in a Western sense; terms and their meanings are often more ambiguous (Postman 1992).

The use of language, in the form of words and narrative, conveys a complex world for humans in a reduced and simplified manor (Postman 1992). Language makes life comprehensible and meaningful. A culture, then, can be seen as a group of people who not only share a common language, but who also share a system of meanings (Bruner 1990). Linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) refer to culture as a group of people that share common *concepts*. These shared meanings or concepts enable human beings of the same culture to interact with one another and describe aspects of the world which are functional (Säljö 2000).

Language on a basic level can be said to have an *indicative function* (Säljö 2000). This function concerns names for objects, events and phenomenon. On a deeper level language has a *semiotic function*. This function concerns more than just what the words stand for, rather what meanings they signal (Ibid). Postman (1995) explains that what things are named and what meanings the words signal will be largely determined by a culture and its language.

According to the philosopher John Dewey (1998), “[t]he primary motive for language is to influence (through the expression of desire, emotion, and thought) the activity of others...” (p.239). What Dewey is implying is that a primary motive of language is its *rhetorical function*. In the lecture environment, where the spoken language is the primary medium of communication, language’s rhetorical function will potentially determine what actions participants will take. In an attempt to illustrate how rhetoric creates meaning and affords action, a background in rhetorical communication will be presented.

5.4.1 Rhetorical Communication

According to Kennedy (1991) humans and animals alike have a natural instinct to preserve themselves. One of the ways in which they do this is by using signs such as howls and growls. This is also true for human beings who use speech. According to Kennedy’s broad definition, all of these ‘signs’ are examples of rhetoric. For Kennedy rhetoric is a natural process which can be defined as: “the energy inherent in emotion and thought, transmitted through a system of signs, including language, to others to influence their decisions or actions” (Ibid, p. 7). From this natural process arise different social and political contexts which develop in ‘civilized’ societies which mold speech into conventional forms (Ibid). The traditional lecture hall would be an example.

Communication theorist James McCroskey (2006) claims that communication is a broader concept than language in that it often uses language as a tool. Meaning, from a communication perspective, is not found in the words, but rather in the people that use them. “No word has a meaning apart from the person using it” (Ibid, p. 32). This means that for a rhetorical communicator’s message to be meaningful, s/he must choose words (and nonverbal signals) based on what s/he expects the receiver’s meanings for those words to be. A failure to do so will result in a communication devoid of meaning.

According to McCroskey’s (2006) model there are three important phases in all rhetorical communications: (1) the *encoding process*, which concerns itself with translating an idea into a message which will resonate with a receiver. Classical rhetoric is primarily concerned with this step in the communication process and focuses on *invention, disposition* and *style*. Invention is the creation of a message; disposition is how the message is arranged; style is the words and phrases that are chosen. This first phase is an audience-centered process. (2) The *transmission process* is the sending of the message. This is done via a ‘channel’ which is primarily written or oral (Ibid). (3) The *decoding process* occurs when the receiver, upon obtaining the transmission, attempts to understand the message. The decoding process consists of four parts: (1) hearing-seeing (e.g. body language, tone of voice), (2) interpretation, (3) Evaluation and (4) Response (overt and covert).

McCroskey (2006) explains two aspects which can interfere “with the generation of intended meaning in the mind of the receiver” (p. 26): (1) *Foggy thinking*, which is often caused by lack of experience or education where the source (lecturer) is not familiar with information or concepts that s/he will discuss. (2) *Lack of understanding in encoding*

process occurs when the source (lecturer) has a misconception of the audience and prepares material for audience A while lecturing to audience B. (Ibid).

In oral-communication situations, such as lectures, people send *feedback*. If an orator observes feedback, s/he must interpret it and evaluate it in relation to the original message's intent (McCroskey 2006). "The teacher must be alive to all forms of bodily expression of mental condition – to puzzlement, boredom, mastery, feigned attention, tendency to show off..." (Dewey 1998, p. 275). This implies being attuned to student perceptions.

Style and Delivery

Two essential concepts relevant to rhetorical communication are style and delivery. *Style* as McCroskey (2006) defines it "determines, to a major extent, the meaning that is stimulated in the mind of the receiver by a message" (p. 233). The meanings are in people, but the meanings in people's minds can be stimulated to awareness by the speaker (Ibid). A lecturer's style is primarily concerned with getting and maintaining the audience's attention. However, attention and the audience's interests must be considered together. The more interesting a message is the more likely a message will be received. From an educational perspective, Dewey (1998) claims that teachers who are able to communicate their enthusiasm for a subject awake a new intellectual interest in students. They have the ability to "stir up the mind, to get it going... to impart by contagion some degree of intellectual excitement" (Ibid, p. 263).

There are several concepts related to *style* which are relevant to this essay: (1) *Concreteness*, which emphasizes the importance of relating the subject matter to the present circumstances. It is much easier to be interested in a subject or concept when it is made specific and concrete. Abstract ideas are often interesting, however, are much more interesting when they are made *concrete* (McCroskey 2006). As Dewey (1998) claims: "A diffusive blur and indiscriminate shifting characterize what we do not understand" (p. 141). Vagueness creates ambiguity and allows different meanings to be mixed together, which affects the attention of the students. To achieve a total definite state is impossible; however, through great effort it can be reduced (Dewey 1998). (2) *Personal touch* is an important aspect of keeping attention since people generally attend to things that personally involve them (McCroskey 2006). (3) *Explicitness* concerns the ability to maintain contact with the audience when it is not well versed on a topic or when subject matter is unfamiliar. In these cases, suggestion is less effective than drawing explicit conclusions (Ibid).

Delivery, which includes *naturalness*, *conversational quality*, effective use of *body language* and effective use of *voice*, are also important aspects of successful rhetorical communication. *Naturalness* concerns itself with that which does not call attention to itself. Good delivery, then, "should be natural rather than artificial or mechanical" (McCroskey 2006, p. 274). *Conversational quality* entails that a message should not be delivered to an audience, but rather should be communicated like one is conversing **with** the audience. Just as in a conversation, the audience gives feedback. As a result the speaker adapts the message to meet the needs of the people that the speaker is conversing with. The audience will then adapt once again and the cycle continues (Ibid). In this way it is a kind of "give-and-take of ideas" (Dewey 1998, p.284). Concerning *body language*, effective communication is dependent on posture, movement, gesture and facial expression. *Voice* is the main instrument that transmits the message. What is important is volume (how loudly or quietly the lecturer talks), the rate at which ideas are presented,

and how a message is articulated. A final aspect of delivery is that has shown that ‘good’ “delivery tends to increase a source’s ...credibility; bad delivery tends to decrease it” (McCroskey 2006, p. 91).

Ethos, Pathos and Logos

A final aspect of rhetorical communication relevant to this study is *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*; all of which can affect the meaning within the lecture environment. According to Herrick (2001), *ethos* concerns a speaker’s character or credibility. In order to establish *ethos* a speaker must exhibit intelligence, virtue and goodwill. *Ethos* is not something that is based on prior reputation, but rather something that is established with an audience on a certain occasion (Ibid). *Ethos* is found in the speaker (McCroskey 2006). *Logos* concerns the words, arguments or logic of a speech and is connected to the rationality of the persuasive argument. It is the organization of the message (Ibid). *Pathos* is described as an emotional appeal which leads an audience to action. It is an appeal which has the goal of “adjusting an audience’s emotional state to fit the nature and seriousness of the particular issue being argued” (Herrick 2001, p. 83). *Pathos* is found in the audience (McCroskey 2006).

In summary, language and its different functions play a decisive role in the creation of meaning. Western culture has a bias for logic and concreteness where education seeks to diminish vagueness. Making use of Gibson’s and other’s theories above, it can be said that successful communication will help the participants of an environment perceive affordances. From this perspective rhetoric will primarily be concerned with keeping an audience’s attention while at the same time persuading them to take relevant action. It can be concluded that an audience which is more attentive will be more perceptive to the environment’s affordances. Achieving a balanced ecology entails reading feedback signals and altering the message accordingly so that students can better perceive the affordances of the environment. This is what will be meant by maintaining a balanced ecology.

The final section will deal with epistemology and the consequences of the theory “the medium is the message.”

5.5 Lecture Based Epistemology

Epistemology “is a complex and usually opaque subject concerned with the origins and nature of knowledge” (Postman 1985, p. 17). In accordance with “the medium is the message”, the dominate medium being used to convey a message will also affect the epistemology of the environment (Ibid). This essay will not analyze results from an epistemological perspective *per se*; rather, it will be argued that epistemology is something that is relative to the environment in which communication takes place. This section will discuss different lecture environments and the communication that takes place within them.

The traditional lecture’s form can be explained using the so-called “transfer metaphor” (Säljö 2000, p. 25). In this model, sender A encodes a message in language form and sends the message via a medium (e.g. spoken word) to receiver B who decodes the message and saves it for future use (Ibid). Another way of expressing this model is with what Dart and Boulton-Lewis (1998) refer to as a *teacher-centered orientation* lecture. In this model there is a distinction between environments characterized by “imparting

information” and “transmitting structured knowledge” (p. 12). “Imparting information” entails focus on the lecturer’s knowledge of a subject. Knowledge is seen as a fluid which is poured into people. “Transmitting structured knowledge” entails a lecturer who puts great emphasis on the quality of the presentation. It is like a stage performance. The discourse is arranged in a logical sequential order so that it is easy to follow. In this form, knowledge is a ball that must be thrown carefully and accurately by the lecturer so that the message will be easily received (Ibid). This view is compatible with traditional empiricism where knowledge is gained through the senses through observing an expert (Stensmo 1994).

Another kind of lecture is referred to as the *student teacher interaction* lecture (Dart & Boulton-Lewis 1998). In this type of interaction, a lecturer tries to leave gaps in the knowledge, which the students are to fill in. The teacher is there to guide them, rather than force things upon them. However, the teacher still has the role of ‘model’ or ‘expert’. This can be seen as a kind of balance between explicitness and doing as little showing and telling as possible; the purpose is to stimulate reflection. Knowledge in this form is partially shared, but primarily knowledge that is seen or experienced through the interaction with an expert, where the expert and knowledge are fused (Ibid). This has traces of behaviorism where knowledge is a linear process but also has traces of pragmatism where the teacher leads rather than instructs (Stensmo 1994).

