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# Discourse at the International School of Asia in Karuizawa: Language and Practice

Merisa Muharemovic

*SIT Graduate Institute*, [merisa.muharemovic@mail.sit.edu](mailto:merisa.muharemovic@mail.sit.edu)

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Discourse at the International School of Asia in Karuizawa: Language and Practice

Merisa Muharemović

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A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

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Advisor: Peter Simpson

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### **Abstract**

Leadership as a form of practice unbound by social position is not a concept commonly taught to students within formal education institutions. It is even less commonly an object of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis, which is the approach that this capstone paper uses to take a closer look at the discourse of student leadership at a newly founded, private, international boarding high school in Japan: UWC ISAK Japan. By doing so it explores the relationship between the language and practice of leadership – a program which, on paper, seems critically liberating, but upon analysis also reveals important contradictions. Through the lens of Foucault's discourse theory and a combination of Willig and Parker's discourse analysis approaches this mixed-methods paper examines interviews from students and employees at the school and a graduation speech read as discursive text. The nuances of the underlying power relations within the leadership discourse are thus unraveled, and age and money are identified as drivers of a disciplinary mechanism that subjugates students and legitimizes those occupying traditional positions of power at the school.

### Introduction

The International School of Asia in Karuizawa (ISAK)<sup>1</sup> is a fully residential private high-school located in the small town of Karuizawa in the Nagano prefecture in Japan. It was the site of my practicum in the academic year of 2016/17 during which I worked as a full-time Fellow. My work focused on extracurricular activities including mentoring student groups and community projects, student support in the form of emotional and mental health support, and some residential duties. In short, I spent an enormous amount of time with students, whether it was through my assigned job responsibilities, self-initiated ones, or personal free time that I dedicated to the students. This made my practicum particularly insightful when it comes to the student experience at ISAK. Together with my academic training and personal commitments to social justice, it allowed me to act as a student advocate of sorts.

At the time of my practicum, ISAK enrolled 154 students (“Welcome to ISAK,” 2016) in the three grades that it offers (“Education,” 2017): grade 10 following the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) curriculum, and grades 11 and 12 making up the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Thirty percent of the student body was Japanese and the rest came from 39 other countries around the world (although many of them from the Asian continent). (“Welcome to ISAK,” 2016) The total price of attendance, including tuition, room and board, and fees was 5,610,000 JPY (\$54,417) a year in 2016/17. (“Tuition,” 2016) Over 50 percent of the students received some form of financial aid.

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<sup>1</sup> The school changed its name to UWC ISAK Japan after joining the United World College movement in the Fall of 2017. I will refer to the school as ISAK throughout the paper because that was its name during my practicum there.

ISAK was founded in 2014 (“School History,” 2017) and was still forming and formulating itself as both an educational institution and a learning experience during my time there. Right after I completed my practicum, ISAK officially joined 16 other colleges that form part of the United World College (UWC) movement (“School History,” 2017), one of which I am a graduate of. This shift has likely changed some things at ISAK, including its admission and enrolment numbers, demographics and financial aid availability (seeing that UWC membership contributes financial resources), but many things have remained the same as well. Leadership as a form of practice, cultivating mindfulness, and creating positive change are still presented as some of the core values on the school’s website. (“Welcome,” 2017) The mission statement remains to empower “students to become transformational leaders who explore new frontiers for the greater good of Asia and beyond” (“Guiding Statements,” 2017). It is around these guiding principles that I center my capstone research.

The idea of the “change-maker” is front-and-center when one interacts with ISAK, and it is what initially drew me to want to work there. Everyone is encouraged to practice leadership in some way, which is communicated through different avenues such as the academic curriculum, extracurricular activities, residential life, marketing or direct speech from the school and its members. After some time and many observations, however, I came to see “leadership” at ISAK as a complex, often times confusing and contradictory concept. While it was frequently used in speech (particularly by adults), and sometimes, in my judgment, even overused in an almost cult-like manner, the actual practice of leadership was sometimes jarringly absent from the everyday life of ISAK members.

This disconnect between language and practice is what led me to ask the following research question: *What is the relationship between language and practice in the constitution of the leadership discourse at ISAK?* I will be looking at my object of inquiry as a discourse because my capstone is informed by Critical Discourse Analysis - an approach that attempts

to reveal the underlying power relations and disciplinary mechanisms of language as practice. I find this appropriate because I understand ISAK as a socially, economically and politically situated site that operates within a larger context of not just Japan, but also Western hegemony, globalization, neocolonialism, and the thoughts and practices of the field of international education itself. As such, it is influenced and constructed by social forces that constrain and liberate individual agency in ways that are not always explicit. Furthermore, these critical perspectives on the social world along with the values that they stand for align with my graduate program program and its focus on social justice in international education.

My methodology is qualitative as I will be looking at interviews and texts as data. My analysis is informed by Michel Foucault and Carla Willig's and Ian Parker's frameworks of Foucauldian discourse analysis. I hope that my findings will benefit ISAK by shining light on the power relations embedded within its discourse on leadership, and the international education community by utilizing an approach of analysis that is not frequently employed within the field. I also humbly appreciate the learning opportunity that this capstone represents for me and acknowledge the limitations of my own work and intellect.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review will first cover the very concept of discourse, and the differing understandings of it in recent and not-so-recent scholarly thought. After that, the focus shifts to a particular school of discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, and the tenets that make it part of critical social theory. Seeing that this school of thought is not a uniformed body of knowledge, the review will touch on a few different approaches to conceptualizing it as they were relevant to my process of developing the research question of this capstone paper. Finally, the Foucauldian analysis of discourse will be elaborated on since it is the theoretical focus of my research on student leadership discourse – a topic that has not been



studied yet, likely because leadership as a formalized academic program is a relatively uncommon occurrence in education.

### **What is Discourse?**

The first thing that might come to one's mind when they hear the term "discourse" is, simply, language - written and spoken communication. (Discourse, 2017) Indeed, language is central to discourse. A working definition of discourse put forward by Parker is that it is "a system of statements which constructs an object" (Parker, 1992, p. 4). However, a lot of work has been done in various academic disciplines to complicate this concept. Specifically, how we understand language has changed. Traditionally, language was understood as a medium for expressing a pre-existing meaning - a mere reflection of an objective reality existing inside of our minds or in the outside world. (Locke, 2004) With the linguistic turn of the 1970s, language was starting to be seen as not just representative, but as *constitutive* of social reality, meaning that language actually constructs meaning and, therefore, reality itself. (Locke, 2004) This also implies that there is no absolute meaning to be uncovered - meaning is historically and culturally situated and, therefore, continuously changing. Crucial for the development of the recognition that language is socially constructed was Saussure's work in structuralist linguistics. Through his ideas about the signifier and the signified, and the arbitrary connection between the two, he argued that words hold no inherent meaning, but that we attach meaning to them according to social conventions that lie outside of the linguistic object. (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002; Kubow & Fossum, 2007).

Poststructuralism and its rejection of the objective (Kubow & Fossum, 2007) developed Saussure's ideas further, but also offered a critique of the structuralist view of language as a stable system and of the binary oppositions within it. An example of this transition in thought is Laclau and Mouffe's post-structuralist discourse theory under which meaning can never be permanently fixed precisely because of the fundamental instability of

language. (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 6) According to them, discourse is in a constant struggle with other discourses, through which it is being transformed. It is never closed or finalized as there are always other (non-binary) meaning potentials that can challenge and transform the current discourse structure.

In light of these epistemological shifts, discourse came to be understood in terms of two broad categories. The first category, basically, refers to text and talk (Tenorio, 2011) and views discourse as a semiotic process (sign systems and meaning making that include both linguistic and non-linguistic forms). It understands language in use as a social practice and emphasizes “larger units such as paragraphs, utterances, whole texts or genres” (Locke, 2004, p. 13). This is also known as small-d-discourse. (Tenorio, 2011) The second category can be understood as James Paul Gee’s big-D-discourse (Tracy, Ilie, & Sandel, 2015), which “embeds little “d” discourse analysis into the ways in which language melds with bodies and things to create society and history” (p. 420). It is a practice of representing as well as constituting and constructing the world. (Locke, 2004)

These shifts can, generally, be tied to the larger postmodern turn that can be defined as an “incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1994, p. 27). The grand narrative, the totalitarian theory (such as positivism, Marxism, or stable language systems), could no longer suffice in explaining our social worlds. (Kubow & Fossum, 2007) Its delegitimization led to a localization of knowledges and language games. (Lyotard, 1994) Within this altered framework of knowledge (what knowledge is and how it is created), several interdisciplinary approaches to the analysis of discourse sprung up (Locke, 2004; Tenorio, 2011) - all of them social constructionist, though, meaning that they understand discourse as a social practice and they aim to analyse the patterns according to which this practice is structured. (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002)

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

One of the more prominent schools of discourse analysis that developed in the last quarter of the 20th century is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It draws on the previously discussed poststructuralism, postmodernism, as well as the Frankfurt School and Foucault. (Locke, 2004; Tenorio, 2011; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) It is embedded within Critical Theory which is a paradigm developed in the 1970s by the Western European Marxist tradition (the Frankfurt School) with an aim to examine the rationalization of modern life and the “reduction of human choices to consumer options”. (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, & Virk, 2012, p. 13) Many other theories that seek human emancipation are also considered critical (i.e. feminist theory, critical race theory, etc.). (Tenorio, 2011) The Marxist background can be located in CDA’s critique of capitalistic exploitation as well as in the dialectic method. (Locke, 2004)

Particularly influential was Habermas’ concept of communicative action, which posits that “validity claims can be challenged and defended in a communication situation that is free from coercion, is only based on rational argument, and permits access to all who are affected by the discourse” (as cited in Tenorio, 2011, p. 189). There we can observe the importance of the ideas of power and domination. Gramsci’s understanding of hegemony also played a role in developing CDA’s tenets, particularly with its distinction between power being exercised through repressive coercion, oppression and exploitation and power being exercised through complicity achieved by the persuasive potential of discourse. (Bates, 1975) CDA further draws on Althusser’s concept of interpellation or being called to accept the position that a text offers (Locke, 2004), as well as Foucault’s important contributions in developing a genealogical understanding of discourse. (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002)

