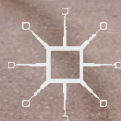


LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND CYCLING IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE

EXPLORING INTERPERSONAL SEMIOTICS
IN MULTIMODAL MEDIA AND ONLINE TEXTS



Patrick Kiernan



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For Nori, Leon and Emma

Preface

While I was working on the studies presented in this book, the Japan Association of Systemic Functional Linguists (JASFL) held its Twentieth Annual Autumn Conference and invited Professor Christian Matthiessen to speak. In introducing Professor Matthiessen at the conference, our association's president, Professor Tatsuki, noted that he had asked our guest if he had any hobbies, to which he had immediately replied, 'Linguistics'. This reply was certainly indicative of the degree to which the most prominent scholars in systemic functional linguistics (SFL) have dedicated themselves to the field. Indeed, for someone so representative of SFL scholarship, it could perhaps only diminish this identity if he had admitted to an interest in a subject unrelated to his dedication to exploring language. Yet, hearing this, I was secretly mortified that by researching cycling-related texts (including one study presented at that conference) I had so blatantly drawn attention to an outside interest and, indeed, an identity quite other than the academic concerns of SFL with which Matthiessen so clearly aligned himself. It is perhaps for this reason that, despite the planned use of cycling-related texts, the original title for this book contained no mention of cycling and was only added on the suggestion of one of the proposal reviewers.

Nevertheless, semi-shamefully, I have persisted in exploring this area because each time I get drawn into some new area of cycling-related texts, I have found myself increasingly fascinated by the relationship between

language, identity and media, and how these relationships are changing as new technology enables new affordances for the expression, enactment or imposition of identities. Because I focus on the identities of celebrity professional cyclists, online communities of amateur cyclists, corporations, consumer reviewers and YouTubers, this book also allows readers to reflect on the relationships between individual and community identities as well as on those between public and private ones.

At the same time, the process of exploring such texts has provided me with an opportunity to use some of the rich array of tools available to those working within an SFL framework while also drawing on other compatible or complementary approaches such as narratology, positioning theory and sociolinguistics more generally. This eclecticism may annoy some readers, who might prefer to see a consistent approach throughout; however, I have tried to organise this book in such a way that the relationships between the different analytical methods are clear. Particularly for readers not familiar with SFL or other approaches on which I draw, I hope that this will serve as a comprehensible introduction that will encourage you to read further, while to those of you already more conversant and skilled than myself, I trust that you will read this in a generous spirit, overlooking the many shortcomings that will inevitably be apparent. I do also hope that all readers will find that the texts explored here are intrinsically interesting and informative, whether or not you have any interest in cycling. Bicycles and those who ride them, even the best riders, may certainly seem inconsequential in the big picture of the world and its needs. Yet, humble as the bicycle may seem, I do believe it offers great benefits to human beings, whether through increased mobility in third-world countries, by providing a cost-effective means of commuting with a low environmental impact or in counterbalancing the sedentary lifestyle of contemporary urban living. Even so, my aim here is not to encourage readers to take up cycling as a healthy exercise or hobby but rather to encourage what I believe is a healthy exercise in taking a new perspective on language and identity outside the much explored and familiar realms of gender, class and ethnicity.

Acknowledgements

The studies that make up this book evolved through presentations given at SFL and applied linguistics conferences. I am therefore indebted to colleagues and friends at the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL), International Systemic Functional Linguistics Association (ISFLA) and Japan Association of Systemic Functional Linguists (JASFL), my local organisation in Japan, for enriching my ideas. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Masaaki Tatsuki, president of JASFL for his wise guidance, and Professor Makoto Sasaki for his tireless editing work on the JASFL proceedings and *JASFL Journal* in which some of the papers that form the basis of my chapters here were originally published. I am also grateful for their allowing me permission to publish revised versions here.

This book would never have been written if it were not for the kind support I received at all stages of the project from the editorial staff at Palgrave Macmillan. I would particularly like to thank Esme Chapman, who encouraged me to write this book in the first place, and Becky Wyde, who saw it through to the final stages of production.

Throughout the writing of this book, I have been employed by Meiji University, School of Business in Tokyo, which has made it possible for me to prepare this book in the first place and even granted me a period of overseas study leave to complete it. I am truly grateful.

The final part of this book was written at the University of Birmingham in the Centre for Advanced Studies in English, and I would like to offer a big thank you to Dr. Suganthi John and Michelle Devereux for looking after me during my visit.

Finally, I would like to thank Noriko, my wife, and our two children Leon and Emma for their patience and support throughout.

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1

Introduction: Exploring Language, Identity and Cycling in the New Media Age Through Systemic Functional Linguistics

In an interview with Simon Mottram, the founder and CEO of the British cycle clothing brand Rapha (2010), Paul Smith described how his fascination with cycling as a teenager was tied up with a new sense of identity that he experienced at the cycle club away from his parents and with further exotic associations with the European continent, including the media through which he accessed information about European cycling—imported magazines. He explained as follows:

... I mean there is no way, I mean I used to go into Nottingham as, having saved up, go to a newsagent's there, that occasionally had international magazines and then I heard about this ... [European cycle magazine name] or whatever it was, then now and again one would slip through the net, come in and it had to be the time I had got me three quid, or something like that, and it was just this bible that I carried around—just so special. But I mean now we all know, you know immediately after the race, people are twittering, blogging, so in a way, it is not just about cycling it is just we're just over-informed. (Rapha 2010)

In the interview, as exemplified by this quotation, Paul Smith positions himself against the wealth of information provided by contemporary

communications, or what will be referred to in this book as ‘new media’. The kind of changes that he alludes to will be a recurrent theme throughout this book. What also interests me about this quotation and the interview from which it is taken is the way in which, while making this point, Smith is able to evoke other aspects of his identity. He presents himself as a cycling fan, as someone who holds a strong nostalgia for older forms of media (also, perhaps, signalling his age and generation) but who is, nevertheless, aware of newer forms, such as blogs and Twitter, and as someone from near Nottingham—an identification evoked not only through the mention of the city but also through the accent with which he speaks (hence ‘my’ becomes ‘me’ in the transcript: ‘I had got me three quid’). He uses an autobiographical narrative anecdote to make his point about how social media has changed cycling, and this also serves to underline his longstanding connection with cycling. As Paul Smith speaks these words in the video, the camera moves from the view of him and Simon Mottram to some old cycling magazines lying on the table in the room where Smith houses his extensive collection of cycling memorabilia, adding a further level of emphasis to his words. Ironically perhaps, given Smith’s declared anti-Internet stance, the interview itself is a video available on Rapha’s website and as such contributes to the way cycling is tied up with the brand’s corporate image—or indeed ‘identity’. The fact that in Britain Paul Smith is a well-recognised celebrity closely associated with cycling is arguably even more important for a company that targets amateur cyclists and fans (and probably also to Simon Mottram, an avid cycling fan himself) than the fact that both men are fashion designers. For this reason, the interview focuses on cycling and not fashion. A further relevant contextual consideration is that, as successful entrepreneurs in the global marketplace in the realm of fashion and leisure, Smith and Mottram are precisely the class of people who are able to thrive and benefit from what Bauman (2005) has characterised as a ‘liquid life’ in which identity itself is increasingly commodified and marketed to a range of middling classes while being denied to ‘failed consumers’ (see Bauman 2004; Spracklen 2015: Ch.5).

Even from this cursory consideration of a very short extract, it is apparent that language and context are interacting in complex ways and that the speakers are drawing on them to evoke various aspects of identity.

