ASp
la revue du GERAS

53-54 | 2008
Varia

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/asp/315>

DOI: 10.4000/asp.315

ISBN: 978-2-8218-0406-7

ISSN: 2108-6354

Publisher

Groupe d'étude et de recherche en anglais de spécialité

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 November 2008

Number of pages: 7-24

ISSN: 1246-8185

Electronic reference

Philip Riley, « The return of “The Stranger”: Distance, proximity and the representation of identity in domain-specific discourse », *ASp* [Online], 53-54 | 2008, Online since 01 November 2011, connection on 10 December 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/asp/315> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/asp.315>

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The return of “The Stranger”: Distance, proximity and the representation of identity in domain-specific discourse

Philip Riley

Introduction

- ¹The theme of the Conference, with its reference to the twin notions of Distance and Proximity was extremely timely, for two reasons. The first is that the year 2008 marks the centenary of the first publication of Georg Simmel’s essay “The Stranger” (“*Der Fremde*”), in which the opposition between geographical proximity and distance and social proximity and distance was originally proposed and expounded in an explicit and theoretically cogent way. The second is that in the month of March 2008, when the Conference was held, for the first time, over half the world’s population came to be living in cities and it is to Simmel’s works on “The Stranger” and the “Metropolis” that we owe much of our appreciation and understanding of the social importance of that development, of the impact of urbanisation on interaction, discourse and identity.

1. The historical and theoretical context

- ² This article has a double aim: firstly, to set this tiny fragment of Simmel’s work in its wider historical and theoretical context, since I believe that it is only by doing so that we can begin to understand why it has had such widespread influence. How has this little essay – a mere six pages long – come to be seen as relevant to issues in so many different fields, including social interaction, discourse analysis, intercultural communication, modernity and urbanism, post-colonialism and identity studies? And, secondly, I will be looking at the notion of *ethos* as developed by Ruth Amossy (1999) and the ‘New Rhetoricians’ as well as myself and some of my colleagues at the CRAPEL, because I think

that it is a concept which usefully complements or extends a number of Simmel's ideas relating to interaction and identity.

- 3 To begin with, the man himself, Georg Simmel was born in 1848 in the very heart of Berlin, the corner of Leipzigerstrasse and Friedrichstrasse. As Lewis Coser (1971: 194) remarks, this is "a curious place – it would correspond to Times Square in New York". Or to Piccadilly in London, I suppose. At the same time it could hardly be more fitting for the future specialist on urban modernity, social space, interaction and identity. Simmel lived on the cusp of modernity: the telephone, antiseptics, artificial fibres and dyes, the metro, cars and planes, tinned food, Darwinism, bureaucracy, mass education, these were only some of the developments which occurred during his lifetime and which, very atypically for a German intellectual of his time, he subjected to serious analysis.
- 4 Simmel was the youngest of seven children. His father was a prosperous Jewish businessman who converted to Christianity but died while Simmel was young and he was adopted by a friend of the family from whom he inherited considerable wealth. He studied history and philosophy at the University of Berlin with some of the most eminent academics of the day and received his doctorate for a thesis on Kant in 1881, by which time his extraordinary intellectual range was already recognised. Unlike most of his colleagues, he did not move from one university to another, he stayed at the University of Berlin as a *Privatdozent*, an 'unofficial' university teacher, paid directly by the students.
- 5 Like many other commentators, I feel that the condensed power and insight of "The Stranger" owes much to his position as an outsider in his own society. He was a Jew in a society where anti-semitism was rife. Despite his brilliance as a writer and teacher, despite the admiration and support he received from the most eminent minds of his time, despite a truly international reputation, he failed to obtain a university professorship until the very end of his life, in 1914, when it was too late. I say 'despite his brilliance' – because of it? Was he, perhaps, "too clever by half"? His all-round brilliance certainly seems to have offended specialists in some of the fields he touched on so fruitfully. They were particularly opposed to the new discipline of sociology, partly no doubt just because it was new, but also because they considered it to have imperialistic tendencies, the desire to monopolise social science and the humanities, and in that, as we shall see, they were right.
- 6 Simmel was free to lecture on any subject he wished, a liberty of which he took the fullest advantage: he gave courses on ethics, poetry, philosophy, sociology, history ... and all the time he attracted enthusiastic audiences. Can't you just hear his critics' "Oh, of course he's very good with the *students*", implying there was something showy and shallow about him and his ideas? And not only did he produce numerous non-academic publications, which people actually read, he dealt with topics which, while entirely consistent with his heavy-duty theorising, were shockingly trivial to his more solemn colleagues: the sociology of the meal, the sociology of flirting, of smell, of fashion. Only now is he also being recognised as a major forerunner of 'Cultural Studies'.
- 7 During the First World War, his famed objective rationality sadly gave way to passionate nationalistic propaganda, a final, doomed effort to come in from the cold. He died in Strasbourg in 1918.
- 8 Simmel was, along with Emil Durkheim (Épinal 1858 – Paris 1917), Max Weber (Erfurt 1864 – Munich 1920), and Ferdinand Tönnies (Riep 1855 – Kiel 1936), one of the founding fathers of Sociology. Indeed, with Tönnies and Weber, he was one of the founders of the

