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Linguistics and Positioning Theory within Conflict Analysis and Resolution: Work in Progress

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1. Introduction.

Over the Spring of this year ICAR was kind enough to allow me to attend Professor Rom Harré's course on Positioning Theory at George Mason University. My own interest in this area is as a linguist working on the discourse of development. My doctoral fieldwork was set in the Makushi Amerindian region of Guyana and looked at discourse between the local communities, the Government of Guyana and professional development groups (Bartlett 2003). After an original intention to critique the discourse practices of the national and international participants, my work came to focus instead on the means by which the local communities were appropriating international development discourse strategies and, in particular, on the collaborative integration of culturally distinct power types within the resulting hybrid discourse types (see also Bartlett 2004, 2005a). In these terms, intercultural collaboration and conflict resolution differ from each other only in the degree of separation of the protagonists at the outset, and in this paper I set out a few ideas on the role of discourse analysis within conflict resolution, relating these to Positioning Theory. In particular I focus on the use of discourse analysis to highlight areas of *common meaning potential* between protagonists – zones where communication based on common understanding and interest are possible.

2. Discourse, Positioning Theory and Vygotsky.

The notion of discourse is the conceptual link between language and society, looking upwards on the one hand to social structures and cultural meanings and downwards to the nitty-gritty of words and grammar – lexicogrammar – on the other. In these terms, language form is not the abstract and autonomous system suggested by linguists such as Chomsky, but rather a socially motivated construct, shaped as it is because of the functions it performs (Halliday 1978:21-22). This functional approach to language applies at two levels: firstly, at the level of discourse patternings, where language is used in culturally specific ways to perform or accompany social activities while respecting interpersonal relations between the participants; and secondly, at the level of utterance or speech act, where lexicogrammatical features within the clause are motivated by the communicative functions they fulfil. Discourse and lexicogrammar are thus different

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levels of *mediational means* (Wertsch 1991), symbolic systems whereby speakers try and (re)produce mindsets for strategic purposes (Vygotsky 2000:251ff); they are snatches of cultural ideology instantiated in verbal action (Halliday 1978; Bernstein 2000).

Discourses, then, reflect and reproduce social structures and the analysis of textual

patternings and lexicogrammatical features can be called on to identify the social contexts of their production, particularly the worldviews and face systems of the participants, but also, and more abstractly, the socialising role of the text itself. As these are areas where there is much room for intercultural variation, the relevance of such analysis for conflict analysis should be clear. And, following Harré and Gillett (1994) amongst others, discourse is not only shaped by the social context, it is also constitutive of society through cumulative patterns of individual socialisation - what Vygotsky (1978) terms the "Mind in Society". This means that there is a bidirectional causal relationship between social structures and individual discourses, with the socialised mind as the conduit. Consequently, while social structures motivate the available range of discourses, there remains room for discourse to alter these same structures. However, as differently socialised groups have different ranges of readily available *meaning potential* (Halliday 1978:19&21), for any form of resolution to be reached where protagonists follow conflicting discourse systems it will be necessary to find areas of overlap between these systems - what Erickson (2001) memorably calls "wobble room", areas where new, conciliatory discourses can be developed, novel discourses that can reconstrue conflictive social structures.

Returning to Vygotsky (1978:86), we can compare such areas of common understanding with what he labels, in the case of individual learning, the Zone of Proximal Development, or ZPD, as:

...the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

In Vygotsky's terms the ZPD is the site of strategic manipulation of social input to stimulate individual development according to a child's current state of understanding. In the case of conflict resolution, the zone in question is not an individual concern nor a question of guidance in collaboration with more capable peers, but is rather the distance between sets of culturally conditioned protagonists working in isolation and their attainment when working in collaboration. The rest of this paper sets out to describe ways in which Positioning Theory and discourse analysis might identify such workable zones of common interest through the links between language, mind and society, as outlined briefly here.

3. Common Meaning Potential.

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Disagreements can arise from two very different circumstances, either through a difference of interpretation of (relatively) objective and *empirically observable facts*, or through a deeper conflict between value-laden *meaning systems*. In the first case, both parties agree on the meanings within disputed areas but there is a breakdown in their application. In such cases disagreements can (hopefully) be solved through a clear explanation of the objective facts in dispute. In the second case there is much greater difficulty as a commonality of terms masks a deeper *semantic* disagreement about the meanings of the terms and their relation to each other and to the social order, a disagreement that can permeate the whole social structure to which the different protagonists belong.