In order to explore identity in such texts, it therefore seems desirable to have a systematic approach to analysis that allows different dimensions of the text to be explored separately. This book is therefore not about Paul Smith's views on cycling or media or this particular interview, but rather it is concerned with outlining an approach to exploring contemporary media texts like this and the ways in which language and other semiotic resources, such as the visual language of camerawork, are used to evoke multiple facets of identity. It is also about the interrelations among celebrity, corporate, community and personal identity within the subculture of cycling.

You may well be wondering why 'Language, Identity and Cycling'? After all, language and identity often signal broad sociocultural concerns associated with education, culture, power and society, typically with implications for language policy, rather than with a sport or leisure interest like cycling. While this book does engage with a range of issues in contemporary society, it is concerned not with language policy matters, such as asserting the importance of minority languages for retaining specific cultural identities, but rather with the role of language use in evoking a sense of human identity more generally.

This book therefore explores the ways in which individuals, communities, celebrities and corporate commercial interests shape their identities through language use. It also looks at how online applications and mobile technology are creating new affordances for expressing or 'doing' identity. The contention explored here is that identities have always been evoked and negotiated through language but that the evolving online media through which these identities are expressed and the communicative means they provide are enabling new ways of realising identities and relationships, impacting identities, power relationships within society and even language itself. This consideration of the ways in which identities are evoked through language also involves analysis of the ways in which both immediate and broader social contexts shape, facilitate and constrain language use and identity. The collection of studies described in this book was undertaken broadly within the framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), an approach to linguistic and semiotic analysis that focuses on meaning use in context (Halliday 1977, 1979, 1994). An overview of some relevant features of SFL is provided later in the chapter to orient readers to the approach taken in this book towards its application.

This book illustrates this approach to exploring language and communication in contemporary media within the subcultures associated with bicycle riding (Edwards and Leonard 2009), particularly the sport of cycle road racing (Smith 2008). The focus on cycling is a deliberate departure from the mainstream preoccupations of applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA) with professional, educational, or political contexts (British Association for Applied Linguistics et al. 2006), but not an entirely unprecedented one, as many linguistic researchers have turned to nonacademic contexts that they find relevant to their needs. Some examples might include Pennycook's (2007) account of hip-hop culture as an example of transcultural flow, Hutchby and Wooffit's (1998) approach to conversation analysis described through a study of Gothic subculture or Plum's (1988) account of conversational narrative genres developed through an analysis of talks with dog breeders. Like the musical cultures of hip-hop, Gothic culture or the world of Australian dog breeders, cycling has been an activity associated with fringe, underground or niche subcultures (Edwards and Leonard 2009). Cycling is arguably the ultimate form of physical escape in contemporary society, particularly in urban contexts, as Jon Day vividly depicted in his *Cyclogeography: Journeys of a London bicycle courier* (2013). Yet, just as Day's cycle courier work was shaped by the urban landscape and by the requirements of commercial institutions in London, cycling—like other sports or areas of leisure—is increasingly colonised by commercial and political interests (Stanger 2011). Cycling is of particular interest for the exploration of language and identity because it is intimately related to a range of key issues in contemporary society, such as health and exercise (Friel 2015; Gerike and Parkin 2015), urban transportation (Shaka 2016) and environmental conservation (Norcliffe 2015), sport and nationalism (Bairner 2001; Earnheardt et al. 2012), drugs in sport (Coyle 2013; Walsh 2015) and gender discrimination in sport (Cooke 2016; Pendleton and McRae 2012), among others, embracing a broad range of discourse usage types and genres, and having implications more generally for our identity as human beings (Horton et al. 2007).

Like other sports, cycling also has its celebrities, whose identities are mediated through an expanding range of media formats from print and television to Instagram and Twitter. Finally, cycling today has also become a major consumer market in wealthy countries with high-performance

bicycles, cycling equipment and clothing selling at premium prices (Rosen 2008). The marketing of these products is interrelated with the brand identities and narratives that associate consumer identities with the product (Beverland 2009). The exploration of language and identity in relation to cycling texts, therefore, provides a suitable field of study for a scrutiny of many aspects of identity in contemporary society. A focus on cycling is also of particular relevance, as cycling itself is becoming an ever more global sport and as governments around the world are reconsidering the role of the bicycle in transportation policies in the context of global warming. Both the relatively underground club cycling scene that Paul Smith participated in as a boy and Britain's position as a nation on the fringe of European cycling have changed dramatically in recent years. Government cycling policies in the UK and elsewhere seeking to promote the health and environmentally friendly benefits of the bicycle as a means of urban transportation have gone hand in hand with government and private-sector funding. A prominent example of this is the public lottery funding of British Cycling and the cable television corporate giant funding of Team Sky.

Besides being concerned with language, identity and cycling, this book is also about the ongoing evolution of digital and mobile media-based communication, and the kind of changes typically associated with the way digital media has integrated itself into contemporary societies, a point already raised in the quotation by Paul Smith above. As he pointed out, the spread of digital media into mobile devices has made sports like cycling increasingly accessible, but in doing so it also potentially robs consumers not only of the enjoyment of the physical objects of print media but of the sense of mystique and symbolic value of professional European cycling channeled through the highly restricted media of imported magazines that would only be sought out by the most enthusiastic and discerning fans.

Language, Identity and Cycling in the New Media Age

The title of this book, *Language, Identity and Cycling in the New Media Age*, refers to the fact that this book explores the role of language in evoking and negotiating identities within the subculture of cycling and in the

broader context of the current new media age. It takes the perspective that identity is both a social and psychological sense of self but that it is effectively played out in communicative social contexts and for this reason can be explored productively through a linguistic and semiotic analysis of the ways in which identities are evoked in these contexts. Cycling was chosen as the focus because it is representative of an area of sporting or leisure identities that are closely bound up with celebrity and corporate identities as well as a range of subcultural communities, as is typical of many people's sense of self in postindustrial societies. As I hope this book will show, cycling subculture is a niche not only where language and semiotics are thriving in new and interesting ways but also where social discourses and identities both compete and coexist. For example, social discourses of the bicycle as a cheap, efficient, environmentally friendly mode of transport; as a healthy means of exercising; or as a means of freedom and escape from the pressures of modern living have become intertwined with competing consumer-based discourses of the bicycle as state-of-the-art technology, nostalgia object or media-based entertainment, among others.

Theoretical Perspectives

In order to explore the relationship between language and identity in both the subcultural niche of cycling and the broader context of the new media age, I make reference to a range of theoretical perspectives, including Bamberg's narratology (1997); Goffman's frame theory (1975); Bakhtin's notions of *heteroglossia* (1981) and *carnival* (1984); Harré and van Langenhove's positioning theory (1999); Wenger and Lave's *communities of practice* (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999), and Zygmunt Bauman's notion of *liquid modernity* (2005). The approach here also draws on work on corporate identity (Balmer 1998; Melewar 2008) and is informed by approaches derived from Critical Discourse Analysis (Bloor and Bloor 2007; Fairclough 2005; Toolan 2002). Nevertheless, the fundamental framework used to develop the analysis is M.A.K Halliday's (Halliday and Webster 2014) meaning-based account of language generally referred to as systemic functional linguistics. The reason

I have chosen to use SFL is that it is arguably the only comprehensive account of language and meaning. Although Halliday has always been primarily concerned with the description of functional grammar (Halliday 1994, 2002a), the principles he and his colleagues developed have allowed the model to be extended in ways that enable a broad account of language, embracing concerns with discourse and genre (Martin and Rose 2003, 2008; Martin and White 2005) and other semiotic resources such as image and sound or nonverbal communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, 2006; O'Halloran and Smith 2011). Thus it is well-suited to the projects reported in this book.

