Writing the Voice of Philanthropy: How to Raise Money with Words

by
Frank C. Dickerson

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Claremont Graduate University in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate Faculty of Education

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Approved by:

Charles Kerchner

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this dissertation of Frank C. Dickerson and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dissertation Committee:

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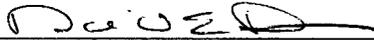
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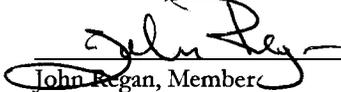
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Abstract of the Dissertation

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Frank C. Dickerson
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Fund raising is a poor cousin in the family of philanthropic studies, where the focus of serious scholars turns to more esoteric matters. Ignored is the CENTRAL TASK of nonprofit leadership: *writing the voice of philanthropy*—writing discourse that becomes the voice of the needy, thus motivating people to care and to give.

Writing the voice of philanthropy is modeled in this recasting of gospel-writer Luke's story about a kind-hearted traveler from ancient Samaria: "The Samaritan stood in the lobby of a roadside lodge in Jericho, supporting with his shoulder, a weak and badly-beaten man he'd rescued after bandits robbed and left him for dead. The innkeeper listened with wide-eyed, slack-jawed amazement as the Good Samaritan spun the tale of the stranger's brush with death. He then asked the proprietor: 'Please tend to him. I promise to repay anything beyond the 2-denari I'm leaving for expenses.'"

This re-write tells a story, then asks. It reduces the dramatic elements of scene, actors, plot, tension, and resolution to words, then adds an appeal for help—all without losing emotional impact. A difficult task. To measure how well philanthropic discourse accomplishes this task, I…

- Analyze linguistic and rhetorical characteristics in a 1.5-million-word corpus of 2,412 online and paper-based fund-raising texts from 880 leading nonprofits across nine subsectors;

- Survey those who write, or cause that discourse to be written, profiling their education, training, work challenges and joys, ambitions, and advice to newcomers in fund raising;

- Measure the effect on response of hand-personalization, added as a paratextual variable of direct mail envelopes and content to enhance interpersonal involvement—important, since nothing else matters in an appeal if the envelope it comes in doesn't get opened or its content doesn't get read.

The corpus analysis discovered that fund-raising discourse reads like academic prose, lacks interpersonal involvement, and contains virtually no narratives. The survey found the central task of equipping leaders to write the voice of philanthropy is relegated to oral tradition and job-shadowing at best. Six tests confirmed that the paratextual variable of hand-personalizing mail correlates with increased response and higher net income.

Writing the Connecting Narrative Moment:
Linguistic Features that Create Interpersonal Connection and Narrative in Texts

In the following excerpt from my dissertation, I discuss three sets of linguistic features . . .

1.) twenty-three features, arrayed on one end of a bipolar scale that create highly interpersonal texts;
2.) five features, arrayed on the opposite pole of the same scale that create highly informational texts; and
3.) six features that create narrative texts.

Two exemplar letters show how these 34 linguistic features produce different effects, and an excerpt from a speech Jesse Jackson gave at the 1988 Democratic National Convention shows how he marshaled them to produce what I call a *connecting narrative moment*—a brief text that strikes a conversational and narrative chord.

A well-written connecting narrative moment creates a *percolation effect*. The verb *percolate* comes from the Latin preposition *per* (through, by means of, on account of) + the verb *colare* (to strain). It's a Seventeenth-Century word that was coined to describe the change that occurs as a solvent (like water) passes through a permeable substance (like coffee). My mom and dad had an old-fashioned coffee percolator in the 1950s. To make good coffee required three things . . .

1.) *ingredients* (water and Folgers® coffee);
2.) *pressure* (the transforming force of heated water) and finally;
3.) *change* (extracting oils from grounds with boiling water to infuse the flavor into the brew).

That's how you make coffee.

And that's how you make a story too. To make a good story you need these three things . . .

1.) *people* (a protagonist, an antagonist, and optionally—a supporting ensemble cast);
2.) *tension* (people portrayed in scenes that are filled with conflict brought on by pressures); and
3.) *resolution* (change for good or ill that unfolds as the protagonist arrives at journey's end).

The percolation effect is created as a writer marshals his or her linguistic resources to portray the three elements of a compelling story—**people**, **tension**, and **resolution**. As wood, wire, and pipe are the raw materials a builder uses to construct a house; words, grammar and narrative structure are the linguistic resources a writer uses to a write a connecting narrative moment that . . .

1.) *reads* like personal conversations between friends *sounds*; and that
2.) *shows*, through the medium of a story, how a single individual has been or will be helped.

My data show that nonprofit executives agree that this is a superior model for writing a fund appeal—whether the medium be mail, the web, or a personal conversation with a major donor. When asked to score the importance of using an argument-centric (expository) style of writing on a 1 to 5 scale (with 5 being high), only 5.04 percent of the leaders surveyed rated exposition high. But when asked to score the importance of writing that is emotional, conversational, and narrative on the same scale, 45.21 rated it high—an increase by a ratio of 9:1.

But there's a wide gap between what leaders believe and what they do. Despite their stated preference for conversational and narrative prose, the writing of those surveyed had little emotional torque and was devoid of narrative! That conclusion grew out of a computer analysis that counted the use of 67 linguistic features in a 1.5-million-word corpus (body) of texts comprised of 2,412 printed and online fund appeals. These disturbing findings brought to mind astronaut Jack Swigert's distress call from Apollo 13: **Fundraisers, we have a problem!**

But that problem can be fixed by using linguistic features that . . .

1.) *connect* at a personal, conversational, and emotional level with a reader; and that
2.) *narrate* a story that causes the reader to empathize with a single person, and thus moves them to give.