At this point it might be useful to consider semantics from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (e.g. Halliday 1978:21). Like Positioning Theory, SFL draws on the Vygotskian relationship between mind, language and society to define the semantic system of a cultural group not as the meanings of individual words and phrases, but as the *meaning potential* of the language system, the culturally sanctioned and interconnected ways of acting through discourse. *Behavioural potential* is the range of social meanings available to members of the culture and the relationship between them, and the meaning potential comprises that behaviour realised through the wordings of the group. This reorientation of the term *semantic* might seem slight, but it moves the notion from an idea of abstract meaning as residing within terms themselves to an emphasis on the relationship between meanings and, more importantly, it emphasises that meaning is behaviour within a specific cultural system. In these terms semantic common ground refers to the overlap of meaning potentials, a zone shared by different protagonists in which each is able to *act* in socially appropriate yet mutually valued ways. In this way the term *common meaning potential* can be employed to refer to both the overlap of understanding/practice of different protagonists and also to the potential for realigning aspects of the semantic system and so affecting social behaviour – the wiggle room, or zone of proximal development for common action.

4. Positioning Theory.

Positioning Theory (Harré and van Langenhove 1999; Harré and Moghaddam 2003) is a version of social psychology that views action as the setting up of positions, for oneself and others, through the performance of socially meaningful (often discursive) acts within an ongoing storyline (comprising the narrative understandings of the context and the contingent rights and obligations of the participants). The acts performed and their meaning do not arise from the pure intentionality of a unique subject but, following Vygotsky (1978), are renditions of internalised representations of social behaviour. In this view the subject is by and large the product of the social and not vice versa, as in the classical Cartesian view. The discourses open to speakers and their means of expression are circumscribed both socially, as the social context is their source, and individually, as

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each acquisition experience provides an individual social repertoire. This view does allow for agency, but in a limited form by which the subject is free to choose from the range of meaning options socially acquired. By extension, discourse is not the realisation of subjective thought but a means of social behaviour (*act*), a strategic and situationally contingent *positioning* with respect to your interlocutors within an understanding of current context and an internalisation of the effects of past discourse events, and in particular the contingent rights and duties for different participants (the *storyline*). The meaning achieved through the performance of each act within the context of the storyline itself constitutes a part of the storyline for following actions as actors orientate themselves to this position. This is represented by the following positioning triangle:

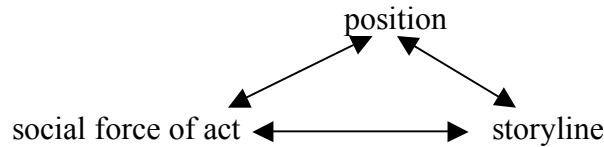


Figure 1. Positioning triangle.

The complex nature of the storyline, however, suggests that actions are taking place on many timescales at once as actions are performed not only in response to the immediately prior action but also to the long-scale storyline, or even storylines, of which it is a part. It is important to note here that the position taken up by a social actor in response to an immediate concern might appear contrary to their long-term positioning. For example, I may wish to appear conciliatory towards an immediate group of interlocutors as part of a wider strategy in opposing them. It is thus important when analysing social behaviour to correlate actions, positions and storylines within the correct timeframe and to relate this to other correlations within different timescales. In these terms, while discourse need not be consistent across time and contexts as an expression of a unified subject, it does have an underlying rationale as the expression of a historical individual’s internalised understandings of socially available and appropriate actions within a series of overlapping storylines. The following diagram is an attempt to capture this dynamism:

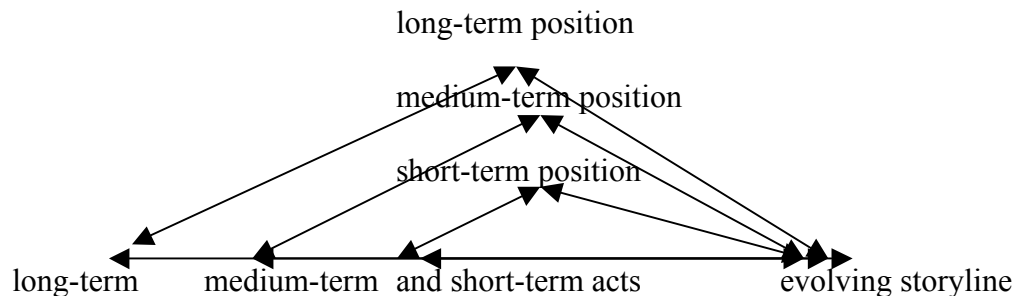


Figure 2. Diachronically embedded positioning.

5. Systemic Functional Linguistics.

SFL is compatible with Positioning Theory insofar as it sees language choice as the realisation of semantic choices which are socially functional and socially acquired – that is, they position the speaker and their interlocutors in socially interactional terms circumscribed by the specific cultural setting. Like Positioning Theory SFL views action as operating over different timescales and has comparable views on the dynamic operation of storyline/context. However, where SFL can complement positioning theory is through the level of detail of analysis of the individual (speech) act, the medium-term

