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Collective identities and the private-public interface in political discourse

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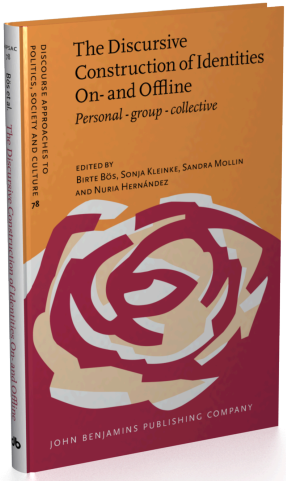

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Collective identities and the private-public interface in political discourse

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This chapter examines the discursive construction of identity in political discourse and considers collective identities as the default in that context. It utilises an integrated approach informed by interactional sociolinguistics and discourse pragmatics. Departing from the premise that discursive identities are co-constructed, reconstructed and – possibly – deconstructed in and through the process of communication, it focuses on those contexts in which political agents depart from the default by entextualising non-collective identities, e.g., private-domain-anchored family person or ordinary citizen. The 'doing' and 'undoing' of discursive identities in discourse is reflected in the importation of private-domain-anchored communicative styles and genres, such as colloquial expressions and small stories, contributing to the ongoing process of hybridisation of institutional discourse in general and political discourse in particular. The discursive construction, re- and deconstruction of identities in political discourse is a multifaceted endeavour which exploits the structural, pragmatic and cognitive constraints of a discourse genre as well as those of institution and society.

Keywords: contextualisation, decontextualisation discourse genre, discursive construction, entextualisation, hybridity, political discourse, private-public interface, recontextualisation

1. Introduction

In discourse, participants refer to themselves and to others; they make predictions about themselves and about others as well as about referents in the discourse world and in the social world; and they express evaluations about themselves and others as well as about referents in the discourse world and in the real world. Self- and

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other-references are of key importance to the presentation of self and others, and to their interpersonal and social relationships. They are used strategically to construct, reconstruct and deconstruct discursive identities of self and others by negotiating their communicative status as regards personal identity, group identity or collective identity (cf. Kleinke & Bös; Mollin; Musolff; this volume), for instance. In mundane, everyday communication, discursive identities are negotiated directly by face-to-face participants and by other ratified participants in the local context. In media discourse, the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of discursive identities as well as their negotiation concern both the directly addressed communication partner(s) and other ratified participants in the local context, but above all, they concern the media audience. In this particular communicative event, the media audience and all of its diverse subsets is the actual addressee of the media discourse and of its negotiation-of-validity processes. This is particularly true for political discourse, which has become media discourse par excellence in digitalised mass-media societies, and which is frequently taken up and referred to in follow-ups (cf. Fetzer & Weizman, 2015; Lauerbach & Fetzer, 2007).

In mediatised political discourse, political agents bring in their discursive identities – and at the same time they bring them about, to employ interactional-sociolinguistic terminology (Gumperz, 1996). The discursive identities brought into the discourse do not need to conflate with the discursive identities brought about in the discourse, as their discursive construction is negotiated and may be challenged in negotiation-of-validity sequences. Depending on their local and global communicative goals, participants may foreground particular parts of their discursive identity, for instance private-domain-anchored identities, while backgrounding others, for instance public, government-anchored identities. The fore- and backgrounding of particular identities generally goes hand in hand with a change in discursive style and a change in other constitutive parts of the discourse genre, such as e.g., turn-taking and interactional roles. For instance, political agents may intend to enhance their currency by doing leadership in context (cf. Fetzer & Bull, 2012), and they may do that successfully, but they may also fail to enhance or keep that part of their discursive identity and thus not be able to present themselves as credible, competent and responsible leaders. In Searle's (2010) *Making the Social World*, the bringing-in of discursive identities and of other discourse-relevant features is administered by 'Background presuppositions', and the bringing-about of discursive identities and of other discourse relevant features is done through practices: "The point I am making (…) is that democracies work not just on rules, but on Background presuppositions, on practices, and on modes of sensibility" (ibid., p. 168). Through the use of language, discursive identities and other constitutive parts of discourse can be represented as existing entities – that is, as how participants intend them to exist and how participants intend them to be represented.

This can be done with the strategic use of metacomments entextualising[1] those parts of the discursive identity to be foregrounded, such as *I* – respectively *you – as a family person* or *I am* – respectively *you are – the only party leader*. Through the use of co-referential pronouns and other deictic devices, participants refer to the entextualised identities and to their inherent normative expectations as entities, which have been accepted in the current discourse and which have been assigned the status of 'Background presuppositions':

> […] in human language we have the capacity not only to represent reality both how it is and how we want to make it be, but we also have the capacity to create a new reality by representing that reality as existing. We create private property, money, government, marriage, and a thousand other phenomena by representing them as existing. (Searle, 2010, p. 86)

Against this background, discursive identities are conceptualised as interactional achievements, as doing political agent or as doing leader, as may be deduced from Searle's reconceptualisation of power: "Something has to be added to our core concept of power, and that is the notion of its *intentional exercise*" (2010, p. 148).