German Society for Sociology in 1911. But these people did not live in an intellectual vacuum. They were themselves the inheritors of a long tradition and a heated debate as to the feasibility and nature of social science. This debate, known as the *Wissenschaftsstreit* ('science war') was essentially about epistemology, that is, about the nature of knowledge and the limits of our understanding. From the Early Modern period onwards, a number of thinkers had addressed the problem of developing a general science of mankind. Bacon, More, Vico and Montesquieu are just some of those cited as precursors of what would later be known as anthropology and sociology. The successes of the physical sciences (especially from 1750 onwards and exponentially in the nineteenth century) only made this ambition, this need to establish a rational and systematic study of mankind, more acute. But those successes also raised the vital question as to what extent this new social science, this *Geisteswissenschaft* ('Humanities') would resemble the physical sciences. Would its aims and methods be the same? In simple terms, would it aim at objectivity (the value-free 'view from nowhere', based on quantification, measurement and statistics)? Because of the very considerable advances which had been made, and which could be seen influencing peoples' daily lives, the temptation to adopt the physical science paradigm was enormously strong.

- 9 However, there were also sources of resistance, many of which have been bundled together under the convenient if confused and confusing label 'Romanticism'. They powerfully influenced the *Zeitgeist*, but in robust epistemological terms, the most important source of formative concepts was unquestionably the German hermeneutic and phenomenological tradition, as it evolved from biblical exegesis into historical linguistics, on the one hand, and historiography, on the other. It was then absorbed into the social sciences in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by a long line of thinkers, including historians and philosophers (Dilthey, Scheler, Hegel, Husserl, Marx, Rickert) as well as sociologists.
- 10 In very, very broad outline, this debate can be boiled down to the following closely-related points:
 1. The point of view of the observer: *Erklären* or *verstehen* (Outhwaite 1975)? What is the ultimate aim of science: to explain the world, or to interpret it? To provide objective, realistic accounts – theories – of the world, laws, physical or social? Or, in the case of social phenomena at least, is it to provide accounts of the accounts, to identify, describe and analyse the interpretative repertoires or world views of the groups which have them? *The* truth or *their* truth? The truth of the laboratory scientist, standing outside and looking in? Or the truth of a participant in an event, standing inside looking out? How, for example, can 'history' be anything more than an arbitrary list of 'events' if we do not understand the beliefs and values, motivations and representations, the modes of thought of the participants in those events? How can we explain anything, rather than simply recording it? How can we come to know the past, and others, and the pasts of others? Is a 'social science' possible, or a contradiction in terms? Is it possible to be objective about subjectivity?
 2. Method: Heuristic or rational? Should "nature be interrogated", to use Bacon's really rather grim expression, physically tortured until she gave up her secrets? And in what language would the interrogation take place: in the language of mathematics or in that of some alternative epistemology? What should be the instruments of torture?
 3. What counts as data? Data which can be counted, or data that counts? That is, is science limited to the interpretation of physical data obtained by experimental and quantitative means? The essential problem here is, of course, consciousness: a chemical product heated in a test tube does not know it is being interrogated, very often human beings do. Even more

to the point, consciousness means that individuals are not only *of* the world but that they *have* a world. Where the physical world is made up of 'facts' such as stones, animals, bridges, plants, the conscious world – social reality – is made up of 'facts' such as appointments, the rank of sergeant, Christmas, honour, social facts. Physical objects are language-independent, but social objects can only exist in and through language and discourse. The third star on the left goes on shining whether I know its name or not and I am certainly not responsible for its very existence. But an appointment is something we can make, which only exists because we have satisfied a certain number of requirements as to what counts as an appointment. We call the appointment into existence. Through communication, it becomes part of our common, social world. But that world is real, factual, as we soon find out if we fail to keep an appointment. Can there be a 'science of appointments'?