accumulation of such acts, and the *mechanisms* by which these acts are tied to social structures. SFL works from the clause up, and its analysis of discourse is based on a tripartite conception of meaningful action as simultaneously ideational, interpersonal and textual, what Halliday calls the three *metafunctions* of language (1978:27). By this theory, the context of any communicative event comprises the material activity in progress, the interpersonal relations between the participants involved, and the social role of the unfolding discourse itself. The alignment of these contextual features with discourse features is the *register* of the discourse: field (representation of the world), tenor (negotiation of social relations), and mode (the role of text as medium). These textual features, or the *discourse semantics* of the activity, motivate in turn the lexicogrammatical choices at clause level. The meaning of a speech act or stretch of text is not reducible to any of the metafunctions in isolation, but to their conjunction and sequencing over *phases* of discourse. The following examples should illustrate this point. They are taken from a meeting of the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB, 4/11/2000), an umbrella group of local communities from the Makushi Amerindian region of Guyana. S. is a professional development worker for the Iwokrama International Rainforest Conservation Programme; UF is a community elder and founding a father of the NRDDB. The texts are extracts from the each speaker's attempt to explain the concept of Sustainable Utilisation Areas (SUAs) to the assembled community representatives:

Text 1. S.

Sydney just asked me if I could tell you a little more about the SUA process, how it's working. I'm not with - in Iwokrama the person in the department who's managing the whole SUA. The processes is dealt with under (xxx), and they have come up with a system where they meet...they have created a team, and on that team you have the four NRDDB representatives, and there are two representatives from (the government), from the Guyana Forestry Commission, which is a government agency, Guyana Environmental Protection Agency has representatives there and it's always within their (x), the idea was what they thought they could do was bring together communities, these government representatives, Iwokrama, to sit down and think about what would be the best way to plan the area, to plan the businesses that they would develop in the area, the management of the land in terms of SUA. The thinking behind it is that these people would meet quarterly, that's (xxxx) couple of months in between, and what they would do is sit down and talk about how the process is going and they could share what are their concerns and what they think should happen.

So from the community perspective the idea was that the NRDDB representatives would be able to bring to the meeting what they think are important for their villages. Because, remember, the SUA is really Iwokrama developing businesses in the preserve. And those businesses are going to operating, it's - one possible

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business is logging; a second is ecotourism; a third is harvesting things like nibbi and cassava, for selling, we call it non-timber forest products.

Text 2. UF.

How can you change it? How do you farm? What path do you take a year after, take a year, five year, or ten year or fifteen year period? So, we get to understand the forest better and those things will be left in their natural state. Because there are other important issues which we, because we live among them, we live inside, it's a way of life, we take it for granted. We (xxx). Many of us do not have sense of why, we (don't??) know how valuable those things are to us, and we just discard it, like many of us who (pushing) fire in the savannah - you know how many innocent birds' lives you destroying (probably, even though you set xxx)? If a snake (xxxxxxx xxxxxx). So, don't blame the snakes where you can't go (x) in the savannah, it's not good, it's a very bad habit, like poisoning, all these things are detrimental. But we never study it in depth, we don't know how disastrous it is.

Here S's speech acts draw together the discourse features of field: SUA as a system; tenor: I as knower, YOU as recipients of knowledge, THEY as Iwokrama controlling both parties' actions; and mode: relatively decontextualised accounts of procedures and plans of action functioning as informative discourse. These are features appropriate to her standing as external expert. UF's speech acts, in contrast, relate to his standing in the community through his weaving together of field: intimate knowledge of the rainforest; tenor: bare imperative, rhetorical questions, WE as whole community including UF alternating with YOU as community not including UF; and mode: relatively contextualised reflections on social life, functioning as regulatory discourse. Of particular interest is the fact that much of UF's account in the full text is in fact a recontextualisation of S's own discourse framework in more locally familiar terms, a point that will be developed below. (For a fuller analysis and account of these texts see Bartlett 2003, 2005a) .

What is important here is that the register of the speech acts of each participant is appropriate to their standing within the NRDDB: UF as local elder and S as the representative of outside expertise. In these terms SFL modifies Positioning Theory on two counts: firstly, every speech act is an act of positioning; and, secondly, the means of performing an act is in itself significant. It is the combination of discourse features that makes the acts in these examples operable, discourse features that individually and synergetically relate to higher levels of social structuring. Figure 3 illustrates this relationship:

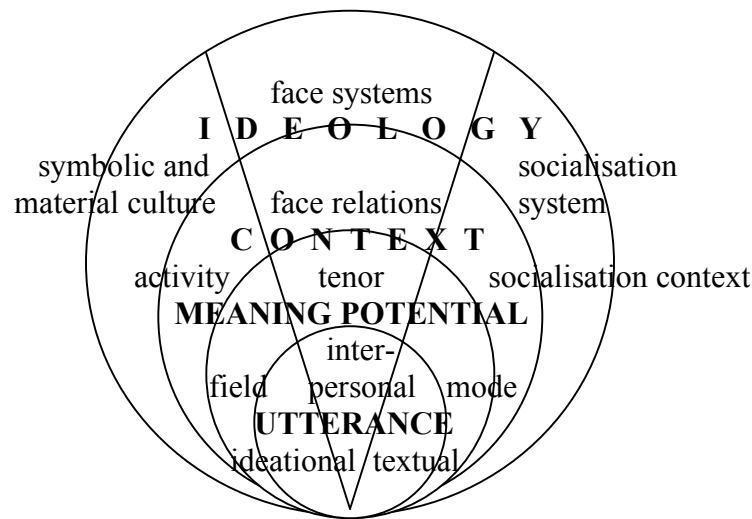


Figure 3. A mythically coherent ideological system. S&MC = symbolic and material culture.