On the one hand, SFL can be used to examine the moment-by-moment choices made by speakers to position themselves or their interlocutors within a specific conversation. On the other hand, SFL is applicable to describing the ways society and education are shaped and constituted through language (Hasan 2005, 2009a). Moreover, SFL recognises that there is a fundamental dimension of all communication concerned with the way identity and relationships are managed. This dimension is referred to as the *interpersonal metafunction* (although I will also explore the relationship between identity and the other two metafunctions: *ideational* and *textual*) (Coffin et al. 2009; Eggins 2004). In addition to being suitable for exploring language on a range of different semiotic strata (from grammar to social discourse), the SFL model can and has been adapted to semiotic analysis that goes beyond narrower definitions of language as verbal communication to explore paralinguistic communication (Zappavigna et al. 2010) as well as the kind of multimedia texts that are increasingly common in online and social media (Gardner and Alsop 2016; Kress 2010; Martinec and van Leeuwen 2008). Because SFL is a model of meaning, it is adaptable to other semiotic systems besides verbal language. In SFL, analysts refer to the resources of speaking, writing, use of gesture or images as different *modes*. For this reason, an analysis drawing on more than one mode, such as the pictures and words in a picture book (Painter et al. 2014) or the paralinguistic and verbal features of face-to-face communication, is known as *multimodal analysis*.

This now leaves us in a position to explain the subtitle of this book: *Exploring interpersonal semiotics in multimodal media and online texts*.

Using the principles of semiotic analysis, such as SFL, this book therefore focuses on the resources SFL offers for examining identity, or ‘interpersonal semiotics’, as realised in multimodal texts, including, in this case, TV broadcasts, magazine and newspaper articles, webpages, forums or such other social media as online product reviews and YouTube videos.

Accordingly, the principle theoretical questions to be addressed over the course of this book are as follows: How is it that a leisure interest/professional sport like cycling has become an important focus of human identity for many people? In what ways are these identities evoked or shaped through contemporary media in the context of the world of cycle road racing? How far can identities be manipulated and indeed faked through language and other semiotic resources in these contexts? What kind of relationships exist among public, private, community and corporate identities? And what role do the semiotic resources of new media play in mediating these relationships?

Who Is This Book For?

As already noted, the content of this book, perhaps out of eclecticism but also due to a belief in the value of interdisciplinary research, bleeds across disciplinary boundaries. Accordingly, it is potentially relevant to a variety of researchers within the social sciences, but particularly those concerned with language and new media, SFL, CDA, leisure and sport in contemporary society, corporate identity and, more generally, language or narrative and identity. Most obviously, I think this book will be of interest to those researching language and new media, many of whom may already have interests in identity as a recurring theme when exploring such data (Page 2010; Seargeant and Tagg 2014). The fact that this book draws throughout on SFL means that it is naturally oriented to SFL researchers, particularly those with an interest in using the framework as a way into social analysis and critique, as well as in contributing to the description of SFL and multimodality in the emergent areas of language use in new media (Gardner and Alsop 2016). That said, I do not assume that all readers will have prior understanding of SFL and, though I generally follow the conventions and terminology used in SFL, have done my best to explain terminology and concepts as they become

relevant to the discussion. I also provide an introductory overview of SFL with suggestions for further reading later in this chapter.

Whereas identity studies in applied linguistics have tended to focus on ethnic, gender, or educational identities that reflect the origins of the discipline in language teaching (see for example Norton 2000; Preece 2006; Ushioda and Dörnyei 2009), leisure and sporting identity are well-established fields of enquiry within Leisure Studies (Earnheardt et al. 2012), as can be seen in journals such as *Celebrity Studies*; *Leisure Studies*; or *Sport in Society: Cultures, commerce, media, politics*. Similarly, corporate identity is an integral part of Marketing Studies (Balmer 1998; Hatch and Schultz 2004; ICIG 2016; Parker 2000; Podner and Balmer 2010). I therefore hope that researchers from such fields may be encouraged to read this book as a study concerned with the relationships among corporate, community and personal identities in the realm of sport, and in doing so raise awareness of the potential of linguistic analysis as a practical analytical tool. Finally, just as I have tried to make this book accessible to scholars and researchers from a variety of disciplines, I hope that it will also be one that can be fruitfully explored by any intelligent reader of English who may be interested in language, identity, the subculture of cycling or new media. The following sections provide an introduction to ongoing research into new media, an overview of relevant approaches to identity and an introductory overview of the approach to language as a social semiotic and of systemic functional linguistics.

The New Media Age

In the title and throughout this book, I use *new media* to refer to ongoing developments in Internet communications, including general social media platforms—such as Facebook and Twitter—and online forums, as well as those specific to cyclists, such as Strava, MapMyRide, or Zwift. However, as I am concerned more broadly with the current media environment, including older forms of media such as television, magazines and newspapers that continue to form part of contemporary media environments, as well as with the identities of those who may not be active users of new media, I prefer the term *new media age* as the most relevant description of this larger context for language change.

I use the term *new media* throughout this book to refer broadly to forms of public or semipublic communication, which utilise software platforms in conjunction with the Internet and, often, increasingly ‘smart’ mobile devices that, for cyclists, include smart phones but also cycle computers. Although sometimes used synonymously with *social media*, I prefer the term *new media* as one that embraces both the socialising and community-building function of the most prototypical social media applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Line, YouTube or LinkedIn, and the older forums, bulletin board systems or BBSs, blogs and chatrooms. The term also includes corporate homepages, online-shopping and product- or service-review sites, wikis, mapping and other informational sites that, while still social, are arguably less focused on socialising and social networking but are nevertheless undeniably built on currently evolving software platforms. Such media are therefore ‘new’ in the sense that they are relatively recent phenomena, but also, as Manovich (2013) observes, because they are continually in a state of developmental flux. These media are also digital rather than analogue, which means that the defining characteristics of older electronic media, such as radio or TV, and analogue media, such as print, photography, film and audio, are increasingly converging. Digital media has a number of features that are subtly but radically reshaping the social world in general, as well as specifically impacting the cultural and communicative context of cyclists and cycling communities. Many of these features are now so familiar and obvious that we may never give them a second thought. Still, it is worth listing them here (drawing on Manovich 2013):

1. Reproducibility: Digital technology is infinitely reproducible and instantly globally transportable, and it therefore eliminates physical limitations on distribution. As such it can be seen as the ultimate end-point of increasing both the size of the audience and its distance from the physical presence of live performances (including sporting ones), from distribution via television, radio or analogue recording, to digitalised performances on digital television or the Internet.
2. Multimedia/multimodal format: Human communication started out as a multimodal communication involving voice, facial expression, gesture and the use of space. However, cultural developments such as

painting, sculpture and music focused on specific media, and language came to be seen as separated from these modalities as the printed word came to dominate. This separation also fit with the modernist structural project of the structural division of disciplines and increasing specialisation within disciplines. However, the digitalisation of media is epitomised by the personal computer (or smart phone), which reunites media and modalities into a single unified system. Digitalisation already enables the creation of multimedia texts and, in due course, will no doubt make them more readily amenable to analysis.