### **The Critical in CDA**

What makes Critical Discourse Analysis critical is its commitment to raising awareness of “the strategies used in establishing, maintaining and reproducing (a)symmetrical relations of power as enacted by means of discourse“ (Tenorio, 2011, p. 184). Critique in CDA functions firstly as revelatory as it aims “to reveal the nature of systems of rules, principles and values as historically situated bases for critique” (Locke, 2004, p. 27), and in this way better understand how the knowledge of today came to exist. Critique also needs to be self-reflexive (Locke, 2004) - since meaning is unstable and constituted, researchers, as producers of knowledge, must also reflect on the temporality and the constructedness of their own research. Science does not exist in a vacuum and is itself constituted by scholarly discourse (Van Dijk, 2008), which can and has been shown to embed oppressive power relations. (Martin, 1991) Further, critique needs to be socially transformative. (Locke, 2004) CDA aims to challenge power relations and as such has to take a stance for or against them. Following the understanding that language constitutes reality, we can see how critically informed language takes action to transform the social by its very criticality. CDA can also explicitly suggest action plans that help subvert domination through power. (Locke, 2004)

The main tenets of CDA, according to Fairclough and Wodak (as cited in Van Dijk, 2008, p. 353), can be summarized as following (the brackets indicate my simplified understanding of particular tenets):

1. It addresses social problems (it is not just concerned with research for the sake of research)
2. Power relations are discursive (they exert themselves through discourse)
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture (it actively shapes our reality)
4. Discourse does ideological work (although Foucault rejects this notion)

5. The link between text and society is mediated (not just by *a* discourse and its power relations but by a whole order of discourse)
6. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory (incorporates subjectivity)
7. Discourse is a form of social action (it is productive)

CDA bridges the macro-level social relations with the micro-level communicative interaction. The strong influence from critical social science comes into dialogue with linguistics as CDA examines discursive text as a way to ascertain how its properties function to produce and reproduce unequal power relations. (Jahedi, Abdullah & Mukundan, 2014) A text is both a product and a process, in that it functions as a material artifact but it also interacts with its social context and communicates with its readers and writers. (Halliday & Hassan, 1985) There are different linguistic systems that CDA researchers can use in conjunction with other social theories and approaches. The Hallidayan grammar has been one of the most important social-semiotic perspectives on language analysis in the development of CDA. (Locke, 2004) His systemic-functional framework looks at field, tenor and mode in order to describe the social context of a text. (Derewianka, 2012) The field asks what the subject matter of the text is (e.g., igneous rocks, herbal teas, etc.), the tenor is concerned with who is interacting in the text and their relationship (sister/sister, teacher/student, intimate, professional, etc.), and the mode looks at the channels of communication within the text (e.g. spoken text, written text). (Derewianka, 2012) These concepts, respectively, relate to the three metafunctions of language established by Halliday (Locke, 2004): 1) the ideational (composed of the experiential, which is what gives meaning to our experience, and the logical, which is what describes the relationship between one process or participant and the other within the text), 2) the interpersonal (defines the process of social interaction occurring in the text), and 3) the textual (looks at the interplay of linguistic elements within a text that give it coherence). All of these choices of text type are influenced by the social purpose of

the text (what it is intended for) stemming from the understanding that text is always socially situated.

Finally, there is a sort of metalanguage that CDA uses in order to talk about both the micro and macro aspects of discourse. Fairclough, a key contributor to the field, neatly organizes the three with his schematization of text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. (Locke, 2004) The analysis of text should focus on how text discursively positions readers to interpret, internalize and act out its preferred reading. At the level of discourse practice one can examine how the text is produced and disseminated, and how it connects to/draws upon other texts and discourse (intertextuality and interdiscursivity). By looking at discursive sociocultural practice it is possible to ascertain the immediate situation giving rise to the discursive conditions that make the text socioculturally relevant or producible. Here, the onus is on the wider context of the discourse and the power relations identifiable within it.

### **Different Approaches**

CDA is a paradigm, a method and an analytical technique. (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) Different parts of it can be used for different purposes, which is something I considered carefully when reviewing the literature to inform the specifics of my research question and the method most appropriate for it. Since CDA is not only language based, it attracts scholars and activists from different disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, communications, philosophy, etc. (Fairclough, 2004), and so I see it as appropriate for the international education context as well.

Fairclough focuses on change and the concept of interdiscursivity to examine how texts draw upon and rearticulate other discourses (different representations of areas of social reality stemming from particular social positions), genres (stabilized semiotic ways of acting) and styles (particular semiotic ways of being). (Locke, 2004) Gunther Kress draws on Halliday's work on grammar, and examines the social conditions of choice in discursive text.

(Locke, 2004) Van Dijk's most relevant work has been on race and discourse in which he is mainly interested in the cognitive interface between the social and the linguistic. (Van Dijk, 2012) Wodak takes a historical approach and looks at discursive continuities and differences over decades, focusing on denaturalizing "common-sense" positions. (Locke, 2004)

Similarly, Foucault centered his work around mapping the origins and the development of the ways of knowing as a way to understand how power circulates to determine the rules by which certain statements are given the validity of truth at particular times in history.

(Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002)

### **Foucauldian Discourse Analysis**

Michel Foucault contributed greatly to the development of the CDA field and most scholars within the field draw upon his work or have been influenced by it in some way.

(Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Tenorio, 2011) While his approach is social constructivist and critical, his vehement rejection of systematicity and claims to objectivity set him apart from Critical Discourse Analysis. (Taylor, 2014) In a poststructuralist fashion, he eschewed the formulation of a universal truth that could explain our realities (Graham, 2005) and did not see his work as laying any claims to totality. Instead, he viewed it as just "philosophical fragments" that open up a space of research. (Foucault, 1991) This is not surprising considering that the focus of his work lies, precisely, in how the true and the false are constituted at a given point in history:

My general theme isn't society but the discourse of true and false, by which I mean the correlative formation of domains and objects and of the verifiable, falsifiable discourses that bear on them; and it's not just their formation that interests me, but the effects in the real to which they are linked. (Foucault, 1991, p. 85)

His concern was with the history of the objectification of objectivities (how and when those things taken for granted, seen as objective, came to become objects of knowledge).

Foucault would have considered a researcher's claim to objectivity or truthfulness as a knowledge that is simply constituted by a coercive (scientific) discourse, for which it would have to have been inscribed in a hierarchical order of power. (Foucault, 1994) For any statement to be considered true there would have to be a "specific social, cultural, and political discursive field" to qualify it as such. (Bazzul, 2016, p. 11) This field is the, so called, regime of truth/rationality in Foucauldian terms:

One isn't assessing things in terms of an absolute against which they could be evaluated as constituting more or less perfect forms of rationality, but rather examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices or systems of practices, and what role they play within them, because it's true that 'practices' don't exist without a certain regime of rationality. (Foucault, 1991, p. 79)

For Foucault, discourse is historical, and his work on sexuality (Foucault, 1978), madness (Foucault, 1965) and discipline (Foucault, 1979) attempted to trace the historical origins and developments of the knowledges and behaviors that were grounded in "truth" through the relations of power operating through discourse. Power and knowledge are closely tied as hegemonical power structures exist within knowledge itself - knowledge is constituted by these structures and it, dialectically, constitutes them. (Taylor, 2014) In *History of Sexuality*, for example, he questions the taken-for-granted repression hypothesis and identifies, instead, a calculated reorganization of sexuality and a multiplication of discourses concerning sex in 18th and 19th centuries as a product of the "encroachment of a type of power on bodies and their pleasures". (Foucault, 1978, p. 48) The use of the word "bodies" here is specific, as Foucault posited that subjects/bodies, not just meaning, were wholly constituted and regulated by discourse. A person's sense of who they are arises from their "imbrication in systems of historically contingent meanings" (Tenorio, 2011, p. 192).



Because of his appreciation for complexity and multiplicity of discourses, it is difficult to ascertain a methodological application of his approach, particularly when it comes to the linguistic manifestation of discourse. (Graham, 2005) Others have stressed that every discourse analysis needs to be specifically tailored to its research question and the specific discourse in question. (Fairclough, 2004; Langer, 1998) However, there have been attempts to develop Foucauldian ways of analyzing discourse - Fairclough's approach, the Duisburg approach and Willig's framework all draw on Foucault's discourse theory. (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Tenorio, 2011)

### **Leadership Discourse**

Although there are plenty of discourse analyses of leadership as a discursive practice tied to a particular social position, both in general (O'Reilly & Reed) and in the field of education (Anderson, Mungal; Henze & Arriazza; Gronn), I have not been able to find past research done on the discourse of "leadership" being constituted as something that students should learn and practice in school.

### **Research Method**

My methodology is qualitative and it combines the methods of critical discourse analysis of text and a coding analysis of interviews. This follows the CDA notion that a research method should always reflect the research question. (Fairclough, 2004) Since my research is concerned with the relationship between language and practice at ISAK, it seemed appropriate to look at both what is presented in text produced by ISAK and what members of the ISAK community observe as practice in their lives at ISAK. I collected my interview data in the Fall of 2017 and the texts were pre-existing data in the form of transcribed speeches given at the 2017 graduation ceremony at ISAK.

## **Interviews**

I set out to interview up to fifteen individuals from ISAK who were students or employees at ISAK during my practicum there in 2016/17. I used quota sampling by identifying categories of participants that were important to my research. These included students (eight participants), faculty (four participants), staff (four participants), and senior administration (one). To select participants I first made a list of all individuals who were above 18 (per Institutional Review Board requirements) in each category. I then divided individuals by gender in each category because I wanted to have a relatively equal representation (even though I acknowledge that the binary understanding of gender has serious limitations). In the student category I also divided students into those who are presently studying at ISAK and those who graduated at the time that I completed my practicum.