- 11 In Simmel's time, the debate as to the nature and feasibility of sociology had become polarised into an opposition between those who saw its place in the Natural Sciences (*Naturwissenschaft*) and those for whom it belonged with the Humanities. The Natural Sciences were *nomothetic*, aiming to establish general laws or truths. In this perspective, sociology would be an extension, a seamless prolongation – of the aims, methods and ideology of 'hard' science: social statistics. This organicist approach was also taken to imply that everything mankind does or thinks – philosophy, economics, etc. – is part of society and all grist to the sociologist's mill.
- 12 The Humanities were seen by many scholars as *idiographic*. In this perspective, there is no such thing as 'society', only individuals involved in unique events. One might almost call this approach an anti-sociology, since it denies the possibility of extrapolating from the particular to the general. From this point of view, individual subjectivities and experience are so profoundly anchored in unique historical contexts – specific and irrecoverable configurations of place, time, individual, motivation and event – that any attempt to systematise them is doomed to failure (a failure, of course, which contributes to the general Romantic gloom about individuals and their destinies. Only great artists whose genius makes them aware of this state of affairs are granted flashes of insight into 'the truth', but flashes of insight, along with revealed knowledge, do not count as 'science').
- 13 One is tempted to describe these two extremes as *megalomaniac* and *defeatist*: on the one hand, we have a claim that sociology is all-embracing. On the other hand, we have surrender: sociology is impossible. So this was the fundamental problem Simmel was facing: How can we establish general laws on the basis of unique events, and how can we study unique, social events as the manifestation of general laws?
- 14 Simmel's answer to this question was highly original. He rejected both the nomothetic and the idiographic approaches. He proposed a third way, one which very carefully dissociated itself from both the megalomaniac pretensions of the hard science approach and from the ineffectual pessimism of the Romantics. He invented *interaction*. Not the word itself, which had existed in English and German since the 1860s in hard science contexts (where it was used to refer to interactions between atoms and chemicals), but interaction as the defining social phenomenon, the mutually influencing behaviours which explain, to quote the title of another of his articles "How is society possible?" How can we go from being individuals, in the most rudimentary sense of having separate bodies and no knowledge of others, to being members of society, competent and recognised members of groups.
- 15 It is this capacity, says Simmel, and the behaviours which manifest it which is the major, the defining object of study of sociology:

Society is merely the name for a number of individuals connected by interaction ... sociology asks what happens to men and by what rules they behave ... insofar as they form groups and are determined by their group existence because of interaction. (Simmel in Wolff [1908] 1950: 10-11)

- 16 For his account of sociation to be adequate, he developed a precisely-defined interpretative repertoire. He borrowed another term from contemporary chemistry: the *dyad*. In chemistry, the term refers to a pair of atoms which have joined to form a molecule, which are in a *chemical* relationship. In Simmel's sociology, it refers to an interactive pair, two individuals involved in a meaningful *social* relationship. The *unit* of sociation he called the *dyad*. The *relationship* he called *intersubjectivity*.
- 17 Intersubjectivity is the psycho-social state obtained between the members of a dyad as a result of communicative behaviour. It has been defined as a "reciprocity of perspectives", but perhaps it is easier to understand as "shared meaning", or even more simply as "communication". At the risk of labouring the point, it is worth remembering that 'communication' means 'making common'.
- 18 For Simmel, then, sociology is not so much the study of society as the study of sociation, the process of forming groups through interaction. Interactions take place "among the atoms of society", individuals, to produce dyads and wider structures and institutions such as the family, trades unions, cities, associations like GERAS, armies. Studying these structures is a perfectly valid concern and constitutes the greater part of mainstream sociology from Durkheim and Weber onwards. But Simmel preferred to focus on the behaviour which produced and maintained them, interaction as the matrix of the social. He refuted the idiographists' claims that all human events are unique and therefore not amenable to systematic study, by demonstrating that, on the contrary, if those events were studied as instances of interaction, it was perfectly possible to establish general rules since the forms of interaction which underlie different patterns of sociation are regular and limited in number.
- 19 Simmel argued, then, that the sociologist's task was not to study an individual, however important he or she might be historically. What King John had for breakfast or even the battles he fought are irrelevant sociologically speaking. The issue for the sociologist is Kingship and the relations of Superordination /subordination which determine the interactions between King and subject. In other words, the sociologist's task is to study *King John* and not *King John*.
- 20 More generally, Simmel insists that all such relationships are necessarily dialectical, any category of identity is in complementary opposition to another or others. King and subject, parent and child, teacher and pupil, baker and customer. You cannot study the sound of one hand clapping: it takes two to interact. In order to investigate the process of sociation, Simmel needed to identify the members of his dyad, since the forms of interaction vary according to who is interacting with whom. But the identities in question must be social identities, not individual identities or otherwise he would fall into the idiographic trap – unique events and actors, with no possibility of making general laws. So what he did was to invent a new conceptual tool, the 'ideal type' or 'social type'. Social types are categories of person defined according to their relationships with others, which I interpret as categories of social identity. These relationships can be specified in terms of the expectations of and reactions to the type's behaviour. These behaviours fix the individual's position within the social matrix.

