

**Course Topic: Teaching Workplace Preparation****Course Instructor:**

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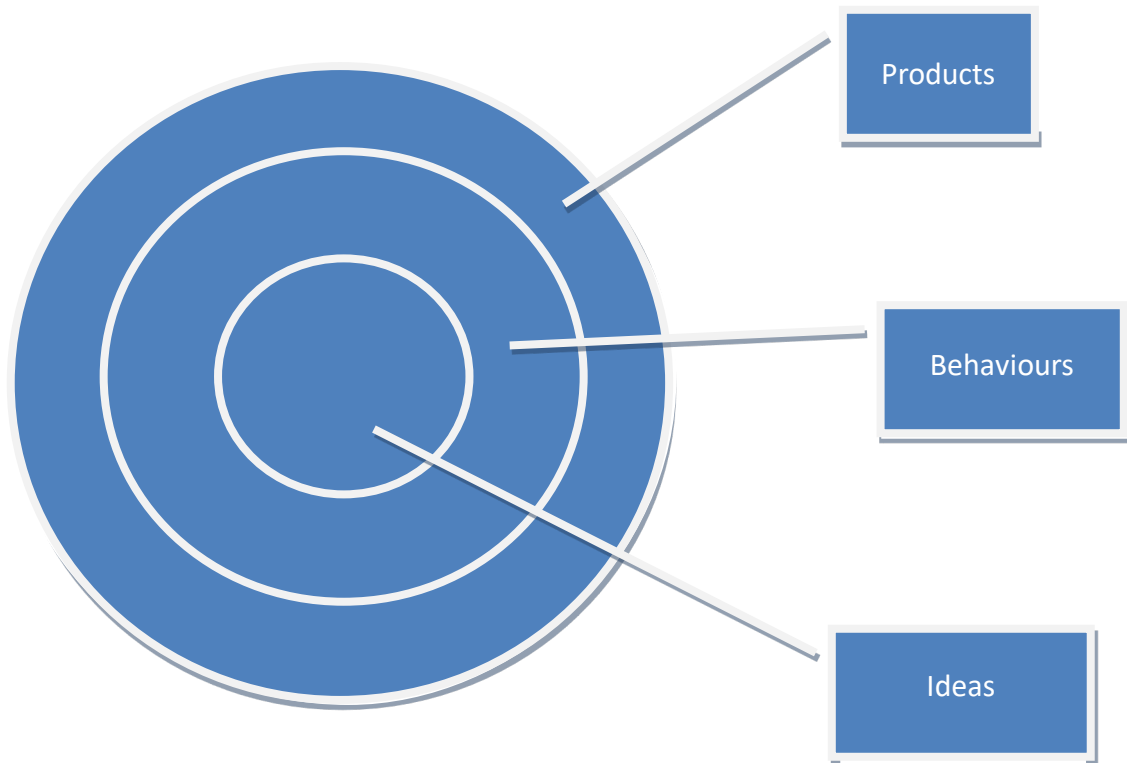
**Course Synopsis:**

This course takes participants through a very simple framework for defining culture that can be used to analyze workplace culture. By applying this framework in an analytical process, you can begin to understand the depth and complexity of a workplace culture. You can then use this understanding to more effectively prepare your students for success in a particular workplace culture, both from a cultural perspective and from a linguistic perspective.

**Course Agenda**

1. A Simple Framework for Culture
2. Analyzing a Workplace Culture
3. Understanding the Ideas Driving the Workplace Culture
4. Determining Language to be Learned for the Workplace Culture

## 1. A Simple Framework for Culture: The Onion



## 2. Analyzing a Workplace Culture

### 2.1 Products

The following are examples of products of a typical workplace. There are many, as you can see.