The core distinctive of a connecting narrative **moment** is the notion that connection can be made in a just a **moment**. A fund appeal doesn't have to be long to be effective—albeit longer narratives have historically raised more money than shorter ones, despite the fact that they may be read by fewer people. A longer story, if well written, creates greater empathy. That aside, a single sentence or a single paragraph can be enough to connect and narrate a story. But like a good movie trailer that requires weeks of careful editing to extract the best footage from months of filming to produce a minute-long preview, the shorter a piece the longer it will take to write it. I now turn to the linguistic raw materials available for writing a connecting narrative moment that can be *the voice of philanthropy*—that can allow your writing to become *the voice* of the *friend* of a *person* who has no other voice than yours.

Table 3.10	Dimension 1: Informational Content versus Interpersonal Involvement							
Positive Features	**Score**	**Positive Features**	**Score**	**Positive Features**	**Score**	**Negative Features**	**Score**
Private verbs	0.96	General emphatics	0.74	Amplifiers	0.56	Nouns	-0.80
THAT-deletion	0.91	First-person pronouns	0.74	Sentence relatives	0.55	Word length	-0.58
Contractions	0.90	Pronoun *IT*	0.71	*WH*-questions	0.52	Prepositions	-0.54
Present tense verbs	0.86	*BE* as main verb	0.71	Possibility modals	0.50	Type/token ratio	-0.54
Second person pronouns	0.86	Causative subordination	0.66	Non-phrasal co-ordination	0.48	Attributive adjectives	-0.47
DO as pro-verb	0.82	Discourse particles	0.66	*WH*-clauses	0.47		
Analytic negation	0.78	Indefinite pronouns	0.62	Final prepositions	0.43		
Demonstrative pronouns	0.76	General hedges	0.58				
Note. Adapted From Biber, 1988.							

Biber's first dimension reflects the conceptual destination to which Deborah Tannen's intellectual journey brought her as she sought to understand the underlying factors powerful enough to account for textual variation among registers. Tannen notes that in her early work on the analysis of conversational discourse, she had discovered a useful heuristic in the contrast others had drawn between orality and literacy (1980 a,b,c). In one study, for instance, the contrast between spoken and written discourse helped her explain variation between the way American's and Greeks described a film (1980 c). She notes that Greeks used a narrative approach (which exhibited characteristics of story telling), while Americans used an expository approach (which showed greater concern for factual accuracy). Delving into the work of scholars who had developed this paradigm (Olson, 1977; Goody, 1977; Ong, 1967, 1977, 1981, 1988; Havelock, 1963; Kay, 1977; Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1981), Tannen found that "the oral/literate dichotomy had the power and fascination of a revelation" (1985, p.126).

However, that revelation had so reified concepts, that it also had the unhappy effect of obscuring a still more fundamental differentiating structure from view. Eventually finding her own voice, Tannen's (1985) intellectual journey led her to posit that the greater underlying differentiator among texts is not the oral/literate continuum, but a relative focus on *interpersonal involvement* versus *informational content*. This new inflection anticipated what Biber's later (1984, 1985, 1986, 1988) empirical quantitative analyses would confirm—that of the seven dimensions his factor analysis produced, the dimension that the first factor represents is the most powerful differentiator among texts. His empirical research not only confirms Tannen's distinction between *involved* and *informational* discourse, but also confirms her observation that adequate differentiation demands more than a simplistic bifurcation of texts into one category or an other, but rather calls for a continuum on which texts can be arrayed between Interpersonal Involvement on one end, and Informational Content on the other. So to the above table of dimension 1, repeated here for convenience, I have added the adjective Tannen

originally used (interpersonal) to modify Biber's label Involvement. Similarly, I have added the noun Tannen uses (content) with the word Informational. These revised labels thus place emphasis on *person* and *content*, which words really do reflect the core contrast the model seeks to depict.

Biber derives the Interpersonal involvement versus informational content dimension based on his identification of 28 co-occurring linguistic features among the 67 discussed above. In summarizing the results of his factor analysis he observes: "High factor loadings on nouns, word length, prepositional phrases, type/token ratio, and attributive adjectives all have negative weights larger than .45" (1988, p. 104). These features, Biber notes, are consistent with academic expository prose, in which a high concentration of nouns, sometimes long and specialized words and prepositional phrases are necessary to precisely communicate specialist concepts and facts into a relatively short discourse space. In his bi-polar scales, one set of features tends to be mutually exclusive of the others. That is, when negative factor loadings are present, positive features are absent, and vice versa.

Following Tannen, Biber also notes that texts with positive scores on linguistic features on his dimension 1 scale reflect a more diverse set of features that "can be associated with an involved, non-informational focus, due to a primarily interactive or affective purpose and/or a highly constrained production circumstances" (1988. p. 105). Tannen describes the presence of the linguistic features on both ends of the Interpersonal Involvement versus Informational continuum as indicative of "the universal simultaneous human needs to be connected to others and to be independent" (1985, p. 125). In personal conversations, Tannen notes that maintaining relationships demands interpersonal involvement; at the same time, however, she acknowledges Kay's (1977) view that "autonomous language" (Biber's negative end of dimension 1) exists to fill the needs of specialist discourse communities to transfer information precisely and efficiently. Tannen's approach to discourse analysis uncovers its human side. Biber's methodologies provide a high *tech* analysis that measures texts' high *touch* characteristics. MD-analysis is truly a high tech way to measure high touch.

Among those linguistic features that would indicate the presence of Tannen's *Interpersonal Involvement* and Naisbitt's (1999) *High Touch*, Biber places *private verbs* at the top of the list (e.g. I *think*, I *feel*) on the positive end of dimension 1. Such words are used to express a personal *stance* about the subject of discourse. Biber and Finegan (1988) categorize three types of stance—epistemic (reflecting degree of certitude in argumentative rhetoric), attitudinal (reflecting feelings about a subject), and manner (reflecting style of expression). Hunston

and Thompson describe stance as "expression of the writer's or speaker's opinion" (2000, p. 2) and Precht (2000) identifies 1,400 stanced words in English, individuals use only about 15 words ninety percent of the time.