- 21 The 'ideal type' was immediately seized on by other sociologists, by Weber in particular and then just about everybody, and is still central to sociological thought and analyses. However, over the last century or so it has been refined and (in the contexts we are discussing) is probably more familiar to us as 'role' or 'status'. In fact so familiar that we tend to forget that this was a major intellectual achievement.
- 22 Simmel's ideal social types include: the King, the Poor man, the Mediator, the Renegade, the Adventurer ... and the Stranger.
- 23 The Stranger, then, is an ideal type, an identity category. It is an abstraction and an idealisation. Like any other such category, it obliges or enables individuals to occupy specific discursive positions, our place in society. I should really say 'places', of course, because real-life individuals play a variety of roles as they go along: customer at the baker's, husband and grandfather, teacher, member of a choir or football team. But that is precisely the point: Simmel's Stranger is not a real-life individual, it is an abstraction, an analytic tool for isolating certain specific forms of interaction.
- 24 The position of the Stranger is determined by two sets of co-ordinates, social and spatial, each of which varies along a proximal-distal axis: social and spatial distance, social and spatial proximity. Simmel brilliantly anticipates Lakoff and Johnson's work (1980) on conceptual metaphors, those cognitive structures for the *organisation* of experience which provide a basis for the generation of linguistic structures which are metaphors for *expressing* experience. Together, conceptual and linguistic metaphors extend the range of meanings of which we are capable. They enable us to grasp experience, to make it understandable.
- 25 Indeed, my previous sentence is a clear example of a conceptual metaphor at work. We regularly use words whose literal meaning is related to 'holding' or 'manipulating' physical objects to express metaphorically mental operations such as understanding: as I just remarked

We grasp experience. (cf. *saisir* in French)
 Chomsky holds that language has a genetic basis.
 I take your point.
 She handles ideas easily.
 Statistical manipulation
 Etymologically, from Latin '*-prehendere*', to seize: Apprehend, comprehend
 ('grasp with the mind', OED)

- 26 Simmel's Proximity/Distance metaphor falls into the category of what Lakoff and Johnson call spatialisation metaphors. In this case, there is a metaphorical extrapolation from physical Proximity and Distance to social, relational or interpersonal Proximity and Distance.

A close / distant relative
 She keeps her distance.
 He's stand-offish.
 He's very approachable.
 He doesn't let anyone get near him.

- 27 Underpinning Simmel's argument is the assumption that physical Proximity and Distance and social Proximity and Distance are metaphorically equivalent, an assumption which in his time was very largely confirmed by experience. It has been calculated that when the first passenger train networks were established in Europe in the 1850s, the vast majority

of the population had never been further than ten miles from their home village. But by deconstructing that metaphor, Simmel was able to provide a descriptive and analytic framework which could be adapted to account for other cases, other configurations of social and physical Proximity and Distance. Together with this framework, and by focussing on the forms of sociation (types of interaction) he was able to demonstrate similarities and regularities across a range of what at first glance seemed to be highly disparate situations. Simmel's analytic framework, although ostensibly dealing with 'foreigners' or 'migrants', can be profitably generalised to any situation where 'outsiders' interact with 'insiders', as we can see if we look at some of the related-but-different situations which have been examined in the light of his model (cf. Schütz 1944):

The new recruit in the army
 The university student who returns to his home village to find something has changed
 The new fiancée being inducted into his or her family of in-laws
 The young researcher hoping to be recognised as a qualified and competent member of a professional or disciplinary community of practice. (professional mobility)
 The candidate wishing to become a member of an exclusive club (social mobility)
 The son of the farmer who goes to college (educational mobility)
 The town-dweller who moves to the countryside (geographical mobility)
 The members of a family of impoverished workers moving to a town where an economic boom is in progress (economic mobility).

