

**De la théorie de l'identité (Identity Theory) à la
sémiopragmatique de la communication : les identités
multiples dans les interactions interpersonnelles**

Alexander Frame

► **To cite this version:**

Alexander Frame. De la théorie de l'identité (Identity Theory) à la sémiopragmatique de la communication : les identités multiples dans les interactions interpersonnelles. Identités en construction, Oct 2008, Liège, Belgique. <hal-00441659>

HAL Id: hal-00441659

<https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00441659>

Submitted on 16 Dec 2009

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FROM IDENTITY THEORY TO COMMUNICATIONAL SEMIOPRAGMATICS.

Multiple Identities in Interpersonal Communication

Alex Frame

University of Burgundy



Identity as a Key to Intercultural Communication

- ❖ Studies in intercultural communication generally exclude identity, and try to explain microsocial interactions in terms of national cultural differences (Hofstede).
- ❖ By taking into account and *performing* both national and other identities (professional, european, regional, local, « social », situational, etc.) during their encounters, individuals adapt their behaviour based on their representations of one another.

How do individuals use their different identities in order to negotiate common grounds for attributing meaning during an encounter ?

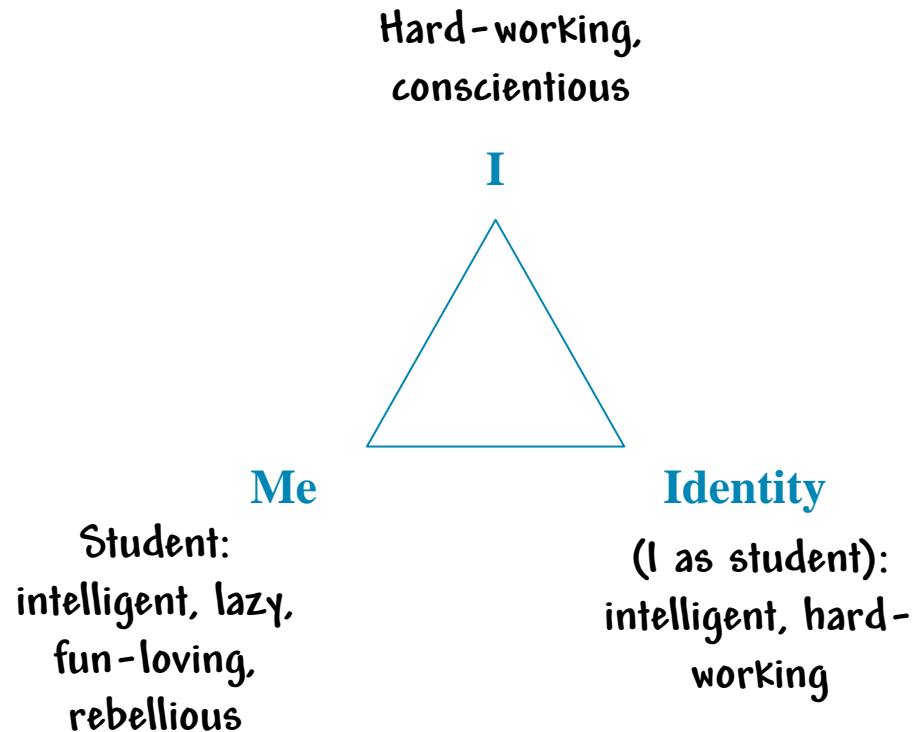
Theoretical Approaches to Identity

(I) Identity Theory

❖ Stryker, S, *Symbolic Interactionism: Social Structural Version*, New Jersey: Benjamin/Cummings Pub. Co, 1980 (reprinted in 2002)

Link between roles and social structure.

Identity as the way that an individual seeks to play a certain prefigured role (interplay between “I” and “Me” – G.H. Mead)



Theoretical Approaches to Identity

(I) Identity Theory

- ❖ Stryker, S & Burke, P, « The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory » in *Social Psychology Quarterly* vol. 63, n°4, 2000
- ❖ Burke, P; Owens, T; Serpe, R; Thoits, P (dirs.), *Advances in Identity Theory and Research*, New York: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers, 2003

Three Types of Identity

- ❖ **Role identity** (social category: doctor – patient, woman – man, etc.)
- ❖ **Social identity** (socialisation in a social group: employee in company Y, national identity, etc.),
- ❖ **Person identity** (character trait: stubborn, kind, etc.).