- Federal legislation
- Provincial legislation
- Municipal legislation
- Licensing procedures
- Academic qualifications
- Employee contracts
- Employee hiring procedures
- Product descriptions
- Procedures and processes
- Safety procedures
- Disciplinary procedures
- Employment insurance
- Employee Manuals
- Tools
- Machinery
- Electronic equipment
- Benefits
- Computers
- Software
- Communication tools
- Resumes
- Cover letters
- Company logos
- Instruments
- Liability insurance
- Unions
- Furniture
- Office space and layout
- Uniforms
- Standards and codes
- Vehicles
- Reports
- Documents and forms
- E-mails
- Advertising brochures
- Job descriptions
- Organization charts
- Dress code
- Performance review

**Activity #1:** Think about the workplace culture for which you are building a course. Which of the above products are found in that workplace? Are there any other products that are missing?

To get a better understanding of the products in a workplace that newcomers need to understand, we can divide the products into the following larger categories:

- Furniture and Decor
- Tools
- Documents
- Policies and Procedures
- Legislation
- Symbols

**Activity #2:** Try doing this yourself. Put all of the products that you have identified from the workplace or professional culture for which you are building a course into the six different categories listed above.

## 2.2 Behaviours

The following are examples of behaviours found in a typical workplace.

- Socializing
- Managing
- Reporting information
- Networking
- Running a meeting
- Presenting
- Interviewing
- Giving feedback
- Hiring
- Firing
- Sharing information
- Communicating with supervisors
- Communicating with colleagues
- Receiving feedback
- Ordering supplies
- Communicating with clients
- Training
- Filing
- Negotiating
- Using the telephone
- Using the computer
- Making small talk
- Expressing emotion
- Talking about personal issues
- Taking a vacation
- Taking a sick day
- Requesting clarification
- Requesting information
- Driving
- Operating machinery
- Following orders
- Obtaining qualifications
- Dressing appropriately
- Completing paperwork
- Suing an organization or individual
- Following the rules or standards

Think of the same workplace culture that you used with culture products. Which of the behaviours we listed above are found in that workplace? Are there any other behaviours that are missing?

We can also divide our workplace behaviours into larger categories to better understand them:

- Using the products
- Communicating with people as individuals or in groups
- Following protocol (following organizationally determined steps in a particular situation)

**Activity #3:** Try dividing the workplace behaviours that you identified into the three categories above.

### 2.3 Ideas, Values, Beliefs

The following are examples of ideas, values, or beliefs found in a typical workplace.

- Equality regardless of age, gender or religion
- Tolerance of differences
- Hard work should be rewarded
- Ability should be rewarded
- Rules, regulations and laws should be followed
- Public safety is important
- Companies should take care of their employees
- The work environment should be safe
- Saving and planning for the future is important
- Higher education and more education leads to a better job
- The more experienced you are, the more money you should make
- The longer you work for a company, the more money you should make
- The government should regulate organizations and individuals
- Individuals should take responsibility for their mistakes
- Products and work should be high quality
- Managers should be respected
- Professionals should be respected
- Employees should keep learning and improving
- Work time and leisure time should be balanced
- The most qualified person should be hired for the job

**Activity #4:** Once again think of the same workplace culture you used in the other activities. Which of the ideas listed above are found in that workplace? Are there any other ideas that are missing?