- 28 This list clearly illustrates Simmel's main point, namely that what look like very different or even unique events can be shown to have commonalities if analysed as patterns of sociation and interaction, of generalisable social relationships. Like many really important insights, this one has become so widely accepted that it is very difficult for use to appreciate how much of a breakthrough it was at the time.
- 29 Simmel's theorisation of the Stranger is deceptively simple. He suggests that the category can be characterised or situated along four parameters: position in space, position in time, social position and relational position. In a remarkable anticipation of postmodern theory and discourse analysis, he argues that these positions are instantiated by specific forms of interaction and discourse. The Stranger, then, is characterised by:
1. **Position in space:** the Stranger is both wandering and fixed: spatial relations 'are the condition ... and the symbol ... of human relations.
 2. **Position in time:** The person who comes today and stays tomorrow ... a person without a history.
 3. **Social position:** For Simmel, the Stranger, paradoxically, 'like the poor and sundry "inner enemies" is an element of the group itself while not being part of it ... To be a Stranger is naturally a very positive relation: it is a specific form of interaction'.
 4. **Relational position:** ... is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself. (Simmel [1908] 1950: 402-408)
- 30 Every one of these points was subsequently taken up and developed on the basis of social typology by later sociologists. Indeed, almost every important twentieth century sociologist has at some time or another addressed the problem of the Stranger, the majority of them basing their approach on the notion of social type. For some – in the USA in particular – it was the focal point of their work. Even the most summary outline of the literature in question would have to include reference to at least the following authors and concepts: Park 'The Marginal Man' (1928); Stonequist, 'The Marginal Man'

(1937); Wood 'The Newcomer' (1934); Hughes 'Unequal Man' (1949); Siu, 'Sojourner' (1952) ... Murphy-Lejeune (2002) '*Les étudiants voyageurs*'.

- 31 However, as the Stranger made his journey from Europe to the USA, he underwent a transformation. For Simmel and the other Germans, including Schütz (see below), the focus was on the experience of being a foreigner: They tried to develop an insider's perspective on how individuals come to terms with being a Stranger, how, in interactive behaviour do you 'do' being a Stranger. Their analysis, that is, is based on the idea of linguistic and social negotiation (and consequently is rich in its implications for foreign language pedagogy). For the American pragmatists of the Chicago school, however, the focus is a very different one indeed. Writing from the perspective of the host community, they ask questions like: what impact will these strangers have on our community? How should we receive and deal with them? How can we make them more like us?
- 32 These two sets of questions – how do I do being a competent stranger and how do I become a member of the community – bring us to the heart of ESP or of domain-specific discourses in general, not in linguistic but rather in sociolinguistic terms. Not, that is, in terms of the internal structures of the linguistic code – morphology, syntax and so on – but in terms of the various kinds of rhetorical and argumentative strategies employed by speakers and writers in order to be recognised, to have their credentials accepted, to be believed, as competent members of the community in question. In Simmel's terms, what are the forms of sociation which characterise interactions of this kind and how can they influence the degree of social proximity? That question has been reformulated a number of times over the past century, but whether the vocabulary used is 'in-group and out-group' or 'periphery and centre', 'inclusion and exclusion', essentially they are all variations of Simmel's original insights, though each of these approaches has also provided insights of its own, of course. So what vindicates Simmel's approach – interaction and ideal types – is the fact that although his Stranger was a very specific sub-category of outsider (the cosmopolitan Jew, in many ways a self-portrait) his theoretical model has been fruitfully applied to a range of other sub-categories, some of which did not even exist in his time.
- 33 An example from the field of urban sociology concerns the emergence of the modern identity category 'the commuter' and recent studies (Castells 1999) of the ways in which other factors related to globalisation – developments in telecommunications for example – may be working in an opposite direction, by re-establishing the identity of workplace and home which preceded the industrial revolution. When we remember that it was precisely the dissociation between workplace and home that did so much to determine gender roles in nineteenth-century Britain – masculine and feminine spheres of power and interest – we begin to appreciate just how tight the fit is between configurations of social and physical Proximity and Distance, on the one hand, and categories of identity on the other.
- 34 I mentioned telecommunications a moment ago, and of course one of the powerful instruments for reconfiguring Distance-Proximity relations is the telephone itself, especially the 'mobile'. To understand just how different Simmel's world was from ours, and to appreciate just how perspicacious his analysis was, consider the following anecdote. In the 1880s in Britain, when the first telephone exchange was being established in London, it was suggested to the Prime Minister, Gladstone, that he might wish to have a telephone set on his desk in Downing Street. His first reaction was to ask what a telephone was. "Prime Minister, it is an instrument for speaking to people at a

distance." His reply, which I suggest merits careful reflection, was "Why on earth should I want to speak to someone who isn't in the same room as me?"

- 35 Let us look very briefly at some of the strategies speakers and writers use to position themselves, to negotiate identities.

a) Explicit Identity claim

I'm a teacher.
I'm one of those people who ...
Speaking as an anthropologist ...
As a lifelong Chelsea supporter ...
Being a taxpayer, I ...
We are playing Arsenal this afternoon.
Us Londoners ...
As a lawyer and mother of three ...