Another type of lecture environment is one in which the lecture is closely connected to other types of discussion forums. As mentioned above, Englund (1997) regards action and dialogue as main ingredients for the creation of meaning, which is viewed as knowledge. He therefore suggests that all lectures should be connected to “intense seminars where these lectures and texts are communicated in small groups” (Ibid, p. 23). Englund’s perspective is compatible with both a sociocultural perspective where humans learn in interactions with others (Säljö 2000) and Gibson’s (1979) view of knowledge as a process. In this case, the lecture environment cannot be separated from other discussion environments.

As Wilshire (1990) argues, the modern lecture hall does not always afford the choice of different methods since teachers often lecture to hundreds of students. This implies the difficulty of maintaining a balance of teacher-student interaction (Wilshire 1990). The sheer size of the audience, comprised of students with dissimilar interests, forces the lecturer into an individual performance, which attempts to catch the attention of the diverse audience (Ibid). This lecture form, when in isolation, has a bias for empiricism where the teacher is forced to play the role of master and attempts to pass on his/her knowledge to the students.

5.5.1 Teacher Education Based Epistemology

The traditional emphasis on teacher education revolves around three types of knowledge that can be transmitted (imparted) from scholars to student teachers: (1) knowledge *for* practice, (2) knowledge *in* practice, (3) knowledge *of* practice (Hammerness et al 2005). *Knowledge for practice* concerns the type of knowledge that teachers need to build their own practice: e.g. knowledge of subject matter, learning theories, effects of different teaching strategies. *Knowledge in practice* concerns what expert lecturers know as it is expressed in their practice or in their narratives and reflections. *Knowledge of practice* cannot be transferred, as it must be experienced. It is acquired through reflection upon experience of a phenomenon. Novice teachers, however, can gain *knowledge in practice*

through both observing lecturers' actions as well as through practical examples provided by the lecturers' *knowledge of practice* (Ibid).

5.6 The Didactic Pendulum

One way of organizing and summing up the different theories presented above is to utilize a model which I have named "The Didactic Pendulum". This model is based on the didactic triangle in Hopmann (1997) and readapted according to Marshal McLuhan's theories. This model will be used to understand interviewee's responses and determine the affordances of the lecture. Furthermore, it will be used to determine the manner in which democracy manifests itself in the lecture form.

A major difference between these two models is that the didactic triangle views the content as something separate from the teacher and students. In the didactic pendulum where "the medium is the message", the content (what) and form (how) are not separated from the different forms of media that comprise the lecture environment. In this model, the concept *media* plays a complex role. Firstly, the lecture form is a medium in that it is a technology which has created an environment where human action in the form of communication takes place. In accordance with Gibson's (1979) model, it is also seen as an ecology, which in order to be meaningful must find a balance between redundancy and variety. Communication in this ecology takes place through different media. By media is meant any tool, whether it be technical or intellectual which communicates messages. The environment is comprised of what I have named *live media* (Humans), *software media* (e.g. language, theories), and *hardware media* (e.g. electronic tools). According to this model, content is not something that is separate from the form; it is something that is defined and redefined within the environment as a whole.

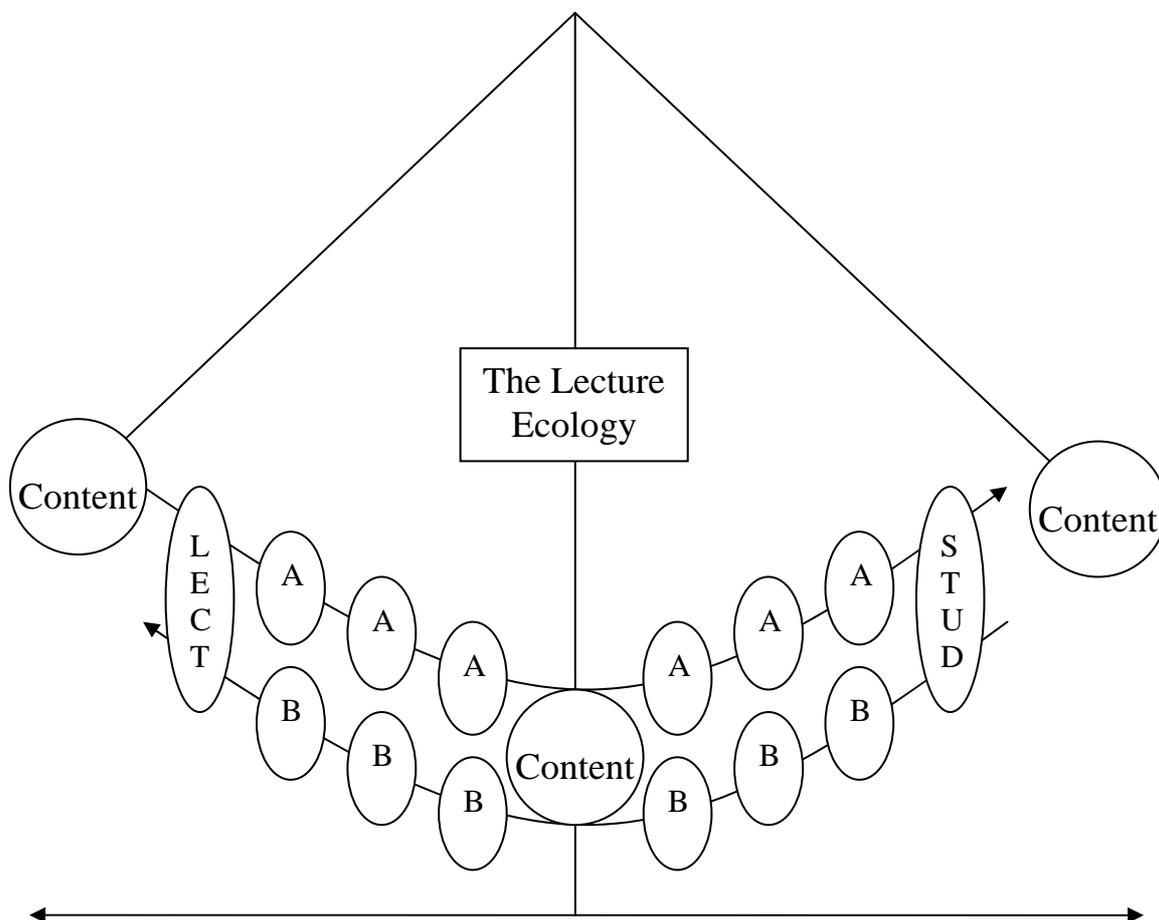


Figure 2: The Didactic Pendulum

5.6.1 Illustration of Model

The lecturer encodes the content of a lecture and it is mediated through him/her, which is represented by the ball and arm of the pendulum entitled “content”. The arm continues through different media, which are represented by the ‘A’ ovals. Each oval acts as a filter which alters the message and conveys its own definition of the content. The content travels through the lecturer and his/her *software media* such as verbal language, body language, delivery, style; then through *hardware media*, such as a microphone or overhead, finally reaching the *passive live media* (students). Students put out their ‘antennas’ in an attempt to identify patterns and invariables in the content presented, attempting to perceive the information. According to how the students experience the message, they will act and thereby feedback through the ‘B’ media channels. Different symbols or events that are perceived will afford different actions. Therefore feedback will come in different forms, which will in turn afford other live media the opportunity to act. A breakdown in feedback will disrupt the balance of the educational ecology. The way the environment affords the live media with the opportunity to act will determine the environment’s epistemology, meaningfulness and value.

6 Method

This section will be divided up into different sections which concern the study's method. First, the choice of method will be motivated followed by a description of how respondents were chosen. Next, it will be explained how data was collected, organized and analyzed. Finally, different aspects of the Method such as the study's validity and ethical aspects of research will be touched upon.

6.1 Theoretical Perspective

According to Miller and Glassner (1997) positivists have as a goal to provide a “‘mirror reflection’ of reality that exists in the social world” (p.99). On the other hand, radical social constructionists contend that no knowledge can be obtained about the social world from the interviewee. Miller and Glassner, however, argue that the rejection of dominant discourses such as positivism miss something critically important. “Research cannot provide the mirror reflection of the social world that positivists strive for, but it may provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds” (Ibid, p. 100).

This essay will utilize the interpretive constructionist theory which concerns itself with how people perceive an event or object and the **meaning** which is attributed to the event or object. It is expected that different objects or events will be given different meanings by different individuals since each brings their own experiences, knowledge and opinions and therefore may interpret things differently. However, in concordance with the definition above, when meanings are shared by a group it can be said that they form a culture. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), this perspective entails that groups of people create such definitions and share them amongst each other. Shared meanings held by those in a cultural group (e.g. common history, work tasks, religion) are what is important in this theory. Interpretive constructivists seek to work out what meanings a group share. At the same time it is recognized that individuals interpret events and objects differently and that an individual is likely to carry their own understandings held by their family or other groups in which they belong. From this perspective conflicting versions of reality can be true at the same time. The interpretive perspective attempts to sort through experiences of various people and then tie together different versions to create a single explanation.

6.2 Choice of Method

The purpose of this study is to ascertain in what ways student teachers experience the lecture as a meaningful/meaningless educational form. Determining the affordances or meaning of an event using the theories above will require a qualitative approach where a qualitative interview form has been deemed appropriate. The interview method is an extremely flexible method where answers can be organized, pursued and analyzed (Bell 2006). According to Patel and Davidson (2003) the purpose of a qualitative interview is to identify different characteristics and aspects of a thing or phenomena. This is compatible with the interpretive perspective, which entails sorting through experiences.

This will demand a greater amount of material, which Bell believes is provided by the qualitative interview method.

An important aspect of this study is to find variation as well as patterns in how student teachers find meaning in the Lecture form. Therefore the student teacher's diverse opinions and perspectives are of interest. Trost (2005) claims that an excellent characteristic of qualitative studies is that respondent's answers are often complex and rich in content. In this vast array of complexity can be found interesting opinions and patterns.