**Data selection.** I used an online list generator to randomly shuffle the names in each list in order to reduce the interference of my list-making in the selection of participants. I then used a random number generator online to select a specific number of participants from each group. I sent an invitation for participation to the selected participants by email (using ISAK email addresses) or Facebook (for the students who had graduated and no longer used their ISAK email accounts). I received a response from eight individuals (six students, one staff member and one teacher) who I then interviewed via online video calls, except for one participant who asked to answer the questions in writing using an online questionnaire I created for them. The interviews that were done via video calls were semi-structured as I followed a set list of questions and probed where I saw fit (see Appendix C for a list of questions). They were done one-on-one and lasted from thirty to fifty minutes. The online questionnaire consisted of the same questions I used as my interview guide. The questions asked about how the participants saw themselves and others at ISAK, their impressions of

ISAK, institutional image portrayal, the guiding principles of leadership in everyday life, and about power and resistance at ISAK. All interviews will be treated as confidential data.

Spoken language acquired from an interview can be read as text, although some argue (Fadyl & Nicholls, 2013) that this is not in line with discourse theory because the interview involves a subjectification of the interviewee in a way that existing texts do not. Further, the interview itself is a discourse on its own and it can be difficult to separate the materialization of that discourse from the one we are trying to study. Others (Cruickshank, 2012) argue that interviews are suitable for discourse analysis as they allow the interviewee to materialize possible resistance to discourse. I decided not to read the interviews as texts but as participant's meaning-making processes about ISAK, instead. As such, the interviews will serve as windows into ISAK members' thoughts, beliefs about and experiences with leadership at ISAK, because this responds to the practice portion of my research question better.

**Transcription.** When thinking about my approach to interview transcription I considered the naturalized and denaturalized approaches. (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2006) The naturalized approach intends to represent the small details of talk such as pauses, intonation and hesitation, which is particularly useful for conversation analysis. A study on the characteristics of the speech women use to refuse sex (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999) found that women were indeed using socially-agreed-upon language understood as refusal, and that men were simply refusing to understand this language. Such a finding would not have been as robust had it not been for careful transcription - it is indispensable for some research questions.

Denaturalized transcription excludes the details of speech and transcribes only what is being said. This can be appropriate for research that is not interested so much in the mechanics of speech but in what that speech says about aspects of the participant's life. (as

cited in Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2006) Since critical discourse analysis focuses on the “ideological dimension of speech” (p. 4), or embodied discourse, which is usually captured in the content of the interview, denaturalized transcription may be a more appropriate choice. (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2006) My research is not so interested in the mechanics of speech, but in the content being delivered about language and practices at ISAK. Unless those mechanics tell me something about what participants really think about what they are saying, they are not relevant for my research question. This is why I decided to use a largely denaturalized approach with the inclusion of some mechanics where appropriate (see Appendix A for transcription convention).

### **Discursive Text**

I have selected three events that I will read as discursive text through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis. They are speeches that were given at the inaugural class graduation ceremony at ISAK in May, 2017 (see Appendix B for a transcription of the three speeches). One was given by the head of the school, another by the founder of the school, and one by a graduating student. I chose this event because it marked a culmination in what a whole class of students together with all the employees had been working for since the founding of the school. As such it is imbued with a representation of all the values that ISAK posits as central to its learning experience, especially the leadership model. This is also allowed by the fact that the speakers are the founder of ISAK, the head of school and a student from the graduating class - figures that can generally be considered ISAK spokespersons. Further, the ceremony was a public event, open to the outside community and attended by many parents and the donors. This inevitably incorporates a sense of “performance” for an audience (the donors being an audience that holds significant economic power at ISAK). All these factors make the event appropriate for looking at the “language” part of my research question.

The ceremony was recorded using a video camera and the video was shared with everyone at ISAK, which is how I got access to it. I transcribed the three speeches using the same approach I used in transcribing my interviews: denaturalized with some recognition of speech mechanics. This is because I am mostly interested in the content of what is being said in the speeches - this content holds discursive material. However, through my practicum I observed that the people who often gave speeches or public addresses of any sort at ISAK used speech characteristics such as tone, pause and humor as a way to garner specific responses. Therefore, I am curious to see if these are at all relevant in constituting discourse and so I will pay some attention to them.

### **Data Analysis**

My approach to data analysis is informed by Foucauldian theory in that it focuses on leadership as a discursive object. However, since my research focuses on two data types, interviews and texts, I have chosen to analyse the two in distinct ways. As previously discussed, I decided not to read the interviews as discursive texts but as meaning-making processes unique to each participant as well as windows into a story of ISAK that is collectively constructed. Therefore, in order to make sense of the interviews I used a simple coding method through which I tried to both understand every interview as an account of its own and find overarching and connecting themes between the different interviews. For the graduation speeches I employed a critical discourse analysis that draws on Foucault but is not fully Foucauldian, since Foucault never really specified a clear methodological approach and, in fact, rejected the attempt as a prescriptive and illusory practice. For the purposes of my research I combined Willig's (2015) and Parker's (1992) readings of Foucauldian discourse analysis, arriving at a total of eight steps for looking at the discursive object.

## Text Analysis

**Willig's Analysis Approach.** Willig's approach to discourse analysis (Willig, 2015; Buchanan, 2008; Jones, 2014) tasks itself with the mapping of a discursive environment asking in the process what characterizes this environment and what possible ways of being it allows. I picked this approach because the steps outlined in it and the questions asked at each step seemed to address the different aspects of the leadership discourse that I am interested in, such as how it is described and what practice and subjectivity it allows for. I chose not to go with a more linguistic-centered approach (such as Fairclough's) because I wanted to explore an approach that attempted to challenge the idea that a systematic, evidence-based way of analysing something is inherently more enlightening. This is an important consideration in Foucault's theory, which sees positivism and scientificity as just another discourse that constitutes objectivity as a legitimate way of knowing the world. (Foucault, 1994) At the same time, total ambiguity about the research method may be problematic as well as it entrusts the researcher with the authority to *know* what is being done in the research process and, through this, disciplines readers into interpellating that authority. Foucault, however, countered this claim by explaining that he never tried to universalize his findings or lay claims to totality but, instead, approached research without knowing or anticipating where, if anywhere, it would lead him. (Foucault, 1991) For a more detailed discussion about this tension between prescription and vagueness in Foucauldian discourse analysis, see Graham (2005).

The compromise, then, could be for researchers to be transparent about what they are doing (Graham, 2005) and avoid constituting their findings as conclusive through the use of scholarly authority. Therefore, I am compelled to recognize that despite the fact that I chose to use approaches described as subjectivist and non-prescriptive I remain critical of how they, nevertheless, do invoke objectivist claims to some degree. For example, the very notion of

distinct steps in an analysis invokes the idea of there being a systematic and linear way of thinking about the research question. I also want to point out that while I present some possibilities of reasoning in my analysis, these should in no way be considered a complete image of the discursive system. Likewise, we should question our desire to bring into sight a complete image of a system as this may just feed into the positivist fantasy of, first of all, there existing a totality of meanings and, second of all, us knowing it. (Parker, 1992)

The discursive object of leadership will now be looked at through the six steps formulated by Willig's approach to analysis: discursive constructions, discourses, action orientation, positionings, practice, subjectivity.

***1) Discursive constructions.*** The first step focuses on how the discursive object (leadership) is talked about, both implicitly and explicitly in the text. (Willig, 2015) Since ISAK students are constructed as the future leaders, the accolades and the advice giving characteristic of the three graduation speeches all implicitly talk about who a leader is and what they should practice. The founder, Lin Kobayashi, is announced to the audience as the leader of ISAK by the virtue of her dedication to founding the school as well as the vision that she has had for it (lines 1-3), two qualities that we can start to define leadership by. In her speech she tells three stories about authenticity (lines 10-28), resilience (lines 28-57) and gratitude (57-74) through which she communicates certain ideas about the characteristics recommended for ISAK students to have. Mexico City as the place where she witnessed “severe poverty and disparity for the first time in (her) life” is set up as the motivator for founding ISAK (lines 10-14) - the latter representing her “life project” or passion (lines 23-24). Leadership can thus be seen as a journey of figuring out what social problem (located elsewhere in the world) one should dedicate their life to. Other implicit references to leaderships are to “live your own life” (line 26), creating our own future (“if you strongly believe in it, you can and should take action and be resilient with it,” lines 56-57), and thinking of alternative solutions to problems (lines 35-

38). All throughout the speech, there is talk about capital, raising funds and financial expansion, which implicitly refer to measures of when one's leadership is proving successful (i.e., enough funds were raised and ISAK could be founded, an entrepreneur practiced gratitude so he was able to get wealthy, etc.).

The student speaker focuses on the ideas of choice (lines 13, 18), risk-taking (lines 30-31, 43) and taking action or controlling an outcome (lines 45-47, 55) in his speech. He talks about ISAK as a place that the students dared to engage with since they were its first class, so it represented a risk and was a source of uncertainty for each one of them ("we all took some kind of a risk", line 31). He frames this risk-taking as an "opportunity to take action" during which they "structured it, shaped it, molded it into what the school is right now" (lines 46-47). Important for carrying through these exercises in leadership was the "tremendous support" received from "staff, faculty, friends, family and the founders" (lines 37-39).

The head of school is announced with reference to the idea of ISAK being a family (line 2), which he later fortifies by saying the students have become part of his family (lines 25-27) and that the promises made to the students' parents three years before were "to know your son and daughter" and "to love your son and daughter" (lines 28-30). Other concepts invoked are the idea of choice and agency to make decisions (lines 14-16), being committed (line 11), having patience (lines 9-10) and receiving support from others (line 12). Not measuring ISAK's success by what universities its students go to and how much money they make (lines 18-20) is another way of saying that ISAK leads the way with a focus on alternative forms of success. The head of school finishes the speech with the hope that some ISAK students will come back to ISAK as faculty and heads of school (lines 32-36), which communicates another form of successful and desired leadership that is, nevertheless, exemplified by occupying a specific position within a community.



The speeches, in short, talk about leadership as a courageous endeavor that requires action-taking, commitment and support, and can be demonstrated as successful by contrastingly profit-motivated and alternative but position-bound forms of success. It is important to note that by the virtue of this discursive event taking place at ISAK, the school as an educational institution is constituted as the space where leadership is brought into existence. All those involved with the event are, thus, also constituted as having some sort of authority on the knowledge and practice of leadership, particularly the speakers in the texts, which further supports the notion of successful leadership as position-bound.