Figure 3 suggests that the ideology of a social group is the coherent conjunction of symbolic and material activities, face systems and socialisation systems. This conjunction determines the concrete conjuncture of activity, face relations and socialisation strategies in real time events, which provide a meaning potential from which speech acts can be realised through the ideational, interpersonal and textual features of speech. Figure 3 is, however, a myth, as no social system is as coherent as this schema suggests and there will be tensions both within and between the strata. Within the strata the correlation of social activities, interpersonal relations and socialisation practices are not so much an alignment as a dynamic which continuously disrupts and recreates itself as tensions ebb and flow between the parties, activities and value systems involved. And as actors jostle to restore equilibrium on their own terms through culturally bound speech acts, so tensions open and close between the strata. These tensions can be resolved either through top-down ideological domination or bottom-up recalibration of the system and at any time the system is a dynamic and often contradictory flux of such activities. This mess of activity is what is meant by the seemingly neat and clean notion of the coconstitution of discourse and society. In these terms ideology is both the dominating force from above that shapes the discourses below it and no more than the sum of the discourses which constitute it. Likewise, texts as social practices can be viewed as determining lexicogrammatical features or as the product of these same features. This bidirectionality is the source of *wiggle room* within (and between) discourse systems, the potential to perturb the underlying ideological myth through the introduction of opposing meanings as constituted by lexicogrammatical features from the clause up, as illustrated in Figure 4:

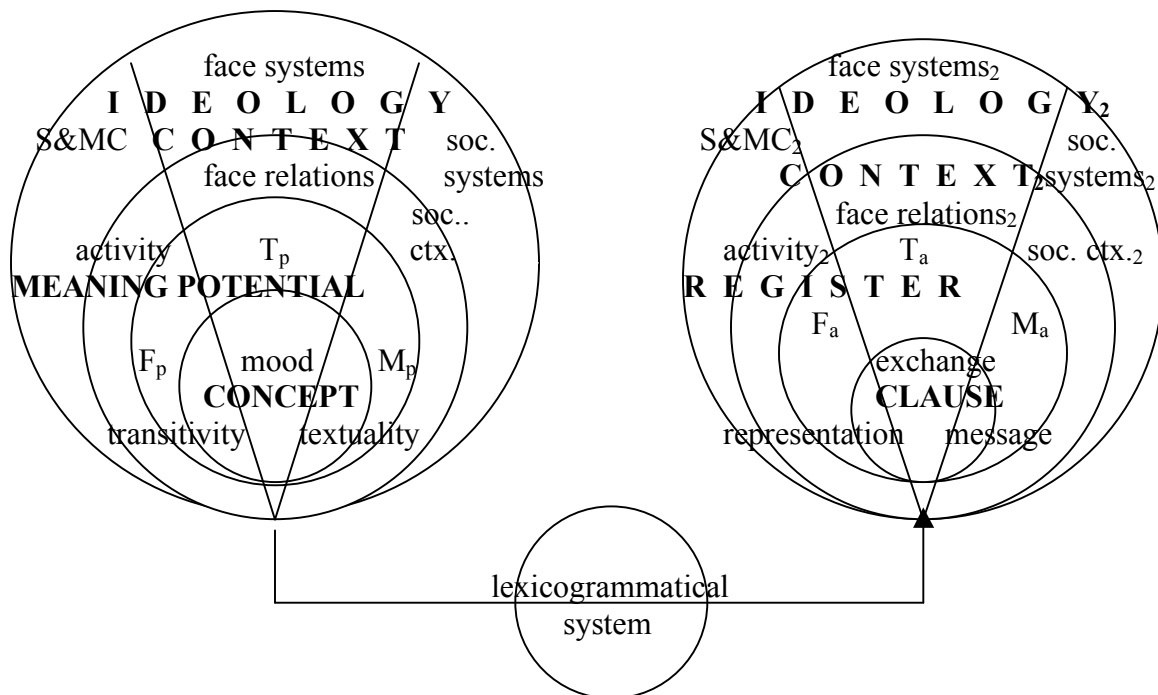


Figure 4. The tensions of social practice and room for change. F_p = potential field, F_a = actual field, etc.