Another consideration regarding the choice of method is the fact that I have worked with language assessments for more than seven years and have carried out hundreds of interviews. I am therefore quite comfortable with the form and feel qualified in regard to Kvale's (1997) claim that the interviewer must be skillful in his/her ability to ask questions. The ability to ask questions means that respondents must be given the opportunity to answer questions with their own words (Patel & Davidson 2003). Variation in responses increases when standardized questions are kept to a minimum (Trost 2005). This entails that follow-up questions are asked when appropriate and that questions in general are asked in the order that they fit into the respondent's replies. To enhance variation in the interview process, an unstructured interview method has been deemed appropriate (Ibid).

6.3 Method of Interview

Rubin and Rubin's (2005) interview model known as *responsive interviewing* was employed in this study. The crux of the model is that an interview is viewed as two interacting human-beings who have feelings, personalities and interests. Interviewers are not expected to be neutral as they cannot enter an interview without their own biases. Who an interviewer is and how they present themselves, affects the interview. Because the interviewer and interviewee interact, they will naturally affect each other. Therefore it is essential that the interviewer is self reflective concerning his or her own biases.

According to this model, interviewers must not impose their views on the interviewee and must therefore attempt to utilize broad questions. Questions must be modified during the interview process so as not to support what they thought before the interview but rather to deepen what they are hearing. The goal of interpretive constructive research is "to find out what conversational partners have seen.... Individual interpretations are not right or wrong...but rather different slants on what happened, slants that the researcher puts together to construct his or her understanding of what has occurred" (Rubin & Rubin 2005, p.150).

Interviews, according to Rubin and Rubin (2005), are structured conversations and are organized by combining *main questions*, *follow-up questions* and *probes*. Main questions are established and structured before the interview and cover the entire research problem. Follow-up questions attempt to enhance concepts, themes and events that interviewees develop. Probes signal the desired level of depth. They ask for examples or clarifications. In summary, main questions will help to find plausible explanations to the research problem. The follow-up questions and probes will provide depth, detail and nuance. Once the data is extracted the results will be analyzed using a variation of Rubin and Rubin's (2005) model of analysis.

6.4 Method of Selection

As stated above, the qualitative interview implemented attempts to extract as much variation in response as possible. In order for this variation to be meaningful, it is deemed necessary that participants in the study have certain commonalities. Therefore, the four student teachers that were chosen for this study have all studied at the same university in Southern Sweden, which was comprised of the same course content, structure and schedule during three terms of the TEP known as AUO. Participants have varying subject backgrounds, have all studied at the university prior to this program and, in addition, have experience from working life. The group is comprised of two men and two women of various ages.

6.5 Implementation of Interview Method

I began first contacting student teachers directly after the completion of the student teaching session. I received a list of all students studying their final term of the TEP at this particular university. I contacted students by telephone and booked interviews with the respective students. I remained as flexible as possible and let the student teachers decide the time and place. Interviewees were interviewed two times on two separate occasions. The first session was conducted before the theory section of the essay was written. This was done so that results would not be too influenced by the literature which could lead to missing deeper insights. In both interview sessions students were interviewed either in their homes and/or at the university, depending on what suited the participants best.

Before the interview process began, I tried to create a comfortable atmosphere. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) claim “[p]eople are usually more willing to talk if they know you” (p. 89). Participants were informed that the interviews were anonymous. In the first session interviewees were informed that they would be recorded. It was also promised that the recordings would be erased as soon as the transcripts were completed. In the second session interviewees were transcribed by hand. In both cases I tried to remain as neutral as possible and informed the interviewee that the interview would not follow a structure, but that questions would be asked according to how the conversation developed. Interviewees were encouraged to talk openly. The second interview took place approximately one month after the first.

To prepare for the interview process an unstructured pilot study was conducted. This entailed testing potential questions on random pairs of student teachers who sat in different group rooms in the local library. The purpose of the pilot study was primarily to practice asking questions in a way that would give as little slant as possible on the results. It was also a way of determining the types of follow-up questions that would be necessary for the controlled interviews.

6.6 Interviewees

Students who took part in the study include four student teachers who have all studied the same program at the same university in Southern Sweden during the same time period. Students are of various ages. For purposes of anonymity all students will be gender free and referred to as Student Teacher (ST) and # – ST1, ST2, ST3 and ST4 respectively.

6.7 Analysis

The analysis that was utilized was adapted from Rubin and Rubin (2005). They describe the process as moving from the raw interview to evidence-based interpretations where the researcher classifies, compares, weighs and combines meaning in an attempt to uncover patterns and “to stitch together descriptions of events into a coherent narrative” (Ibid, p. 201). The analysis took place in two separate phases. In the first phase, the first set of interviews was transcribed into Swedish. Once the transcripts were completed a variation of Rubin and Rubin’s model of analysis was implemented. This entailed identifying and recognizing different concepts and themes in the different interviews. Concepts, according to Rubin and Rubin, are words or terms that are relevant to the research problem. Themes are summary statements of that which is going on. The first interview phase attempted to answer the first research question, which then was important in answering research questions 2 and 3.

The first set of interviews sought to get the interviewees into a general discussion about different aspects of the TEP. This was done to establish a system of shared meaning or what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) refer to as shared cultural concepts. The analysis consisted of highlighting common words in the transcripts that interviewees made use of when describing their positive and negative experiences of the TEP. Next, a label was created that described larger concepts that these words were a part of. Rubin and Rubin (2005) refer to these labels as “codes”. These codes were then written on the transcripts in areas where interviewees described experiences and phenomena that were meaningful/meaningless for the interviewees. Positive experiences were seen as meaningful and negative experiences were less meaningful. Once these codes were established, they were written into a single file on separate piece of paper. The files were then systematically examined to clarify what was meant by each concept. This entailed defining the codes according to all the ways in which interviewees used them. Once the codes were defined they were divided up into two separate groups. When interviewees spoke positively of an experience, then the concepts that were used to describe the experience were deemed meaningful and placed into one category. When interviewees spoke negatively of an experience, the concepts used to describe the experiences were deemed meaningless and placed into another category. Often concepts that were created had antonyms. When concepts that were created lacked antonyms, opposites were created based upon what the opposite would entail. It was assumed that concepts that described meaningful experiences must also have an opposite concept which describes meaningless experiences.

Once these concepts were divided into meaningful and meaningless categories they were further divided into Klapp’s (1986) model in Figure 1 above. This entailed interpreting concepts that represented good redundancy and good variety and concepts that represented bad redundancy and bad variety. The definitions that Klapp provides for these concepts were used to organize the data.

Once these concepts and themes were clarified and organized into a typology of cultural concepts in 7.1 below, the second phase began. The second session focused on interviewees’ experiences of the lecture form. This part of the analysis established different themes. This entailed using a similar method to the one described above. Once the notes were transcribed cleanly into English, different concepts developed in section 4 were used as codes to label possible themes. Once different themes were identified they

were placed into files. These files were analyzed and each theme was developed and explained using the cultural concepts established in the first interview together with concepts developed in sections 4 and 5. Different explanations (both positive and negative) were synthesized and different themes and narratives were created. The majority of the data was organized using the model in Figure 2 above. Results were organized beginning with the affordances of the lecture environment as a whole and work its way down to the affordances of minor aspects of the lecture.

6.8 Study's Validity

Even if I feel comfortable with my ability to get interviewees to go into depth, this study's reliability can be influenced by the fact that I am quite inexperienced when it comes to qualitative studies. The purpose of a language assessment interview is to get people to talk rather than to lead and probe.

A critical aspect of this study is the fact that many of the students may not talk openly for fear of lack of confidentiality. To increase the studies validity I guaranteed participants that personal details would be kept to a minimum. To assure reliability in participants' responses the first interviews were taped. This enabled me to produce an accurate transcription of the interviews. The second interview session was written by hand to save time. In this case, there is a risk that certain details that I was not looking for were ignored. To be as unbiased as possible, I tried to control the pace of the interview, and asked interviewees to repeat comments. To assure that my assessments were fair, interviewees were permitted to read through the transcripts.

A study's validity, according to Patel and Davidson (2003) can be strengthened by an independent observer who scrutinizes the instruments utilized in the gathering of data. This also is a weakness in the result since the interview questions have only been scrutinized by me. In an attempt to ensure validity, questions were tested on 20 different student teachers in different contexts during the course of a week. The goal was to primarily test questions, but also to practice being as objective as possible.

6.9 Ethical Issues

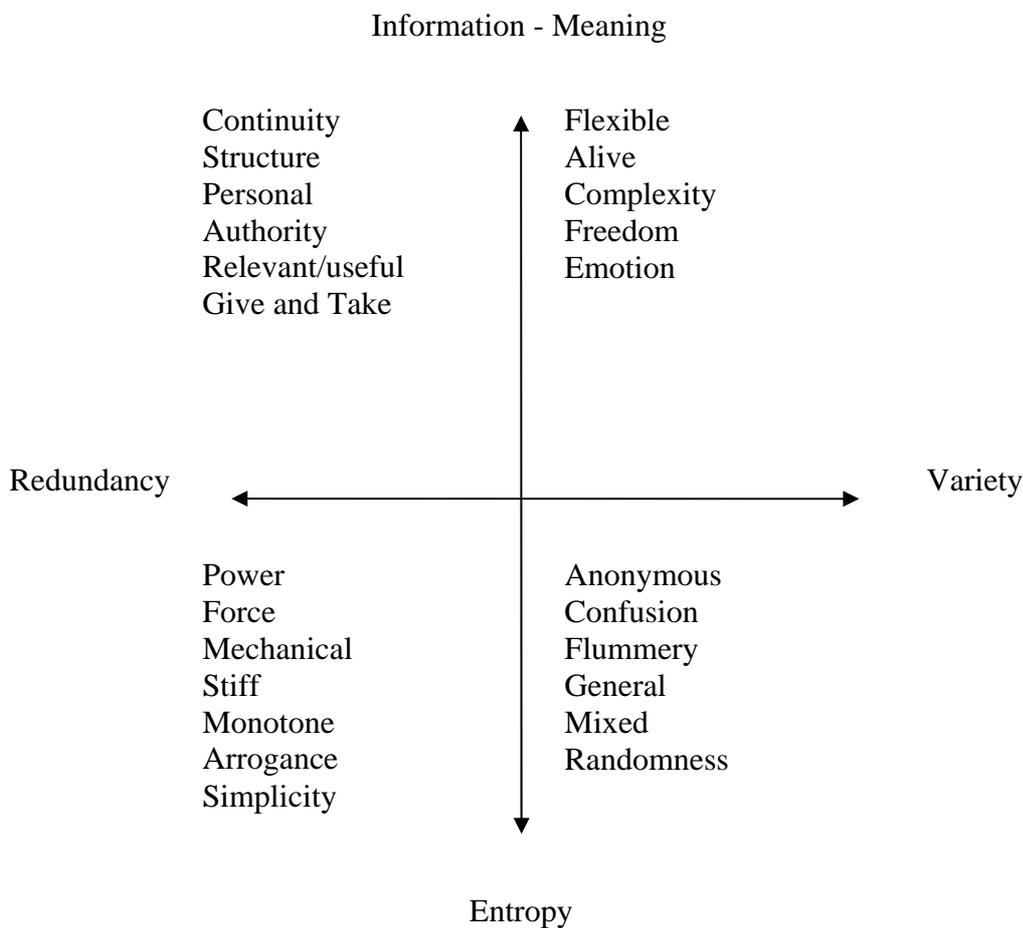
In accordance with the Ethics of Research outlined by *Vetenskapsrådet* (2004) I realize that it is ultimately my responsibility to provide good quality research which is morally responsible. I have consequently followed the ethical principles which are comprised of four demands in regard to the protection of the participants: (1) all participants were informed as to the purpose of the study; (2) all respondents participated of their own accord; (3) all respondents were guaranteed confidentiality in the study; (4) all respondents were informed that answers given in the interview would not be used for other purposes.