3. New ways of seeing: All technology has brought with it new metaphors and ways of visualising the world. Digital technologies not only blend media but enable completely new ones. These may be as simple as the zoom functions on a computer word processor or as complex as the cycling-specific services of Strava, which allow riders to compare their relative speeds on 'segments' of roads in real time with a leader record or visualise their routes on maps, leading to the practice of Strava Art—routes planned to create a visual picture from the tracing of the route ridden.
4. Cultivating niches: The global expansion of digital communications means that increasingly narrow community niches are able to communicate and thrive through the use of online social media. It is perhaps for this reason that research would benefit from giving attention to communication within outlier groups.
5. Digital divide: Coinciding with the increasing inequalities wreaked by global capitalism are the haves and have-nots of technology. Although there are examples of leapfrogging, such as mobile phones taking hold in developing countries where landlines are few and far between, the advantages for those able to access more advanced digital technologies compared with those who cannot are continually expanding. As we shall see, although the overall design of bicycles has changed little since their original development less than 150 years ago, recent developments have gone hand in hand with a booming cycle industry that touts technological development at its top end.

Nevertheless, my concern is not with software platforms but rather with the impact they are having on language and identity.

Language and New Media

The exploration of language and new media within applied linguistics can be said to focus on two broad themes. On the one hand, there have been a number of public debates concerning the potential negative impacts of new media on language, education and society. On the other hand, new media has been seen as providing emergent forms of discourse that are increasingly available but that also present new practical and theoretical challenges.

Early debates around language and the emerging new online media (then texting and Internet chatrooms), focused on allaying public concern over the perceived potential negative impacts of these practices on education and language (Crystal 2006, 2008). This theme of the potential negative social impact of social media has been taken up more recently by Seargent and Tagg (2014), who challenge many such public fears through their research into social media, with their latest work addressing the role of social media, such as Facebook, in creating the filter bubbles often blamed for spreading fake news (Tagg and Seargeant 2016). Such research serves as an important counterbalance to views about the negative effects of new media on contemporary culture that are based on unverified impressions.

In addition to getting to grips with realities that are otherwise shaped by public media, applied linguists have gradually been mapping the expanding range of digital genres. As a result there are now applied linguistic descriptions of a broad range of digital text types, including Don's early consideration of the patterns of communication in an email list (Don 2007), Myers' account of the distinctive features of blogs and wikis (Myers 2010), and Tagg's description of text messaging (2012). Page has explored social media, including online forums, Facebook and Twitter (2012), and detailed accounts of Twitter and social media have also been provided by Myers (2016). Vázquez has given an account of consumer reviews (2015), and Benson (2016) proposed an approach to describing the discourse of YouTube. More generally, these studies align with the exploration of new media through discourse analysis and constitute an emerging field of discourse analysis that builds on what Jones has defined as *mediated discourse analysis* (Jones et al. 2015; Norris and Jones 2005).

Accordingly, new media is fast emerging as a major area for applied linguistic research. The range of approaches and themes arising from these projects, which ultimately address what are becoming new mainstream modes of communication, cannot easily be summarised in the limited space I have here. Nevertheless, three overriding themes relevant to this book are (1) the ways that language and social media are shaped by concerns with community and identity and, related to this, the prominence of interpersonal forums that would once have been primarily spoken in digitalised written formats; (2) the compacting or increasingly fluid sense of time and space brought on through mobile digital platforms, and with this an increasing sense of the importance of up-to-the-minuteness; and (3) an increasing awareness of the multimodality of digital resources and the importance of being able to develop descriptions that account not only for separate semiotic modalities but for communication among them. Not only are visual modalities becoming increasingly important as more and more video content is available online but people are engaging with new kinds of modalities, such as the health monitoring apps discussed by Jones (Jones 2011; Jones et al. 2015). Despite these recurring themes, there is as yet no agreed upon framework for exploring the digital practices associated with new media. This is perhaps as it should be when considering emergent text types. Yet, it also seems desirable to have a coherent approach to semiotic analysis on which to shape emerging descriptions. The approach taken in this book, while inevitably departing from it at many points, derives from the Hallidean perspective on language as a social semiotic (Halliday 1979).

Language as a Social Semiotic

Just as this book will be investigating the ways in which identities are shaped through language, the way in which language itself is defined inevitably shapes how the term can be used. In defining what is meant by *language* here, I am not so much attempting to offer a comprehensive definition as outlining a specific perspective on language that enables the kind of analytic approach that informs the chapters of this book. Readers from other schools of linguistics or other academic fields may be used to

working with substantially different or seemingly opposing definitions of language. My aim in this book is not to challenge these definitions but rather to illustrate the kind of insights that can be obtained by looking at language as what Halliday has called ‘a social semiotic’ (1979).

In general terms, a social semiotic approach recognises that human beings are endowed with a facility for communication and meaning making through the use of semiotic systems. A semiotic system consists of a network of signs organised in relation to each other to evoke meaning (Halliday 2002b). This approach has come to be associated with Halliday, but, as Halliday (1994) has pointed out, it draws on a linguistic tradition that goes back to Firth (Palmer 1968), Hjelmslev (1961) and the Prague School (Fried 1972).

What Is a Semiotic System?

Semiotic systems pervade human meaning making; a simple and familiar example often used to illustrate how semiotic systems work is the traffic light (Egins 2004; Fawcett 2008; Fontaine 2012). The traffic light has three important features, which it shares with language. First, the relationship between the signifier (the colour red lit up) and the signified (cars must stop) is effectively arbitrary. That is, any construal of a naturalness of red as the colour of blood and therefore an intuitive symbol of danger needs to be set aside in understanding how semiotic systems work. What is important is that the red traffic light is recognised and agreed upon by all road users as meaning *stop*. The arbitrariness of this colour attribution can be illustrated by the case of Japan, where the colour of the ‘go’ light is referred to in Japanese as ‘blue’. Though generally used on city traffic lights in Tokyo this ‘blue’ is the same turquoise colour as in, for example, the UK; it is also what I would describe as ‘bright blue’ on many roadwork traffic lights in the same city. The important points are that the ‘go’ light (green or blue) is recognisably different from the other lights and that the signifier (green/blue light) and the signified (‘go!’) are, for users, effectively inextricable. In the same way, the sound or written form of a word need have no natural relationship with the signified in order to encode its meaning.

Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic

The second feature of semiotic systems is that the meaning of the sign (red light) is also effectively defined in relation to the other signs, or lights in our traffic light example. Hence, in a two-light system with only red and green, the meanings would simply be ‘red = stop; green = go’ but the meanings of both lights are changed and nuanced by the inclusion of the orange or amber light into the system, which allows four distinct meanings to be created, as illustrated in Fig. 1.1. In technical terms, these four light combinations constitute a *paradigmatic system* in which each of the meanings is effectively understood in relation to the other possibilities. Hence, red now means not only ‘stop’ rather than ‘go’ but also ‘stop’ rather than ‘go’, ‘slow down and be prepared to stop’, and ‘slow down and be prepared to go’. The traffic light signals can also be viewed as a *syntagmatic system* that includes implicit rules for the combination of lights that are possible as well as the sequence of lights. Hence, green followed immediately by red would be a violation of the three-light system shown in Fig. 1.1, as would green and red showing at the same time.

Like traffic lights, language is a semiotic system of choice, as can be seen if we consider the system of options available to users of English when indicating the believability of some proposition—a system referred to as *epistemic modality*. A prediction of rain tomorrow can be made with varying degrees of confidence from ‘it will’, ‘it will definitely’, ‘it will probably’, ‘it might’, etc., through to complete negation ‘it won’t’.