Bernstein (2000:Chapter 1) describes the dynamic between structure and action in terms of *classification* and *framing*, where classification is the ideologically motivated division of discourse into insulated practices that serve to maintain the dominant ideology and framing is the means of controlling and reproducing these practices as a coherent *voice* through the selection and sequencing of appropriate *messages*, or unified phases of discourse (see also Bartlett 2005a). Every message is an act of positioning and the means of their performance are significant as miniature manifestations of the social order. As such individual messages can be used to introduce alternative ideologies, little by little, into a discourse practice. Eventually a critical mass can be reached and the dominant voice subverted (Bernstein 2000:15, italics in original):

The potential for change is built into the model. Although framing carries the message to be reproduced, there is always the pressure to weaken that framing...at some point the weakening of the framing is going to violate the classification. *So change can come at the level of framing.*

In such a case we have the appropriation or colonisation of one voice by another. What is of interest to my own research and to conflict analysis, however, is a milder form of

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subversion by which hybrid and collaborative voices appear which build on commonalities within the two systems, and in the following section I draw on Positioning Theory and SFL to illustrate how tensions within systems can be revealed, tensions that at times demonstrate the voice of the other and therefore point to an area of common meaning potential that can serve as a zone of proximal development for, in this case, collaboration and, in more severe cases, conflict resolution.

6. Textual analysis

The following text is also from an NRDDDB meeting (19/1/02). Here WA, local elder and NRDDDB Chair, is wetting the agenda for the day. V and G are Iwokrama representatives.

Text 3.

WA: *So we call on Dr G. to come up.*

G: *Just..quick...just ask R. to give his report? (Xxx) doing most of the surveys and managing most of the surveys so...so, I would suggest that they [xx].*

WA: *[I thought] you would have erm =*

G: *=Just rub it out=*

WA: *=walked withⁱ the WP/SUA thing.*

G: *That's separate from fisheries..report=*

WA: *=That's why I call you for the [(xxx)]*

G: *[The Audubon] not (xx).*

(3s)

V: *We have CEW reports first or G. first?*

WA: *No, CEW reports we're taking after lunch.*

(4s)

V: *I was just saying that S. wanted Minister's representative to be here for the Touchaus' [village captains] report and so on...If you wanted to erm, anyway, I think that's okay=*

WA: *=So you're saying we would would – we could take the Touchau report [after lunch?]*

V: *[The CEW] reports..while the Minister (xxxx) here, maybe the CEWs could report and finish with that (xx). The (MRU's getting) ready.*

WA: *Ah (4s) yeah but CEWs...maybe we could ah..take the CEWs' [report...]*

V: *[We finish] with that.*

(7s)

WA: *Okay, Dr G., you could er get more prepared. We will take the CEWs on the floor. (2.5s) CEWs, please be brief in your reporting. We know that you attended NRDDDB last meeting and thi:s and tha::. Also what you would say, we*

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know about it. What we want to know is, like, what new things have been taking place in communities that we are not aware of. So, we don't want to know that...we don't want you to come up here, "CEW report, erm, year 2001, period of so, so, so. We attended NRDDDB meeting, we this, we this, we went"; no, we want to know after you attended the NRDDDB meeting you went into community meetings, what was the response of the people, did you..er..how successful you were at these meetings, and what new agenda you have all taken on board. And that shouldn't be a whole paper that is put out. Those reporting format is more or less to, kinda, say that you were working for Iwokrama. (2s). Okay? ((W. continues.))

In the terms of Positioning Theory this text can be placed within the higher level of development in the North Rupununi and the mid-level of the NRDDDB Meeting in progress. At each level we can sketch out the positioning triangles for both the NRDDDB and Iwokrama:

Development

NRDDDB: *storyline*: the marginalisation of Amerindian communities within national and international development and their subsequent wrongful development coupled with the loss of community tradition; *position*: Makushi as guardians and modernisers of tradition, Iwokrama as outside expert advisers; *acts*: consultation, authorisation and development of reformed traditional practices.

Iwokrama: *storyline*: the sustainable development of the Iwokrama Rainforest and the social sustainability of the communities within and around it; *position*: Iwokrama as providers and implementers of imported scientific knowledge to sustain the rainforest and the communities in and around it, Makushi as traditional custodians of the Rainforest with useful traditional knowledge; *acts*: educate Makushi communities in imported ecological sciences while respecting and drawing on local knowledge.

NRDDDB Meeting.

WA: *storyline*: setting of agenda drawing on community and Iwokrama representatives, mid-level storyline of local failure to control such discourses; *position*: WA as chair, community and Iwokrama as contributors; *act*: to sanction and coordinate contributions from different representatives.

V/G: *storyline*: occasion to contribute expertise and advice as WA sets the agenda, mid-level storyline of communities gradually taking control over such discourses; *position*: Iwokrama as expert contributors, community participants as receivers of imported knowledge and contributors of local knowledge; *acts*: to provide information and suggest activities from a position of expert knowledge.

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We can now supplement these sketches with detailed linguistic analyses of the acts performed not only in terms of their intent/result *but also in terms of their meaning as fragments of different cultural systems*, as messages in Bernstein's terms. Following Fairclough (1989), this is a three-stage process building up from an (as-far-as-possible) objective *description* of the speech acts, through a situated *interpretation* of the social meaning of these acts to an *explanation* of the even in terms of the sociopolitical context. In effect, this is the correlation of low-level and high-level positionings.