In mundane, everyday discourse as well as in media discourse, the interactional organisation of discursive identities is based on indexically realised self- and other references to discursive entities brought into the discourse and brought about in the discourse: the former utilises first-person-singular- and plural pronouns *I* and *we*, as well as generic *you*, while other-references are expressed by the second-person-singular and plural pronoun *you*, and by the more generalised forms *she* or *he*, and *they*. Particularised discursive identities are entextualised by metacomments and/or predications entextualising the political identity of party leader, foregrounding institutional power and relevant leadership qualities, for instance "*I am the leader of the party now*" (William Hague in an interview with Jonathan Dimbleby, May 30, 2001). This is also the case in the following excerpt from a political speech delivered by Tony Blair, the then leader of the Labour Party and prime minister, in which the private domain is connected explicitly with party politics: "*I don't think as a human being, as a family man, I've changed at all. I have changed as a leader*" (Tony Blair, Labour Party Annual Conference, Manchester, September 28, 2004).

This chapter focuses on the discursive construction, the reconstruction and deconstruction of discursive identities in political discourse, in which collective

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1. The use of 'entextualisation' in this contribution differs from the one promoted by Park and Bucholtz (2009), who define entextualisation primarily in terms of institutional control and ideology. It shares their stance of approaching entextualisation in terms of "conditions inherent in the transposition of discourse from one context into another" (ibid., p. 489), while considering both local and global contexts.

identities are seen as the default, irrespective of the use of first-person-singular or first-person-plural self-references. It concentrates on the analysis of entextualised identities and on inherent normative expectations, which are used strategically to foreground particular parts of the identities while backgrounding others. The discursive construction of identities is a dynamic, multifaceted endeavour which requires an integrated frame of reference for felicitous analysis, accommodating discourse-pragmatic intentionality of communication action, rationality and conversational inference on the one hand, and interactional-sociolinguistic indexicality of communicative action, negotiation of meaning and contextualisation on the other.

The chapter is organised as follows. The next section investigates the discursive construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of identities. The third section presents the contextual constraints and requirements of political discourse, paying particular attention to its mediated on-record status, to political identities and to hybridity in mediated political worlds. The conclusion argues for cognitive prototype-based scalar conceptions of individuality and collectivity, which – depending on the communicative goals of the participants – are fore- and backgrounded in interaction.

2. Constructing, reconstructing and deconstructing identities in discourse

The construction of discursive identities is connected with what Davies and Harré (1990) refer to as acts of positioning. Positioning "is a discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines" (ibid., p. 46). A discursive identity thus emerges as a product of ongoing interaction rather than being a fixed identity, which is simply encoded and represented. The dynamics of the discursive construction of identity does not mean that discursive identity is constructed from scratch in every instance of interaction. Rather, social agents are firmly embedded in their social worlds in general and in their mediated (political) worlds in particular, and they "draw on expectations about identity claims and stereotypes derived from previous encounters in a process of analogy" (Bolander & Locher, 2010, p. 168).

From an ethnomethodological perspective, acts of positioning correspond to membership categorisation (Sacks, 1992), which is referred to indexically in the discursive construction of identity with strategic use of pronouns, deictic expressions and entextualised roles with their normative expectations. The latter are generally realised as metacomments containing a self- or other-reference with an explicit mention of the role. In interactional sociolinguistics, identities are not static entities but also context-dependent interactional achievements, which are constructed, co-constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed in and through

discursive action. Discursive identity construction thus feeds on pre-identities brought into the discourse and identities that emerge in the interaction; that is, constructed, co-constructed, reconstructed or deconstructed identities.

The context-dependence and multilayeredness of discourse is reflected in Heritage's observation that talk-in-interaction is *doubly contextual* (1984, p. 242), i.e. an utterance relies upon existing context for its production and interpretation, and it is, in its own right, an event that shapes a new context for the action that follows. Arundale (2006) refines the doubly contextual status of discursive action by extending it to interpersonal aspects of communication:

> To paraphrase Heritage's (1984) observations with regard to conversation and context, communicative action is both relationship-shaped and relationship-renewing (242), and like context, relationship is endogenously generated within talk, not simply exogenous to it. (Arundale, 2006, p. 201)

The doubly contextual status of discursive action and its extension to interpersonal aspects of communication, in particular to relational work is of importance to the discursive construction of identities as it entails not only content-based identity construction but also interpersonal and thus relational issues. Against this background, the discursive construction of identities is relational, relating discursive identities to other relevant identity constructions in the ongoing discourse as well as with past and future discourses. In other words, discursive identities – or discursive selves – can only be constructed, co-constructed, reconstructed or deconstructed in relation to other discursive identities or discursive others.

The discursive construction of identities is connected closely with their linguistic representation by definite descriptions, general nouns, pronouns or identity-specific predications, to name but a few. These linguistic devices function as social indexes which relate discourse-internal construction with social and sociocultural contexts. Once the discursive identity of a participant has been constructed in discourse and has been ratified by acceptance, the identity construction is considered to have been felicitous and the established discursive identity becomes part of the discourse common ground. In Searle's terms, the established discursive identity is assigned a "collectively recognised status" (2010, p. 7). The established identity may then be referred to by personal pronouns and other indexicals, which express co-reference with that identity construction. However, identity constructions may also be challenged in discourse. Analogously to the non-acceptance of presuppositions in discourse (Fetzer, 1999), discursive identity constructions which have been assigned the status of a discursive presupposition – or a 'Background presupposition' in Searle's terms – need to be made explicit and their contextual embeddedness needs to be spelled out. Only then it is possible to negotiate their validity in order to deconstruct or reconstruct them.