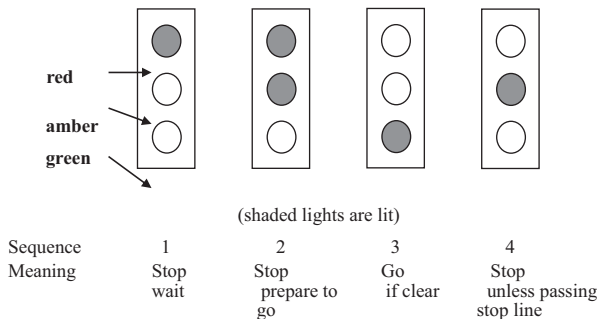


Fig. 1.1 The semiotic system of a traffic light

Similarly, the word ‘rain’ could be chosen in relation to other weather options or synonyms such as ‘pour’, ‘piss down’ or ‘drizzle’, each of which enables different meanings.

A focus on the *syntagmatic dimension* of language has constituted the exclusive focus of generative grammar, which explores the wealth of implicit structural rules in decontextualised sentences (Noam Chomsky 1965; Naom Chomsky 2002; Horrocks 1987). This approach will not be pursued in this book because, in my view, the abstract rules governing syntax have little if any bearing on the evocation of identity in social contexts.

Meaning Potential and Context

This brings me to the third important feature of semiotic systems: they constitute *systems of meaning potential* that allow users to evoke meanings in *context*. These evocations are referred to as *realisations*. The importance of context is indicated in Fig. 1.1 by the reference to the position of the car in relation to the white line, and in practice all road users are expected to interpret the traffic signals in relation to their position on the road and to other road users, including emergency vehicles, whose rights of way may effectively temporarily override a green signal. If an ambulance is about to cross your path all road users are expected to stop regardless of signals to allow it to pass. In this case, the instruction to stop is *realised* by the flashing light on the ambulance (which incidentally is blue in the UK and red in Japan!). As can be seen from this discussion, even the very simplest of semiotic systems becomes complex when considered in a social context.

In language, the importance of context is most obvious in terms that are used to refer explicitly to some feature of the actual or conceptual context, collectively referred to as deictics. Deictics include referents to people, things or concepts (using pronouns: ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’, ‘this’, ‘that’ ...), time (‘now’, ‘then’, ‘yesterday’) or place (‘here’, ‘there’, ‘on the right’). Such terms can only be understood in the context in which they are used. Context may include the physical context of a conversation or the rhetorical context of the text, and, as will be seen from the examples in this

book, the virtual spaces of online communication fall somewhere in between. Deictic expressions are by definition ones that depend on context for their meaning; however, more generally it can be said that all language use is both shaped by and, to a greater or lesser degree, gives shape to its context.

All languages are examples of semiotic systems, but the semiotic system outlined above for the traffic light is not a language. Language instead bears the heavy burden of being expected to be able to represent or communicate the full range of human meaning including being adaptable to meanings and contexts not yet imagined. This final caveat in accounting for language as a social semiotic is not trivial, but it is one that has been taken seriously in the development of the account of the resources of language described by systemic functional linguistics. The following section provides a summary of these resources as well as suggestions for further reading where more detailed accounts of these resources are given.

The Three Metafunctions of Language

Systemic functional linguistics describes meaning in language from three perspectives that relate to fundamental functional properties of human language. These three perspectives, sometimes considered as ‘strands of meaning’ (Fontaine 2012, p. 10) or *metafunctions*, implicitly reflect the way we experience and interact with the world. The parallel nature of the three strands means that any example of language (hereafter referred to as a ‘text’) can be analysed in three different ways that reflect three different dimensions of language use. They reflect the fact that all meaning is generally simultaneously concerned with experience, relationships and structure—or, in SFL terms, *Field*, *Tenor* and *Mode*. In systemic functional grammar (SFG) these metafunctions are described as the *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual*, respectively.

The *ideational metafunction* deals with the way the world is represented through language and as such most closely corresponds to the conventional ideas of language and meaning. The *interpersonal metafunction* recognises that language is also involved in positioning identities or

relationships within communicative discourse and therefore is the perspective most closely related to the focus of this book. Finally, the *textual metafunction* describes the use of language to structure a text or to indicate structural relationships with other texts. It is therefore concerned with things like the resources of *coherence* and *cohesion* (Halliday and Hasan 1976).

Consequently, SFG offers a multifunctional perspective on the clause that is very different from conventional grammar. Although, I do not have space here to provide a detailed analysis, an example is given in Fig. 1.2, which shows the clause analysed in terms of traditional grammar as well as the three metafunctions of systemic functional grammar.

At each point, the language used represents a conceptual selection from among the meanings available in the context. In the case of the traffic light introduced above (Fig. 1.1), there were three lights but four contextual choices. The categories of SFG can be mapped as systems of choice that range from general categories to increasingly fine subcategorical choices. The move towards these finer distinctions is referred to in SFL as increasing ‘delicacy’ as finer distinctions of meaning are implied. The finest level of delicacy of a network would theoretically be one represented by a *realisation*—a specific contextualised use of a lexico-grammatical expression. Thus, whereas traditional grammar implicitly treats grammar as structure and lexis as items to be inserted into this structure, SFG regards grammar and lexis as two ends of a lexico-grammatical continuum of meaning.

Clause	Leon	gave		his mum	the teddy drawing	for her birthday
Experiential meaning	Actor	Material Process (active)		Beneficiary	Goal	Circumstance: manner
Interpersonal meaning	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	Complement	Adjunct
	Mood					
Textual meaning	Theme	Rheme				

Fig. 1.2 Clause analysis showing the three metafunctions

Grammatical Metaphor

Systemic Functional Grammar also describes the ways in which clauses are interrelated with each other in terms of group and phrase complexes, and includes discussion of the ways in which grammatical structures are deliberately mismatched, which is referred to as *grammatical metaphor*. Hence, for example, in the sentence ‘I enjoy cycling’, ‘cycling’, which refers to an action that would most naturally be expressed as a verb, is *packaged* as a noun (*nominalisation*). We could unpack the sentence as ‘I feel happy when I ride my bicycle’, which conceptually brings the expression in language closer to experience. In technical terms the second sentence is more *congruent*. Academic language tends to go in the other direction (towards less congruent expression) in order to discuss complex ideas and in so doing work with abstract concepts, as for example in a sentence like, ‘Cycling industry growth forecasts have outstripped predictions.’ This example also illustrates how evaluation and actors, and evaluations that would be visible in congruent texts, are packed out of sight in such a way that they are invisible and indisputable. The existence of bicycle production and sales that constitute a cycle industry are taken as givens, as is an increased number of bicycle sales or new businesses implicated in ‘growth’. Such rhetorical strategies are often exploited in CDA as a way into texts, as they will be in this book, too.

Systemic functional grammar therefore not only provides an account of how meanings are organised paradigmatically in relation to each other but also constitutes an account of how meaning is packaged. The processes of packaging involve packing away ideological meanings with language and can be seen as ideological in themselves. As such, SFL potentially offers a useful approach for those interested in exposing the relationships between language and power and thus enabling a critical analysis of society rooted in language (Fairclough 1993, 2002; Machin 2012).

Systemic functional linguistics has also been linked with Bernstein’s (2000) legitimation code theory, which proposes an account of the role education plays in reproducing power relations in society (Halliday 1995; Hasan 2009b; Martin and Maton 2016). The way meaning is condensed in academic or technical language, it is argued, effectively makes

it inaccessible to those who have not been inculcated into the relevant tradition. In response to this, SFL offers an analysis of language that allows learners to see how meanings are created and packed in the highly valued registers of academic and scientific language, and proposes that teaching should be an ongoing process of moving between abstracted and more congruent realisations of meaning (Rose and Martin 2012). The important point for this book is that such rhetorical resources in language effectively constitute the technology for shaping and negotiating identity.