### 3. Understanding the Ideas Driving the Workplace Culture

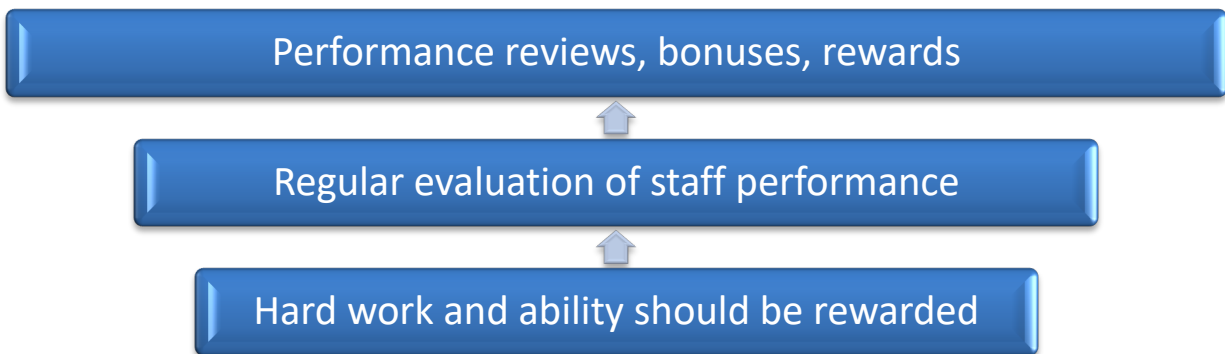
If we just teach our students the products and/or behaviours of a workplace culture, without teaching them the underlying ideas, we are giving our students an incomplete understanding of the culture. Students will not buy into the products and behaviours, because they will not understand where these products and behaviours come from. We have to make sure we teach our students the ideas that drive the products and behaviours that they will see in the workplace.



Here is an example:



And here is another example:



**Activity #5:** Select some of the ideas from Activity #4. Determine which behaviours and products are driven by those ideas.

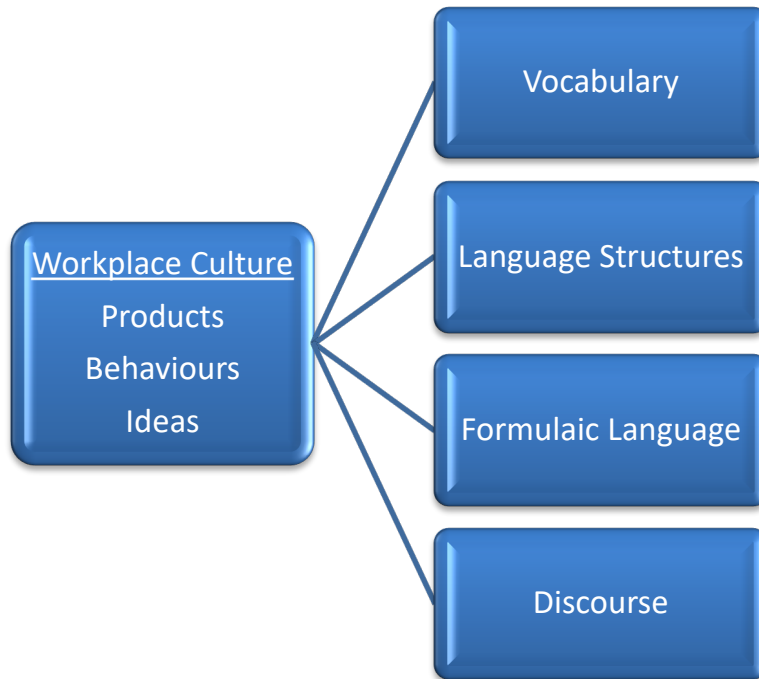
#### 4. Determining Language to be Learned for the Workplace Culture

Each single piece of culture, whether it is a product, behaviour or idea, requires an employee to have certain language knowledge and language ability. Think about these three questions:

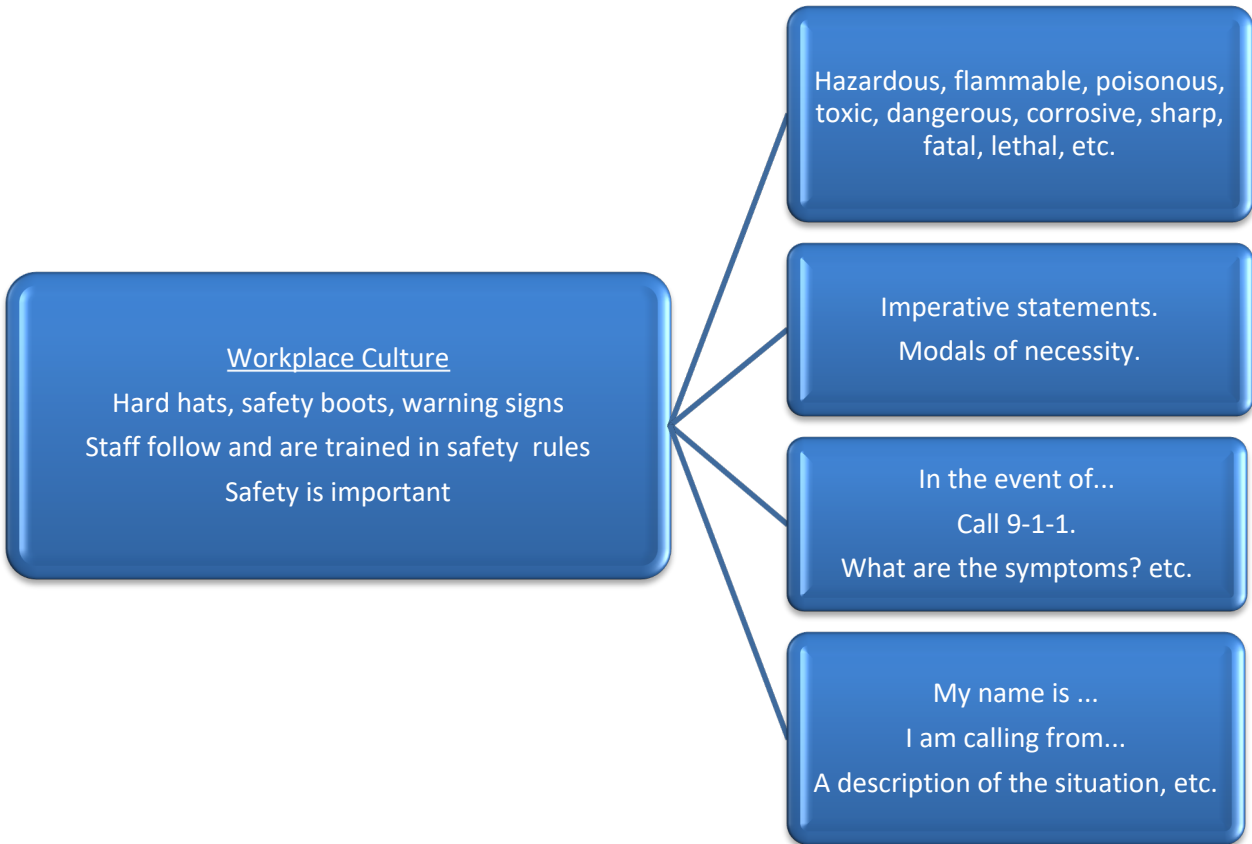
- What language does an employee need in order to use the products of a workplace culture?
- What language does an employee need in order to perform the behaviours of a workplace culture?
- What language does an employee need in order to understand the ideas of a workplace culture?

For each product, behaviour and idea, a newcomer to a workplace culture will need to understand vocabulary or terminology, language structures (grammar), formulaic language or gambits (set phrases that are used), and discourse patterns (how people interact, what they take turns saying). That is a lot of language for one piece of workplace culture!