In the context of a political interview, for instance, references to the direct communication partner by first name, surname and title all function as social indexes concerning the construction of their discursive identity. In referring to an individual as *David Cameron*, *Prime Minister*, or even *the Right Honourable Member for Witney*, that particular individual is singled out and identified both for himself and the audience, and is assigned a particular discursive identity, which is being constructed: while the use of first and last name may relate the discursive identity to others on a solidarity-based dimension, the reference to his position in government signifies a higher social status and thus dominance. The reference to the individual's constituency is more neutral in that respect, foregrounding his role in the Conservative Party and in Parliament. This is not necessarily the case with the personal-pronoun reference *you*, whose domain of reference is indeterminate as it may, in principle, refer to any human being and their discursive identity in the local and global linguistic and social contexts. Naturally, possible referential domains of *you* are narrowed down by the local and global context in a political interview, but the 'addressed' addressee may still opt for a collective-based referential domain to *you* anchored to their political party rather than to their party-member-specific responsibility. Indeterminate referential domains allow participants to shift responsibilities in context, giving the pronoun a less determinate interpretation, as has been shown for the strategic use of pronouns in political interviews (Bull & Fetzer, 2006). If co-occurring with metacomments, such as *you as the leader of the Conservative Party*, *you as the former Director of Corporate Affairs* or *you personally*, the referential domain is further narrowed down and the discursive identity of the individual is entextualised. This may enhance the status of the individual, as is the case with the reference to party leadership, and it may contribute to lowering his status, as is the case with the reference to the status as former director. Referring to a political agent by individually-anchored 'you personally' does generally not enhance their social status but rather contributes to lowering it as it deviates from the default.

References utilising definite descriptions and general nouns function as social indexes and anchor identity constructions to the local discourse. Metacomments and identity-specific predications also anchor discursive identities to the discourse, but they generally go further by spelling out normative expectations, as for instance 'Director of Corporate Affairs', i.e. an individual with a superior position, or 'leader of the Conservative Party'. Normative expectations can also be expressed in a more indirect manner, as David Cameron did in a leadership contestant speech in 2006. In this speech he stands up for gay rights, but in the context of more traditional family values: "*And by the way, I think it matters and I think it means something whether you're a man and a woman, or a woman and a woman or a man and another man. And I am proud that we supported civil partnerships*". The re- and deconstruction of discursive identities is generally done with metacomments, which entextualise

normative expectations anchored to the identity-in-question and thereby assign them the status of objects of talk.

Definite descriptions, general nouns and metacomments as well as more implicit devices, such as presuppositions and implicatures, make explicit 'deviations' from a speech community's tacit norms and expectations about discursive identities. These tacit assumptions may concern code-of-conduct, expectations about participants' rights and obligations outside the interaction within society or participant-specific rights and obligations in the interaction.

The discursive construction of identities – or the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) – is of key importance to social agents in general and to political agents in particular. This is especially true for the presentation of political selves in the mediated political arena, where political agents present themselves not only as committed public figures but also as committed private-domain-anchored individuals, fore- and backgrounding their multifaceted discursive identities in line with their communicative goals, for instance as caring parents, loving husbands, wives or partners, or environmentally friendly people, as is going to be examined in the following.

3. Political discourse in context

Political discourse is a multifaceted notion which comprises discourse about politics on the one hand, and discourse by politicians on the other. However, not every instance of discourse produced by one or more politicians may count as political discourse, and not every discourse about politics may count as political discourse, either. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a stretch of discourse to count as political discourse? Political discourse in our westernised mass democracies is public discourse, it is institutional discourse, and it is – to a large extent – professional discourse. This is because the traditional concept of politics is anchored to the public domain of society. Since political discourse is also mediated and medialised discourse (Fairclough, 2006), it interfaces with micro domains, entering the private spheres of life through the media. In medialised mass democracies, this is the only way most people ever encounter politics (cf. Fairclough, 1995; Fetzer & Weizman, 2006, 2015; Lauerbach & Fetzer, 2007).

Political discourse in the media is a complex phenomenon: it is institutional discourse, it is media discourse, and it is mediated and medialised discourse. As institutional discourse, it differs from everyday conversation in being subject to institutional constraints. As media discourse, it is different from other types of institutional discourse by being, above all, public discourse addressed to a mass media audience. As mediated and medialised political discourse, it is the outcome of the

encounter of two different institutional discourses: (1) those of politics and the media, feeding on the inherent constraints of mediated discourse, i.e. communication through a medium and thus the uncoupling of space and time, and the movement of meaning from one text, discourse or event to another with the constant transformation of meanings; (2) those of medialised discourse, i.e. the professionalisation of politics and the management of mediation of political 'messages' by spin doctors or political branding, among others (Fairclough, 2006).