- 36 This seems simple enough, I know. But when supervising theses, I have often been struck by the difficulty even very advanced students have in identifying themselves in this way with respect to their discipline – "Speaking as an anthropologist", "as an applied linguist" and so on. On the one hand, they simply do not perceive themselves in this way. On the other, they are afraid of seeming pretentious or of being slapped down. When I questioned one of my students about this, she said "Oh, I couldn't say that, I wouldn't dare, not until after I've got my doctorate, then I can".

b) Implicit Identity claims ('Knowledge claims')

- 37 A less direct but powerful form of identity claim is to lay claim to knowledge or experience.

Anyone who works in higher education knows ...
Look, I spent my childhood in Kenya ...

- 38 One important kind of knowledge is who you know:

I was talking to Angelina and Brad the other day ...

- 39 An experienced and self-confident member of an academic discourse community may formulate an elaborate knowledge-based identity claim:

No-one with a life of finite duration could hope to be an expert on the entire oeuvre of figures as prodigiously productive and diverse as Freud, Marx, Durkheim, Helmholtz, the contemporary structuralist or post-structuralist thinkers, or to have an intimate first-hand acquaintance with contemporary ethological, anthropological, archaeological, etc. writing. *The only areas where I can lay claim to any kind of expertise are in twentieth-century American and European philosophical thought, the writings of post-Saussurean theorists and modern biology and medicine.* (Tallis 1997: xiii, my emphasis)

- 40 In domain-specific discourse, these strategies may also take the form of bibliographical references and of technical vocabulary:

Fully validated modules for oesophago-gastric cancers:
QLQ-OES18: Blazeby J *et al.* Eur J Cancer 2003; 39: 1384-94
QLQ-STO22: Vickery C *et al.* Eur J Cancer 2004; 40: 2260-8
QLQ-OG25: Lagergren P *et al.* Eur J Cancer 2007; 43: 2066-73

- 41 The topoi and contours of language variation serve as an iconic representation of the forms and configurations of identity available to those individuals recognised as possessing the competence to use them. Or, to put it in simpler terms, to use a word like 'phoneme' is to lay a claim to knowledge about linguistics, to be a linguist.

c) Identification strategies ('positioning')

- 42 As we negotiate identities, jostling for social and discursive positions, we also frequently try to nudge or force our interlocutors into accepting our definition of their identity:

- Are you ready to order, sir?
- Open wide.
- Tickets please.
- Next patient, please.
- Compare and contrast.
- Why do you Northerners (women, Catholics, teachers, etc.) always ...
- You BBC luvvies are all the same.
- Business Class passengers only.
- Staff only.
- Pregnant women should consult their doctors before using this medicine.
- There's a good girl!
- Big boys don't cry.
- Corporal!
- Asylum seekers should go directly to Desk C.

- 43 Let us look a little more closely at the expression of identity in domain-specific texts. Summarising analyses carried out by a number of writers over the last few years, one can draw up the following list of explicit and implicit identity strategies in academic discourse:

(i) **Explicit:**

author's professional rank or status
 author's institutional affiliation
 contact information (surface mail, email)
 acknowledgements
 biodata
 bibliobiodata

(ii) **Implicit:**

Choice of title
 Length of text
 Use of first-person pronouns
 Use of epistemic modality markers
 Positioning of self, reader and others:
 - identification and identity claims
 - claiming credibility of the self
 - claiming credibility for the research
 Use of verbs implying specific role for the author.

- 44 It is not possible to go into details about each of these items, though in the context of a discussion of authorial ethos each of them can be shown to be relevant. If we take the 'explicit strategies' as a group, for example, the presence of the expressions 'rank or status' and 'affiliation', provide very different opportunities for ethos construction: 'Regius Professor of History at the University of Cambridge' somehow carries more

weight than 'Doctoral candidate, Middletown College'. Similarly, an acknowledgement to 'Noam Chomsky for his time and enthusiasm' is more impressive than thanks expressed to a colleague readers have never heard of. Biodata and bibliodata full of awards, visiting professorships and previous titles will also considerably bolster reputations and expectations. Turning to implicit strategies, it is clear that those related to 'positioning' cover a wide and important range of rhetorical moves through which authors can increase proximity with their readers. In one way or another, these moves all aim to show that the writer possesses the knowledge necessary to be recognised as a competent member of the epistemic community in question: these include the unexplained and accurate use of technical terms, acronyms, etc.; familiarity with the background to the field, including earlier texts, names and projects, often referred to with little or no elaboration; allusions to methodological and theoretical principles and procedures; mastery of the norms of intra- and extratextual reference, citation, exemplification and material presentation and of the disciplinarily relevant argumentative structures (e.g., IMRAD) – and avoidance of generically inappropriate expression, which may include self-revelation, *ad hominem* criticism, non-standard language, rhetorical questions, exclamation marks and jokes.