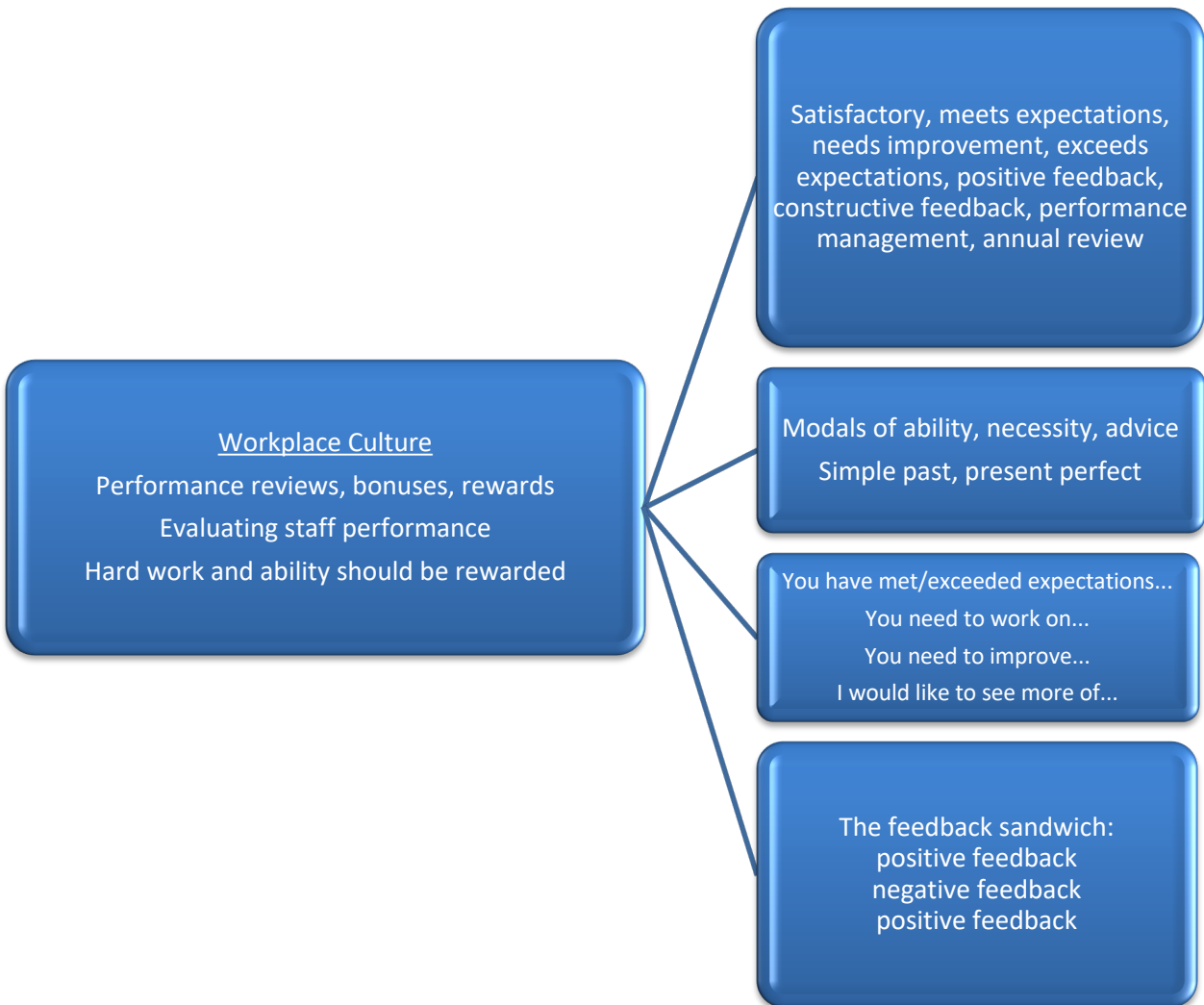
Here is what this looks like:



Here is a brief language analysis, using the above framework:



Here is another example:



**Activity #6:** Now it's your turn to try. Select one aspect from the workplace culture for which you are building a course. Using the framework provided above; note down the idea, behaviours and products on the left. Then on the right; note down the vocabulary, language structures, formulaic language and discourse that students need to learn in order to have the linguistic ability to function within that particular aspect of the workplace culture.



**Remember:** By conducting this systematic and methodical analysis of a workplace or professional culture and the associated language, you can ensure that your students will have all of the language and communication skills that they need in order to be successful.

**Thanks for participating!**

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