Systemic Functional Grammar Resources

The three metafunctions as well as features such as grammatical metaphor have been described most fully in Halliday's accounts of functional grammar, which offer a quite different analysis compared to conventional accounts of grammar (Huddleston and Pullum 2002; Quirk and Greenbaum 1985). One of the most accessible accounts of this grammar is the second edition of Halliday's *Systemic Functional Grammar* (1994, the first edition being published in 1985). With each edition since then, the account has become more comprehensive, far-reaching and nuanced, but also less readily accessible to beginners (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, 2013). Instead, there are now a number of other preliminary books that usefully introduce systemic functional grammar. Of these, Coffin, Donohue and North (2009) offer a basic starting point that also provides an overview of conventional grammar suited to those undertaking grammatical analysis for the first time. Other introductions, such as Bloor and Bloor (2013), Fontaine (2012) or Thompson (2004), also offer reader-friendly introductions to SFG but might usefully be read after Coffin et al., as they go into rather more detail.

Systemic Functional Linguistics as Discourse Analysis

Systemic Functional Grammar is the most fully described area of language in the SFL framework; however, the lexico-grammatical

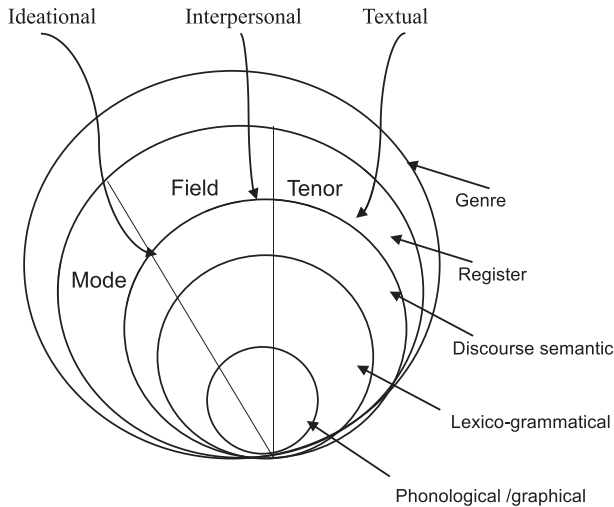


Fig. 1.3 The SFL model of language and discourse

continuum constitutes just one level of an overall framework that encompasses discourse, genre and social discourse (see Fig. 1.3). This model is effectively an extension of SFG, whereby in one direction we can see that the lexico-grammatical level is dependent on either a graphical or a phonological encoding of the distinctive phonemes—or graphical elements—that represent the morpheme—the smallest unit of meaning used to build meanings at the level of grammar and lexis. In English, the word *bicycle* consists of seven letters (but only six phonemes because the letter ‘e’ is not pronounced) organised into two morphological units or morphemes: ‘bi’ meaning ‘two’, and ‘cycle’ meaning ‘revolve’ or ‘move in a circular motion’.

Moving in the other direction in the model from lexico-grammar to discourse, clauses are organised in discourse as utterances in a conversation, or sentences and paragraphs in writing. Just as morphemes are combined into words and words are further structured through grammar, enabling more complex or subtle meanings, so lexico-grammatical meanings are shaped as communicative acts or ‘texts’ at the level of discourse.

Whereas the focus on syntax in Chomsky's (2002) influential description of language means that linguistic analysis stops at the level of the sentence, the SFL approach to linguistic organisation extends into the level of discourse. Outside SFL, this level of linguistic discourse has been explored in considerable detail through such traditions as conversation analysis (Markee 2000; Sacks 1995; Sacks et al. 1974) and narrative analysis (Bamberg 1997; Cortazzi 1993; Daiute and Lightfoot 2004; Riessman 1993) or the Sinclair-Coulthard (Coulthard 1992, 1994) models of discourse analysis. However, SFL offers a distinct advantage over these approaches in that it builds on the same principles as those used in describing grammar, making a more comprehensive multilayered description of language possible.

The overall scope of SFL discourse analysis is outlined in Martin and Rose's *Working with Discourse* (2003). As the subtitle to this book suggests, linguistic discourse is principally concerned with 'meaning above the clause'. Their account of SFL discourse is framed within five principal areas, which fall within the three metafunctions of interpersonal, ideational and textual. The textual metaphor is described in terms of 'tracking people and things' and 'the rhythm of discourse'. Tracking people and things is described in a system called *identification* and is concerned with the way pronouns, names and other resources make it possible to follow participants across a text (pp. 145–174). Complementing *identification* within the textual metafunctions is *periodicity*, the flow of information within a text. *Textual metaphor* therefore describes the way that given and new information is organised on various scales across a text, which Martin and Rose consider in terms of *waves*. Three levels are described, from the localised 'little waves' of *themes* and *news*, through the 'bigger waves' of *hyperthemes* and *hypernews*, which mark the overall topic of stretches of a text such as paragraphs, to the 'tidal waves' of *macrothemes* and *macronews* that reach across even larger expanses of a text.

The *ideational metafunction* is concerned with the representation of the world and experience through language. The discourse resources of the *ideational metafunction* as accounted for by Martin and Rose (ibid, pp. 66–144) are divided between *ideation* or 'the representation of experience' and *conjunction*, 'the connecting of events'. In practice, *ideation*

explores the way entities and experiences are evoked across texts, such as the way participants and contexts are evoked in a narrative. The resources of *conjunction* complement this by providing an account of the way logical connections are evoked. It is important to point out that these relationships are different from those described within the *textual metafunctional* resources of *periodicity* because they are concerned not with the structure of the text per se but with a structuring of the world. Hence in a novel, for example, *conjunction* would provide an account of the organisation of the narrative plot, whereas *periodicity* would show how the novel was structured to do this. Similarly, *conjunction* in a legal text would describe the legal relationships, whereas *periodicity* describes how legal discourse is organised.

As should be apparent from this overview, the *ideational* and *textual metafunctions* of discourse would potentially offer useful descriptive tools to account for the way that identities are evoked in discourse. People, organisations and things are evoked as *ideational* entities, and readers of novels will recognise that the dynamic development of character across text is dependent on the way this information is ‘fed’ to the reader, a feature of textual organisation. As we shall see, narratives of the self are one important strategy for identity work. Nevertheless, the most important analytical discourse perspective on exploring identity within SFL is the *interpersonal metafunction*, which explicitly describes the way relationships are negotiated in discourse. Within, Martin and Rose’s account of the discourse resources of SFL, there is only one system for dealing with this: *appraisal*, the system for ‘negotiating attitudes’, also referred to as ‘the language of evaluation’ (Martin and White 2005), which will be introduced and expanded in Chap. 2.