*II) Discourses.* The second step looks at how the text invokes other discourses. (Willig, 2015) It overlaps significantly with the first step since the discursive object is always constituted by other discourses invoked and vice-versa. Leadership in the speeches draws upon several other discourses such as entrepreneurship, competition, support, control, hierarchical positioning, the orientalized “other” and formalized education. The founder talks about jobs, money, donations and investment almost all throughout her speech (lines 16-17, 19-20, 31-33, 37-38, 51-52, 70-72, 76) even if she uses these only as the background to the focus of her different stories on authenticity, gratitude and resilience. The head of school also thanks the founders, specifically (lines 8-14). Interestingly, the student does not invoke these discourses except when he thanks the founders among others (line 39) and when he talks about the class not being eligible for the Davis scholarship (line 34-35).

Entrepreneurship, social initiative and global expansion are brought into play, too, as the founder talks about giving advice to a couple of entrepreneurs (lines 59-72), one of whom went on to build a donor base in “multiple countries in Asia and expanding” (lines 72-73). Alternative ways of looking at a problem and dealing with it are also referred to by the founder when she talks about the founders looking for a hundred donors instead of one billionaire to fund the school (lines 35-38), by the student when he talks about his class taking

advantage of uncertainty and shaping the school in their own way (lines 44-47), and by the head of school when he talks about alternative ways of managing success at ISAK (lines 18-20).

Another discourse invoked is that of school prestige, particularly by the student when he talks about leaving a competitive private Japanese school whose students enter top Japanese universities in order to attend ISAK (lines 14-18). Further, he frames ISAK as being a risky school to attend at first because the students “did not have the promise of an IB education” (lines 31-33), meaning that the students could not rely on the stability of an internationally renowned academic program. The head of school also talks about prestigious universities, however, in the context of ISAK student success not being measured by whether they attend those or not (line 19). The masculinist discourse of desiring control and domination over something (Salisbury & Riddell, 2000, p. 237) is invoked through references to creating the future (founder’s speech line 56; student’s speech line 56), taking action (student’s speech lines 25, 46), and making a decision despite challenges (founder’s speech line 46; head of school’s speech line 15-16).

A discourse around support is drawn upon in all three speeches, whether it is support coming from ISAK employees and parents (founder’s speech lines 78-80; student’s speech lines 36-67; head of school’s speech lines 21-22), or specifically support from the founders and donors primarily in the form of money (founder’s speech lines 75-78; student’s speech lines 38-39; head of school’s speech lines 8-14). Support from the close relationships built at ISAK is also invoked by the student (lines 10, 37, 57-58) and by the founder (line 27).

A discourse around hierarchical social positions reveals itself when the student talks about missing the deadline to apply to ISAK and then emailing the head of school about it, after which he was able to apply past the deadline and get accepted (lines 25-30). The head of

school also invokes this discourse when he expresses his wishes for at least four graduating students to come back to ISAK to work as faculty (lines 31-33) - a fairly privileged group of individuals at ISAK - and for one individual to return as head of school (lines 35-36), which would then be perhaps the most privileged social position within the hierarchy. The founder does something similar when she speaks about the donors as the people she and the board members had to pursue and who, ultimately, decided with their funds whether ISAK was going to be created or not (lines 35-40, 41-42, 51-52). A discourse of economization and rationalization is brought into play by specific terms such as “batch” to mean “a class of students” (student’s speech line 31), “track record” to mean “evidence of school’s success” (founder’s speech line 82).

An orientalist, white-saviour type discourse is invoked when the founder refers to Mexico City’s poverty inspiring her vision to found ISAK (line 12). At the same time, a sort of valorization of internationalism is invoked by the student when he talks about “international connections from Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, Taiwan” (lines 48-49) that the class formed through their extracurricular projects. This exists within a discourse of globalization and movement of knowledge, experiences and bodies across borders, which could be particularly salient in the context of an international school. Lastly, the very fact that the discursive event is occurring at a formally recognized school and that a graduation of its class is being celebrated as an achievement invokes the understanding that formal educational institutions are legitimate ways of learning (leadership).

**III) Action orientation.** This step looks at the function of constructing the discursive object in a particular way - what is gained by constructing leadership in the way that the text constructs it? (Willig, 2015) Primarily, the specific construction of leadership valorizes the achievements made by the students who are framed as the future leaders of the world. The speeches are formulated as celebrations of the graduating class as well as projections into the future. The

ideas used to implicitly and explicitly refer to leadership act as guidance for what values, behaviors and yearnings a student should internalize in order to achieve a, seemingly, objective form of success (personal or professional). For example, when the founder tells her story about gratitude and how the entrepreneur who thanked her ended up developing a wealthier business (lines 70-72), she is making a powerful claim about how a student should conceptualize and execute “leadership” in order to ensure a successful future. I refer to students specifically here because it is important to notice that, even though the speeches address different groups of people, they are primarily directed at the students by the nature of the graduation ceremony being an event created specifically to mark the end of the students' studies. This positioning achieves that the students be most interpellated or called into constitution by the text.

I see four other major functions of leadership being constructed in the way that steps one and two of the analysis put forth. One is a justification of the donors' social positions and their financial power. The founder's speech, in particular, addresses this aspect in a way that makes the donors seem indispensable: “first of all, I'd like to thank Taniya-san and the founders and the catalyst supporters and donor supporters for believing in us when there was literally nothing” (lines 75-78). The head of school thanks them profusely as well (lines 8-14) and, interestingly, thanks them first in the speech just like the founder does in hers. Going a step further, this valorization of monetary contributions by the donors justifies an unequal capitalist economic system since it provides no resistance to the idea that there is a very small number of people in Japan and the world (the, so called, one percent of the wealthiest) who have enough capital to invest in a school like ISAK. This fact is constituted as normal in the text.

Another function is a normalization of hierarchical social positions. This is particularly achieved by the way that the student's speech talks about getting accepted past

the deadline by reaching out to the person who holds one of the most powerful positions at the school - the head of school. When one looks at the transcription of those lines (lines 25-29) there is no particular hesitation or pause and they are delivered relatively matter-of-factly. Additionally, there is an element of humor as the speaker refers to the head of school as just a friend he knew from summer school. The humor indicates that what is being said is not actually true (the head of school cannot just be a casual friend) which further visibilizes that the head of school holds an important and powerful position at ISAK. Another example of hierarchical social positions being normalized is when the head of school states his hopes for the graduating class: “Ten years from now (.) my wish is that at least four of you will return to ISAK and be sitting in that corner as faculty (applause)” (lines 33-36). In this way the position of a faculty member is constituted as desirable. He then goes on to say:

Even more importantly (.) class of 2017 you know what’s coming next (.) I’ve never said it publicly (.) the first time (.) in ten years (0.3) I hope and wish standing here before you one of you will be a head of school at ISAK (applause and audible awe).  
(lines 32-34)

There is a sense of anticipation and grandiosity in these words and, most importantly, a sense of it being common-sense knowledge, which constitutes the head of school position as even more desirable than that of a faculty member (i.e., of course it is important to be a head of school and of course anyone would desire to occupy such a position).

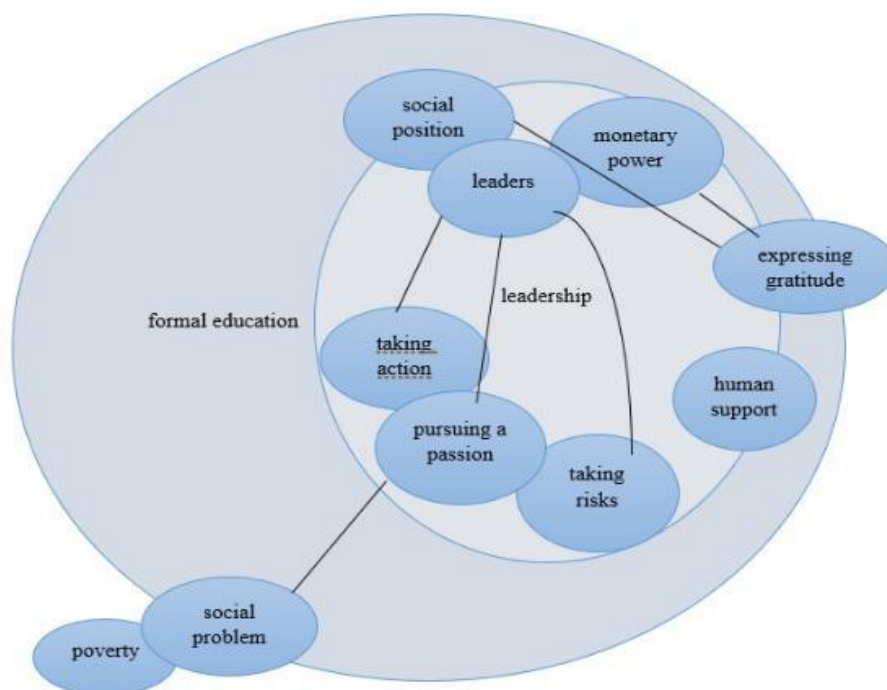
The discursive object of leadership can also be understood to fulfill a function of valorizing human support. From ideas of gratitude leading to success (founder’s speech lines 58-74) to those of ISAK being a family (head of school’s speech lines 25-28), students being brothers and sisters (student’s speech line 57) and, simply, the many thanks being expressed to different groups of people, the text constitutes leadership as something that entails receiving and giving support. It is important, however, to note who is thanked how and for

what as this might indicate important differences between social positions. For example, when wealthy donors receive much of the gratitude expressed in the text then the discourse of gratitude may be fulfilling a function of normalizing a top-down hierarchy and the concentration of wealth.