Description

Text 3 shows WA continually challenged with regard to his proposed timetabling for the NRDDDB meeting. These challenges come from two senior Iwokrama figures, G and V, in the form of interruptions and overlaps. WA accepts the change in plan and addresses G with the formal title of "doctor", in contrast to the first name terms used by the Iwokrama representatives, and this formality extends through the request/directive "you could get prepared" and into his opening request to the Community Environment Workers (CEWs) "please be brief in your reporting". However, in his following instructions to the CEWs, WA shifts from formal, institutionalised language to adopt a far more familiar tone, marked phonetically through the long vowels in "thi:s and tha::", lexically through "like" and "kinda", and pragmatically through the use of imaginary reported speech and simple reformulations of complex ideas.

Interpretation

This extract shows WA coping with complications to his proposed timetabling and his successful management of G and V's interruptions in rearranging the timetable as a joint effort. This is in contrast to previous meetings where WA appeared intimidated by the institutional power of the Iwokrama representatives and ended up ceding control to them while adopting a speaking stance more like that of the community members participating from the floor (for a full analysis of the text from which this extract is taken, see Bartlett 2003, Chapter 6). While WA eventually does go along with the Iwokrama proposals here, what is of more interest is the way in which he is able not only to take this alteration to plans in his stride but the way he is able to draw it into his own way of doing things in a contribution that mixes his institutional voice as chairman and his community voice as elder. Of interest here is his use of formal titles to address participants who are also his friends. This is an interpersonal strategy often used by community speakers and extends even to family members. It is effective as a means of orienting the meeting to an institutional framework and so invoking the community authority that the NRDDDB represents (see also Bartlett 2005a). In contrast, when WA addresses the CEWs, his casual and extended vowels in "thi:s and tha::" not only mark a change in formality but are also iconic of the excessive length of some of the CEWs' reporting styles, an aspect that WA is about to criticise – a discourse option which is only appropriate here in light of the compensatory solidarity achieved through the change in tenor. He further mimics the formulaic reporting style of many CEWs' with his "We attended NRDDDB meeting, we this, we this, we went", but the familiarity of the closing lines and the hedging of "kinda" reassert the solidarity WA is expressing with the

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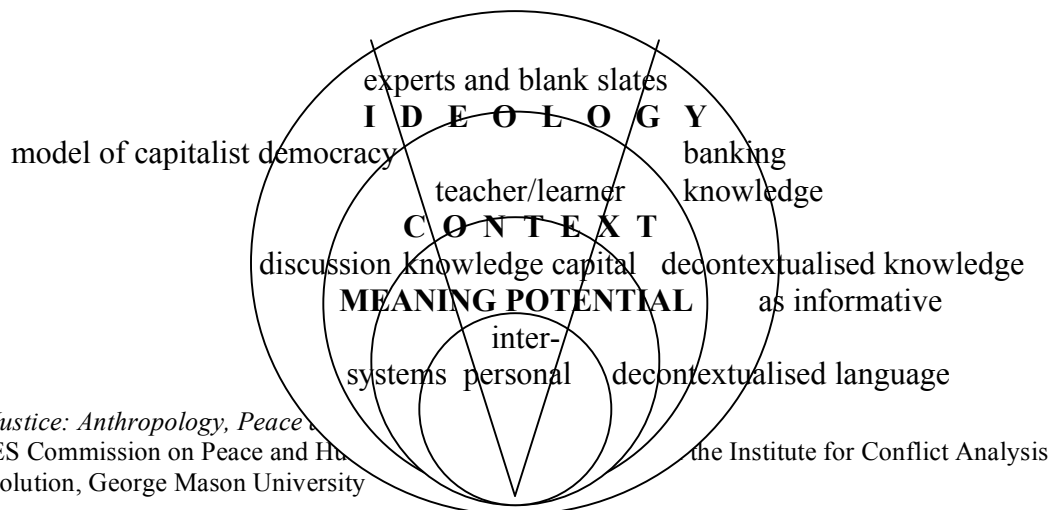
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CEWs through the use of his “community voice”. In these ways WA is able to bring aspects of community-level meetings into the more formal setting of the NRDDB.

Explanation

What is clever about WA’s contribution here is that he is challenging the norms of the institution at the interpersonal and the ideational level simultaneously. The interpersonal switches between institutional and community voice are fairly explicit, but WA’s instructions to the CEWs also contain an implicit challenge to the concept of Iwokrama’s authority. Control over the CEWs is a moot point between NRDDB and Iwokrama, corresponding to their role as go-betweens for community custom and imported science. WA’s redirection of their reporting can thus be seen as a move to shift this aspect of the institution further to the community side, a point he almost makes explicit, but not quite, in his dismissal of the existing reporting format as “more or less to, kinda, say that you were working for Iwokrama”.