Political discourse uses various discourse genres, such as statements and speeches in the contexts of election campaigns, summit meetings, business meetings or party conferences: interviews in the context of TV or print media, multi-party discourse in the context of panel interviews, parliamentary debates and digital discourse. Political discourse may also be formatted as reports, analyses, commentaries, editorials or letters to the editor, to name but the most prominent ones. All of these discourse genres are employed strategically to talk politics and to talk about politics. Moreover, these discourse genres do not occur context-independently but rather are embedded in journalistic news discourse and may be repeated as sound bites in later programming. Ordinary people may also participate in audience participation programmes in mediated political discourse, for instance panel interviews, standing in for the interviewer and asking questions, or by members of the home audience, calling in or sending emails and texts. Most recently, the evolution of the internet and the professionalisation of digital discourse has brought about new forms of communication and opened up new arenas for political discourse, e.g. social networks, online discussion forums, Twitter or blogs (cf. Atifi and Marcoccia (2015) for an overview of the different types of digital discourse).

Political discourse has undergone important changes in our digitalised and medialised societies, and that is why a felicitous analysis of politics and of political discourse can no longer comprise *text and talk* (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002) only, but rather needs to consider political discourse as a multilayered, context-dependent phenomenon with fuzzy boundaries (Fetzer & Bull, 2012). This also holds for all of its constitutive parts, in particular for the discursive construction of identities and ideologies. The symbiotic relationship between political discourse and the media is interdependent on the medium-as-such in and through which political information, beliefs and opinions are transmitted and shaped. The impact of modern mass-media culture on communicative behaviour and performance is further reflected in the conversationalisation and professionalisation of political discourse (Fairclough, 1998).

From an ethnomethodological perspective (e.g. Garfinkel, 1994), politicians 'do' politics in and through their acts of communication as regards politics-as-a-whole as well as its constitutive parts: they do 'political talk', 'political ideology' and 'political identity'. In Gumperz's (1996) interactional-sociolinguistic terms, political

agents can be seen both as bringing their discursive identities into a communicative setting, and as bringing them about in that setting. However, politicians 'do' more than simply 'talk politics in the media'. At the same time, they construct and reconstruct their multiple identities and functions in discourse against the background of others with whom they relate by aligning or dis-aligning with them and the ideologies they represent, contributing to the discursive construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of their own identities as well as to those of others. Prototypical occasions for politicians to demonstrate their multiple skills and dedications are political speeches, interviews and debates, which are broadcast as wholes or in part.

Political discourse is public, institutional, mediated and professional, to various degrees. It is discourse about politics done by politicians and thus discourse by elites – or discourse from above – but it is also discourse about politics by members of the non-elite – or discourse from below (cf. Fetzer, 2013, pp. 13–14). What is more, political discourse is both process and product: it is negotiated in discourse genres in the media and it is negotiated across discourse genres in the media and across the media.

In the following, metacomments referring to the contextual constraints and requirements of political discourse, that is public, institutional, mediated and professional discourse (Section 3.1), as well as to the constitutive parts of discursive identities (Section 3.2) are examined in more detail, and their contribution to the hybridisation of political discourse (Section 3.3) is discussed and illustrated.

3.1 Political discourse: Public, mediated and 'on record'

This section examines the function of metacomments referring to political discourse as media discourse, which entails the latter's status as public and institutional discourse. It demonstrates that metacomments trigger inference processes which challenge the taken-for-grantedness of domain-specific presuppositions (cf. Weizman, 2008). The argument is based on the premise that discourse-genre-specific presuppositions anchored to the genre-as-a-whole or the macro-validity claim (Fetzer, 2000) are ratified through default acceptance by all of the participants in the opening section. After that, their validity is taken to hold for the genre-as-a-whole. Should they be referred to in one of the topical sections, or even be made explicit, they indicate one or more critical incidents (Fetzer, 2006). The validity of presuppositions, and this also holds for genre-specific presuppositions, can only be negotiated if they are made explicit; only then can they be rejected. In mediated political discourse, making explicit genre-specific presuppositions is generally done with metacomments, as, for example, in an interviewee's request to use interviewer-anchored first-part questions 'can I ask you a question?'.

In the following, metacomments making explicit the mediated, institutional and/or public statuses of a communicative event are examined in detail. Excerpt (1)[2] is adopted from a political interview, in which the interviewer (IR) refers to the unprofessional management of the BSE crisis by a prominent member of the government:

(1) **IR** Now, you've been saying this over the last few days, *you've been saying it till you're blue in the face*, **the public** remains at the moment *evidently* unconvinced. Do you think, in retrospect, it's easy to make mistakes, that it would have been wiser not to have a lot of comment about it. *Put your daughter* **on the screen**, force-feeding, **as the newspapers say**, force-feeding hamburgers down her.