Lastly, the discourse on leadership at ISAK functions to construct the social problem itself. When the founder refers to the poverty in Mexico City as an inspiration for her founding ISAK (lines 11-14), a location of a social problem is spoken into existence (“third world” countries) as well as a desirable course of action to be directed at it (addressing the problem through a project) and the people who should do so (young leaders). Similarly, when the head of school talks about the true measure of ISAK’s success being whether or not it has made an impact on the town in which it is located (lines 18-20), we are called to understand the local community as a place which needs to be acted upon, exerted influence over or altered. This is relevant because it is linked to a leadership discourse that in its core rationalizes action-taking and change-making. We can say, then, that through this leadership discourse certain locations/societies are constituted as needing help, and the students of ISAK as well as others involved with ISAK are constituted as the leaders who will provide that help.

***IV) Positionings.*** This step looks at the subject positionings made available by the discourses, that is, how different people or concepts are positioned in the text. (Willig, 2015) I attempt to show the positionings made available by the leadership discourse constituted in the text through the drawing below (see Drawing 1). The smaller circles represent subjects, while the larger circles represent discursive fields within which these subjects are positioned. The overlapping of circles indicates connections or a sort of grouping between subjects, whereas the lines show (inter)action between subjects. Since ISAK is a formal educational institution, leadership is positioned as operating within a discourse that legitimizes the formal education

system as a desired way of learning. Within the leadership discourse there are leaders who are positioned in connection with social position and monetary power upon which they depend. Expressing gratitude is a desirable behavior that should be directed to those from which resources are received: subjects in important positions and with money. Human support is positioned as something indispensable to all at ISAK. Taking action, taking risks, and pursuing a passion are positioned as desirable leader qualities. Pursuing a passion incorporates the other two qualities and is positioned to act upon a social problem linked with ideas of poverty.



*Drawing 1. Positionings.* This drawing shows the positionings of the different subjects and objects made available by the discourse in the text.

**V) Practice.** This step looks at what people/groups can say and do (or not) given the positions made available in the discourse. (Willig, 2015) It asks what the possibilities and limitations for action through the positioning of subjects within specific discourses are. Looking at the leadership discourse itself a few possibilities come to light: when one is presented with

something difficult they should continue with it and persevere; taking risks allows for opportunities in life; one should try to control their own life and future; one should do something they are passionate about; a passion should arise out of or dedicate itself to the solution of a social problem (this social problem can be located in the Global South); a community should support its members; one should show gratitude to those we have received something from; (big volumes of) money and power can be held by people in particular social positions; one should be wealthy or be capable of using the wealth of others; a person in a position of power can change a rule/limitation of their own accord; coming up with an alternative solution to something can facilitate success; formal educational institutions are legitimate ways of learning (leadership).

Contrastingly, limitations would be placed on: giving up from something difficult; missing out on opportunities by choosing not to take risks; letting life just run its own course; not having a passion to dedicate oneself to; one's passion not centering around a social cause (even if in the orientalist sense); members of a community being unsupportive of each other; failing to show gratitude to those we have received something from; (big volumes of) money and power not being distributed equally and made accessible to everyone; a rule/limitation being changed by collective consensus; traditional solutions to problems being sufficient for achieving success; formal educational institutions are illegitimate ways of learning (leadership).

The category of limitations is expressed here as just the other side of a dichotomous formulation and as such is, of course, limited. However, writing it out does help clarify what a discourse constitutes as possible/desirable and impossible/undesirable.

**VI) Subjectivity.** This step looks at what people can think, feel and experience given the positions made available in the discourse. (Willig, 2015) Basically, it zeros in on how



individuals are internally constituted based on the discourse. Since I believe the texts are primarily calling to students I will focus on the subjectivity made available to them.

Being called to understand leadership as composed of action-taking, risk-taking and resilience makes it possible for a student to think that they should strive to take action whenever possible and that difficulty is normal and justified. They could feel accepting of or unsurprised by the pressures that come with this. The idea of creating one's path in life can make one think that control is establishable and, therefore, feel in control when things are going as envisioned and out of control when they are not. The construction of gratitude as important for success can lead to one feeling accomplished for expressing it and guilty for not doing so. Similarly, the importance laid on receiving support can make one need support or feel that it is meaningful, even fulfilling, to provide it.

The discourse invoked around hierarchical social positions can make a student yearn to occupy a high position in society, feel accomplished if they already do or unaccomplished if they do not. It can also make them experience rule-bending when performed by a person in a position of power as justified and normal. Wealth being positioned as influential and productive (in that it creates possibilities such as the founding of a school like ISAK) can make a student think that it is important to accumulate wealth and feel inferior if they do not have access to wealth. They might also think it necessary to attain money in order to bring a passion to fruition and, consequently, live a meaningful life. At the same time, the alternative possibility presented in the text of one's success not being measured by going to prestigious universities and earning a lot of money offers a space for the student to feel unconcerned by wealth and think that there are other objects to center one's living around.

Lastly, the discourse around social entrepreneurship can call students to feel compelled to focus their work on social problems and feel unsatisfied if they are not. An orientalist discourse invoked in connection with this can make them think that certain

societies in the world are helpless and need precisely their leadership to be helped. Further, they might experience surface-level treatment of social problems as sufficient and even laudable.

**Parker's Analysis Approach.** The following two points of analysis are incorporated from Parker's 20-step analysis (Parker, 1992), because I believe they bring forward a stronger Foucauldian focus. One of these is looking at which categories of people gain and lose from the employment of the discourse. (Parker, 1992) Here we can point to donors and others who are in positions of wealth and power as people who gain from a discourse on leadership that normalizes an unequal distribution of wealth and power. Those who are able to be linked to this category of people and, in turn, access what they own may also gain from a discourse that constitutes leadership through action-taking and resilience. The losers, here, could be those who do not demonstrate leadership as it is constituted by the discourse, either verbally or through action and, therefore, fail to access the different forms of restricted capital.

The second point of analysis tries to identify the institutions which are reinforced when the leadership discourse is used. (Parker, 1992) The institution that immediately stands out here is that of formal education and, perhaps, international education. It is constructed as self-evident that a group of students engaging their minds, bodies, time and money with ISAK is an achievement to be celebrated. A justification (even a need) for the continuity of ISAK's existence is spoken into existence by the head of school's reference to the graduating class coming back as faculty and heads of school (lines 30-35), which assumes that the school should still be operating by that time, or by the student's mention of the other two classes at ISAK having some time left to study at the school.

Another institution that is reinforced strongly is the capitalist institution. The existence of money and the need to own it is constituted as self-evident all throughout the text. The unequal distribution of it is honored by the accolades given to the donors of ISAK. Some

resistance to this institution can be found in the invokement of the discourse of support and family as something that takes care of people. However, it is questionable whether these people would be part of the “supportive ISAK community” in the first place if it were not for the money that ensured it. The discourse around gratitude can be seen as another form of resistance, but if gratitude is expressed mostly to those in positions of power and wealth, then this discourse only further reinforces (neoliberal) capitalist ideas.

Outside of the scope of this research but relevant points to look into are analysing how and where the discourse of leadership emerged, and describing how it has changed. These two steps would involve a more extensive genealogical approach to the discourse on leadership.

### **Interview Analysis**

I approached the analysis of the eight transcribed interviews using three forms of qualitative coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. (Neuman, 2012) Open coding is the first reading of the qualitative data that has been collected and it involves “identifying concepts and and themes and assigning initial codes or labels to them” (Neuman, 2012, p. 354). I did this step slowly, carefully and with an open mind, allowing for any theme to come to surface. Next, I did axial coding, which is the second reading of the data and focuses on connecting the different themes that came up in the first stage, and reviewing and refining these. When I did this step I focused, in particular, on the relationships between the different interviews as well as the disconnects or the themes unique to individual participants. The last step is selective coding, which is the final reading of the data. At this stage, the already developed themes and concepts from axial coding are revisited selectively, in order to find supporting evidence for them. These three steps made the analysis of my interviews much more manageable and provided me with a more integrated final picture of what the data might mean. The following are the central themes that I identified in the eight interviews:

what ISAK represents for people, image creation, what qualifies as change-making, how leadership is done and by who, and a push for positivity.

**Me, others and our surroundings.** When the participants were asked to talk about who they and those around them at ISAK are and what ISAK represents for them, they expressed a relatively similar set of ideas. Many talked about their close friends and people they care about who provide them with lots of support, and some talked about the community in general being small and feeling like a family. Three participants felt ISAK was a place/community they needed to or wanted to contribute to in different ways. A few described others as people to learn from, and the overall experience as a challenging one that they grew from. For some, it was an opportunity, a way of getting to another place in life they wanted to get to, or simply an International Baccalaureate school that met the criteria. A couple of participants talked about ISAK as a place with values or programs that focused on doing something different (like leadership and mindfulness) as opposed to most other schools that just focus on the academics. For non-native speakers the topic of English came up as something they have struggled with. Similarly, the relationship between Japanese and Western norms at the school is something to be navigated, particularly for participants who have a Japanese background. One participant in particular explained how the process of interacting with diverse people and having to explain themselves over and over again helped them understand their identity better. Another also pointed out this idea of people from diverse backgrounds intermingling and learning from each other, as well as that bringing challenges with itself, especially within such a small community where “relationships were very heightened”.

**Image Creation.** Some of the participants described ISAK during their time there as a safe space, and as an environment in which they felt at home and comfortable expressing themselves. Some others also felt restricted at ISAK and as if they could not voice their true

opinions (three participants ). All of the participants, even if not explicitly, expressed some sort of a disconnect between what they imagined/expected ISAK to be and what they found it to be after being there for some time, which in itself might not be so surprising. Four out of the eight participants identified the disconnect as quite significant.

Some initial impressions of the school or expectations before coming to ISAK identified by the participants are that people would be supportive, caring and friendly, that leadership would be a practice available to everyone and anyone, and that it would simply be a school that is “different” or unique. Many participants were attracted to ISAK by the leadership program, especially the notion of leadership not being a position reserved for specific people. One participant specifically mentioned being interested by the school’s commitment to not measuring student success by what universities they end up attending or how much money they end up earning. This distinction between ISAK and “other” schools was discussed by three participants who also added that, in reality, there was nothing different about ISAK. One of them specifically talked about the academic part being similar: “Sometimes I feel like it's the same, it's the same as like what I used to have. Because you just come to class and then like study, like focusing more on studying and studying, lots of things to do”. Another participant commented specifically on the idea of education for social change and that while ISAK propagated this concept it also did not necessarily fulfill it: “(...) it felt like we were trying to change the world but basically we're just sending students to Harvard and Princeton”.