Other high-scoring features consistent with involved discourse include *that-deletion*, *contractions*, *present tense*, and do as *pro-verb*, all of which have factor loadings above +.80. In the Longman Grammar (*LSWE*) Biber et al. (1999) describe the absence of the word *that* in relatives clauses (e.g. *You could tell **[that]** her 10-year-old mind was really racing*) as the use of the *zero relativizer*. Omitting *that* is consistent with the informality of personal conversation: "About 25% of all relative clauses in conversation omit the relativizer" (p. 620). *LSWE* data indicate that between 80 to 90 percent of the time, the relativizers whom and that omit the word *that* when not in the subject position. Similarly contractions are common in spoken English, and informal writing. *Present tense* can refer to actions occurring now, one's own actions, or those of another. The *pro-verb do* substitutes for lexical verbs (e.g. *That **did** it. I felt my heart break*). Biber et al. note that "face-to-face communication, coupled with online production needs, result in the common use of *pro-verb do* in conversation. This device leaves implicit the exact referent of the verb, as well as following noun phrases, other complements, or adverbials in many cases" (1999, p. 432).

Six additional features have factor loadings between +.71 to +.78: *analytic negation*, *demonstrative pronouns*, *general emphatics*, *first person pronouns*, *pronoun IT*, and *BE as main verb*. Fitzmaurice notes that "synthetic negation conveys positive negation of a proposition, e.g. *she's not unkind*, analytic negation conveys neutral negation of a proposition, e.g. *she's not kind*, and a combination of the two conveys negation of a negative proposition, e.g. *she's not unkind*" (2000, p. 175). Tottie (1983) explains that "negative sentences with an indefinite expression after the verb can be of two types in English, SYNTHETIC as in *He saw nothing*, or ANALYTIC, as in He *did not see anything*. It has been argued, by Jespersen (1917) and Poldauf (1964: 370) that the syntactic variant is favoured in formal language 'because it yields a more elegant expression'" (p. 18). Thus, in conversation, the elegant usually gives way to the plain and simple analytic version among texts scoring high on dimension 1. *Demonstrative pronouns* (*this, that, these* and *those*) are used to mark a person or thing as known and to specify the proximity of a referent. It can refer to animate and inanimate addressees. Among these the *LGSWE* notes that demonstrative *that* is the most common, occurring 11,000 times per million words in conversation. What Biber (1988) describes as general emphatics are described in *LGSWE* as part of a class of degree adverbs. In American conversation the most commonly used emphatics in *LSWE,* ranked in order of frequency, include: *so*, *very*, *really*, *real*, *completely*, *absolutely*, and *totally*. For example*: You could tell her 10-year-old mind was **really** racing and spinning dreams of what it'd be like*. Because conversation naturally involves speakers talking about one another, *first*

person pronouns I and *we* are common for texts scoring high on dimension 1. Because conversation requires

processing speech in real time, the pronoun *IT* is used as a general-purpose pronoun that is easily substituted in

the real-time context of speech, it is common in conversation and thus scores high on dimension 1. Biber

(1988) describes *BE as main verb* as a Stative form that, when used as a main verb, is considered non-complex,

transmitting a low amount of information.

The second dozen features scoring high on the positive side of the scale on dimension 1 fall between

+.42 to +.66. Biber notes that *causative subordination* can use a number of words (e.g. *as*, *for*, and *since*), but his

dimensional analysis focuses on *because* since it "is the only subordinator to function unambiguously as a

causative adverbial" (p.236). *Discourse particles* (Biber, 1988) are called *discourse markers* in *LGSWE* discourse

particles are defined as "inserts which tend to occur at the beginning of a turn or utterance, and to combine

two roles: (a) to signal an transition in the evolving progress of the conversation and (b) to signal an interactive

relationship between speaker, hearer, and message" (Biber et al. p. 1086). Words and phrases that serve this

function include *okay; so; anyway; well. Indefinite pronouns* in *LGSWE* include four basic groups derived from the

quantifiers *every*, *some*, *any*, and *no*, used either to intentionally keep name the referent ambiguous or because the

constraints of conversation do not allow more precise choice of vocabulary as, for example, in this use: *every*

single one of our 16 girls was able to go to camp this year. A class of adverbials called *general hedges* allows speakers or

writers to qualify discourse with words like *kind of* or *sort of* communicating a purposefully imprecise

characterization. Conversely, *amplifiers* are stance words that express confidence in or puff the scope of a

proposition or observation with words like *really*, *absolutely, completely*, and *totally. Sentence relatives*, according to

Biber (1988, p. 235), have no nominal antecedent, but function instead as a comment clause on a proposition

as a whole. The feature set designated *WH-questions* refers to the common set of journalistic questions (*who,*

what, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*) and are consistent with interactive discourse. *Possibility modals* are among three

types of modal expressions. Citing Quirk et al. (1985) Biber (1988) classifies possibility modals among the range

of modals that include "(1) those marking permission, possibility, or ability; (2) those marking obligation or

necessity; and (3) those marking volition or prediction" (p. 241). The *possibility modals* include *can*, *may*, *might*, and

could. In conversation, *LGSWE* identifies *can* and *could* as the most frequently used, with *can* being equally used

to express extrinsic possibility and ability and *might* being used less than *can* and *could*. In fund-raising discourse,

where asking others to give is one of the primary purposes of the register, these modal words are important

tools (e.g. **Could** *you help us once more?* **Can** *you give $20 to help our girls?*) *Non-phrasal coordination* refers to the use

of *and* to connect clauses, for example, in stretches of conversation when an individual begins a new sentence with *And.* Biber (1988), citing Chafe (1982), relates the use of and with a "fragmented style resulting from this simple chaining of ideas to the production constraints of speech" (p. 245). *WH-clauses* in Biber's protocols are restricted to those clauses that act to complete objects for three verb classes: *public verbs*, *private verbs*, and *suasive verbs* (e.g. *I [**knew**] **what it meant**. Carley's little dream had slipped away*). *Final prepositions*, sometimes referred to as *stranded* prepositions are common in speech (e.g. *They simply don't know where it would come **from***). van Gelderen (2002) cites the disdain of Sir Winston Churchill for prohibitions against sentence-ending prepositions with his oft-quoted comment: "This is something up with which I will not put" (p. 180). In conversational texts structures like this are common: *They simply don't know where it would come **from**.* Although *adverbials* were not used to calculate dimension 1 (since with a factor score of.42 they were out-scored on dimension 3 at -.46), they are still relevant. As noted earlier, on this and subsequent dimensions, several features that were not salient in *defining* dimensions are nonetheless useful in *understanding* the nature of what a dimension measures. In this case, *adverbs* are consistent with the essential nature of interpersonal involvement in that they give voice to personal views and feelings. In total, an even two dozen features were extracted from factor analysis with loadings greater that +.35. These features work together to produce the quintessential feel of animated human communication, adding personal inflection to discourse, intensifying the personal feelings that are communicated (e.g. *I'm extremely unhappy, and I really think [that] I have to go now. So—what are you gonna do about it?*).