In (1) the politician's handling of the BSE crisis is challenged. His[3] attempts to convince the public are seen as unsuccessful, as is expressed in the IR's description "you've been saying it till you're blue in the face". The failure is also implied in the evaluation "it's easy to make mistakes", it is implicated with the comparative construction "it would have been wiser not to have a lot of comment about it" with the implicatum that it has not been wise of the politician to have over-used the media in his attempt to manage the handling of the crisis, and it is made fully explicit in the on-record statement "**the public** remains at the moment *evidently* unconvinced". This on-record statement is not only intensified with the evidential 'evidently', indicating that more evidence could be put forward, if required (cf. Fetzer, 2014), but it is also commented on by references to not just one, but a number of outlets, that is '**the newspapers**', which have been following up the politician's handling of the crisis. What is more, the politician is also criticised for having misused the media by having mediatised his daughter, who is a constitutive part of his private-domain anchored family life, by putting her "**on screen**" and "force-feeding", an expression which is generally associated with people on hunger strike, beef in the form of a hamburger. This strategic move of the politician to use his daughter as evidence to support her father's campaign counts as another challenge of his handling of the crisis, which has been followed up and criticised in the media.[4]

Excerpt (2) stems from an interview (Jonathan Dimbley & Michael Heseltine, On the Record, BBC1, May 13, 1990) which starts in a conventional manner but

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2. Since the focus of the analysis lies on lexical material, and to facilitate readability, the transcription adheres to orthographic conventions. *Relevant linguistic cues* are printed in *italics* and metacomments are printed in bold.

3. In this chapter, the use of grammatical gender corresponds to natural gender.

4. Fetzer (2002) analyses politicians' references to private-domain-anchored discursive identities as attempts to enhance the politician's credibility.

then turns into a highly antagonistic exchange in the topical section, where both IR and interviewee (IE) make explicit genre- and media-discourse-specific presuppositions, including (political) interview (IR_2), audience and viewer ($IE_{1,6}$), contracts and agreements ($IE_{2,4,6}$), information and manipulation (IE_1):

(2) **IE_1** no but you and *now you are going to get the last word* in which **you leave an impression in front of your viewers**
IR_2 no **I have the right to say this is an interview** and I'm sure you will recognize it because you understand **the nature of political interviews** Mr Heseltine as well as I do
IE_2 *well I understand the nature of the agreement* (…)
IE_4 **I've agreed to come on this programme** *not to discuss these issues*, **to discuss important factors about ideas**, *about the direction of policies, about where we should go in the nineteen nineties*. **That's what I agreed to do** (…)
IE_6 *Jonathan, you are wasting your time* and what **viewers happen to be watching**. *You are wasting their time as well* so let us now continue with **the agreement that we had to discuss issues** (…)

The metacomments to the constitutive parts of the media frame and media genre make explicit tacit presuppositions concerning participants' rights and obligations; that is, that the IR has the right to open and close the communicative event-as-a-whole as well as its opening, closing and topical sections. IE_1 implies that the IR does not exercise his right to close a section in an appropriate manner but rather misuses it in order to mislead the audience about the IE's true beliefs and intentions, since the IR will "**leave an impression in front of your viewers**", which the IE cannot comment upon, as the IR is "*going to get the last word*". This is refuted on-record in IR_2 with the IR referring to genre-specific participants' rights and obligations by saying "no **I have the right to say this is an interview** and I'm sure you will recognize it because you understand **the nature of political interviews** Mr Heseltine as well as I do". By referring to the clear-cut division of labour in political interviews (cf. Blum-Kulka, 1983), that is the IR's right to close topical sequences, he makes explicit that he is acting in accordance with the genre-specific rights and obligations, while at the same time implying that the IE is not acting in accordance with these rights and obligations. The IE rejects this and makes explicit another tacit presupposition, namely that in the genre of political interview, participants generally agree upon the topics to be discussed. By echoing a shared conception of the situation reflected in "*I understand the nature of*" and by replacing the reference to the genre-specific presuppositions with "*the agreement*" and by specifying the agreement going on record about its contents "**I've agreed to come on this programme** *not to discuss these issues*, **to discuss important factors about ideas**, *about the direction of policies, about where*

we should go in the nineteen nineties. **That's what I agreed to do**", he contributes to the interview becoming more and more antagonistic. This is also reflected in the references to media-frame-specific presuppositions, that is "**viewers happen to be watching**" implying that the programme does not have a regular audience, and to the IR's communicative performance as not only "*wasting your time*" but also that of the audience.

The metacomments and references to the genre- and media-specific presuppositions have the communicative function of challenging the communicative style of the communication partner while at the same time supporting the discursive deconstruction of identities, for instance, the professionalism of the IR who is not neutral but rather attempts to manipulate the audience, or that the IE who is not only evasive but also does not act in accordance with IE-specific rights and obligations. Because of the mediated status of the interview, the metacomments are directed both towards the face-to-face communication partner and towards the audience, who is invited to draw inferences of the kind that the communicative performance of the IR, respectively the IE, has been inappropriate. Against this background, metacomments are functionally equivalent to Scannell's (1998) design features:

> […] the design features […] indicate that it is meant for reception by absent audiences. And this, in turn, establishes the intrinsically public nature of broadcast talk. Talk-in-public, especially political talk, is 'on record' and this has consequences on what can and cannot be said and for ways of saying and not saying.
>
> (Scannell, 1998, p. 260)

Political discourse in the media is public discourse and thus 'on record'. In that frame of reference, metacomments provide participants with the tools to comment upon their communication partners' communicative performance and to their construction of discursive identities, contributing to their reconstruction, if the metacomments reflect positively on the identity, or to their deconstruction, if the metacomments reflect negatively on it. In general, metacomments tend to challenge the communicative performance of participants referred to, thus contributing to their discursive deconstruction while at the same time enhancing the positive presentation of self. Political discourse in the media is part of a mediated political world, and thus of mediated political action and mediated political identities.