While some participants found the leadership program helpful and educational, at least in part, and some saw room for improvement but remained optimistic about it changing and adapting, the general theme is that there is something incoherent or puzzling about it. As one participant puts it: “There was a huge change. Um because even though the leadership wasn't a huge aspect of why I went to that school um once entering I realized that like the way they

focused on it was a bit off". Many participants talked about the leadership concept and the language around it being considered a joke and not taken seriously anymore at the school. Some attribute this to a perceived attempt by the adults at the school to drill the ideas into students' minds through constant repetition. Along with that, those ideas simply lost meaning: "they tried to: make sure we valued those words but then for some: reason it just lost its value". A few other participants point out that the leadership and mindfulness language is sometimes just used to control students: "some of the language (...) is (0.3) um connected to somewhat generalized terms and on the other hand you could just say that it's a dressed up form of telling someone to do something else". Other participants, although cognizant of this reality also try to remain optimistic about there being room for the words to regain their value.

A few of the participants pointed out ways in which ISAK intentionally engages in image creation, such as showing happy and diverse students on the website or during open campus days when visitors can get to know the school better. Some participants talked about efforts to hide certain things from the public that could be viewed negatively, one of them mentioning a rule that used to disallow students from dyeing their hair unnatural colors because it would seem improper. While this difference between what is presented to the outsider and the insider is critiqued, there also seems to be an understanding of why it is done or even necessary:

We know that ISAK, like we know this, it's a new school and publicity is everything and being able to prove that the graduates of ISAK manage to go to all these famous name schools is a huge thing (...) and we're not rich, we need donations, we need money and all of those things help but it's just, it's not really (0.4) we're told a different story. So we're told like the 'No this is all a hundred percent genuine you know we just want good things for you personally um nothing else' but you can (.) you

can um as I said in the very beginning, when someone's trying to be someone they're not, you can sense it you can kind of feel it from I don't know words or actions (0.3) and I know I'm not the only student who feels that way.

The pressure of pleasing the donors seems to be felt by another participant who doubts a student would ever talk honestly about the “things that they felt were wrong with ISAK or discomforts they might have”. They further explain that “even though if ISAK is to be this open-minded place then they should be honest, I don't know if they would be, I don't even know if I would be with a donor”.

**Is the Change Loud Enough?** Related to image creation is the question of what constitutes as leadership, and a theme that came up here is that it tends to depend on who is watching. Five of the participants talked about media publicity and how ISAK has needed to or has chosen to portray a specific, more positive image of itself. This alteration of “reality” also applies to the kind of examples of leadership the school puts forward. Leadership that achieves smaller-scale changes or that, simply, fails to create any change is often overshadowed by the “louder” change-making that is expected to attract more public attention and a positive response. One participant notices that: “ISAK instagram and stuff like that uh portrayed the leadership and change-making done at our school, like they usually put more emphasis on the (...) more interesting things that people have done to try and be a changemaker”. Another participants has similar thoughts on the unspoken criteria of what qualifies as change-making:

(...) there's a bit of a gap between you know either we're community building or ISAK or we're going to have to go and do something big. One of my personal frustrations is the absence of small change making. Like everyone laughs when you tell them not to get plastic bags at 7/11 because that's not change making that's just stupid.

Again, participants put this into the context of the school, being newly founded, needing to attract more students and more funding, and how propagating its leadership program has to play a big role in doing that.

**How does a leader lead?** Participants describe a leader in a variety of functions: it is someone who brings people together through a genuine passion, they do something for others and support them, they are courageous and take action, they behave responsibly, they represent ISAK and their country, they open up space for discussion that includes multiple viewpoints, anyone can be a leader, and not everyone can be a leader. A couple of the participants see the concept as ambiguous and do not really understand what it means. An interesting theme around the way a leader should talk came up as well. While it seems to be expected that a leader speak up and take a stance, there are certain approaches to it that participants say can turn people away. One participant talks about the line between persuasive and aggressive being quite slim and how “it's so easy to be called bossy rather than a leader”. Another recounts peers’ efforts to persuade others failing because of them getting too emotional or heated about it. Tone and word choice, then, are seen as important factors to consider for those who are more outspoken about things. Despite their frustrations with this scrutiny of how one delivers the act of speaking up, one of the participants tries to adjust and “tone down”. There is a sense, however, of these qualities being imperative for students but not so much for the adults. Specifically, one participant expresses their frustrations with the lack of follow through by the adults in positions of leadership at ISAK: “I know like because of their roles they have to speak loud and make words, use big words or whatever but it's not like, like they always do what they're saying”.

**Who are the leaders?** Something that was pretty unequivocal across all the interviews is that the adults have a lot of power at ISAK. When asked about who holds power at ISAK, the participants pointed at either the founder, the head of school, the faculty, or the donors. These



individuals (or social positions) hold the “big power” - they are the ones who make decisions and are able to do so without consulting anyone, they change things, sometimes in an authoritarian fashion even, and they grant permission to others who want to do something. Participants also point out some nuances here such as the power of years of experience or money, and how pushy and loud someone is about what they want to see happen.

When asked about student power, the participants usually point to collective power. For some, the Student Union has made important steps toward getting recognized and respected as a body with some say in how things are done at ISAK. The underlying mechanisms of this, though, seem to be unsatisfactory as one participant details: “We can definitely start things and try to move them forward (...) but I don't think we really have the power to (...) actually change something, I think it's still whatever the teachers say (.) it still goes through some sort of a system of us asking for permission”. Another participant details that the Student Union brought about change that should have not had to be done in the first place, like having access to wifi internet or being allowed to leave the campus without the accompaniment of two other students. Other participants talk about there being power in numbers and how it is easier to do or change something if there is a larger number of students behind it. This is not always so straight forward in one participant's mind who finds the claim questioned when recounting a recent situation in which only a couple of students effected a change that most of the student body was actually vehemently against.

An important piece of the puzzle seems to be, simply, who one is supported by: for one student, changing something they wanted to change in the academic program was quite doable with a faculty member helping them through the process. Being very persistent, not giving up and accepting that the change may not be what was initially envisioned, are also parts of the process. Nevertheless, as one participant who worked for ISAK explains, there can be a phase during which a back and forth, push and pull of opinions and positions plays

out but, ultimately: “I think if the person giving their opinion is someone who is perceived as having a lot of power or someone that does have a lot of power then it's more likely to make an impact um versus if it's like me” alluding to their lower social position at ISAK as something that gives them less influence over decision-making. A few other participants agreed that often times nothing changes after a discussion in which resistance to a decision is presented, and that sometimes the adults (specifically faculty) engage in these discussions with no real intent of changing their position. As one participant describes, resistance is an ambiguous and even risky endeavour:

(...) for example in one setting one faculty member would say ‘well it's important to question like the things that you hear and um it's important to like take initiative and um like take action in the face of discomfort’ um but then there are other situations where maybe a student disagrees with something that faculty says and they will take action or say something about it or express how they feel at least and be honest or take initiative or whatever but then they'll get shut down or in trouble for that.

**Be positive.** One participant in particular talked a lot about feeling pressure to show gratitude and how not showing it could risk getting them in trouble with the school (i.e., the administration, staff and faculty). Being a scholarship student, this carried legitimate risks and, eventually, led to a sort of silencing: „and every of the (staff) just made me say that i am thank full for the opportunity to come to isak with scholarships...its like i could not even have an opinion”. This participant went on to explain that the idea of “gratitude” was often used to tell a student who is being critical of the school off by labeling them as ungrateful. Looking through the other interviews, I found more examples of a push for positivity either coming from above or an internalized one that self-exerted itself. For instance, looking at the positives in a situation or finding the good in the bad: “I think it was helpful for me in that aspect although not necessarily positive while going through it”. Linked to this is the idea expressed

by one participant about leaders bringing others together through a positive energy, as well as the mention of “creating positive change” by several participants as something that is/should be important at ISAK.

### **Discussion**

I started out this research inquiring about the relationship between language and practice in the constitution of the leadership discourse at ISAK. My initial assumption (formulated during my practicum) was that what is expressed through language at ISAK would be disconnected from what can be seen in everyday practice. After reviewing the Critical Discourse Analysis literature and the theoretical foundations of Foucauldian Analysis, I started to understand that what is discernable in surface level language can tell us a lot about underlying practices, upon closer examination. Analysing discursive text in the ISAK graduation speeches and the interviews focused on what participants saw going on at ISAK every day, showed me that, indeed, language and practice communicate very closely.

Many of the concepts that participants expressed about their experiences at ISAK could also be found in the graduation speech text. The two connected and spoke to each other so much so that the interview analysis worked as a reinforcer for what could be ascertained in the text analysis. In Foucauldian terms, the two constitute each other. A few connecting themes, in particular, come to light: 1) there are certain criteria around what qualifies as leadership that go against the presented idea of leadership being a practice available to anyone, 2) giving and receiving support is important at ISAK, 3) gratitude, although romanticized, is also used as a tool for manipulating outcomes, 4) money, social position within a hierarchy and age all exert influence over access to capital and access to decision-making.

Particularly interesting is how the discourse around leadership draws upon two other discourses: ageism and capitalism. Lived reality at ISAK has many variations and nuances but in almost any situation described by an interview participant or a line of text, age and money play some sort of a role either in explicit or implicit terms. A key point to consider here is the self-evidency with which the two factors are constituted. Foucauldian theory and method attempt to “dissect, disrupt and render the familiar strange” by investigating what is constituted as true and false. (Graham, 2005, p. 4) An adult knowing more and knowing better than a child is seen as a common-sense truth at ISAK. When looking at the worldview of the Sami people in Scandinavia and the centrality of children’s independence from an early age (Kuokkanen, 2005), however, we can begin to problematize the notion of age and see it, perhaps, as a social construct and even a disciplinary mechanism. Age, then, functions as a regime of truth and exerts disciplinary influence through the leadership discourse over the people and the practices at ISAK. It speaks into existence subjectivities and practices that position adults as superior to students. To a lesser degree, because there is some resistance to this discourse in the interviews and the text, money playing a decisive role in what happens and does not happen is not shown as something to be challenged but, instead, adapted to and utilized for not only personal success but also for the success of social justice projects (which may well purport to reject the very notion of capitalism). The capitalist discourse disciplines people and objects into subjugation through a leadership discourse that invokes and legitimizes it.