Seale et al. (2004) claim that "[we] are obliged to protect the participants' identity, places, and the location of the research" (p. 233). To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, gender pronouns will not be used in the results. All lecturers and respondents will be s/he or him/her. According to *Vetenskapsrådet* (www.vr.se) it is forbidden to create facts, steal or copy data when referring to a source. It is also unethical to twist the process or results by including or excluding data. One safe guard in this respect is that the interpretive perspective encourages the inclusion of all data since contradictions only add to the results.

7 Results

Different concepts have been identified and created according to how students discussed meaningful/meaningless experiences. These concepts will be used to describe and explain different themes which will aid in the construction of different narratives which will attempt to answer the study's research questions. The main concepts are listed and described below by placing them into Klapp's model in Figure 1. The concepts that have been categorized below are an attempt to establish a system of meanings and values that the interviewees share.

7.1 Cultural Based Meaning



It is hypothesized that the concepts that are listed above the redundancy-variety continuum are concepts that interviewees use when discussing meaningful experiences. When experiences are less meaningful, respondents make use of concepts listed below the redundancy-variety continuum. As the model explains in section 5.3.3, moving too far

in either direction on this continuum means that an experience decreases in meaning. Too much 'freedom' may fall into 'confusion'; too much 'structure' may become too 'mechanical'. Below a brief explanation will be given for each concept. These concepts along with the concepts outlined in chapter 4 will be used to interpret and organize the interviewees' responses into narratives.

Freedom and Flexibility/Force

Interviewees describe meaningful experiences as those where students have "free hands" or where situations are 'flexible'. The opposite side of "Freedom and Flexibility" is what has been named 'force'. This concept can be described by how respondents sometimes feel 'forced' into doing things. For example interviewees explain that teachers are sometimes experienced as having a perception of students as always trying to get out of things and therefore need to 'force' students to perform.

Authority/Power

A distinction can be made between being an 'authority' and the word 'power'. 'Authority' is connected with a one's knowledge while asserting authority is connected with 'power'. All teachers have power in the sense that they decide whether students will pass the course or not. However, not all teachers are experienced as having 'authority'. Using 'power' is similar to using 'force'.

Personal/Anonymous

Positive experiences on the program are described as those that were 'personal' where interviewees feel seen. On the other hand interviewees are critical when the program is perceived as being impersonal.

- *I can't claim to have built any relations to a teacher. I can't claim that they know who I am either. You are pretty invisible. ST2*

This feeling of 'anonymity' expressed in the quote above goes both ways as even some teachers can be experienced as 'anonymous'.

- *I was joking one time that there were so many initials on the course schedule. I have no idea who is who. There are a lot of teachers who are more or less anonymous. ST1*

Give and Take /One Way Conversation

Closely connected to this concept 'personal' is 'give and take', which emphasizes the importance of human interactions.

- *All of the discussions with other students have been very meaningful....When you have a seminar with students that discuss and contribute to the discussion, that is the optimal. ST2*

On the other hand, lectures that were experienced as merely transmitting knowledge where a one way conversation took place were not experienced as meaningful.

Relevant – Useful/Irrelevant

That which is relevant is that which is connected to reality. Interviewees emphasize the need for a connection of theory and practice or knowledge that can be used. When content is not connected to the teaching profession it is deemed irrelevant.

Structure/Confusion

‘Structure’ is an important aspect in the interviewees’ experience of finding meaning. The opposite of ‘structure’ is ‘confusion’. When interviewees’ discuss the term *meaningful*, they utilize metaphors which make use of ‘structure’ or things that are ‘concrete’, where for example education is needed to gain a “**base** understanding”. When things are confusing they are “cluttered” and “weak”. Knowledge is something that you “**build** on to”. “The rules of the game” tell students how to behave.

- *The courses structure has been pretty good if you see the **thread** from the first course to the last and so on. It has been pretty **linear** for me. ST2*

Both of the highlighted words can be seen as cultural concepts for structure.

Concrete/Flummery

Closely related to the concept ‘structure’ is the concept ‘concrete’. The opposite of this concept has been deemed ‘porridgey’ or ‘flummery’.² Respondents emphasize the importance of experiencing something as ‘concrete’ and being able to “grasp” it. This concept can be both described by a need to not only ‘grasp’ a phenomenon but also to ‘see’ it.

- *When you make use of “flummery” it is ok to test different perspectives of a thing. The goal is to reach something concrete. When you don’t reach something concrete, then “flummery” is negative. There is only confusion... You can define it as irrational or illogical. ST1*

Things that are not ‘concrete’ are not rational or logical. Other concepts such as ‘diffuse’ or ‘intoxicated’ were also used to describe situations that were vague.

Specific/General

Closely connected to the above concepts is the concept ‘general’. When interviewees are critical about certain parts of the course they describe them as too ‘general’ and emphasized the importance of being ‘specific’. ‘General’ is closely connected to ‘diffuse’.

Mixing/We

Experiences can also get confusing when things are ‘mixed’. Certain lectures and seminars are not experienced as ‘relevant’ when groups of students studying different age groups are described as being ‘mixed’ together. On the other side of the continuum is the concept ‘we’. This ‘we’ feeling is generated when students studying the same program are gathered in the same environment to discuss common problems or ideas which are ‘relevant’ to their common future professions.

² “Flummery” is an archaic English word which refers to a kind of porridge that solidifies into a gelatin. It is used as a translation of the Swedish word “flummig” which finds its etymology in the English word “flummery”.

Alive-Emotional/Stiff - Mechanical

Respondents stress the importance of being ‘alive’ as opposed to being ‘stiff’. The concept ‘alive’ runs like a thread throughout the different interviews. It could be said that which is perceived to be ‘alive’ or ‘living’ is experienced as meaningful. The ‘alive’ concept includes experiences that are emotional and warm.

- [S/he] is so alive!...I think that is exciting. It doesn't become stiff. More alive. ST2

This concept's antonyms are that which is perceived as ‘mechanical’ or ‘stiff’. There are also several other concepts described above which are intertwined into this concept. An ‘alive’ experience is one that is ‘flexible and free’, ‘humble’, ‘complex’ and ‘personal’. When an experience is over-structured it can be experienced as too ‘mechanical’ or ‘stiff’, which can ‘kill’ the experience.

Continuity/Randomness

This concept is closely related to ‘structure’ and ‘anonymity’. ‘Continuity’ is expressed in interviewees’ ability to find a ‘thread’ in the course and in their descriptions of different courses which follow a general pattern. However, interviewees sometimes experience different parts of the course as time-fillers that are not ‘connected’ to each other, giving a ‘choppy’ feeling to the course. This together with a feeling of ‘anonymity’ can produce a feeling of ‘randomness’.

Humility-Complexity/Arrogance-Simplicity

‘Humility’ is named as a quality that was gained in the TEP. Interviewees explain that they see life as much more ‘complex’ than before the program, where ‘complexity’ leads to ‘humility’. ‘Humility’ is an important quality for teachers to possess. ‘Humility’ is connected to the concept ‘authority’ where a teacher does not assert their ‘power’ but remains ‘humble’ to the amount of knowledge they possess. The opposite is ‘arrogance’ where ‘complexity’ is often ignored and ‘power’ is asserted.

7.2 Themes

Several different themes have been organized from the empirical data assembled in the second interview session. The terminology from 7.1 together with concepts outlined in sections 4 and 5 will be used to develop and describe different themes that were extracted from the interviews. These themes will be developed into narratives of meaning. When relevant, quotes and concepts will also be used from all available interview sessions. These narratives are **interpretations** of the interviewees’ responses and explanations of a complex reality. When the concepts from 7.1 are used, they will be written in single ‘parentheses’. When concepts from sections 4 and 5 are utilized they will be written in *italics*. Finally, the model in Figure 2 will be implemented to analyze and explain the different narratives.

As this essay has regarded the lecture form as a total learning environment, it should be noted that none of the categories below can be separated from its total form and its smaller parts. It is the whole ecology that is relevant. It is also important to take note of Walter Ong's (1971) observation that “the media is not the message, for one medium will incarnate many messages” (p. 290).

7.2.1 Messages and Affordances of the Lecture

When interviewees discuss the lecture form they do not make a distinction between the lecture and the lecturer. Meaningful lectures entail meaningful lecturers. Meaningful lecturers are determined by how the lecturers use different *media*. The main *media* that are identified were the use of rhetoric and Power Point.

It can be said that a lecture's affordances are experienced when a lecturer is experienced as 'flexible', 'dynamic', 'humble', inspirational, open, knowledgeable and 'structured'. Affordances are perceived when lecturers do not practice 'flummery' and seek to reduce *vagueness*. They are 'authorities' at the same time as they do not overuse their 'power'. They above all need to be 'alive.' When lecturers reflect these concepts then *the teacher is the content*.