3.2 Political discourse and political identities

This section examines the discursive construction, and re- and deconstruction of identities in political discourse. It shows that the discursive construction of collective identity is the default in that context, discussing the role of pronominal preferences, that is self-reference with 1st person plural pronouns, as well as the orchestrated

interplay between 1st person singular and 1st person plural self-references. In line with Iedema and Caldas-Coulthard (2008) identity is seen as

> relational (that is, a performativity achieved in social interactions in the here-and-now) but also extends materially across non-local timescales. Identity is linguistic/discursive and multi-modal or semiotic: identity is the things we say, do, gesture, posture, wear, create, and so on (acknowledging that not all sites/activities call for multi-modal repertoires in the same way).
>
> (Iedema & Caldas-Coulthard, 2008, p. 8)

Political agents are generally affiliated to one or more collectives, that is political parities, (shadow) government, trade unions or pressure groups, and thus bring in collective pre-identities, which are brought about in discourse. Against this background, the discursive construction of political identities utilises the strategic use of pronominal self- and other-reference co-occurring with entextualised political functions and the corresponding normative expectations. Political agents bring their political identities into a particular communicative exchange and they bring them about in that exchange. This can be done implicitly with pronouns and other deictic devices, or it can be done explicitly with meta-comments, entextualising particular roles and expectations. The bringing in and bringing about of discursive identities in mediated political discourse can be described in Lemke's words as "[i]dentities are contested public terrain" (2008, p. 32).

The discursive construction of identities is relational by definition building on the dichotomies of 'us' versus 'them' while at the same time generally expressing positive evaluations of 'us' and negative evaluations of 'them'. The degree of explicitness of evaluation may vary from fully explicit to getting in a particularised conversational implicature. Analogously to the default construction of collective identities in political discourse, it is generally collective identities, and not the political agent as a private-domain-anchored individual, which are objects of discourse and thus negotiated in discourse, as is illustrated with the following Excerpts (3) and (4). Excerpt (3) stems from a political speech delivered at a party conference (David Cameron, Conservative Party Conference, October 4, 2005), and (4) from a political interview (David Dimbleby & Tony Blair, BBC1, April 7, 1997):

(3) (…) real change is 'bout changing **our** *culture and* ***identity*** and making it right for today. *It's not* some slick re-branding exercise or *marketing exercise in spin*. It's about making sure that at the next election when all of *you* and when *I* when *everyone in this room* goes out and fights the greatest battle of **our** *lives* street by street, house by house, flat by flat that **we** *have a message that is relevant to people today*, that shows **we** *love* this modern country as it is and that shows that **we** *think* **our** *best days lie ahead* as a country …
(…)

> Although **we** *agree with Labour* about trust schools, there's still a profound divide between **our** *approach* to education and *their* approach. *They think equality means treating every child the same. Including kids with learning difficulties in classes with the brightest. Forcing schools to accept disruptive pupils, putting up with bad behaviour, no matter what the damage does to other children.* **We** *think equality means something else. Individual children have individual needs, individual abilities, and individual interests. Real equality means giving individual children what is right for them.* (…) *It should mean clear rules of behaviour* – so that our *children grow up knowing the difference between right and wrong.*

Using first-person-singular self-reference (*I*) in the context of first-person-plural self-references (*our*, *we*), the politician does not construct a contrast between himself as private-domain-anchored politician and that of a public-domain-anchored politician. Rather, he foregrounds his affiliation with the Conservative Party and its ideology with the first-person-plural self-reference, as for instance in '**our** *culture and* ***identity***'. The pronominal shift from first-person-plural to a first-person-singular self-reference is embedded in the context of further pronominal shifts from 'all of *you*' to '*I*' to '*everyone in this room*', relating the politician and the party he represents with some heterogeneous and indeterminate audience as well as with the less heterogeneous and more determinate face-to-face audience 'in this room'. The politician's explicit connection of political and thus collective 'I' with generalised 'you' and 'everyone in this room' allows him to align with the face-to-face audience as well as with other mediated audiences. The positioning of self and other thus does not necessarily need to be binary but can also be scalar, positioning self against the background of allies, as has been the case with the audience above, and opponents, as is reflected in '***we*** *agree with Labour*', while at the same time making explicit '*a profound divide between* ***our*** *approach*' and '*them*' and elaborating on what '*they think*' and what '***we*** *think*'.

In the dialogic setting of a political interview the discursive construction of political identities is more dynamic and the referential domains of the personal pronouns may not always be that clear-cut (cf. Bull & Fetzer, 2006). While politicians construct collective identities by default, the default discursive identity of IRs is generally institutional and individual, as can be seen by the IR being addressed with his first name '*David*':

(4) **IR** **I** know that but did **you** have **you** abandoned have **you** did **you** *believe* what **you** *said* **you** *believed in the eighties*

IE Look of course **we** always *believed* in the idea of a more just a more fair society *and the Labour Party believed* for a long period of time that the way to do that was for example greater nationalization erm was for example simply more increased state spending. The whole process of modernization *David* has been to take *the Labour Party* away from that to keep true to its principles but put those principles properly in a modern setting now…

In (4) the IR requests the IE to comment on his political ideologies in a sociocultural context coloured by massive changes in the Labour Party, using the second-person pronoun '**you**' and the predications '*believe*' and '*say*', which would usually be interpreted as a reference to the politician's personal beliefs, especially as both are embedded in a past temporal frame ('*the eighties*'). The politician, however, adopts the default collective identity and encodes it explicitly with the first-person-plural self-reference '**we**', which allows him to present a mediated political world in which he can speak on behalf of his party ('and *the Labour Party believed*'; '*the Labour Party*'), which – like him – has adapted its principles to a 'modern setting'.