- 45 All the strategies we have been looking at serve to form or position identities, our own or our interlocutors'. However, if we want to benefit fully from Simmel's insights, if we want our account of interaction and identity to be truly intersubjective, it needs to be completed by an approach or notion of some kind that will treat them as dyadic and not as the equivalent of one hand clapping, which is why I am now turning to the notion of ethos.

2. Ethos

- 46 The crucial difficulty in defining identity is the fact that the term is used in two very different, and for many observers, irreconcilable ways.
- 47 On the one hand, 'identity' is used to refer to what makes *me* different from every other individual. Me myself. But on the other hand, it is used to refer to what I have in common with others, my membership of certain groups, my similarity to other members: I am British, a man, a pensioner, a speaker of certain languages, a lapsed Catholic and supporter of Chelsea, and so on. For the sake of argument, can we agree to call these two aspects of personal identity *Self* and *Person*.
- 48 So far, so good. What we have here is essentially an updated account of Aristotle's observation that man is *zoon politikon*, a political or social animal. Each of us is at one and the same time a separate, physically embodied individual *and* a member of society, of groups. In Simmel's own words: "Man is both social link and being for himself, both product of society and life from an autonomous centre".
- 49 But there is something missing, isn't there? How are the two related?
- 50 This is, I believe, precisely where Simmel and Aristotle come to the rescue. By developing the Aristotelian concept of ethos, it is possible to integrate Simmel's notions of sociation, interaction, intersubjectivity and the dyad/communication.
- 51 Ethos, you may remember, is one of the three pillars of Aristotelian rhetoric, along with *logos* (argument) and *pathos* (emotion). Ethos is communicative identity. It is an amalgam of speaker identity (who I am and who I want to be taken for) and perceived identity (who

you think I am and who you take me for). It is being used by discourse analysts to refer to the self-image projected by a speaker in and through his or her discourse, but also as it is filtered through the hearer's perceptions, expectations and values, especially as constrained by social roles and genres: it is interpreted self-expression, the rhetorical and socio-psychological product of mutually influencing communicative behaviours and judgements. While I am here speaking I rather hope that the impression I am making on you is one which – if you had to put it into words – you would describe as 'convincing', say, 'intelligent' or 'well-informed'. Unfortunately for me, I am not in a position to impose those impressions unilaterally. For all I know, you are sitting there searching through the antonyms in your mental lexicon: 'boring', 'pretentious', 'ignorant', and so on.

- 52 It is usually glossed as the *credibility, reliability or trustworthiness* of character that a speaker or writer adopts or projects towards their audience. Arguments and information, speech acts and declarations of moral and emotional engagement only have value for hearers to the extent that they can trust the person expounding them. Hearers, in order to arrive at a valid interpretation of the speaker's utterances, need to relate those utterances to the context. And the most fundamental question in any situation is, who is speaking to me? And can they be relied on? Ethos is the product of this ongoing assessment of performance. It is at the heart of all expressive behaviours and is the essential and necessary starting-point for all interpretation.
- 53 In this socioconstructionist approach to identity (Mead 1934; Vygotsky 1978), the architecture of personhood and the individual psyche is seen as the product of an intrapersonal dialogue between the Self and the Me, the forms of which are determined and learned by the communicative practices acquired in and through interpersonal dialogue, intersubjective couplings. In this perspective, the Me is seen as the individual's personal perception of his or her social identity. Membership of these groups forms a bundle of roles and discursive positions which the Self may occupy, though with varying degrees of choice and awareness. Public perceptions of the Me and of a person's social identity form *ethos*.
- 54 The Self, Ethos and the Person have different temporal or existential orientations: the Self is fundamentally diachronic, as the locus of the individual's memories, providing the sense of continuity and a historical site for ongoing experience. The person is fundamentally synchronic (though often highly repetitive), it is the account of successive discursive positions or roles. And between them, as it were, we have ethos, the past-in-the-present, judgements as to and of present performance in the light of previous knowledge and contacts, including public reputation and stereotypes (see table 1).