In summary, this extract shows WA successfully blending his role as chair of the NRDDB as an institution with his role as a member of the North Rupununi as a community, a synthesis which, by his own admission, he aimed for but failed to achieve as facilitator in earlier discourse events. He is able to do this by creating an *intertextual* style (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999) that draws on discourse features, and hence voices, from different cultural systems. This is possible because the discourse between the NRDDB and Iwokrama is already a realignment of what are generally oppositional systems, the discourse of capitalist development according to the international financial organisations and the Government of Guyana (notably in the 1976 Amerindian Act) and the discourse of cultural autonomy that informs the more radical members of the NRDDB and is set out in the NRDDB Constitution (see Bartlett 2005b for a detailed analysis and discussion of these two documents). In the discourse of development, international organisations are models of practice and suppliers of universals of knowledge to backward social groups; in the discourse of cultural nationalism minority groups maintain their distinctive identity, focusing on the moral regeneration of the community while developing their culture through the same processes of hybridisation, assimilation and accommodation apparent in majority cultures (May 1999:25, 2001:78). These two discourses are represented iconically in Figures 5 and 6:



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ideational textual

Figure 5. Mythical ideology of capitalist development.

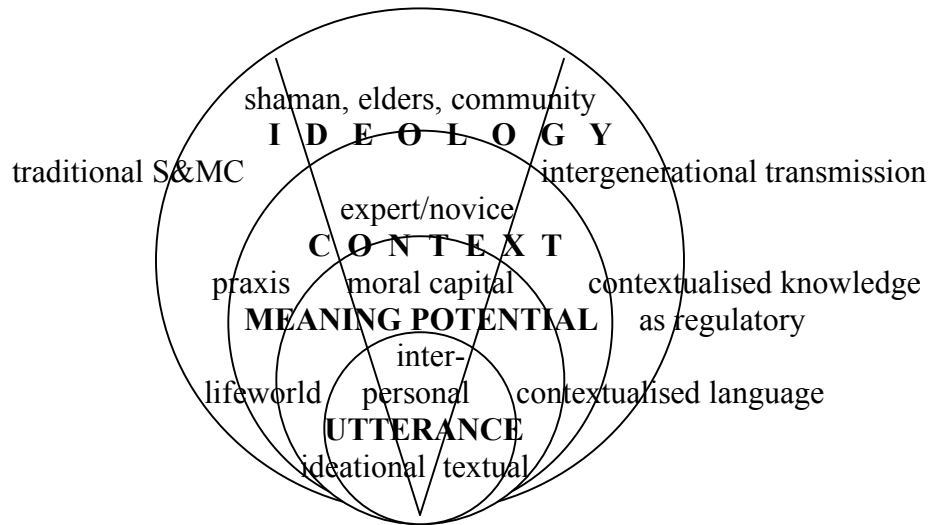


Figure 6. Mythical ideology of cultural nationalism.

Again, these are impossibly coherent positions and represent only one form of ideology, what I have labelled elsewhere (Bartlett 2005a) *ideological ideology*, politically motivated and deliberately formulated unifying myths at various levels of practice. In practice, these ideologies are challenged at every turn and tensions appear that can be exploited towards achieving a common meaning potential. This is precisely the innovative area in which the NRDDDB and Iwokrama are working.

7. Ideologies

In addition to politically motivated *ideological ideology*, and in tension with it, are *practical ideology* (the meaningful conduct of protagonists in real time, particularly in terms of discursive behaviour) and *implicit ideology* (the belief/value systems of individual protagonists as revealed through narratives). I consider all three to be ideologies in that they demonstrate a coherent, systematic and mutually-informing (though never closed) patterning of symbolic and material culture, face relations and means of socialisation. The concept of ideological ideology is clearly close to the notion of high-level storyline in the terminology of Positioning Theory, while implicit ideology corresponds to lower-level storylines and practical ideology to actions. In these terms the contingent nature of discourse and the impossibility of closure of the social system mean that tensions will exist between these ideology types, tensions which can reveal wiggle room where common meaning potential can be sought in practical discourses that cut across discourse systems which, at the level of ideological ideology, appear mutually exclusive. As far as implicit ideology is concerned, while it is acknowledged above that discourse is not the realisation of thought and that narrative strategies are strategic rather

than permanent, it still seems possible to use discourse analytical techniques to reveal general ideological tendencies within the sense-making narratives of individuals as a function of their experience and internalisation of situated social practice. What is more, the inconsistencies in these narrative ideologies also reveal potentially exploitable tensions as part of the search for common meaning potential.

8. Conclusion: Common Meaning Potential as Practice

Returning to the SFL concept of the three metafunctions, such tensions, and so wiggle room, can be observed not only in ideational terms but also with respect to face systems and the use of discourse as a socialising tool. Without following the schemata in figures 5 and 6 (which I have already said are mythical or, in more acceptable theoretical terms, heuristics), the tensions that exist between and within the various ideologies and their (movement towards) resolution in the collaborative hybrid practice of NRDDDB-Iwokrama discourse can be explained in the following terms.