A third as many linguistic features mark texts that focus on informational content on dimension 1. These include *nouns*, *word length*, *prepositions*, *type-token ratio*, *attributive adjectives*, *place adverbials*, *agentless passives*, and *past participial postnominal clauses*. The *LGSWE* confirms that highly informational texts such as academic prose are rich in *nouns*. Conversely, conversational texts in the *LSWE* contained half as many (see Biber et al. p. 579). Nouns bear the weight of communicating knowledge in highly nominal texts such as academic prose. And when noun counts are high, the rare fewer characteristics of discourse designed to create interpersonal involvement. Related to the high density of nouns is the second characteristic Biber (1988) identifies with highly informational texts: *word length*. *Word length* gets higher where the rhetorical aim of communicating precise information often requires longer specialist vocabulary. Precision is also achieved by *prepositions*, which occur more frequently, according to Biber (1988), in highly nominal texts. Hinkel (2002, 2003) notes that *prepositions* are more frequent in academic writing than any other kind of prose and function as adverbs and adjectives to more carefully load information into clauses to serve the end of maximizing informational content. He cites six that comprise 90 percent of the prepositions found

in academic writing: *of*, *in*, *for*, *on*, *to*, and *with*. *Type-token ratio (TTR)* refers to "the relationship between the number of different word forms or **types** and the number of running words, or **tokens**" Biber et al., 1999, p. 52). Compared to conversation, informational texts have a high *TTR*. In discussing the four lexical classes of words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) data from *LSWE* reported Biber et al. (1999) note that the distribution of adjectives and adverbs reflects the distribution of nouns and adverbs—nouns and adjectives are more common in written registers, especially in informationally loaded genres like academic prose, while verbs and adverbs are more common in texts reflecting a focus on interpersonal involvement. *Attributive adjectives* "modify nominal expressions, preceding the head noun or pronoun. In most cases they modify common nouns . . . the most striking pattern . . . is the extreme reliance on classifiers—especially relational adjectives (such as *different*, *general*, *major*), but also topical adjectives (such as *social*, *economic*)" (p. 511). The *LGSWE* divides adverbials into three classes—those of *circumstance,* of *stance*, and those that link elements of text, serving as connectors and integration. Adverbs are divided into three classes that describe their function in *LGSWE*: circumstance, stance and linking . *Place adverbials* are subsumed under the circumstance class, which can describe a specific *distance*, *direction*, or *position*; for example, the following specifies the *place* where a problem exists: *economic asymmetry* **in inner city Chicago** *now threatens*. *Agentless passives* are identified as falling into two groups in *LGSWE*: long (by-passives) and short (agentless) and occur in finite and non-finite form constructions (e.g. **Elucidating** *the bridging model*) and are common when process and not people are the focus of discourse. *Past participial postnominal clauses* substitute for full relative clauses relative post modifiers. Three types are cited in *LGSWE*: non-finite postmodifying clauses: *ing*-clauses, *ed*-clauses, and *to*-clauses (e.g. *A confluence of economic, social, and psychic impediments* **exacerbated by this crisis**). Postmodification intensifies information load of a text, defining the subject matter in greater detail. Several of the preceding samples are from the two texts that follow. I wrote these texts and the other *exemplars* that follow provided for pedagogical purposes. Later I demonstrate variation with samples from the Dickerson IRS 880 Corpus. However, by illustrating features first with constructed texts, hyperbole can be used to stretch certain features, and thus minimize ambiguity about the point being made. Therefore, the exemplars below represent a combination of practices that may be profitably emulated while others represent practices to avoid. In Figure 3.2, *Help Send Carley to Camp* is an exemplar showing interpersonal involvement and narrative, which fund-raising practitioners advocate, yet data confirm to be lacking in most fund-raising discourse. *Help Ameliorate Socio-Economic Asymmetry* is an example to avoid.