- *If that one lecturer who talked about school law presented the same content as one of our anonymous teachers, it [content] would probably be interesting. ST1*

The content, "school law", is not interesting until it is mediated through the lecturer's *enthusiasm*, use of *body language* and ability to connect content to a real life situation and its 'usefulness'.

Interviewees do not expect a complete egalitarian relationship with the lecturer. The affordances of a lecture are strongly connected to the lecturer's 'authority' in his/her knowledge *for practice*, knowledge *of practice* and their ability to live out their teaching experience *in practice*.

Interviewee's descriptions of different lecturers have been weaved into three different narratives of meaning. Each type of lecturer offers different affordances.

The Mentor

The *mentor* is a lecturer who has a deeper knowledge of the subject matter. They accept alternative opinions from the students and try to incorporate them into their lecture.

Mentors can easily jump off track while still working towards a fixed point.

- *This teacher never reads from the text but speaks from the heart...and has a lot of different ways of giving us information. ST4*
- *[This teacher] is flexible and... dynamic! If [s/he] has certain content that [s/he] is going through... [s/he] can easily jump off track. [S/he] is so alive. [S/he] is not dictated by the content.... It doesn't become stiff. More alive. ST2*

The above citations illustrate how the *mentor* establishes *ethos*. *Mentors* have deep knowledge, but at the same time practice 'humility', maintaining a close 'personal' contact with the audience; thereby making the lectures 'alive'. The *mentor* is an 'authority' who leans on their deeper knowledge of subject matter and humanistic skills. They are 'flexible' and 'personal'. They have a deep love for what they are doing and their feelings for the subject are contagious. This contagion creates an emotional state or *pathos* in the students. They avoid expressing their opinions so that students are allowed

to form their own while at the same time maintaining a *conversation* with the students. These types of lecturer's afford a 'we' feeling where the environment reflects a *pragmatic* or *socio-constructivist* 'give-and-take' epistemology.

However, the challenge of the **mentor** is to avoid *bad variety* or 'flummery'. **Not** expressing opinions can lead to *disconnectedness and irrelevance*. And letting in too many opinions from students can lead to *channel clutter*. The **mentor** who invites the audience into the creation of content is 'flexible' but still needs to assert their 'power' otherwise the message can lose its *logos*.

- *There should not be too much input from the students since there are often so many sitting in the same lecture hall. Questions need to be carefully chosen so that they can benefit everyone. ST2*

When too many opinions are expressed the result can be a 'non-concrete' experience or what has been termed 'flummery'.

The Dictator

The **dictator** is a lecturer who has a preference for dictating information rather than *conversing* with students. They are not as interested in others' opinions and try to steer the lecture towards a fixed point. They read from a text and do not like to jump off track emphasizing the lecture's *logos*. This can promote an 'unnatural' feeling which lacks *social resonance*. **Dictators** can be experienced as 'forcing' opinions on students. They resonate 'power' at the same time as they sometimes resonate a lack of 'authority'. Another aspect of the **dictator** is their preference for reduction of *vagueness*. The **dictator** uses *continuity* and invites students into a dialogue. However, questions are usually planned into the lecture. This has the tendency to break up the *naturalness* of the experience. In addition, questions asked have a 'mechanical' nature, which can be experienced as 'inflexible' and closed; since 'simple' answers are sought. **Dictators** can be experienced as 'concrete' at the same time as they do not always afford ample room for plurality of opinion and 'complexity'.

- *Certain teachers have decided opinions about what should be in the content and when others come with different opinions they don't want to change their views during the lecture. ...It is not open for new ideas. ST3*
- *Sometimes it feels that discussions are just planned into the lecture and are not really needed...you shouldn't just have discussions just to have them. ST4*

The **dictator** decides from the beginning exactly where the lecture is going. The **dictator** does not always read the feedback of the students and adapt the lecture accordingly. The situation can become a question of 'power' where the **dictator** 'forces' the content to take a certain form. The environment that results from this type of lecturer results in an epistemology where knowledge is structured. The lecturer "knows" something and passes it on to the students. This reflects traces of both a *constructivist* and/or *empiricist* view of knowledge.

The Anonymous Imparter

The third kind of lecturer is the *anonymous imparter*. These types of lecturers are described as “initials” at the bottom of the course schedule. This suggests that a lecture with *anonymous imparters* at the helm lack *continuity* in that students do not recognize familiar cues of the situation. *Anonymous imparters* do not draw attention to themselves. “Sometimes it feels that they are just doing their duty...their job” ST2. Interviewees experience such lecturers as not having a strong feeling for the subject matter presented and the result is a ‘monotone’ experience. *Anonymous imparters* tell facts without making ‘personal’ contact with the students. These kinds of lecturers are more ‘general’ or *vague* and do not relate practice and theory. This can be interpreted as a kind of *formalism*. They neither *dictate* nor *mentor* a lecture; they simply go through the motions. The lack of active engagement results in a lack of ‘we’ feeling and *social resonance*. The affordances of this lecturer are difficult to perceive. The epistemology of this environment puts the content of the lecture in the center. Content is offered as information and left to the student to put into context and make sense of it.

Application of Model

Using the model in Fig.2, the content “swings” through the live medium, the *mentor*, and is perceived as ‘alive’. When the *mentor’s* message is perceived, students are afforded with the opportunity to influence the content, reflect over the content, ask questions and gain interest in the subject. Perceiving the *mentor’s* message results in further inquiry, the forming of individual opinions, debate, digestion of what is being said, and questioning (both *overtly* and *covertly*). Students above all focus and listen. The ecology becomes imbalanced when the *mentor* lets too much *feedback* through B media channels or when there is too much ‘flummery’ and too little *explicitness*.

Content that “swings” through the *dictator* will feel structured and rational, but sometimes even ‘forced’ and ‘mechanical’. Perceiving the *dictator’s* message affords the student with clarity and reduction of *vagueness* leading to clear thinking. Students participate, but do not directly influence the content. When the B feedback channels are closed it leads to resistance, which may disrupt the balance of the ecology. Students may question ideas, but mostly *covertly*.

Content that “swings” through the *anonymous imparter* is experienced as ‘monotone’ and ‘irrelevant’. The affordances of the *anonymous imparter* are difficult to perceive. Without *enthusiasm* or *personal touch* the affordances of an *anonymous imparter* can be reduced to offering no more than just reading a book. During such experiences students begin to daydream, write in their diaries or make shopping lists. Such actions lead to imbalance of the lecture ecology.

Hardware Media: Where’s the Power – Where’s the Point?

The primary *hardware medium* of the modern lecturer has become Power Point (PP). The power of PP, is in its ability to use alternate media (i.e. pictures, film clips) to convey the content of a lecture. Pictures and clips help to connect and explain the text, which in turn helps to explain the spoken message. The point of PP is to create ‘structure’ in a lecture’s *disposition* by using an outlined text which serves as an *aid to communication*. In addition it can also be used to adjust the emotional state of an audience (*pathos*) through images. It can also support the lecture with key words (*logos*). However, PP on its own

can shift the attention from the lecturer to the *hardware media* which destroys *social resonance*. PP is a ‘useful’ tool but should not be in focus.

- *It [PP] is like a football match. A good referee is at his best when he is invisible. And the same thing is true for Power Point.* ST 1

PP is an aspect of *delivery* that should be invisible. When it draws attention to itself it acts as *noise* and disrupts the ‘living’ aspect of the “game”. The heading of this section “Where’s the Power – Where’s the Point?” is an expression used sardonically by ST4, where PP is seen as a “big race” where modern culture uses “Power Point on Power Point”. In addition, the ‘structure’, which is its point, can result in a bad *continuity* where all lectures become exactly the same, lacking an ‘alive’ feeling. When PP dominates, communication becomes sterile and strips the ‘give-and-take’ nature of the lecture ritual allowing no *feedback*. Finally, an abundance of text as opposed to key words can result in a *sheer overload* of information which leads to *banality*.

Application of Model

PP is represented by the A media. As the content “swings” through the PP filter it has the ability to ‘structure’ the content at the same time as it redefines it in written words, pictures and video clips. This affords *logos* and *pathos* and alternate ways of understanding verbal utterances. When PP remains invisible then it becomes a complement to the message of the *live media* affording the opportunity for students to contribute. However, when the content swings through an overload of text or “Power Point on Power Point”, the *live media* is not perceived. When the *hardware media* is too dominating then the perceived message is ‘dead’ and meaningless. When PP dominates, it also filters out any feedback from the passive *live media*, killing student’s influence over the meaning of the environment, ultimately disrupting the ecological balance of information. In addition, the positive affordances of PP are experienced when students have access to a text version before the lecture. This affords students the opportunity to follow the ‘structure’ of the lecture drawing attention away from the PP and letting students perceive the *live media*’s message.

Software Extensions: Rhetoric and the Narrative

When pressed to explain the reasons behind certain lecturers’ ability to *resonate* with students, interviewees mention explicitly different rhetorical techniques.

- *It is important how you perform. How you talk and move. What you offer of yourself, the tone of voice is also important.* ST 2
- *It is also body language (motions with arms like embracing audience). You can’t just stand like this (leans back and folds arms).* ST 2

Aspects of *style* are attributed to making content interesting and ‘relevant’. Nonverbal signs such as *body language*, *naturalness*, *conversation quality*, *tone of voice*, and *eye contact* were all named explicitly as important aspects of an interesting message. ‘Specific’ examples of real life are also important, at the same time students find it interesting when “facts” that one takes for granted are problematized; in Dewey’s words when the *mind is stirred up*. On the other hand, critique is directed towards those

lecturers who practice ‘flummery’, who are *vague* and ‘diffuse’. Interviewees claim that content needs context and *explicitness*.

- *The best ones [lectures] were the ones that mixed in emotions.* ST3

An important aspect of lecturer’s rhetoric can be attributed to their ability to set the audience into a certain emotional state of mind (*pathos*). This is done in two ways; when a *personal* chord is touched with the audience; when a lecturer’s *enthusiasm* for a subject infects the audience. Emotions create an ‘alive’ experience that feels *personal*.

- *By behaving in a relaxed manner a lecturer can create a very...natural atmosphere...to be a human.* ST4

This quote highlights the importance of *naturalness* and *ethos*. To experience a lecturer as “a human” is to experience *ethos*. The concept *ethos* is also exemplified below.