In media discourse politicians present their multiple discursive identities, they may express individuality, foregrounding their private domain-anchored identity constructions, which tend to have different functions, if initiated by the IE, such as shifting responsibility for a controversial claim by the politician himself as in Excerpt (5) (Jonathan Dimbley & Charles Kennedy, BBC1, April 25, 2001), or attempting to unbalance a politician, if initiated by the IR, as in (6) (Jeremy Paxman & Tony Blair, BBC2, April 17, 1997):

(5) **IR$_1$** But **you**'re also the only party leader who *says, as you said to me-*
IE$_1$ Indeed **I** did.
IR$_2$ not so long ago, erm, when **I** asked **you** whether users of cannabis were criminals, **you** said, **I** don't regard them as criminals. And **you** say – **I**'m right, aren't I? – **you** don't regard them as criminals.
IE$_2$ **I- I**- that's what **I** said to **you**, in a- in another studio, in an equivalent programme some time ago, *that is **my** personal view. It is not the position of the Liberal Democrats, let* **me** *be quite clear about this*

Excerpt (5) does not only contain instances of entextualised private-domain-anchored identity constructions of the politician ('*that is **my** personal view*'), which is taken up in the co-referential metacomment ('*let* **me** *be quite clear about this*'), but also explicit distancing from the politician's collective identity and the ideology which he should have represented ('*It is not the position of the Liberal Democrats*'). The local non-default as regards identity constructions is also reflected in the explicitly negotiated quotation used by the IR, making explicit the local and temporal embeddedness of the original statement.

In (6), both IR and IE use entextualised private-domain-anchored identity constructions. While the IR uses the reference to John Major and his childhood ('*the boy who came from Brixton*') to relate it to the IE's background ('**your** *background* and **your** *appeal to middle England*') in order to contextualise his private-domain-intended request for information ('Do **you** still consider yourself a socialist'), the IE uses private-domain-anchored identity constructions to provide information about his personal background ('**my father**', '**my dada**', '*and you know Jeremy* **my father** *came from a very poor background indeed*', '*his father erm his adopted father*') in

order to account for his refined political beliefs ('**I** do in the sense of the values. **I** don't share the idea that socialism's about some fixed economic prescription'):

(6) **IR** well John Major is presenting himself as *the boy who came from Brixton* and … and by contrast we all know erm **your** *background* and **your** *appeal to middle England*. Do **you** still consider yourself a socialist

IE **I** do in the sense of the values. **I** don't share the idea that socialism's about some fixed economic prescription. *And you know Jeremy* **my father** *came from a very poor background indeed*. He was brought up in in Govan, *his father erm his adopted father* was a rigger … but in fact **my dada** always used to see to **me** and **I** think this is true *he said it's not where you came from that matters it's what you are and what you can do for this country*. And *you know* **I** **I**'ve **I** *read all the stuff* that the the Conservatives've got *in the papers this morning* about all this *you know* his background, **my** background **I** really think **we** should argue about the future of the country or debate over and **I** think that would be more constructive a viewpoint

The IE's response does not only use private-domain anchored identity constructions strategically to account for the changes of the Labour Party as regards their economic policies, but also to attack the Conservatives for having used his private-domain identity and that of his father in the press ('**I**'ve read all *the* stuff (…) *in the papers this morning*') to attack the political party the IE represents, thus connecting private-domain-anchored identities ('**my** background') with the default collective ones ('**I** really think **we** should argue about the future of the country (…) **I** think that would be more constructive a viewpoint').

Politicians and other actors in the political arena do not only strategically use different types of media, that is print media, television, and social media, and genres, such as speeches, interviews and other types of debate, to persuade the electorate but they also mix styles, for instance using conversational styles, such as discourse markers ('you know') and lexical expression ('stuff', 'dada') and genres, such as the accommodation of narratives in election campaigns (Duranti, 2006), or of small stories in political speeches and interviews (Fetzer, 2010), and the presentation of self as private-domain-anchored identity constructions as well as the default collective and public ones. These are all clear-cut cases of the on-going process of hybridisation, which is discussed in the following.