Table 1. The Self, Ethos and the Person

SELF - Which individual? Singular or numerical identity private, subjective	ETHOS - Rhetorical identity. Projected self plus perceived self	PERSON - What sort of individual? Social identity: public, intersubjective
That entity whose reactions we report by using 'I', which has a proper name	Interpreted self- expression. The 'Me' I perceive in others' reflected behaviours and judgements.	The 'You' that others address, construct, observe
The agent of my actions, separately embodied in a numerically and physically distinct organism	The product of a mutually influencing set of behaviours, judgements	A set of discursive positions, rights and duties. The sum of all the social figurations of which I/You is a recognised and competent member
Diachronic locus. The continuing site of my memories and thoughts, emotions, ongoing experience	The past-in-the present: 'reputation', including earlier contacts and stereotypes in the light of present performance	Synchronic locus. Dynamic performer of social roles

Conclusion

55 During his lifetime and for fifty years after his death many serious sociologists regarded Simmel as a brilliant failure because neither he nor anyone else had developed the intellectual and methodological tools necessary to analyse the process of sociation, to analyse interaction and discourse. I think that we can now claim, without undue hubris, that that is no longer the case. If we look at the field of sociolinguistics in general and discourse analysis in particular, we can find a number of approaches which have developed accurate and powerful procedures, rapidly and satisfactorily filling in the gap. (An excellent survey of approaches to discourse and identity is Benwell and Stokoe 2007).

- Variationist Sociolinguistics (Labov 1972; Trudgill, 1974)
- The ethnography of communication: Communicative practices (Hymes, 1970; Gumperz 1983; Hanks 1996; Joseph 2004)
- Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1991, Jefferson 2007)
- Membership Categorisation Analysis (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998; Pepin 2006).
- Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré 1990).

56 In the latter half of the twentieth century, the term 'discourse' came to have two very different meanings. On the one hand, it was used by historians and social theorists interested in the conditions of production of ideologies ('grand narratives', 'representations' and so on), an essentially Marxist approach in which forms of thought and identity are generated by socio-economic structures. This 'top-down' social determinism has become one of the commonplaces of post-modernist philosophy, as encapsulated in Louis Althusser's dictum that "Ideologies interpellate individuals". On the other hand, discourse was understood as language in use, 'situated language'. This essentially 'bottom-up', anthropological approach involves the examination of actually-occurring data, a task of great complexity since it involves the identification and

description of the communicative practices and their linguistic forms and functions, as well as the social constraints under which they operate, which social members employ in constructing social reality together in intersubjective couplings.

- 57 Ideally, one would like to see an integrated approach, one in which specific forms of interaction could be shown to be instantiations of 'ideologies', whilst at the same time taking into account in a non-determinist way the participants' awareness of themselves as agents enacting identities. That is, we would have a theory of the relationship between identity and discourse that was at one and the same time an account of the ways in which identities are shaped and performed in and through discursive practices and a theory of self-expression, of the knowing subject. What I have tried to do in this paper to indicate how a certain number of ideas, a framework for understanding how society emerges from interaction, first proposed by Georg Simmel a century ago, can help us achieve this aim.

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NOTES

1. This article includes extracts from Riley (2007).

ABSTRACTS

The year 2008 marks the centenary of the first publication of Georg Simmel's essay "The Stranger" ("Der Fremde"), in which the opposition between geographical proximity and distance and social proximity and distance was originally proposed and expounded in an explicit and theoretically cogent way. This article aims, first, to set the essay in its wider historical and theoretical context, arguing that Simmel's apparatus for delimiting and describing the field of sociology, which included such seminal notions as 'interaction', 'sociation', 'the dyad' and 'intersubjectivity', remains relevant to the investigation of the relationships between discourse and identity. Secondly, it is argued that recent work on the concept of ethos, or rhetorical identity, provides a valuable complement to Simmel's approach and is helpful in understanding certain characteristics of domain-specific discourse.

L'année 2008 marque le centenaire de la première parution de l'essai de Georg Simmel intitulé « L'étranger » (« Der Fremde ») dans lequel l'opposition entre la proximité et la distance géographiques et la proximité et la distance sociales est présentée pour la première fois et exposée dans un cadre théorique explicite et convaincant. Cet article vise tout d'abord à replacer cet essai dans son contexte historique et théorique plus vaste ; il soutient que l'appareil critique de Simmel, qui lui permet de délimiter le champ de la sociologie et de le décrire et qui comprend des notions essentielles comme « l'interaction », la « sociation », la « dyade » et l'« intersubjectivité », reste pertinent pour étudier les relations entre le discours et l'identité. Dans une seconde partie, l'auteur souligne que de récents travaux sur le concept d'ethos, ou identité rhétorique, complètent utilement l'approche de Simmel et aident à comprendre certaines caractéristiques du discours spécifique à un domaine.

INDEX

Mots-clés: discours spécifique à un domaine, ethos, identité, proximité et distance, Simmel (Georg)

Keywords: domain-specific discourse, identity, proximity and distance

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