- *I had a bias against XXXX. [S/he] had a totally different attitude before. [this last time] [S/he] was extremely open and really knew the subject.*

The lecturer, in this case, who was initially perceived as lacking *ethos* before the lecture, is able, on this occasion to establish contact with the audience through *character*, *good will* and ‘authority’ and thereby builds *ethos*.

Interviewees detail a *narrative* when describing a lecture that is extra meaningful for them.

- *[The lecturer] was a principle and [the] daughter was very confident and she was ...I think a good football player or something. Two girls moved into the school system and started bullying her. It wasn’t anything that you could prove because they bullied her so secretly. Then ... I think [this lecturer] did not believe her and told [the] daughter to get a hold of herself. Oh yeah, [the lecturer] had missed all the signs, depression and bad grades, and [the lecturer] was a principle that should have recognized all these signals. I don’t remember what happened in the end but I think [the] daughter confronted the bully later on. So it ended happily.* ST4

These kinds of stories help students to relate subject matter and content to its use *in practice*. Aside from implementing many of the techniques discussed above, this lecturer is able, through *narrative*, to connect content and reality as well as ‘personalize’ the experience. This lecture is described as a real life experience.

Application of Model

Using Fig. 2 above, content “swings” through different media symbols (e.g. body language, voice, etc...). When content is mediated through a *natural style* students perceive the lecturer as talking directly to them. Perceiving a *personal touch* affords students the feeling of owning the content. In the *narrative* example, the theoretical content “bullying” “swings” through the *narrative* medium conveying the lecturer’s knowledge of *practice* and expressing theory in a real life situation that students feel a part of. This experience is perceived as ‘alive’, ‘personal’, ‘emotional’ and real. This

narrative affords interviewees with a ‘concrete’ and ‘relevant’ learning experience where interviewees feel as if they experienced the event. The content also “swings” through the *ethos* of the lecturer the *logos* of the narrative and finally through the passive *live media*, the students, creating a *pathos* which spreads throughout the environment. This affords students with the opportunity to experience the feelings involved with bullying and affords student teachers with the opportunity to take action in reality when they later become teachers.

7.2.2 Messages and Affordances of the Students

Interviewees discuss the subordinate role that students play in the lecture form, which affect their perceptions of the lecture’s affordances. These descriptions have been weaved into three different narratives: the *living participant*, the *technical attendee* and the *invisible face*.

The Living Participant

The *living participant* feels like a subject who is a part of the content-defining-process. They are not entirely separate from the lecturer. They above all feel like humans and feel important. Lectures where students are *living participants* are described as “cozy”, which is synonymous with warmth and human closeness. A *living participant* also feels apart of the bigger whole which was referred to by interviewees as a “we” feeling.

The Technical Attendee

The *technical attendee* experiences itself as a “blank slate” or an impersonal object that is stuffed with information. This is exemplified in the quotes below:

- *There was a philosopher who saw students as blank slates that you fill. And sometimes it feels that way with us.* ST2

The Invisible Face

The *invisible face* is an anonymous student sitting in the audience who mostly goes unnoticed.

Application of Model

Using Figure 2 above content “swings” through *living participants* along with other media in the lecture environment which actively redefine content “together with the other 100 who are taking part” ST1. That is, when the content is mediated through the lecturer and his/her extensions, it is then mediated and redefined by the *living participants*, contributing to the mutual creation of content. The B media at the bottom of the model represent feedback to the lecturer. Content that is fed-back to the lecturer will also affect the lecturer’s experience of the content. A lecturer who is ‘humble’ takes the new definition and perceives the affordances of the new content and thereby adapts the message.

The *technical attendee* is an object (rather than a filter) whom the content is forced upon. The pendulum bounces off of students, instead of being absorbed and redefined by them. It may lead to reflection but the action does not affect the environment as drastically as with the *living participants*. Content is “written on” them, not mediated through them.

The content never reaches the *invisible face*. The pendulum is either not swinging high enough to reach them or misses them entirely because of their invisibility. Actions available to *invisible faces* are not perceived.

The *living participant - mentor*, the *technical attendee - dictator* and the *invisible face - anonymous imparter* are compatible and complement one another and are generally found in the same lecture environments.

Audience A and Audience B

Interviewees also describe the necessity of a “we” feeling. When students studying different programs are ‘mixed’ they are converted into *invisible faces*. This is because:

- *It is hard to know which knowledge is relevant for you. How am I going to use this knowledge? Is it for me? When we had lectures with only upper-level teachers then the content is much more interesting. ST3*

Such experiences seem to lack *social resonance* and students do not know who the content is for, resulting in loss of *identity* and *we-feeling*. In these environments the affordances are more difficult to perceive since the lecturer preparing a lecture for *Audience A* also has *Audience B* in the same lecture. This is an impossible *encoding process* where one group inevitably feels invisible. In this way, it is the students introduced into the environment who have a major affect on the content and even the type of lecturer experienced. When students feel invisible the teacher becomes ‘anonymous’. When only *Audience A* exclusively takes part in a lecture:

- *the content is automatically more interesting. Everyone’s opinion becomes more relevant. I didn’t feel a ‘we’ feeling in lectures where everyone was there. ST3*

Introducing many different audiences into an environment not only makes it difficult to find ‘relevance’ but it also makes it difficult for students to be *living participants*. The introduction of *Audience A* and *Audience B* into the same environment can disrupt the ecological balance of information.

7.2.3 Democratic Affordances

Another important aspect of the lecture form is the democratic affordances. On an explicit level, interviewees define democracy simply as having the right to voice their opinions.

- *A student’s voice needs to be heard if it is going to be democratic. But there are limits. The lecture is focused on the teacher and his or her knowledge. There should not be too much input from the students...ST2*

Interviewees are skeptical as to the democratic affordances of the lecture and cite or imply several problems with it. The first is, in McLuhan’s terms, *the medium is the message*. The form dictates the experience; a lecture is not a seminar where students voice their opinions they explain. Another problem is the ‘power’ aspect.

- *Many wouldn't dare to challenge [a lecturer's ideas] since they would be afraid that they wouldn't pass the course. ST4*

This aspect of a lecturer's 'power' works against the principle of *equality* and does not always afford students the 'freedom' to express what they think about different ideas. Students may think to themselves, but if it goes too much against what the lecturer says, they will not voice their opinions. This 'power' is also reflected in the *dictator* who says "it's like this" (ST4), who then proceeds to 'force' the audience in a certain direction. One hurdle that makes it difficult to perceive the democratic affordances is that democracy is mentioned so many times during the program that it becomes a cliché; something that is done for the sake of it. This is reflected in discussions that feel planned into the lesson instead of spontaneous *deliberative* democratic discussions based on *civic participation*.

Another problem with democracy in lectures is that lectures are experienced as isolated from each and other forms.

- *There is no real connection between lectures. They feel like different blocks. There is no transition. ST3*

Lectures are also experienced as being disconnected from other learning forms, including seminars and writing assignments. Even when lectures are experienced as being connected to other forms, interviewees feel that the focus is on what the teachers wanted to hear rather than a *deliberative* dialogue. In seminars it is of course always 'free' to discuss ideas, but interviewees either forget or do not have the time. Seminars tend to focus on writing a report for the teachers rather than establishing *the better argument*.

Democratic affordances are perceived when the *mentor* who is 'flexible', 'humble', open, and an 'authority' does not overuse his/her 'power'. This affords students with a feeling of *equality* and contributes to *the better argument*. Furthermore, they make students feel like subjects emphasizing *polite recognition* of the individual's *otherness*.

Active Participant meets Dictator

Interviewees describe different events which illustrate important affordances which are not experienced consciously as democratic. Interviewees explain a case where a lecturer begins to simplify and generalize the content to an extent that certain students felt marginalized. These students *challenged the assertions* of the lecturer with *counterargument*, which culminated in a heated discussion where students *seized* control of the lecture causing it to self-destruct. It can be said that this event afforded students (the people) with the opportunity to challenge the 'power' structure and influence the outcome. This is reminiscent of the Roman *contio* mentioned above.

Implementation of Model

Using Figure 2 above when content "swings" through different media such as the *mentor* and his/her rhetoric affording students the opportunity to *voice opinions* and influence content, then a democratic lecture is perceived. This means that the B media in the model are perceived by both lecturer and students and are open for communication. This is sometimes lacking with the *dictator* and always lacking with the *anonymous imparter*.

7.2.4 “Observing” in the Lecture Environment

The unique situation of teachers who lecture to student teachers affords a unique opportunity of *learning by observing*. Lecturers who have knowledge *in practice* can visibly be observed. This entails observing how content is communicated by the lecturer and his/her extensions; that is through the lecturers’ actions, *rhetoric*, use of *hardware media* etc... Student teachers learn by observing the “experts”.

Through observation, interviewees learn the importance of *delivery*, making ‘personal’ contact with the students and connecting theory and practice to create ‘concrete’ experiences for students. Once they become teachers, interviewees will utilize methods that are experienced as “good”.

When lecturers fail to practice what they preach, the affordances’ of the environment actually increase.

- ...*experiencing something ‘bad’ has often made me realize how I won’t teach.* ST 4

Interviewees that experienced certain lectures as lacking ‘concrete’ examples emphasize the importance of including ‘concrete’ examples in their own lessons. Interviewees who experienced certain lectures as ‘stiff’ will try to make their own lessons more ‘alive’ by doing the opposite of what they think caused the ‘dead’ experience. Those who experience a lack of student input will take extra precautions to listen to their students.

- *I don’t think I will use Power Point as much as I thought I would. It takes the life out of a lecture.* ST 4

Those who experienced “Power Point on Power Point” will reconsider how they will utilize it themselves.

Interviewees are also able to draw important lessons from lecturers’ mistakes. ST1 states four important lessons that were learned from a lecturer who while discussing planning could not get the PP presentation to function:

- [1] *It can happen to the best of us.* [2] *To don’t say one thing and do the opposite in front of students.* [3] *To always have a plan B.* [4] *Never trust technology.* ST1

Application of Model

Using Figure 2, lecturers are directly or indirectly acting out what they are theorizing about. When the content created in the medium of words does not match the content created in the medium of action it draws attention to itself. In the language of media, this is saying one thing is true and then in the next minute saying the opposite is true. This is *illogical* and ‘confusing’, however, it is also *stirs up the mind*. What these “bad” experiences afford is a chance to observe what leads to less meaningful experiences. These experiences act as a kind of antithesis which lead students to a conscious pedagogy of what they should **not** do as teachers. This, in turn, leads them to reflect and thereby develop a ‘concrete’ view of how they will actually work *in practice*.