Genre

Just as language is patterned as a resource to shape meaning at the levels of lexico-grammar and discourse semantics, it is also organised into broader structures that recognisably define a type of text. These structures are known as *genres*. Genre nevertheless has implications both for the

overall organisation and the more localised use of a word or expression. So, for example a conversation, a newspaper report and a court hearing would constitute three quite different ways of packaging the meanings associated with a particular reported event. The exploration of generic patterns may involve the building of a taxonomy of subgenres, as in the case of academic writing, which ultimately needs to take account of different fields (Swales 1990, 1998) and could even be further subdivided into types of papers. The description of specific highly valued or common subgenres can be of real use in education (Dreyfus et al. 2016; Rose and Martin 2012), business (Zhu 2005) or critical discourse such as the analysis of company reports (Fuoli and Hommerberg 2015), business emails, or indeed academic papers (Charles et al. 2009; Coffin et al. 2003). The analysis of a subgenre is implicit in many SFL studies because they are concerned with specific texts. Nevertheless, a more useful approach to developing a theory of *genre* per se is one in which more generalisable generic patterns can be developed. Martin and Rose (2008) explore genre in terms of *stories, histories, reports and explanations*, and *procedures*. This account is a theoretical overview of the approach to developing writing through genre in schools in Australia associated with the Literacy and Education Research Network (LERN) project and outlined in practice in *Learning to Write, Reading to Learn* (Rose and Martin 2012), particularly targeting the indigenous population for whom English is a second language. As they explain in the introduction (2008, p. 9), their notion of *genre* is informed, on the one hand, by Halliday's notion of *text in context* and, on the other, by Bernstein's model of social contexts of languages as codes (Bernstein 2000; Halliday 1995). An overview of the SLF framework is provided in Fig. 1.3.

In the meantime, Halliday, Matthiessen and colleagues have proposed a more comprehensive and broad-based model of text types in terms of 'rhetorical relational cartography'. Rather than focusing on specific text genres, this model offers a top-down view of *register* organised into eight primary types and seventeen secondary categories. The approach is described as *registerial cartography* as it seeks to map the registerial categories of communicative interaction (see Fig. 1.4). Unlike the more specific narrative, explanatory and procedural genres of Martin and Rose (2008),



Fig. 1.4 Overview of Matthiessen's model of registerial cartography

the registerial wheel proposes that all communication can be described at the broadest level as categories of human interaction. If this model is a resilient one, it should also be possible to map the emergent genres of online communication onto this model. While doing this is well beyond the scope of this book, this model is one that I explore in Chap. 11. Beyond register are more general patterns of culture and society that are also discussed in Hasan's analysis of social discourse (Hasan 2005, 2009b, 2013).

Systemic Functional Linguistics and Multimodal Analysis

Besides this far-reaching model of language as a system of meaning-making potential, it has also been proposed that this model of language is adaptable to the description of other meaning-making resources besides those of verbal language. The development and application of these analytical models is referred to as *multimodal discourse analysis* because visual, audio or other modalities are explored as separate systems for meaning making. While Halliday himself has argued that language as a system of meaning-making resources is explicitly verbal, he has also endorsed the development of multimodal analysis by researchers who have explicitly developed descriptions of nonverbal modalities using an SFL framework. For example, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) explicitly proposed a grammar of visual design, and a similar approach has been taken to exploring video (Bateman and Schmidt 2012), music (McDonald 2012), gesture (Herman 2010; Zappavigna et al. 2010) and so forth. Considering that the advent of digital communications and digital literacy both facilitates communication involving mixed media, and hence mixed modalities, and also enables the recording and analysis of these mixed media (MultimodalAnalysis 2013), an account of language that embraces multimodality seems increasingly important. Indeed, it could be argued that a multimodal account of language is both of more practical use in describing communication in digital contexts and more suited to a theoretical account of a postmodern digital environment (see also discussion in Gardner and Alsop 2016). As Manovich (2013) has pointed out, the structural separation of modalities was an important project of modernism that reflected the physical distinctness of such artifacts as books, paintings and musical instruments. However, digitalisation and the advent of personal computers and mobile devices have brought these modalities together. Accordingly, while, the development of linguistics as a distinct discipline was made possible through a focus on verbal language (Harris 1987; Saussure 1986), what is perhaps needed now is an account of language and meaning making that is able to capture the way that meaning making is effectively spread across a range of modalities (Kress 2010; Martin 2012; O'Halloran and Tan 2015). An SFL-based

description of multimodality would seem well-placed to do this, and the studies described in this book could well be seen as contributing to testing the waters for such a project.

Overview

This book is divided into three parts, each of which explores a different dimension of social identity as well as a different aspect of media. Part 1 considers public celebrity identities, investigating the ways in which famous professional cyclists negotiate their identities in the public eye. It also focuses on older predigital media, such as autobiographical books, newspapers, manga and television even though many people today consume them in digital formats via ebooks or online websites. In particular, Part 1 focuses on the tensions between public media and the voice of the celebrity. Chapter 2 considers an episode from Mark Cavendish's first autobiography *Boy Racer* (Cavendish 2010) in which he describes a post-race interview with a journalist in conjunction with newspaper and cycling magazine race reports. In the biographical account, Cavendish interspersed the actual words of the interview following a stage of the Tour de France that he had hoped to win with a heavily ironic subtext. While the respective accounts all concern closely related *ideational* material, they differ markedly in the *interpersonal* positionings examined with reference to appraisal theory and Bakthin's notion of *heteroglossia*. Chapter 3 offers an analysis of Lance Armstrong's notorious confession to doping on the Oprah Winfrey show, a case that raises disturbing questions about the relationship between power and public identity. Armstrong's denials extended to libel cases against his accusers, and this interview represented the tipping point where Armstrong admitted his guilt in public for the first time. Nevertheless, the analysis shows how the interview is less an outright confession and more an attempt at mitigation, which is undermined through the skilled use by Oprah Winfrey of the framing resources enabled through television. It also explores the integration of the semiotic contributions of video, music, image and voice in packaging the interview for the viewing public. In other words, the interview is analysed as a multimodal text. As the final chapter in this

section, Chap. 4, extends these themes of multimodality and framing to provide an account of the evocation of fictional identity in manga. [It delves into the multilayered identity work that mediates the fictional characters of the story with the identities of author, reader and professional cyclists. The chapter also offers a tentative framework for the analysis of verbal and visual resources in manga.

Part 2 moves from a concern with celebrity cyclists to the consideration of ordinary cyclists through the exploration of an online cycle club based in Japan. The respective chapters explore not only the rich variation in text genres across the forum but also *interpersonal*, *textual*, and *ideational* focuses in the forum. Chapter 5 begins this section with an introduction to the forum and analysis of a *thread* in which participants encounter an obvious mismatch in perspectives with regard to an account of a ride they attempt to renegotiate. Chapter 6 explores the forum further through an analysis of hyperlinks as a textual resource, which nevertheless opens up new potential for identity evocations; and Chap. 7 considers the case of a troll, a fictional identity taken on by one of the participants as an ironic play on the forum itself. The phenomenon is analysed from the point of view of ideational resources and is also considered in relation to Bakhtin's notion of *carnival*.

Part 3 of the book forefronts multimodal resources, this time through the exploration of corporate websites. Chapter 8 begins by considering how the layout and the resources of the page contribute to brand identity through a comparison of the cycle components giant Shimano and the much smaller frame and parts maker Surly, who use very different linguistic and semiotic strategies to reflect their differing marketplace positions and brand identities. Among the changes that consumers and those who market their products to them face in the context of new media is the growth of customer reviews. Review sites and even those included in online retail sites allow users to share both positive and negative reviews to evaluate products and services, which shoppers will often use to guide their purchases. Chapter 9 considers the consumer's role in evoking corporate identities through online customer reviews at the websites for Brooks England Limited, the traditional British saddle maker, and Wiggle, a much more recent online cycle retailer that also sells Brooks

saddles. In particular, I look at how the resources of evaluation and narrative are integral to evoking both reviewer and brand identities. Chapter 10 continues the theme of narratives and corporate identity but returns to multimodal resources, this time focusing on brand-building videos associated with the British professional cycle team Team Sky. It focuses on the team's branding motto *marginal gains* and considers how the concept itself is repositioned through the multimodal resources of video. The language of video and identity is further developed in the final chapter of Part 3, which considers the broad semiotic resources of register in relation to video genres on the YouTube channel GCN (Global Cycling Network). Through the analysis I suggest how choices of register also go hand in hand with identity positionings of the relation between the presenters or the show and the audience. Finally, in the conclusion I attempt to bring together the implications of the material discussed throughout this book and outline some directions for future research.