Theoretical Approaches to Identity

(I) Identity Theory

Saliency and multiple identities

« Identity saliency is defined as the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations; or alternatively across persons in a given situation »

(Stryker & Burke, 2000 : 286)

« The higher the identity in that hierarchy, the more likely that the identity will be invoked in a given situation or in many situations »

(Stryker, 1980 : 61)

« Not all situations invoke more than one identity, but it is likely that an identity's location in a saliency hierarchy will increase its “call-up” threshold in interaction with other defining characteristics of situations »

(Stryker, 1980 : 61)

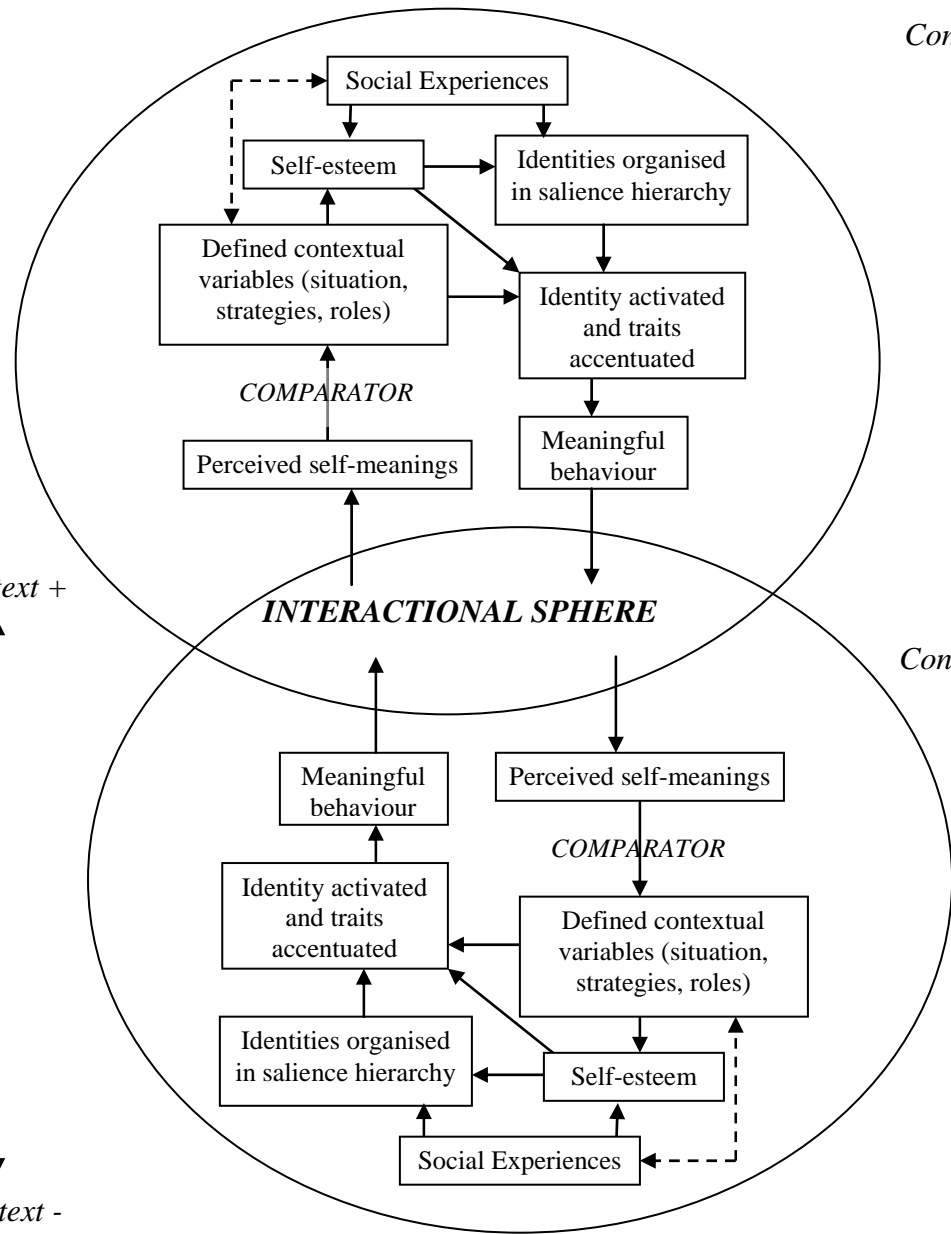
Theoretical Approaches to Identity

(I) Identity Theory

Person A

Context +

Context -



A model of the intrapersonal processes at work in an interaction, as described by Identity Theory