Leadership as a discourse, then, should not be seen as a stand-alone phenomenon but, instead, as a platform for invoking other discourses. Age and money function to mediate unequal power relations and domination, which are carried through by the discourse of leadership in a more concealed way. The subject is constantly interpellated by these discourses (akin to the way students explained being “drilled” by leadership language) in a

place where leadership is supposed to be seen as an unmediated practice, which makes it difficult to try to resist against these or even see the reasons for doing so. Resistance, however, is already present at ISAK. Although there is a sentiment that not enough is being done with regards to this, the very fact that the language to talk about it exists shows that the space for resistance is there - language both represents and constitutes practice.

So far, the paper has focused on the revelatory function of critique (as identified in CDA) through the attempt to understand how the leadership discourse is constituted: students are positioned as less powerful than the adults in what can be seen as a legitimizing reproduction of the discourses of age and capitalism. While the revelatory function is an action of social transformation in and of itself, a logical path for this research to continue on would be to ask about action plans. This research shows that the onus of social action might have to go beyond the ideas of “leadership” alone and extend to consider the discourses of age and money and their role in subjugating people and knowledge. Having a discussion about leadership at ISAK, its status quo and its future, would have to, then, include a thorough unpacking of how age and capital have played a disciplinary role at ISAK. For example, all-school town hall meetings could focus on this question, the academic curriculum could incorporate critical examinations of the school's power relations, a committee could be formed to transparently monitor how decisions at ISAK are being made, and other mechanisms could be put in place to offset the disciplining done implicitly and explicitly through age and capital. Most radically, students would be positioned to have as much say as donors in how resources are being used at ISAK. The very strangeness of such a proposition speaks to its relevance.

One message that I hope not to communicate here is that expressed language at ISAK needs to be “cleaned up”. Foucault was not interested in the “intent” behind texts, meaning that, for example, it is irrelevant whether the founder *believes* herself that financial capital is

central to learning. The very language that is constituted in the moment of the utterance is situated within an established discourse that enabled such language to happen in the first place. It is this discourse that tells us a broader story of what forces are at play. Therefore, one's reaction to this analysis should in no way be to sanitize language so that one can no longer infer some of the power relations that we could observe here. Language and power relations are constituted dialectically and need to be transformed together.

### **Major Learnings and Thoughts for Future Research**

The biggest learning that I took out of my research is the hows and whys of not just reacting to language with my own (critically-inclined) schemas, but delving deeper into it and looking at the specific mechanisms through which it constitutes us and the world. The idea of language being power became much more tangible to me as I went through text and tried to understand the functions, positionings and subjectivities it interpellated or spoke into existence.

Since this was the first time I did a fully qualitative study, an area of learning that was important for me was the interviewing process. Listening to the interviews over and over again at reduced speed allowed me to notice where I could have asked a question differently, or where I should have probed more more to create space for the participant to go deeper into an idea. Especially interesting was the concept of allowing for the space of resistance within an interview, that is, asking not only about what the participant's realities are but also about how they might challenge these. Furthermore, allowing the participants to challenge me as the interviewer (being in a perceived position of power) became more and more relevant as I carried out my interviews. The subsequent transcription process made me appreciate the nuances of speech and the very skill of interviewing. Although speech mechanics did not

factor too much into my analysis, except for the reading of tone in a few instances, I benefited from trying out some of the conventions of naturalized transcription.

I also developed an appreciation for the need to problematize prescriptive models of inquiry. Before this research, I had mostly done quantitative analyses and I was quite accustomed to a relatively positivist way of looking at and talking about the social world. This is evident in this paper, which often uses “scientific” language and is organized in a way that most research papers are (i.e., introduction, literature review, analysis, discussion). I see myself as having subscribed to a positivist discourse of knowledge creation through this paper, which is something I hope to keep thinking about and finding ways to challenge.

Some of the limitations of my research are that my participants were mostly students and so I gained insight into the experiences and perspectives of a group of people that holds a very specific position at ISAK, which shapes how they think and feel about their worlds. I also think my interview questions were too pointed at times and perhaps leading, although I attempted to valorize the participants’ own understandings of my research question in this way and avoid leaving too much room for my own interpretations. The volume of text I analyzed in this research was fruitful but relatively small. It could be relevant to take on larger samples of text in the future. Another interesting possibility for future research is a genealogy of the leadership discourse that would attempt to situate it historically and allow for an understanding of how it is that some elements come to be seen as self-evident within it. I think the leadership discourse currently exists within an interesting formulation at ISAK and there is visible space for it to be resisted and renegotiated, which could be important to investigate further. Lastly, a concrete action plan informed by a more thorough analysis would add a greater purpose for social change to this research. I hope, at least, that the conversations that this research could inspire are the first step of that action plan and can

dynamically, through communicative renegotiation, reconstitute leadership practice at ISAK while taking into consideration the role of age and money.



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## Appendix A

### *Transcription Convention*

[ indicates onset of overlapping speech

: indicates that the preceding sound is lengthened or drawn out (more colons indicate greater prolongation, e.g. Ah:::::)

underlining indicates emphasis

(.) pause less than 0.2 of a second

(0.3) pause, timed in tenths of a second

.hhh inbreath (more 'h's indicate a longer inbreath)

hhh outbreath (more 'h's indicate a longer outbreath)

= indicates no pause between speakers; one turn runs into another with no discernible pause

, (comma) not used as a punctuation mark, but to indicate a slightly rising 'continuing'

intonation

## Appendix B

### *Graduation Speeches*

#### **School Founder**

Announcer: It is an honour to introduce Miss Lin Kobayashi, founder and chair of the Board of ISAK. She has shown unbelievable dedication and vision as a leader and educator in helping found ISAK. Her genuine interest, (?) personality is dear to all of us. Please welcome Miss Lin. (applause followed by Japanese translation)

- 5 L: So (.) (faces the graduating students sitting behind the speaking podium) my dearest G12 students um it seems like only yesterday that I welcomed you all on our campus for the first time. Today on your graduation day I'd like to give you three stories alright. So the first one. Don't look at me like that (facing the students who seem to have made her emotional) (laughter). I'll try looking that way (faces the general audience). (laughter) Um so the first
- 10 story is about authenticity being your true self. Many of you probably recall that I was trying my (?) as a high school student, but in Canada there was a chance to visit my classroom my classmates in Mexico City where I witnessed severe poverty and disparity for the first time in my life. That summer left me such a strong impression for me and later became one of my motivations to start ISAK. However the journey between then and now was not very
- 15 straightforward. It took me 17 years and 4 different jobs until my life came full circle. I kept changing my jobs asking myself "What is it that I want to do in my life?". I enjoyed every single job I had but at the same time it was very difficult inner work that I had struggled with for many years. What made it even more painful was that some of my friends started to question my decisions. Especially when I told them that my fifth job was going to be start up
- 20 a new school. "Oh" (imitating her friends' reaction). Many of them literally rolled their eyes and said "Lin, you should stop job hopping". Um. But I was very fortunate, I was very lucky to have a handful of my friends and my husband and my parents who instead said "Oh, that sounds like what you've been looking for!". They helped me regain energy and courage to pursue what I could finally call my life project. (turning to the students and smiling) So I'd
- 25 like to say it is okay to be lost. What you think your passion is today will change, and that's okay too. The important thing is that you always live your own life. Not someone else's. And I hope that you'll be there for each other when you need it the most. Be authentic and be true to yourself. Second story is about resilience. Again I quoted many times that I must have approached maybe 2,500 people. Um I was very fortunate to meet 100 founders who are here
- 30 today with us. Um. (?) And today I'll tell a bit more detail about how that went, right. So many years ago when Taniya-san and I started this project together we had 30 thousand dollars in a bank account all together. That's what we had. The amount that we needed to start such a school was estimated to be 15 million US dollars, at least. Because this was right after the financial crisis, no one wanted to help because it was really hard to raise any funds
- 35 anywhere at that time. In 2008 2009 almost for two years we had so little success and um because of that one of our board members who is here today suggested that instead of looking for a billionaire to fund an entire school let's find 100 founders to help us build this school together. Thanks to (?) in 2010 a few of those donations started coming in. By early 2011 we had 10 founders interested. (?) On March 3rd in 2011 ten of us got together and said "Let's
- 40 each bring 10 more people, and we're done! As easy as that!". (?) On March 11, 2011 the Tohoku earthquake shook Japan. More than 40 meetings that the original founders had arranged got canceled. All of them. It was only natural it was very understandable that no one wanted to meet outside of Tohoku at that time. But that was just (?). We also planned our second summer school but we really weren't sure if we could pursue it because no one
- 45 thought our faculty or students would ever want to come to Japan after the accident in the

