

## The Role of Classroom Community in Second Language Education

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The construct of classroom and *community* is central in many fields of education, including adult second language education. Descriptions of classroom experience – whether provided by teachers, students or classroom observers -- frequently refer to the phenomenon of community within the classroom. Research on program retention and student persistence in adult education often invokes the concept of classroom community as something which draws and holds students in programs. Recent research on the cognitive development of students in adult education suggests that a student cohort's experience of community formation within the classroom may be central to the learning that takes place, quite independently of whatever impact direct instruction may have within the classroom. Scholars of adult ESOL widely believe such classroom community to be a key contextual feature of adult second language acquisition. Yet, as important as this construct of community may seem, there is surprisingly little empirical research that operationalizes or measures it in the adult classroom.

This presentation introduces and demonstrates a new method for observing and measuring the phenomena of classroom community as it develops over time in low-level adult ESL classes. Time-lapse videography, in which a series of video clips are selected and viewed from classrooms that were continuously recorded over an entire term. Clips are viewed and carefully compared from given classrooms -- early in a term, midway through a term, and late in a term – to illustrate the gradual emergence and development of classroom community. Analyses of changing patterns of social interaction and use of classroom reveal important non-verbal dimensions of community that form over time within the classroom. The key role of classroom development in the teaching and learning of second languages is illustrated and discussed. Implications are considered for teacher education, for language teaching, and for new methodologies in classroom research.