Person B

Context +

Context -

Theoretical Approaches to Identity

(II) Communicational Semiopragmatics

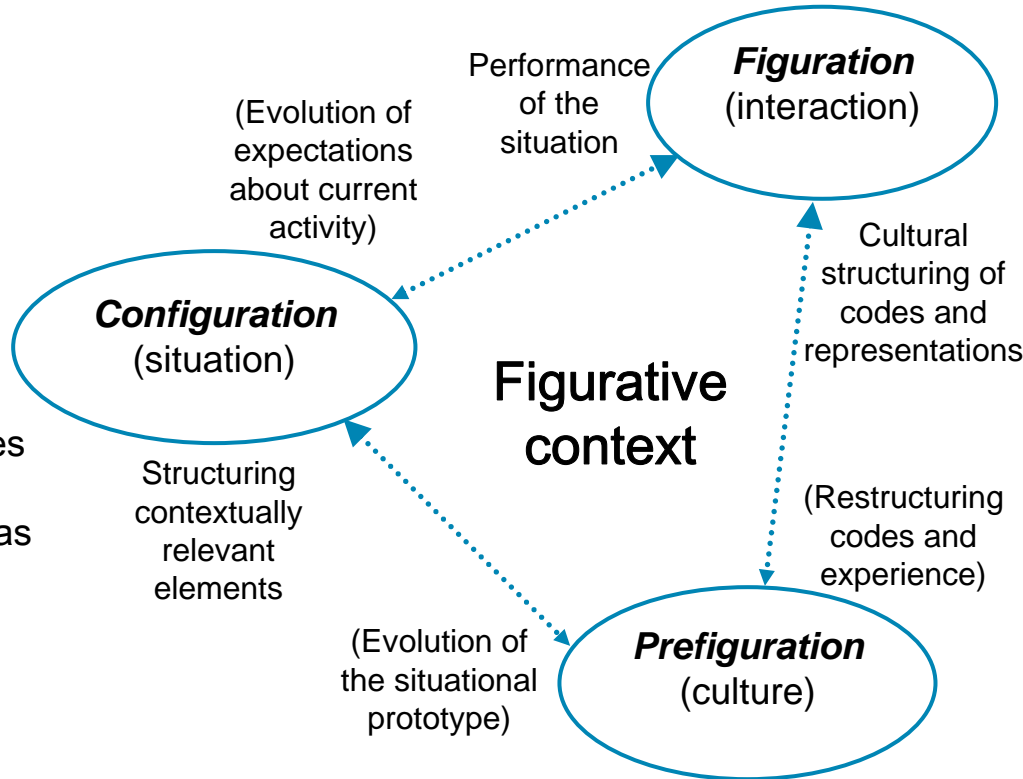
❖ Boutaud, J-J, *Sémiotique et communication*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998

How do participants co-construct common grounds for attributing meaning during an encounter ?

Theoretical Approaches to Identity

(II) Communicational Semiopragmatics

- Contextually-based expectations:**
- ❖ representations
 - ❖ codes
 - ❖ rituals
 - ❖ values
 - ❖ experiential frames
 - ❖ identities
 - ❖ preconceived ideas
 - ❖ social pressures
 - ❖ objectives & motivations



- Emerging figures:**
- ❖ performed elements (identities, codes, symbols & objects, representations, values & rituals)
 - ❖ conversational theme, emerging “*mondes possibles*”)
 - ❖ immediate contextual pressures
 - ❖ physical disposition (levels of anxiety, attention, motivation & self-esteem)
 - ❖ intersubjective relationship
 - ❖ perceived opportunity structures