Exemplar Help Send Carley to Camp *High Interpersonal Involvement-Style Fund-Raising Text*	Help Ameliorate Socio-Economic Asymmetry *High Informational Content-Style Fund-Raising Text*
Carley excitedly joined in when the club talked about going to camp, "I've never slept in a tent before, or gone in a canoe. Are there bears? And what's ah *Sa-More*?" You could tell her 10-year-old mind was really racing and spinning dreams of what it'd be like. Being with best friends. Adventure. Animals. Cooking out on a campfire, all of which was exotic stuff to a child of inner city Chicago. Then last week when she came to the club meeting, I could tell something was wrong. "Hey now. . .You OK, honey? What's wrong?" I asked as kids were heading out. Looking up, she waves bye to best friend Lori. Other girls had been laughing, planning and screaming as they left for home. Then when we were alone, and it was "safe," I heard again what I hear every year from a child whose mom is their family's sole source of support. Carley had been turning her face so no one would see. Then tears almost come. She whispers: "Mama said I can't go to camp 'cuz we can't 'ford it." That did it. I felt my heart break. I knew what it meant. Carley's little dream had slipped away. It takes money to send kids to camp, and her mom just doesn't have it. And I don't either. Carley would not be able to go to camp. But I don't want to leave her. . .or *any* of her friends behind! Twenty dollars is all we ask kids to pay. For you or me it's the cost of a few Lattes. But for Carley's mom, $20 is very precious because it might cost her kids a meal! They simply don't know where it would come from. They're truly unable to afford the cost. So that's why I'm writing, John. I know you've helped before. Could you help us once more? Can you give $20 to help our girls?	Hard economic times are robbing moms who are their families' primary caregivers. A confluence of economic, social, and psychic impediments exacerbated by this crisis now constrains their ability to provide childcare, adequate housing, and basic nutrition for their families, especially in light of unrelenting and unprecedented economic down cycling. Consequently, little discretionary income, given their fiduciary responsibilities, remains for what social workers call *bridging* experiences, so salient to the development of youth. Elucidating the *bridging* model is the development of the ever-emerging and relevant corpora of findings confirming that such psychosocial opportunities are, indeed, quasi-constitutive of eight prominent variable factors in the neurobiological development of prepubescent working-class children. This was revealed by a seminal study, emanating from the Urban Action Group Lab of NorthSouthern University, validating the archetypal dynamics of *bridging* as a useful nascent sociological construct that finally accounts for two statistically significant 4-way correlations (valid at $\alpha = < .01$), between facilitation of educational pursuit persistence and salient *bridging* experiences, like camping. Although the factors relating to the development of environmental support structures relevant to the maximization of complimentary *bridging* opportunities both inform our heuristic and remain our prime directive, concern over economic asymmetry in inner city Chicago now threatens near-term paradigm realization. Notwithstanding noteworthy economic drift, philanthropy yet continues to represent a multi-faceted linkage of networks which can be engineered toward eleemosynary initiatives that may well coalesce into a complementary array of educational, social, and pertinent psychological resources—*bridges if you will*—satisfying the socio-economically challenged. Help us facilitate amelioration of the economic asymmetry that so challenges Greater Chicago!

Figure 3.2. Interpersonal Involvement versus Informational Content Exemplars.

I have written this (and the others exemplars that follow) to represent poles on one of Biber's dimensional scales. The two above are used to illustrate both Dimension 1 and 2 of his protocol. *Help Send Carley to Camp* exemplar illustrates what Tannen (1985) describes as a focus on *Interpersonal Involvement*, and *Help Ameliorate Socio-Economic Asymmetry* illustrates the other end of that continuum, a focus on *Informational Content*. Admittedly, the hyperbole of the *Informational Content* exemplar intentionally stretches toward the extreme end of the continuum with its content-thick, non-narrative style. However, that stretch is warranted in light of the empirical evidence in Connor and Upton (2003), which places fund-raising letters closer to academic prose than conversation or personal letters on dimension 1, and scores it *below* academic prose and official documents on dimension 2. The following tables describe linguistic features of these very different texts on Dimension 1:

Table 3.11		Examples of Positive Features on Dimension 1 Showing How They Create High Levels of Interpersonal Involvement	
Linguistic Features in Rank Order	**Factor Loading**	**Characteristic or Function of Feature in Creating Interpersonal Involvement**	**Example from the Letter:** *Help Send Carley to Camp*
Private verbs	0.96	Expresses mental thoughts and feelings	*I felt my heart break…I **know** you've helped*
THAT-deletion	0.91	Reduces surface form, sounds conversational	*You could tell **[that]** her 10-year-old*
Contractions	0.90	Shortens words, adds fluency to discourse	*I've never slept in a tent before…**They're***
Present tense vbs	0.86	Depicts immediate topics and actions	*Looking up, she **waves**. . .Tears almost **come***
2nd person prn	0.86	Specific addressee, shows interactivity	*Would **you** be willing to help…**You** OK, honey?*
DO as pro-verb	0.82	Substitutes for a clause, reduces density	*That **did** it…And I **don't** either*
Analytic negation	0.78	Conceptually simpler form of negation	*She would not be able [versus **unable**] to go*
Demonstrative prn	0.76	Noun substitute, understood by context	*That did it…**that's** why I'm writing, John*
General emphatics	0.74	Marks stance: affect, evidence, quantity	*10-year-old mind was **really** racing*
1st person prn	0.74	Marks ego involvement, interpersonal focus	*I could tell. . .**I** know you've helped before*
Pronoun *IT*	0.71	Marks relatively inexplicit lexical reference	***it** [paying $20] might cost her kids a meal*
BE as main verb	0.71	Communicates sate of being versus action	*all of which **was** exotic stuff to a child*
Causal avb subord	0.66	Adverbial *because* or *as* mark causation	***because** it might cost her kids a meal*
Discourse particles	0.66	Attitudinal and structural discourse markers	***But** I don't want…**Hey** now…**So** that's why*
Indefinite pronouns	0.62	General referent device often used like *IT*	*I could tell **something** was wrong*
General hedges	0.58	Informal markers of probability or uncertainty	*tears **almost** come, and Carley says*
Amplifiers	0.56	Lexical *degree* words to magnify verbal force	*for Carley's mom $20 is **very** precious*
Sentence relatives	0.55	Speech-like relative, comments on context	*all of which **was** exotic stuff to a child*
Direct *WH*-?s	0.52	Direct questions, marks personal interaction	***What's** wrong? I asked as kids were*
Possibility modals	0.50	Subjective, tentative, states possible reality	***Could** you help us once more? **Can** you*
Non-phrasal coord	0.48	And acts as loose general purpose connector	*Are there bears? **And** what's ah Sa-More*
WH-clauses	0.47	Verb complement, to give personal viewpoint	*I knew **what it meant**. Carley's little dream had*
Final prepositions	0.43	Reflects surface reduction, marks speech	*simply don't know where it would come **from***
(Adverbs	0.42)*	Often reveals stance, qualities and feelings	*Carley **excitedly** joined in…**truly** unable*

* Because **Adverbs** had a higher loading on another dimension when factors were extracted, even though at +.42 they load above the |.35| minimum, they were not used in the calculation of Dimension 1: *Interpersonal Involvement / Informational Content*. However, they remain of interest. Although this is a fictitious letter I created, it is useful for illustrating traits of an *Interpersonal Involvement* style of discourse.
Note. Adapted from Biber, (1988, pp. 102-103 & 221-245).