At the level of ideological ideology, both discourses deal with some level of autonomy within the nation state. While the Government of Guyana's postcolonial version of capitalist development and integration is complex (see Bartlett 2005b), it does allow for, or even rely on, granting a level of self-determination to Amerindian groups as a symbol of the country's precolonial roots. Conversely, cultural nationalism within the Rupununi does not militate against belonging to the Guyanese entity at a different level and UF states that "We want the Government of Guyana to see Surama as an asset not a liability." Likewise, the communities of the North Rupununi look to cultural development through new expertise linked to cultural practice, as set out in the Region's Report on Poverty Reduction Strategy Consultations (RDC 9 2001:5):

Communities were very responsive and participatory, it was noted that people are hungry for development, which they said, should occur hand in hand with cultural revival.

While international development ideology still largely sees target populations as blank slates, despite theoretical protestations to the contrary, Iwokrama's own mission statement is aimed more at social sustainability than capitalist development and their approach is marked by a spirit of negotiation and the joint construction of practice.

In interpersonal and textual terms, development ideology might be seen to favour pushing the symbolic capital of external experts and the abstract and supposedly universal methods and concepts of imported knowledge while cultural nationalism relies largely on the moral authority of community elders and the intergenerational transmission of traditional values. However, key participants such as UF are able to manipulate a range of message types to switch between power types and to recontextualise abstract imported systems within local meaning systems. An analysis of implicit ideologies gives further

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insight into the hybrid discourses arising in practice between the NRDDDB and Iwokrama, particularly in terms of how differently positioned speakers appropriate to themselves different authoritative stances towards the development process. Bartlett 2001 and 2003 (Chapter 8) show how G relies on his symbolic capital as outside expert to make suggestions (primarily through the use of SHOULD, NEED and THINK clauses) while SA, a community representative, uses HAVE TO and KNOW to set an agenda for change based on his lived experience of life in the Rupununi. UF again provides the crossover, with his use of CAN simultaneously defining the possible while sanctioning the allowable.

Drawing all these factors together I have suggested a workable model for collaborative discourse in which outside advice and inside knowledge are combined but which rely on the moral authority of the community for their realisation in practice (Figure 7):

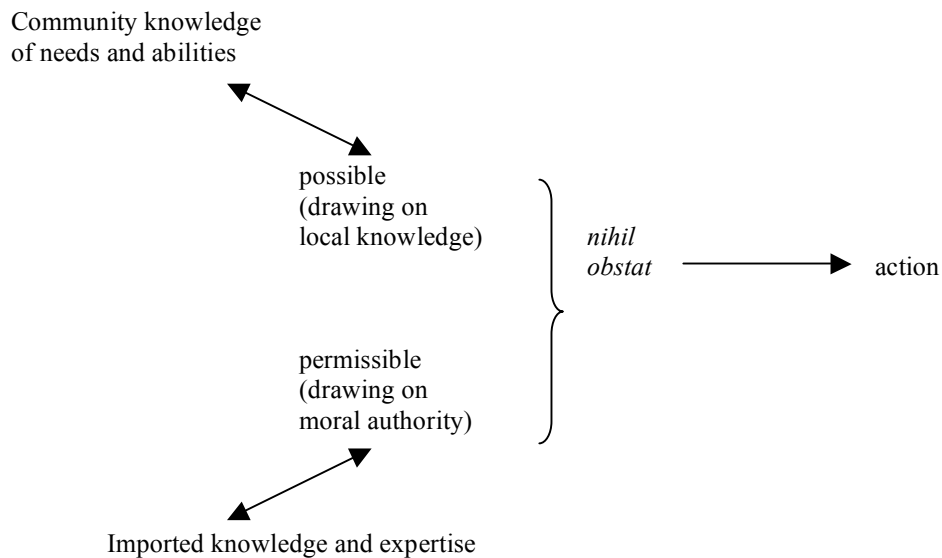


Figure 7. Working model for collaborative discourse

The final figure is a schematic representation of the reconstruction of discursive tensions within a system based on common meaning potential.



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MEANING POTENTIAL
innovative inter- contextualised
practice personal language
UTTERANCE
ideational textual

Figure 8. ZPD for collaborative practice.

This is the ZPD for further collaborative work, with the emphasis on the Z – this is not a solution but a *zone* where solutions may be found and developed. Moreover, such a system will function differently in different contexts, where the issues to be resolved, the interpersonal relations involved and the textual practices employed will be differently aligned. This suggests the need for a planned *topology* of discourse events (see Bartlett 2003, Chapter 9 for further discussion on this point). All in all, then, an emphasis not so much on a final conflict resolution but on an ongoing discourse based on existing areas of common meaning potential and the opening up of new ones.

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ⁱ In Guyana WALK WITH is used to mean BRING WITH YOU.