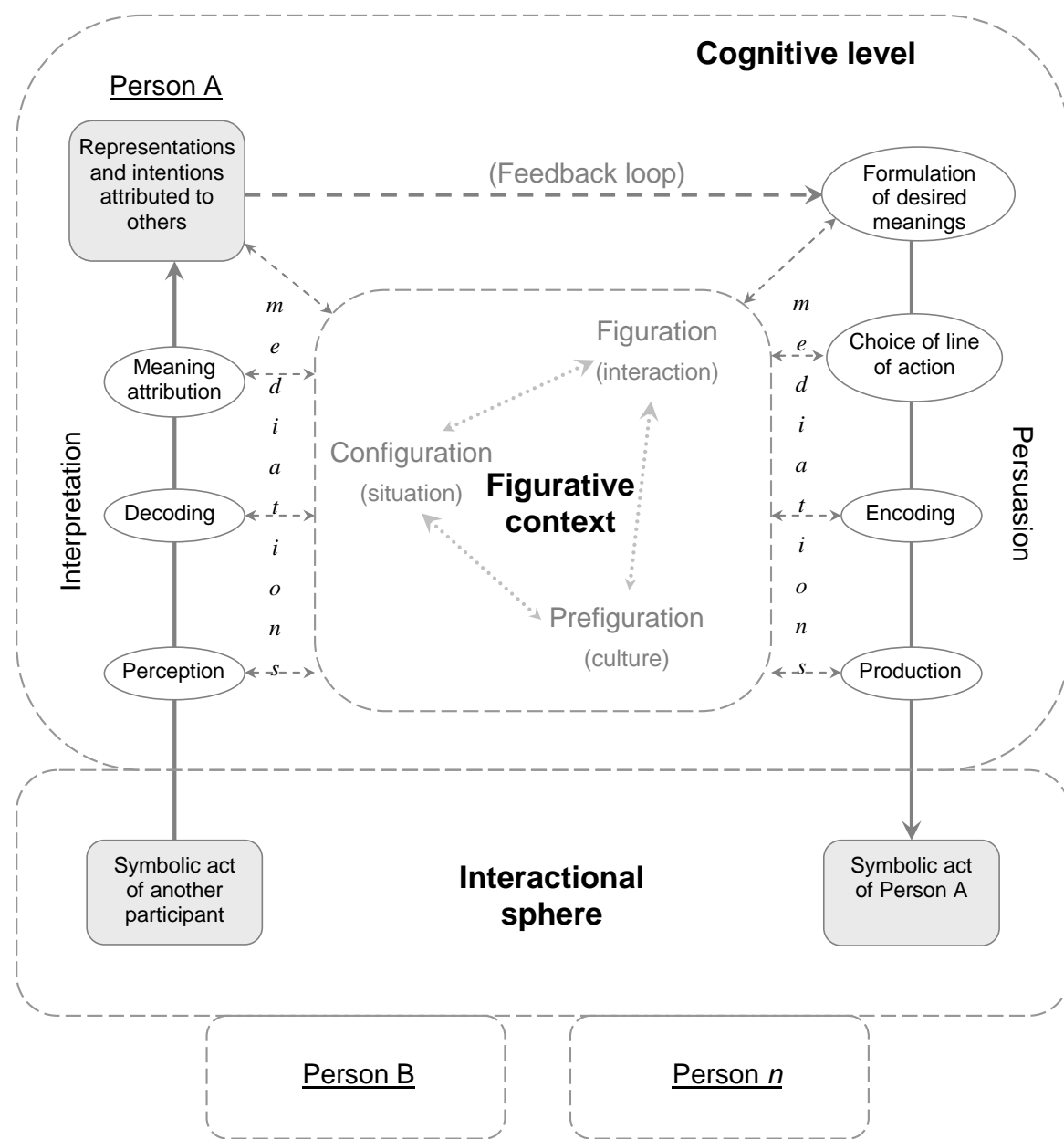
Three levels of meaning construction in an interaction

- ❖ cultures
- ❖ social structure
- ❖ communicational competencies (codes, rituals, experiential frames & social roles)
- ❖ semiospheres (social representations, myths, values)