Table 3.12		Examples of Negative Features on Dimension 1 Showing How They Create High Levels of Informational Content	
Linguistic Features in Rank Order	**Factor Loading**	**Characteristic or Function of Feature in Creating Informational Content**	**Example from the Letter: Help Ameliorate Socio-Economic Asymmetry**
Nouns	-0.80	Nominalization of verbs adds density	***amelioration** of the economic asymmetry*
Word length	-0.58	Long words lead make text hard to read	***Consequently**, little **discretionary** income*
Prepositions	-0.54	Tightly packs highly nominal discourse	***facilitation of** educational pursuit persistence*
Type/token ratio	-0.54	*Different* words (types) to *all* words (tokens)	***psy**chic **social psy**cho**social**: 2 types, 3 tokens*
Attributive adjs	-0.47	Used to expand and elaborate meaning	***adequate** housing, and **basic** nutrition for*
(Place adverbials	-0.42)*	Elaborate the *where* frame of an action	***in** inner city Chicago…**by** a seminal study*
(Agentless passives	-0.39)*	Impersonal, detached, focus on patient	*so salient to the **development of** youth*
(Past part postnominal	-0.38)*	Integrates, elaborates (*[which]* = deletion)	*confluence… **[which was]** exacerbated by this*

* Because items in (parentheses) had higher loadings on other dimensions when factors were extracted, even though each loads above the |.35| minimum, none were used in the calculation of dimension 1: *Interpersonal Involvement / Informational Content*. However, they remain of interest. Although this is a fictitious letter I created, it is useful for illustrating traits of an *Informational Content* style of discourse. Unlike the *Interpersonal Involvement* letter, this text intentionally pushes features to a point of hyperbole to illustrate its point. Yet hyperbole seems warranted in light of research showing that fund-raising letters actually tend more this direction, than toward the style illustrated in my *Interpersonal Involvement* sample.
Note. Adapted from Biber, (1988, pp. 102-103 & 221-245).

Table 3.13		**Dimension 2: Narrative versus Non-Narrative**				
Positive Features	**Score**	**Positive Features**	**Score**	**Positive Features**	**Score**	**Negative Features**
Past tense verbs	0.90	Perfect aspect verbs	0.48	Synthetic negation	0.40	*Four were present, but since they had higher factor loadings on other dimensions they were **not** used.*
3rd person pronouns	0.73	Public verbs		0.43	Present participial clauses	0.39	
Note. Adapted from Biber, (1988).						

Biber's second dimension (*Narrative* versus *Non-narrative*) describes linguistic features that mark the presence or absence of narrative in discourse. The preceding example of *Help Send Carley to Camp* illustrates a text that not only represents a high level of *Interpersonal Involvement*, but is also marked with features consistent with narrative discourse. Therefore, I use that text again here to illustrate this dimension. Dimensional scores indicating narrative presence do nothing to grade the actual *quality* of a narrative discourse—its artfulness, appropriateness, or accuracy. But Biber's metrics at least serve to indicate whether or not there is something *story-like* about the text. And it can be argued that the ability to know whether narrative is present or not is, a very significant diagnostic advancement. This time I first summarize narrative linguistic elements in such texts, then I discuss narrative issues presented in Biber (1988), in *LGSWE* and additional sources.

Table 3.14		**Examples of Positive Features on Dimension 2 Showing How They Create Narrative Discourse**	
Linguistic Features Listed in Rank Order	**Factor Loading**	**Characteristic or Function of Feature in Creating Narrative Discourse**	**Example from the Letter: Help Send Carley to Camp**
Past tense verbs	0.90	Surface marker of past events of a story	*Carley excitedly **joined**…I **heard** again*
3rd person pronouns	0.73	Identifies actors in a narrative account	***her** 10-year-old…**she** came*
Perfect aspect verbs	0.48	Marks past action with a continuing effect	*Carley **had been turning her face***
Public verbs	0.43	Observable, they introduce statements	*She **whispers**: "Mama **said** I can't go"*
Synthetic negation	0.40	Result of negation, stated as a description	*They're truly **unable** to afford the cost*
Pres participial clause	0.39	Used to elaborate the frame of action	***Looking up,** she waves to best friend*
Note. Adapted from Biber, (1988, pp. 102-103 & 221-245).			

Table 3.15		**Examples of Negative Features on Dimension 2 Showing How They Create Non-Narrative Discourse**	
Linguistic Features Listed in Rank Order	**Factor Loading**	**Characteristic or Function of Feature in Creating Non-Narrative Discourse**	**Example from the Letter: Help Ameliorate Socio-Economic Asymmetry**
(Present tense verbs	-0.47)*	Puts focus on information not persons	***accounts** for…both **inform** …and **remain***
(Attributive adjectives	-0.41)*	Information dense modifiers of nouns	***psychic** impediments … **discretionary** income*
(Past participial WHIZ deletions	-0.34)*	Relative pronoun (e.g. *[which]*) deletion)	impediments ***[which have been]*** exacerbated
(Word length	-0.31)*	Precise language requires longer words	*economic **asymmetry**… **quasi-constitutive***
* Because items in (parentheses) had higher loadings on other dimensions when factors were extracted, even though each loads above the |.35| minimum, none were used in the calculation of dimension 1: *Interpersonal Involvement / Informational Content*. However, they remain of interest.			
Note. Adapted from Biber, (1988, pp. 102-103 & 221-245).			