nuclear powerplants. But we proceeded (with determination) with the summer school as planned. Thanks to so much effort of our volunteer team members back then they gathered so much information information disclosure, and continued with planning. To our surprise, no one canceled, and everyone showed up in Japan that summer. Everyone. That summer school got broadcasted through multiple TV channels and a number of newspapers, magazines, and before we noticed, in about a year or two, we had enough founders, again who are here today um enough founders to build the first section of our campus which we're standing on today. (0.4) (wipes her eye as if wiping tears, holds back tears) So I'd like to say when there is a will there is a way and I know you've been (?) of things after you graduated and it is very naturally for you to encounter a lot of challenges and obstacles so natural. And it is very easy to be pessimistic about it. But the future is something that we create. If you strongly believe in it you can and should take action and be resilient with it. Can you do that? Great! Um my third and last story is about gratitude. Um this is not about myself this is a story about two young entrepreneurs who I happen to know. So entrepreneur A and entrepreneur B about few years ago they both came up to me and said "I'd like your advice on social initiatives, social entrepreneurship." So I sat down with each of them for about an hour each. Entrepreneur A leaves the office never ever reaches out to me ever. Never writes me an email. (?) Entrepreneur B he immediately writes to me a long email how successful, the most successful meeting that was in his life or whatever. And he wrote me a postcard a few weeks later saying how he is still affected by what I told him. Interestingly enough without me going around telling the story about those two. (trips) Sorry, gonna fall. Yeah so I started hearing other people talking about similar experiences that they had about those two individuals. I'm sure entrepreneur A was very efficient in squeezing in as many meetings as possible into his schedule while entrepreneur B was spending way more time thanking people (?). You know what happened? After three years entrepreneur A suffered a decline in his donor base and has left the organization that he founded. Entrepreneur B he has raised over 10 million dollars and has a donor base in multiple countries in Asia and expanding. (?) My message to you is I know everyone is busy but never ever forget to thank them the people who (?). And don't just thank the people the obvious ones, but please do thank everyone who deserves your gratitude. So I'd like to close by thanking three special groups of people today. First of all I'd like to thank Taniya-san and the founders and the catalyst supporter and donor supporters for believing in us when there was literally nothing and for your endured trust and enthusiasm for ISAK. Secondly I'd like to thank Mrs Jemison and his team faculty and staff present and past for (0.3) (wiping tears) for your (through tears) kindness and really tireless effort of making our mission and vision a reality. Thank you. And lastly and most importantly I'd like to thank the 52 of you and your parents in the audience for entrusting your precious (?) with us. You know back then when we were a brand new school with no track record um so thank you very much for choosing to be our very first cohort. And for living the mission and vision to the fullest. And literally creating the school together with us. You were the ones who made this school truly special. And for that I'm endlessly grateful. Thank you. And congratulations again for making it throughout the 3 years and entering into the world of opportunities and possibilities. Um. Wherever you go and whatever you end up being (.) or doing we will forever be proud of every single one of you. Congratulations and arigato. (applause and standing ovation)



### Student Speaker

Announcer: We would now like to ask senior Koki to make a speech on behalf of the graduating class.

Audience (students): speech, speech (laughter) (alluding to the birthday videos tradition)

5 Koki: Good morning everyone.

Audience: Good morning

Koki: On behalf of the graduating class of 2017 I would like to once again welcome all of our staff faculty friends family the founders to the first and last graduation ceremony of ISAK. (laughter) Class of 2017 8.) we made it. (applause and cheering) Coming to ISAK I think we  
 10 were all full of uncertainties but we overcame the hardest times together throughout the 3 years. And it seems like most of us are here. (laughter) If you don't mind I'm gonna start with a little story of mine. I was never supposed to come here. The winter of two thousand seven uh two thousand thirteen I had a choice. The choice to risk my younger brother's education and come to ISAK or to sacrifice myself from applying to ISAK and continue my education  
 15 at the (?) private japanese school that I was attending. Now this japanese school was very competitive. Uh. Sending students alumnis to the top universities in Japan. Which doesn't mean that I will be going to a top university in Japan. (laughter) Anyway with these two choices I chose to give up ISAK and stay where I was. I once fully gave up on ISAK. The application deadline for ISAK passed and I carried on with my education. After a month or so  
 20 one of my closest friends (?) got his first acceptance from ISAK and he had an interview coming up. Now this was weeks after the deadline passed and here's what happened. I got jealous. (soft laughter) I got really jealous. That kid made me think about all my memories I had in 2012-2013 summer school combined. He made me regret the decision that I made. I was infuriated with myself. And this is when all the miracles started to come together. I  
 25 immediately emailed Mr Jemison. I knew him from summer school and he was a friend of mine that just happened to be at the school of ISAK. I said in my email and I quote "I regret very very very much about which path I took for my life. Right now I know that going to ISAK is the best decision I could make and I'm very sorry, period, very sorry, period." After this I was able to apply past the deadline successfully and got accepted. And so began my  
 30 journey here. My point is, everyone in the class of 2017 risked something as they took part of this batch. Obviously to different extents but we all took some kind of a risk. When the first 49 students joined ISAK, we did not have the promise of an IB education. We received our IB school confirmation around March of 2015 five months before IB started. We only became a UWC on October 2016. Our batch had the disappointment of not being able to receive the  
 35 Davis scholarship. (0.3) Everyone was not directly affected by these but these are definitely risks and challenges that we had to face as a class of 2017. And I must add with every challenge (0.2) we have grown stronger and closer together. (0.3) However we would not have made it here without the tremendous support that we received from all of you staff faculty friends family and the founders. And for this we appreciate you greatly. (0.3) Classes  
 40 of 2018 and 2019 have another year or two to go. And we the class of 2017 are off to a new frontier and challenge. I would like to end this speech with a message of mine and for this I would like to (?). As I got to know you the class of 2017 in our two, three years together was filled with risks and challenges. Who knew if ISAK was gonna be the right place to go. (.) I said I did from intuition (.) a way of knowing. (graduating students laugh) But we were all  
 45 uncertain on many things and once we came to ISAK, we did not regret or complain about how stressful ISAK might have been but instead we took this opportunity to take action. We structured it shaped it molded it into what the school is right now. And because of this we have a strong connection with Rising Field (.) international connections from Thailand Vietnam Nepal Taiwan from CAS and individual (?). We started every year with the Obon

50 festival and Halloween parties for little kids (.) many talent shows and the Golden Nugget that  
Mr Fitz (?) our weekly trips to tsuruya (.) the onsen all of these are traditions that we created.  
We built this school right out of (?). We did not know if ISAK was the right path to take  
however we shaped the school into what it is now so that we can confidently say that it was  
worth us. I want to tell you this to all of you with the reference of a mindset that I learned  
55 through one of our journeys. Whatever struggle you're in there's always hope. Do not worry  
that whatever path you took or will take is the wrong one but instead make that path the right  
one. We will always be your brothers and sisters providing the best support possible. I wish  
my classmates all the best for the future as we continue to our respective countries. I wish that  
we could all stay forever but as Robert Frossling (altered name) said "Nothing good can  
60 stay". (applause, cheering and standing ovation)

### Head of School

Announcer: At this time we would like to (?) on the stage our (?) speaker, head of school Mr Roderick Jemison. (applause) motto is Isak is a family and he takes (?). Please give him a warm welcome.

R: So I wanna be mindful of the ti:me um but I also want to: enjoy and cherish this moment. Before the students the class of 2017 entered uh the gymnasium this morning I said to them “Soak it in. Cherish the moment. Enjoy it. Think about it. It’s a special historical moment.” With that being said I want to: first of all show my sincere appreciation to Lin-san (.) Taniya-san. And it’s been an incredible journey to get here. Your support (.) your enthusiasm (.) your patience with *me*. (.) We all know you need a lot of patience with me. (laughter) And your commitment. (.) Ah. You showed us the path and I can't thank you enough. Our founders (.) your undying support. (.) Whenever we needed you you’ve been there for us. (0.3) I can’t imagine being around a more excited committed and passionate group of people. I’ve never been inspired on a day to day basis like I am with you. Thank you so much. (.) The mayor of Karuizawa. Incredible. Today you’ve come here and decide that you’re gonna dedicate yourself to speaking English. (applause) It shows the impact that our school is having on others but also the impact that the town has had on us. Three years ago when a founder asked me “How are you gonna manage the success of this class?” and the one thing I was very clear about. (.) is not by a university list, not by how much money you will make. But sincerely if we would make an impact on Karuizawa town. (.) I say today that we have (.) in so many different ways that have been explained today. (.) To all of you parents. (.) It’s been an amazing journey that I share my and show my sincere appreciation not only for myself but the faculty Lin-san and Taniya-san for all that you’ve given us. (0.3) You’ve heard me say it time and time again. It’s been a long journey. This year has been personally and professionally challenging for me. (.) It’s been a year that I’ve lost my mother and all of you know how much I cherish my parents and my family and my wife and my daughter. And you’ve become a part of that. You are a part of that. And for that I really appreciate you and thank you. (.) Couple of things I wanted to leave you with. Parents (.) three years ago we promised (.) you two things. Not sure if you remember but we promised you two things. We promised to know your son and daughter and we promised to love your son and daughter. I hope we fulfilled that promise to you. (.) And to the class of 2017 I leave you with one wish. I’ve said this before but I’ll remind you of it. Ten years from now (.) Ten years from now my wish is that at least four of you will return to ISAK and be sitting in that corner as faculty. (applause) Even more importantly (.) class of 2017 you know what’s coming next. I’ve never said it publically. The first time. In ten years (0.3) I hope and wish standing here before you, one of you will be a head of school at ISAK. (applause and audible awe) (0.3) Ladies and gentlemen: (.) I think the class of 2017 needs to rise at this time. (applause and cheering). Class of 2017 please turn your tassel. (music starting) Thank you so much. Everyone, I give to you now. ISAK inaugural class of 2017: (graduating students throw their graduation caps up in the air) (cheering and applause)

## Appendix C

### *Interview Guide*

- What is ISAK to you?
- Who are you at ISAK?
- Who are those around you at ISAK?
  
- When you first learned about ISAK what impression did you have of the school?
- What impression did you have of ISAK after you came to the school?
- Is there a difference between your first impression of ISAK (how you imagined it to be based on what you were told and shown about it) and how you see it now? What is it?
  
- How would you describe the language that is used at ISAK to communicate? What meanings/values does it embody?
- How much of a role does ISAK's guiding principle of "students developing as change-makers who identify what is most important and needed, take action in the face of discomfort, use diversity as a strength, and support others in this practice." play in your everyday life at ISAK?
  
- Does "portraying a specific image" play a role at ISAK? What is that role?
- What kind of an image do you think ISAK wants to portray to its audiences?
- How much overlap is there between the image that ISAK portrays and what you see going on every day at ISAK? In what areas?
  
- Who holds power at ISAK?
  - Where are the students in all of that?
- Is power resisted at ISAK? How?