8 Discussion

One of the main assumptions made in this study is the belief that humans are products of their tools. Different tools or media afford different actions and reactions. Viewing reality through these tools or media, people perceive events in different ways which determine what an event will mean and consequently what action will be taken. At the heart of this essay then, I was trying to find what possible meanings the lecture form on the Teachers' Education Program offers students. The theories that were summarized were to a large degree a great help in organizing concepts of meaning and enabled me to a large degree to answer the research questions.

In the following sections I will discuss the above results and their consequences while attempting to problematize the findings with a skeptical objectivity.

8.1 Cultural Based Meaning

Trying to establish a 'true' definition for meaning is of course impossible. However, Postman (1979) contends that a true scientist must believe that events can be explained by referring to some organized principle. Above all, a scientist must believe "that the world makes sense" (Ibid, p. 78). The organized principle in this case is the shared meaning which is found in the structure of Western language which was used by interviewees to describe meaningful/meaningless experiences. Using Klapp's (1986) model was an effective way of organizing the different ways in which different concepts were used by interviewees.

A potential problem with the model in this section is the fact that interviews were conducted in Swedish and then translated into English. Translating from Swedish to English entails a new message or meaning. It has already been argued, however, that Swedish and English are both Western languages that share an "ideological bias" resulting in a "scientific outlook" (Postman 1995, p. 124). This implies that Western culture views the world through a language that demands order and structure when perceiving the world. It might be said that the Swedish language has a bias for a constructivist/empiricist epistemology, where one must have a 'base' understanding and things must be 'grasped' or 'seen' to be meaningful. Studies presented by Lowman (1984) also indicate this bias where it is argued that students expect 'clarity' of presentation, 'concrete' examples and 'logical' presentation of information.

A good example of this bias is found in the word 'flummig'. The essence of this Swedish concept is a negative perception of anything that is illogical and non-scientific; it is synonymous with blurred perception. Do words like 'flummig' tell our culture how we should feel about events as Postman contends? The implications of this theory are that anything that is experienced as philosophical, or anything that appears as too complex for simple solutions, may be experienced as meaningless. Englund (1997) emphasizes the importance of problematizing content. The concept, problematize, in my understanding is a modern term for philosophizing. If my view is accepted then it is a term that may be problematic since "[s]tudents...often complain that philosophy is inconclusive" (Graham 2002, p. 38); that is, it may not be compatible with Western cultures scientific outlook. However, the benefits of philosophizing, as Socrates notes, are realizing how much one does not know (Ibid). The question is, how does one get students to see the benefits of

philosophizing, which entails blurring perceptions? Does the Western culture always need to “see” and “grasp” things for an experience to be meaningful? Does our “scientific outlook” demand concrete answers? Previous research indicates that being concrete is important to students. Based on these assumptions, what should a teacher problematize and when should they not do it?

8.2 Messages and Affordances of the Lecture

The typology, which identified different types of lecturers, does not describe individual lecturers, but rather are a sum of various interviewees’ statements and ideals that were built into narratives. These narratives represent different degrees in which students experience lectures as meaningful/meaningless. Postmodernity entails an abundance of information that is mediated through dead machines. This is a plausible explanation for interviewees’ preference for ‘alive’ experiences. Reading from a PP may afford nothing that cannot be experienced in student’s everyday lives. On the other hand, giving a living interpretation of the content, using real life examples through narrative and pictures may resonate with modern students who are swamped with information that they do not know what to do with.

If there are actual *anonymous imparters* then the question begs: what is their motive? Could it be that such lecturers believe that it is the student who is responsible for his/her knowledge? Do they believe that any rhetorical show or use of narrative would deny students of the complexity of real life and influence students’ thoughts rather than leading to reflection? Is being invisible an attempt to deconstruct power structures thereby reducing an authority’s influence? If these are the ideals of certain lecturers, then results seem to indicate that these ideas are extremely problematic. Results indicate that lectures are meaningful when they feel a personal connection to the lecturer. This is also supported by the previous research presented by Lowman (1984) and Brown and Atkins (1988). Furthermore, Wilshire (1990) warns that by attempting to cut themselves off from the student, lecturers disengage themselves from the actual life of meaning-making, blocking knowledge and truth. It would be interesting to conduct a study on different lecturers’ views on lecturing. What strategies do lecturers use to make students feel important, to feel seen? Are these considerations?

The results also suggest that those lecturers who use PP must be extremely careful. PP supports the structure of the lecture but it is also subtractive in that there is a great risk that it can strip the experience of its vitality. What happens when relevant input from the students comes into focus; does PP afford lecturers with the ability to jump off track? The obvious implication is that the lesson turns into something inflexible and mechanical and plods forward towards a fixed point. Are electronic media based lectures completely redundant in the postmodern society? Or is technology such as PP a necessity in order to speak the language of contemporary students? When and how is PP additive? Subtractive? If it is accepted that a feeling of ‘aliveness’ is a necessity in a meaningful experience, then Klapp’s (1986) hypothesis that any technical device introduced into a living environment has the ability to make the environment less meaningful should perhaps be taken seriously. The results suggest that PP was experienced as mostly subtractive. If these results are accepted then the question is, why should PP be used and what are the consequences of all lecturers employing it in exactly the same way?

One aspect of this model that has been marginalized is individual experiences of what different messages could mean for different students. It is plausible that one particular

lecturer could be experienced as a *mentor* by one student and a *dictator* by another. For example a lively tone of voice may resonate with one individual while at the same time be experienced as monotone for another. The assumption in this essay, however, is that the interviewees share meaning. From this perspective, it can be concluded that body language, voice, eye contact, ethos, pathos and logos are all important communicative aspects of the lecture form, irrespective of different interpretations. The model of rhetoric developed in 4.4 was mostly used as an interpretive tool for this essay; however, could it also be utilized by lecturers as a cultural model for creating meaning in the minds of receivers?

Regardless of whether a lecturer consciously uses rhetoric or not, what the results suggest is, lecturers who can communicate the excitement of an idea naturally embody a rhetoric that resonates meaning. Where does this enthusiasm come from? Is it a sincere burning interest? A skilled use of rhetoric? Can lectures be meaningful when lecturers are not enthusiastic? It is difficult to say, however, a student's interests and prior knowledge must also be important. Oliver explains the double-sided nature of this relationship and writes "whatever we attend to is interesting, and to whatever is interesting we freely give our attention" (McCloskey 2006, p. 238). This may be true, but the empirical evidence compiled suggests that it is the lecturer that determines whether the content will be interesting or not. If a lecturer is experienced as monotone, boring and stiff it is may be difficult for students to perceive the information that is being conveyed. In concordance with studies presented by Lowman (1984), this may make it difficult for the *dictator*, who is stiff and businesslike, to provide a meaningful discourse. On the other hand, Klapp's (1986) model implies that too many lectures with an overabundance of enthusiasm and liveliness may also result in bad redundancy which could also be meaningless. Would then monotone and stiff lectures be welcomed? From another angle it seems likely that lecturers will inevitably present material that they are not especially interested in. What then? They can perhaps at the very least use narratives of their knowledge *of practice*; everyone has stories to tell. Even if a lecturer is unable to speak from the heart, the lecturer may be able to activate the meanings which lie latent in the minds of the listeners. This is probably not as simple as using good delivery and narrative, but it may be enough to satisfy individuals with a scientific outlook.

8.3 Messages of the Students

The typology that was created concerning students is once again a sum of the experiences communicated by the study's participants. Of course how active a student is depends largely on an individual's personality. Outgoing and confident students will have the ability to be a participant regardless of the form. However, what this typology sought to illustrate is the types of lecture environments that encourage students to partake actively. In an ideal world, when a lecture environment is comprised of smaller groups of *live participants*, there would be a multitude of opinions, practical examples and critiques of the content affording the opportunity to establish the better argument. The problem seems to be that it is easier for students to feel like objects in larger environments. There is simply not enough room for everyone to express their opinions in large lecture halls. For everyone to express their opinions would mean chaos. How can students feel that they are important and alive in such an environment? According to the results, this requires a great rhetorical performance by a lecturer whose style speaks directly to the individual students. From a democratic perspective this can be likened to Young's (1996) view on

democracy where by speaking to students as subjects there is a polite acknowledgement of the individual. A great rhetorical performance could then be described as both democratic and meaningful.

Another problem with modern lectures is that they are often comprised of students with divergent interests. This makes it complicated for both teachers and students to activate meaning in the minds of others when interests are so varying. This is not necessarily the case on the TEP where all students are aspiring teachers. However, as interviewees note, studying together with teachers with different grade-level focus is potentially confusing and can even result in entropy. One explanation for this could be that it is difficult for lectures to use narrative and connect theory and practice. How can a preschool narrative that relates practice and theory be relevant for a teacher working with adult education? Perhaps that is why some lectures are described by interviewees as general? The consequences of placing different kinds of student teachers together can be a loss of a 'we' feeling which Klapp (1986) contends is essential in any meaningful experience. From a democratic perspective it can be said that a lack of 'we' feeling excludes the logic of equality and makes it difficult to achieve a feeling of solidarity. It can also render content diffuse and confusing making the affordances of the information difficult to perceive. As ST 3 asks himself "What is this for, who is it for? How do I use this? Is it for me?"