The report of *what Carley said* in the above exemplar letter holds what Clift (2005) describes as power derived "interactionally . . . by which various linguistic features. . .act as stance markers in a particular context. In specifying the nature of that context, it takes as its analytical focus a phenomenon which is not ostensibly a stance marker at all: direct reported speech" (p. 569). Such reported events are the hallmark of *narrative*, marked by *past tense*: (e.g. *Carley excitedly* **joined** *in*). In this case, the executive director of the nonprofit reports on a *past* situation involving the protagonist Carey (e.g. *Then* **last week** *when she* **came** *to the club meeting*). The writer makes reference to Carley not only by name, but also by *third person pronoun* reference (e.g. *You could tell* **her** *10-year-old mind was really racing . . .* **she** *came to the club meeting*). Carley's story thus captures the storyteller's *personal stance*, marked by the story itself and expressed with specific linguistic features that helped to achieve the *rhetorical aim* of creating what I describe as a *connecting narrative moment*. For instance, using the *perfect past aspect verb* structure the writer portrays a scene that presents the tension at the heart of the story (e.g. **Carley had been turning her face** *so no one would see. Then tears almost come.*) Biber et al. note that the function of the *perfect aspect* is "to refer to a time that is earlier than some specified past time" (1999, p. 460). In this narrative, the scene portrays a young girl in obvious distress, trying to hide her face from her friends. Using the *perfect aspect*, the writer paints a word picture of a young girl who, over a brief course of time, had plainly exhibited signs that something was wrong, which scene illustrated the writer's earlier narration (e.g. *I could tell something was wrong*). Then having stated and illustrated the problem, the writer moves from commentary and scene description to dialogue, using the *present tense private verb* **whispers**. While technically a *public* verb, the word choice is also dramatic, suggesting a degree of intimacy, embarrassment, conflict and dramatic tension (e.g. *She* **whispers***: "Mama said I can't go to camp 'cuz we can't 'ford it.*) Then using *synthetic negation* to describe the import of the story, the writer says: *They're truly* **unable to afford** *the cost*. Suddenly a brief narrative moves the reader into the middle a scene in which the writer confronts the reality of what poverty means in the context of a child unable to attend camp for lack of funds. Narrative used in this fashion is described by Clift as an example of *evidential modality*. Palmer (2003) reports this kind of use is more common "in some of the Native languages of North America, and the languages of Papua New Guinea, [where] the dominant type of modality is different." Palmer frames modality in language studies with the terms used in *LGSWE* to categorize stance adverbials: *epistemic*, *attitudinal*, *stylistic* (Biber et al., 1999, p. 764). Palmer adds that the difference in some cultures is the phenomenon that "there is a fourth kind, 'Evidential' modality, in which, instead of making a judgment about the truth-value of the proposition, the speaker offers evidence for it" (p. 7). He cites two types of evidential

modalities—report and sensory. The conversation with Carley reported in the *Help Send Carley to Camp* letter represents the former type of *evidential modality*—report. Numerous neurological studies reviewed above certainly tend to support this view (see Oatley and Johnson-Laird 1987,1996; Oatley 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, Mar, Oatley & Eng 2003; Mar 2004; Oatley, Keltner, and Jenkins 2006). Evidential modality as a method of elaboration in speech moves beyond the linguistic features noted in dimension 3, which will be discussed next in connection to paralinguistic equivalences to narrative description by which a speaker may refer to items in physical proximity—referring, for example, to actual displays of projects children may have produced at camp (e.g. exposing people to evidentials by browsing, looking, feeling—as if viewing exhibits in a court of law or, more appropriately, in an art gallery) and textually (e.g. a parallel verbal description of what is on display is spoken, in which projects and what they mean [stance] is communicated)—sensory references that Palmer and Clift cite as common in other cultures, which Palmer describes as "what is seen, heard, or even smelt" (2003, p. 7).

In the *Help Send Carley to Camp* narrative, the writer essentially uses linguistic tools to create for the reader the sense of being in the room with Carley. The writer uses the devices of Kenneth Burke's dramatistic pentad—act, scene, agent, agency and purpose (1945, xv). And the length of the narrative is not that long, yet exhibits what Longacre (1996) describes as narrative underlining. He writes that in even a brief story "a narrator does not want you to miss he important point of the story so he employs extra words at that point. He may employ parallelism, paraphrase. . . .Let us call this device *rhetorical underlining*. It's as if you took a pencil and underlined what you are writing" (1996, p. 39). Labov describes narrative as "recounting past events, in which the order of narrative clauses matches the order of events as they occurred," which, he notes, extends "over a broad range of human activities: novels, short stories, poetic and prose epic, film, folk tale, interviews, oral memoirs, chronicles, histories, comic strips, graphic novels and other visual media" (forthcoming). Biber's dimension 2 measures the frequency of salient linguistic features that work together to accomplish what Labov defines as the "fundamental human capacity to transfer experience from one person to another through oral narratives of personal experience" (forthcoming). Elsewhere (1967, 1972) Labov notes that narratives that are memorable and effective because they are not trivial strings of past happenings, but are focus on what he terms a reportable event. Bal (1997) describes narrative as a three-layered creation of fabula, story, and text—with fabula being the raw materials from which a story can be constructed, the *story* being the concrete product that evolves from those raw materials, and the *narrative text* being the written, spoken or otherwise mediated [e.g.

such as film, cartoon] expression of the story. Chatman (1978) describes narrative in terms of what it is not, contrasting it to exposition, description, and argument, and focusing on the *chronologic* character of narrative as portrayal of events through time. He would argue, for instance, that a static piece of art with no inherent indication of movement through time, fails the test of narrative.