3.3 Hybridities in mediated political worlds

The concept of hybridity is not only well established in postcolonial studies but also in dialogue-centred, critical-discourse-analytic and sociopragmatic approaches to language and discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Linell, 1998). While the former focus on the connectedness between discourse, participant and context, dialogue-centred approaches examine how polyphony or multi-voicedness is reflected in the production and interpretation of text. In the late modern discursive formation of political discourse, access to political decision-making processes and political action are no longer the sole privilege of an elite and its political agents. The major transformations in the public sphere concern the role and actions of civil society and its citizens who may take part in the formation of political opinions, which takes place in the media and through the media. There are, however, different logics that control public media commodities, namely that of technologisation and commercialisation. Technologisation of communication enables social agents to have a greater number of mediated encounters using diverse genres, such as forum discussion, chats and weblogs, and construct respective discursive identities, and as a consequence, the contexts in which political topics emerge multiply (Charaudeau, 2005, p. 30) furthering the distribution of political ideologies and politics. Fairclough (1992) points out that the media tends to be based on economic principles according to which it needs to produce attractive and well-selling products, contributing to the commodification of political discourse and of politics. Hybridisation is thus not only reflected in the function of media as providing both information and entertainment but also in the heterogeneity of the audience who varies according to its options to access and willingness to participate in encounters provided in and by the media, selecting topics ranging from local to global, and national to supranational, and constructing discursive identities as elite or non-elite political agents.

The concept of activity type (Levinson, 1979) informed by Wittgenstein's language game and cognitive pragmatics allows for the accommodation of the fuzziness and dynamics of discourse, and thus for the hybridisation of discourse. Activity type is "a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded events with *constraints* on participants, setting and so on, but above all on the allowable contributions" (Levinson, 1979, p. 368, original italics). These constraints capture the interactional and media-specific presuppositions of a communicative exchange, such as a political interview, and allow for the conceptualisation of the exchange as a context- and activity-type-dependent achievement. Additionally it accounts for meaning-making processes:

> […] there is another important and related fact, in many ways the mirror image of the constraints on contributions, namely the fact that for each and every clearly demarcated activity there is a set of *inferential schemata*. These schemata are tied to (derived from, if one likes) the structural properties of the activity in question.
> (Levinson, 1979, p. 370)

References to activity-type-specific constraints in the topical sections of a political interview, for instance, or entextualised metacomments are used strategically by the participants to signify participant-specific violations of normative expectations, if not norms, and they tend to be interpreted accordingly.

The hybridisation of discourse in general and of discourse genres in particular makes manifest their multilayered status, blurring taken-for-granted boundaries thus turning a once predictable event into a fuzzy, locally non-predictable media encounter. By acting in dis-accordance with genre-specific constraints, for instance by presenting themselves as multiply voiced and thus as both collective as well as private-domain-anchored identities, politicians and other social agents transcend boundaries and go beyond linearity and predictability. In those local non-defaults, the staged performance of the encounter and of its constitutive parts is surfacing and both may be assigned the status of an object of talk.

In Excerpt (7) (Jeremy Paxman & Tony Blair, BBC2, February 6, 2003), the hybridity of the exchange surfaces in references to the private domain of the IE in the IR's turns ('**your** *personal feelings*', '*smile*') as well as entextualised discursive identities and their respective expectations ('*Christians*', '*pray together*'):

(7) **IR_1** …**I** want to explore a little further about **your personal feelings** about this war. Does the fact that George Bush and you are both *Christians* make it easier for you to view these conflicts in terms of good and evil?
IE_1 **I** don't think so no, **I** think that whether you're a Christian or not a Christian you can try and perceive what is good and what is is is evil.
IR_2 **you** *don*'t *pray together* for example?
IE_2 *no* **we** *don't pray together Jeremy, no*.
IR_3 why do you *smile*?
IE_3 because erm erm erm erm *why do you ask* **me** *the question?*
IR_4 *because* **I***'m trying to find out how* **you** *feel about it*

The entextualised discursive identity as well as the entextualised normative expectations and implied expectations make the exchange unpredictable for the IE, who responds with private domain-anchored information regarding his religious beliefs, but at the same time exploits the scenario by a non-default nonverbal reaction, that is smiling, which the IR assigns the status of an object of talk in IR_3 and which is taken up by the IE in IE_3 with a deviation from the default division of labour by the IE asking a question himself, to which the IR responds by providing an account in IR_4.

In discourse in general and in political discourse in particular, identity constructions as well as identity relations emerge in interaction. They are brought to the discourse and they are brought about in the discourse utilising several related indexical processes, including the entextualisation of identity categories and labels, implicatures and presuppositions regarding identities and normative expectations, as well as footings and interactional roles (cf. Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 594).

4. Conclusion

Political discourse has been described as public discourse, media discourse and professional discourse. It has a particularised recipient design, comprising a more or less particularised set of addressees with a ratified participation status. As regards its production framework, political discourse is produced by one or more individuals, whose footing may be author, principal or animator, and who may speak for a more or less particularised collective. In interactional-sociolinguistic terms, politicians and other agents in the political arena bring their personal and collective identities into the discourse, and they bring them about in discourse. Personal and collective identities may thus be assigned the status of a presupposition for the discourse as a whole.

Prototypical – or default – political discourse is in accordance with clear-cut participant-specific rights and obligations, clear-cut public-domain-anchored discourse topics and discursive styles, and clear-cut collective identity constructions for political agents anchored to clear-cut public domains of society. Non-default political discourse is more or less hybrid, exploiting the constraints of an activity type, turning a predictable monolithic encounter in a – more or less – unpredictable multi-dimensional one. Participants do not solely act in accordance with their clear-cut participant-specific rights and obligations, with clear-cut public-domain-anchored discourse topics and discursive styles, and clear-cut collective identity constructions for political agents anchored to clear-cut public domains of society.

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