8.4 Democratic Affordances

In the Background Knowledge, a summary of the history of oratory was presented in an attempt to highlight the aspects of a lecture which represent meaningful ritual and democratic participation. Democratic affordances express themselves explicitly in student interactions with the *mentor*, when content is created in a kind of traditional oratory dialogue similar to dialogue in tribal cultures. It also expresses itself when students display their disapproval of ideas in a *contio* sense. It would seem from the results that the modern lecture must include the audience in a way which differs considerably from the traditional teacher-centered lecture. When lecturers are experienced as *mentors*, students feel involved in the creation of content. Using this definition of democracy, it could be said that an environment is democratic when the B media channels are open. In other words when lecturers respond to feedback, a lecture's democratic affordances can be perceived. The problem is that the *mentor* always walks a tightrope and struggles to keep the B media channels from cluttering. It could be argued that the more students voice their opinions the more cluttered and meaningless a lecture becomes. What happens when an environment does not afford everyone with an opportunity to voice their opinion? The narrative on bullying was not mentioned in this section of the results, however, it is interesting to discuss it as a democratic phenomenon. It was a lecture that was to a large degree a one-way communication. Is this undemocratic? From one perspective it could be argued that the B media channels were open and the lecturer was taking the feedback in the form of nonverbal signals and adapting the message to the audience's needs. Civic participation can also be defined as reading one another's signals and acting accordingly. From another angle, by appearing as a human and concerned parent, this lecturer reduced the student/lecturer power relationship and presented him/herself on equal terms. Students were also invited into the experience and felt what it might be like to be both a mother and a victim of bullying. Understanding other perspectives and concern for the well-being of others is an important aspect of

democracy. What actions does this narrative afford? This type of story telling, as Young (1996) explains, reveals the experiences of those situated differently and enables justice to be done. If student teachers gain a more conscious awareness of democratic values through the lecturer's argument and are able to implement this awareness into their teaching, is this not the essence of democracy? Student influence is irrelevant when an authority on a subject presents ideas and values that lead to democratic action. Is this not what Tocqueville was implying when he used the term civic participation? What else is the great tradition of oratory but a call to action? Sometimes democracy is something that happens later.

It could also be argued that many lectures lacked democracy in the sense that students did not perceive a channel to vent their opinions. Lectures are to a large degree experienced as isolated events completely disconnected from other forms of discourse. A key element of democracy in the lecture form would seem to be the opportunities that are afforded to students to voice their opinions and challenge authority - **after the lecture**. Englund (1997) emphasizes the connection between the lecture and group discussions where the group discussions are extensions of the lecture. Is this because, he realizes that the *environment is the message*? It would seem that to guarantee that a lecture's affordances are perceived it would be wise to implement Englund's model. This would provide ample room for students to challenge the lecturer's power by affording students with the opportunity to present *the better argument*. This in turn could potentially influence the lecturer's understanding of the content. The results in this study suggest that the lecture form is lacking a major democratic affordance; an explicit connection to other forms of discourse. Does this also make lectures less meaningful?

Perhaps if lectures had an explicit connection to its extensions; the seminar and written assignments, where students are afforded the chance to question biases of the lecturers, then dialogues would be generated where students expand on the functions of the content. This could lead to further affordances for both students and lecturers. If writing assignments are about appeasing the teachers and the seminars about reaching consensus, how does the best argument shine through? If doing is learning, then how do students learn to question power structures if they are not afforded the opportunity to do so? Without perceived connections, the risk is that lectures resonate a "now this" feeling of flipping through television channels; where yesterday's affordances are not relevant to today's actions. Or perhaps there is a clear connection between different forms of discourse and the interviewees are simply victims of postmodernity where individuals have lost the ability to perceive connections between things. Whatever the reasons, previous research indicates the importance of a forum for smaller group discussions where information and problems can be deliberated. This may be best done directly following the transference of information.

Even if it could be agreed upon that participation can be nonverbal and that the *mentor* creates content together with the other hundred students, we are forced to admit that the sociocultural epistemology advocated in the new TEP (SOU 1999:63) has difficulty fitting the lecture form. If, however, knowledge is seen from a cognitive or empirical perspective then there is nothing undemocratic about an expert transferring their knowledge *of/in* practice to subordinates; helping them structure knowledge; providing them with an enlightened understanding. The transfer of knowledge is the transfer of power. This view of knowledge seems to better fit the form. This may require, however, that there are other opportunities given to students to question the subject matter's authenticity. I tend to agree with Waltzer's assessment above and believe that a sound

knowledge of language and rhetoric empowers any student to question the fundamentals of any subject matter and thereby diminishes power structures and increases equality.

8.5 “Doing” in the Lecture Environment

An interesting find in this study is the concept which was referred to as *learning by observing*. It is perhaps common sense to assume that student teachers will emulate what they see the ‘expert’ teachers do. However, that interviewees emphasize what they will **not** do as teachers is an interesting discovery. This find illustrates an important difference in the terms *meaningless* and *affordance*. Experiences where lecturers made mistakes would likely be described as “meaningless”. Meaningless is often used as a synonym for negative experiences. Affordances, on the other hand, are actually neutral. The interviewees who shared these experiences obviously remembered them; this means that they perceived them. Perceiving is learning as Gibson (1979) would say. Even if these experiences may be described as negative, they still have affordances since these experiences lead to actions that have value. This seems to be an extremely effective way of teaching methods without making them explicit. However, if it is accepted that the lecture requires an authority at the center to hold the environment together, then the lecturer who does not embody the truths that they espouse will probably not command attention. According to Wilshire (1990) it is the duty of any teacher and his/her special authority to embody and exemplify personally the value of meaning and truth. “The ultimate educating force is who I am. Since it is the humanities professor who is especially obliged to teach what being human involves, it is especially this person who must exemplify *in person* what self-knowledge and goodness are” (Ibid, p. 31). It might be said that teachers are obliged to teach what teaching involves and they must exemplify what a good teacher is. This is a huge challenge for any teacher of teachers.

8.6 The Didactic Pendulum

Like all models the didactic pendulum that was created is reductionist and is limited to the dimensions that can be perceived on the paper medium. That however, does not mean it is not useful. This model can be used in any situation where communication takes place. It could be said that for a democratic communication to take place both channels must be open and each party must adapt the communication style according to how the information is defined and redefined. From an educational perspective, content is never fully defined, but rather a never-ending dialogue. In situations where there is an authority, the authority may have a dominate role in the creation of content but needs to remain open to the signals of subordinates, always providing a channel to refute ideas while adapting to the feedback that the students provide. It should also be mentioned that in this model the didactic question ‘why’ is seen as an A media which is used rhetorically in a lecturer’s delivery. Explaining content through the ‘why’ tool helps create clarity and explicitness and makes content relevant.

8.7 Conclusion

What have been created in the results are narratives of truth. These narratives are observably false in many respects, while at the same time, they organize and give meaning to the lecture experience on the TEP. They provide lecturers and students with

an explanation of what happened, attempting to explain the intricate relationships that are present in the lecture environment.

Creating a balanced meaningful ecology begins with a lecturer who mentors the experience. This may express itself in student-teacher interaction or it may express itself in a lively rhetorical presentation. The important thing is that the B media channels remain open. In this way, it could be hypothesized that there is no difference between a lecture's affordances and the degree to which it is democratic.

Students that influence the lecture are empowered at the same time as students who gain knowledge are empowered. When knowledge is given a context through rhetoric and narrative, they have the potential to lead to democratic action. The balance of information is disrupted when the channels to problematize or refute the lecturer's biases are closed or are not perceived. The essence of democracy is human interaction (Dewey 1999). It might also be said that the essence of a meaningful lecture is also human interaction.

What has become clear to me in this essay is that the students who in the introduction of this essay experienced the lecture form as meaningless may only mean that they are not fond of lectures, or rather, that they experience them negatively. Another plausible explanation is that they may simply feel like an anonymous object in the large lecture environments. *Meaningful*, in this essay, means much more than 'to be fond of' something; it is learning to perceive different possibilities for action. The results from this essay indicate that students do perceive affordances of lectures even if they are not explicitly able to express them. In Gibson's terms, this means that students learn. In this sense it could be said that lectures have value. However, it should also be noted that previous research indicates that experiencing something as positive is associated with learning. It follows that experiencing something negatively may affect the amount of learning that takes place. Consequently, in order to maximize on the lecture's affordances on the TEP, certain precautions can be taken to create a more positive experience.

Using the background knowledge and theories presented in this essay it may help to explain the lecture's ritualistic and democratic nature to students. Secondly, lecturers could try to help students perceive the connection between different lectures and its extensions; seminars and writing assignments. Thirdly, lecturers could explicitly encourage students to problematize content by pointing out biases and inconsistencies with the lecturers' *own* arguments. This could be done in seminars and writing assignments where it is emphasized that alternative opinions will not affect grades. Fourthly, an awareness of language and rhetoric could be a major element of the TEP. As Richard Weaver writes: "the study of language and its use -that is of rhetoric- is the most vital component of education, for this learning determines the nature of all other learning. Rhetoric is both cultural and personal power" (Herrick, 2001, p. 260).

In conclusion, when its purpose is explicitly stated, a lecture's form may find a meaningful 'good' redundancy, where a feeling of 'we' can be established, where student teachers together with lecturers construct meaning. With sound knowledge of rhetoric and language student teachers can scrutinize a lecturer's claims and thereby offset the imbalance of power. A lecture is an environment where narratives of meaning are shared, where an essential narrative is lived out; mankind's great history of oratory. As I see it, the key for educators today is combating the effects of postmodernity and making students aware of information's affordances; this entails making information as perceivable as possible. For modern teachers the ultimate didactic question becomes: "How do I make this content as perceivable as possible?" A great starting point is realizing that: "the medium is the message" and the best media are the ones that are alive!

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Attachments

Interview Guide 1

1. What aspects of the course were meaningful?
2. Can you define meaningful? What would a meaningful course entail?
3. What is the purpose of the TEP?
4. What do you think of the program's schedule?
5. Describe some of the different learning forms that have been utilized on the AUO. Which ones do you prefer? What is the purpose of these different forms?

Can help with this list.

- Lectures
 - Seminars
 - Essays
 - Student Teaching
 - Group Work
6. What is the teacher's role at the university?
 7. Comment on the schedule in relation to student-teaching and theoretical courses.
 8. How have you developed as a person on this course?
 9. Comment on the different courses that you have studied.
 10. How do you learn? What is your epistemology?

Interview Guide 2

1. Comment on the use of Power Point in the lecture form.
2. What is the purpose of a lecture? Why do we have them?
3. How does democracy express itself in lectures?
4. In which way do you like lectures? Dislike?
5. What is the lecturer's role? Students?
6. How are lectures connected to other aspects of the course?
7. What happens when teachers present ideas that you don't agree with?
8. An example of a lecture that you remember that was bad/good? Describe it.
9. What have you learned from the lecture form? In which ways will you use what you have learned?
10. What are common hindrances that prevent a lecture's message from reaching students?