While Labov, Bal and Chatman *define* narrative, Tannen emphasizes its *effect* by framing it as a key method by which interpersonal involvement in discourse is created. Tannen cites Labov's (1972) view that key components in personal narratives are personal evaluation (expressions of attitude, e.g. indicated by private verbs) and a coda (expressions of a story's moral) to support her case that narrative is a discourse resource for building *interpersonal involvement* (cf. Biber's dimension 1). In her *Talking Voices* (1989), Tannen describes the use of repetition, dialogue, and imagery to create interpersonal involvement and observes that narrative becomes a stage on which these three involvement devices are see action in the Burkean (1945) sense of human drama. That is, the speaker/writer, in describing reportable (nontrivial) past events creates involvement with the hearer/reader in the narration of: "what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)" (Burke, 1945 p. xv). In many ways the dramatistic approach to texts taken by Burke in his *Grammar of Motives,* takes the same path of Tannen's analysis of discourse. While Burke seeks to understand motivation by synoptically viewing text through the five-part prism of his dramatistic structure, Tannen seeks to differentiate text according to their valence as contributors to interpersonal involvement in spoken and written discourse. To this end, Tannen describes numerous linguistic involvement devices that coalesce and in narrative: *musicality*, *repetition*, *dialogue*, *imagery and detail.* In this research, I identify numerous *connecting narrative moments* in the discourse of fund raising that use such devices on a rather limited stage. The space allotted for a fund-raising text is often a page and on the high end, and four at the high end. Online the space is usually little more than a single screen shot or two (though another discourse study is suggested by more recent innovations using streaming video). I use the term *moments* to emphasize that a *connecting narrative moment* need not occupy a great length of text to create human connection. The notion of *connecting narrative moments* is an important distinction since the very words *narrative* and *story* inherently suggest long stretches of discourse. Tannen illustrates the use of a *connecting narrative moment* as an involvement device that quickly connects like a needle quickly reaches a nerve below the skin. She illustrates this point with an excerpt Jesse Jackson at the 1988 Democratic National Convention that received wide acclaim in the press (Shales, 1988). In his delivery, reminiscent of Kings *I Have a Dream* rhetorical style (1993) Jackson delivers a short but evocative

section of dialogue and narrative discourse that frames him not so much as a political "rock star" figure who

runs with "big people", but as one who *understands* the plight of the ordinary struggling family. The word

understand had been used repeatedly in portions of speech running up to this section of Jackson's address.

First, Tannen's reports Jackson entering into an imagined dialogue with the audience, bringing to the

foreground their preconceptions that he is an inaccessible politician who can't identify with ordinary people. In

this imagined dialogue he gives voice to their views (*italics represents Jackson's enactment of the audience's side of an*

imagined dialogue in response to his initial question):

> Why can I challenge you this way?
> *Jesse Jackson, you don't understand my situation.*
> *You be on television.* [laughter]
> *You don't understand*
> *I see you with the big people.*
> *You don't understand my situation.*
> I understand.
> At three o'clock on
> Thanksgiving day,
> we couldn't eat turkey.
> Because Mama was preparing somebody else's turkey
> at three o'clock.
> We had to play football to entertain ourselves.
> And then around six o'clock,
> she would get off the /Aha Vista/ bus,
> and we would bring up the leftovers
> and eat our turkey,
> leftovers:
> the carcass,
> the cranberries,
> around eight o'clock at night.
> I really do understand.   (Tannen, 1989, p. 183)

Tannen observed in the excerpt above the ability of the speaker to connect, to create interpersonal

involvement, to use Biber's term. I call these brief stretches of prose *connecting narrative moments*. In his speech,

Jackson fist addresses the objections in an imagined dialogue (with his interactants' voices indicated in italic

above). Then he answers the imagined questions, recalling what Thanksgiving was like for him, growing up

poor. In fund-raising discourse, the canvas on which the word pictures are painted is quite small. As this brief

except illustrates, the attention can be captured and a powerful image can be created in a brief space.

Biber describes six linguistic features that provide evidence of narrative presence in texts, though as

noted above a narrative being present is different that an *effective* narrative is present. The most obvious

linguistic feature correlates with Labov's and Chatman's description of past actions—*past tense* and *perfect aspect*

verbs that fix Burke's elements of *act* (what was done), *scene* (when or where it was done) and *agency* (how the

actor did it) to specific points in past time. The use of *third person pronouns* mark the presence of Burke's *agent* (the one who acted) and the use of and *public verbs* involve these *agents* in reported speech using words like "*admit*, *assert*, *declare*, *hint*, *report*, and *say*" (1988, p 109). Using *present participial clauses* indicates "that the narration of past events is often framed by . . . vivid imagery" (1988, p. 109) and the use of synthetic negation seems to give provide more emphatic force than the analytic alternative. In the excerpt of Jesse Jackson's speech, he sandwiches his narrative of Thanksgiving between two utterances of the private verb (*I understand*), which had been used to involve his audience by communicating that because of his personal history of growing up poor, he *understands.*

Jackson's speech was influenced by proximity to his audience. They were in the same room, and his rhetoric reflected the interactive possibilities that production environment afforded. Biber's next dimension describes linguistic features that vary contingent on the context of communication.

The negative pole on dimension 2 in Table 3.16 is comprised of four complimentary linguistic features that Biber describes simply as non-narrative. Because these features had higher scores on other dimensions, they were not salient in defining dimension 2. However, lack of salience does not equate to lack of relevance, so these (and subsequent non-salient features on remaining dimensions) will be considered briefly.

The first negative feature on dimension 2 is *present tense verbs*. When the present tense is dominant in discourse, the past these of narrative usually is not. The text written to contrast with the *Help Send Carly to Camp* letter illustrates this. The letter, *Help Ameliorate Socio-Economic Asymmetry* opens in the present tense (e.g. *Hard economic times* **are robbing** *moms…now* **constrains**…*little discretionary income, given their fiduciary responsibilities,* **remains***).* The second factor with a negative factor loading on dimension 2 is attributive adjectives. In *LGSWE* the authors note that in the most striking observation about the use of adjectives is how reliant academic prose is on these words in evaluating and measuring (e.g. **fiduciary** *responsibilities…* **relevant** *corpora* … prepubescent working-class *children…*seminal *study…*archetypal *dynamics… statistically* **significant 4-way** *correlations…***salient** *bridging experiences*). In discourse heavily loaded with adjectives, these words place a heavy weigh on the reader who must interpret the nuance of meaning each adjective carries. In contrast, narrative discourse does much of the meaning-making work by illustrating the issues portrayed through the elements of Burke's pentad (act, scene, agent, agency and purpose. Narratives *show* meaning. Non-narrative explain meaning. *Past participial WHIZ deletions* eliminate the which relativizer (e.g. *psychic impediments [which have been] exacerbated by this crisis now constrains*) and long words do not show up when narrative is present (e.g. *engineered toward* **eleemosynary** *initiatives).*

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