Theoretical Approaches to Identity

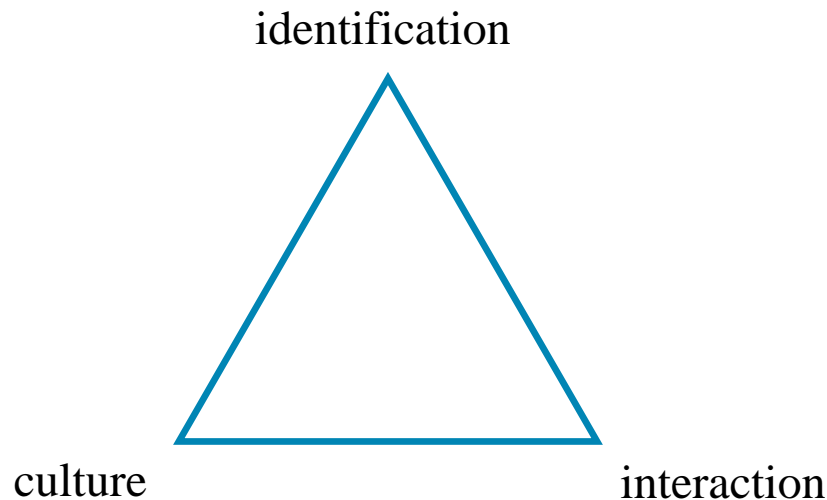
(II) Communicational Semiopragmatics

Intrapersonal construction of meaning during an interaction



Performing Identities and Identifications

- ❖ Identity traits seem to be taken for granted, but in fact are context-dependent, and linked to the different identities activated.
- ❖ Various strategies, accentuating common values, shared traits and predicaments, can be more or less consciously adopted, to attempt, more or less successfully, to build relationships and facilitate interactions.





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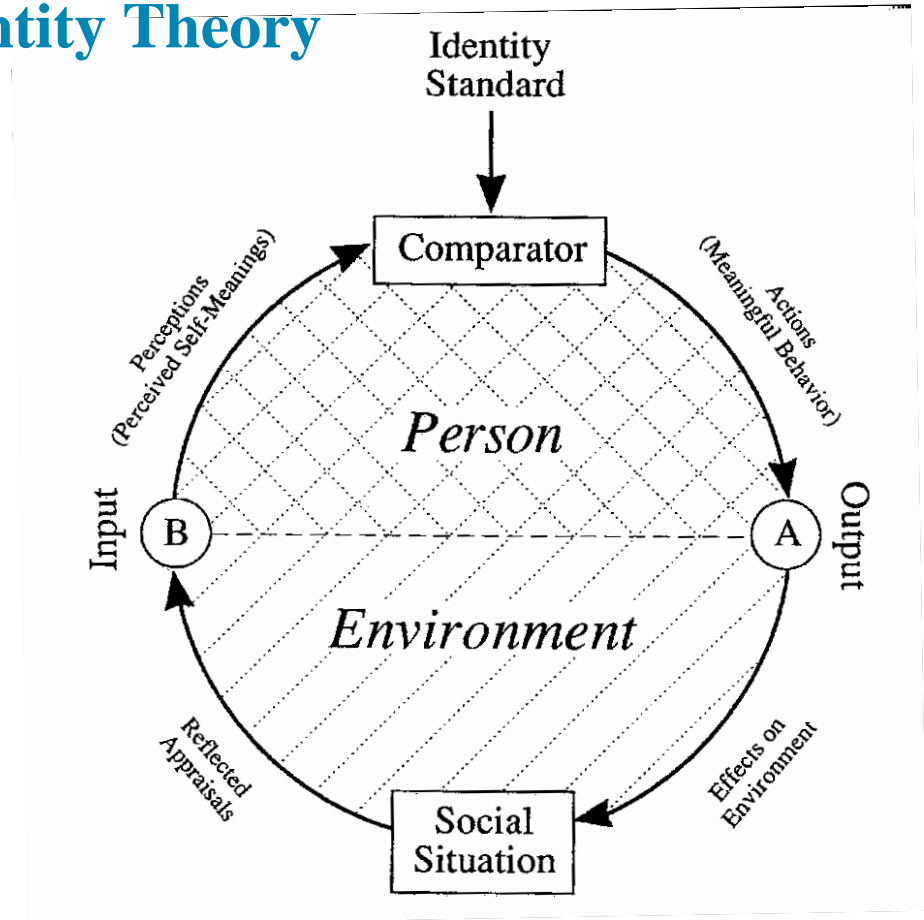


Theoretical Approaches to Identity

(I) Identity Theory

Salience and multiple identities

- ❖ Cast, A & Burke, P, « A Theory of Self-Esteem » in *Social Forces* n°80, 3, mars 2002
- ❖ Burke, P, « Identity Processes and Social Stress » in *American Sociological Review* 56, 1991



Burke, 1991: 838. Original caption : « *The Control-System View of the Identity Process: The Cycle of Meaning Showing Possible Points of Interruption at A and B* »