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Part 1

Identities in the Media

2

‘Mark, Mark, Can We Have a Word?’: Narrative and Evaluation in the Media Interview

Introduction

A direct sighting of the Tour de France from the roadside may be little more than a flash of colour as the peloton passes by in a matter of seconds, travelling in excess of 40 kilometres per hour. Exhilarating as this may be, unless you have some way, such as familiarity with the race and its participants, to contextualise what you see, some way to know what happened before and a ‘schemata of interpretation’ (Goffman 1975), the few seconds you witness will almost certainly be incomprehensible in terms of the race.

Like many other phenomena in contemporary society, following a bicycle race is largely dependent on information from the media. It is a pertinent reminder that meaning in cycling experience, as in other sports and other areas of public life, is often shaped through the media. A further implication of this is that the identities associated with a sport are also effectively produced in the media. The power of digital recording to encapsulate and spread meanings evoked using multisemiotic resources will be a recurring theme throughout this book, but in this chapter the focus will be on how public identities such as those of professional cyclists

are evoked in the media. This involves some discussion of the nature of celebrity identity and the ways in which public figures contribute to the shaping of their media image. This chapter explores the different voices that shape celebrity identity in the media and also considers the way individual texts either open themselves up to a range of potential voices or alternative perspectives, or close them down.

There is now a bewildering array of resources for public celebrities to narrate themselves in new media applications; however, this chapter focuses on older media resources. In order to do this, I will discuss the postrace rider interview and consider four media versions of the interview and how they are interrelated. The texts represent sporting celebrity as narrated through the conventional cycling media resources of a televised press interview, a cycling magazine article and a newspaper report, as well as an excerpt from an autobiography. All of the texts focus on the cycle race itself as a narrative that creates an opportunity for evoking identities of the rider, his team, the public and even the interviewer.

The approach used in order to do this is a narrative one extended through the appraisal model of evaluation (Martin and White 2005). In particular, it highlights the resource of *heteroglossia*, a feature borrowed from Bakhtin (1981), which helps elucidate the kind of strategy the celebrity uses in his autobiography to negotiate a problematic challenge to his identity.

The rider discussed in this chapter is British cyclist Mark Cavendish, who has become one of the most successful sprinters of all time, winning, among numerous other races, a record number of stages at the Tour de France. The interviews analysed here come from a period in his career when, despite his cycling success, he struggled to make a positive impression in the media.

Cycling and the Media

The importance of the media to cycling (but also cycling to the media) dates back to the beginnings of the sport. Early editions of the Tour de France were dependent on newspaper reporters who followed the race. Their coverage, nevertheless, saved L'Auto, the race's original promoters,

from bankruptcy (Herlihy 2004). This was undoubtedly due to the race reporters' colourful portrayal of the participants, many of whom have become ensconced in the historical lore of the sport (Fife 2005). Today, even those who line the roadsides of Europe and elsewhere to watch live events are often dependent on televised coverage (or text-based internet updates of it) that use a combination of helicopter and motorcycle cameramen, as well as the latest on-bike camera footage (streamed footage from cameras attached to designated riders' bikes), to make sense of the race. To the uninitiated, even this footage, edited to follow the flow of the race, can be largely mysterious without the voices of the commentators, who further frame the action and supplement it with both live data, provided for them by the race organisers, and supplementary background information that helps contextualise the action. Some of this information is provided on the screen to show the position of the riders in terms of the overall race and the time distance of gaps between groups of riders. Additional information, such as rider and team information or overall standings, can be further overlaid by the commentators. The commentary and data add further semiotic strata to the viewers' experience of the race. While living in Tokyo, I became used to watching European races with the humorous and engaging Japanese commentary of the J-sports presenters so that seeing the races on British TV makes the race itself feel different even though the video footage may be identical. Experiences like this can make you aware of media framings that otherwise go unnoticed. The riders themselves have a more direct view of the action as, of course, they are the action; yet, they cannot see the helicopter panorama (or appreciate the European countryside and heritage that are part and parcel for television viewers). Even so, at the elite level, riders are updated, and their race tactics informed, by their team car, which relays events in the race they may not directly be able to see themselves due to their position in the race.

At the end of a major race, winners are usually given a televised live public interview in which they typically thank their teams and share their perspectives on the race. Meanwhile, the many journalists attending the race will seek out the alternative perspectives of other riders or team managers in accordance with the interests of the organisations they represent. The events of the race itself, as shown in the live broadcasts or edited

highlights, and interviews with riders and team staff or race officials, as well as the articles packaging these identities in various ways, are distilled to evoke the riders' public identities.

At the levels of both collecting this information and writing it up, journalists and their editors make choices that implicitly shape the identities of their subject matter, their audience and the writers themselves. A national press focused on a general audience will inevitably cover the race with a focus on the nation's hopefuls as well as with features that could be considered newsworthy from a more general perspective. A news outlet aimed at cycling fans, such the cyclingnews.com website, will provide up-to-the-minute reports, details of the whole race and separate reports on a major race reflecting the differing perspectives of riders and their teams. The latter audience is therefore positioned as both more familiar with the sport and more interested in the details of events, riders, teams and other issues. Preliminary race reports available within minutes of the race (as well as updates during the race) are usually fleshed out in later updates. Even so, there is a selection process that highlights the riders deemed to be the key participants in the day's racing or, in the case of a stage race, favoured contenders for the overall prize. In addition, an English website's attention may also be given to less prominent Anglophone riders. Finally, cycling magazines not only provide a mix of race reports and information for amateur cyclists but also often include interviews with specific riders who may be featured on the cover as a selling point for the particular issue. Increasingly, these resources are being supplemented and referenced, but also potentially replaced, by social media tools such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. However, it is worth beginning with a description of the more established media through which celebrity identities are evoked.

Cycling Autobiography

The cycling autobiography is even more explicitly targeted at cycling fans than the cycling website or magazine, as it constitutes a more extended account of an individual rider than even the in-depth interview. The sportsperson's autobiography represents an opportunity for celebrities to reconfigure their public identities by telling their side of the story.

One technique for this is the foregrounding of internal voices representing their own memories. Ironically, even challenges to media representations can be heavily dependent on media resources. On a public level, the British cyclist Victoria Pendleton was able to combine the seemingly incompatible roles of cyclist and fashion model, which ultimately made her appear a glamorous and successful cyclist in the British media, until her surprise early retirement. The unexpectedness of the public narrative is made much more coherent in her autobiography (Pendleton and McRae 2012), which nevertheless draws on media resources she had available to her. For instance, she used video recordings of races in order to describe them in detail but did so using the inner voice of the athlete blended with outer perceptions of the race, creating a hyperreality effect. The narrative of success is far less obvious in her autobiography, which reveals the professional frustrations she experienced within an organisation that led to her early retirement.

Brockmeier (2001, p. 249) has argued that autobiography unavoidably follows a plot genre of the 'successful life', and this expectation is all the more emphatic for sporting celebrities, yet it also involves shaping subplots of failure, as demonstrated by the reasons, invisible to the public, that led to Pendleton's retirement. These circumstances only attracted media attention years later when another British cycling athlete, Jess Varnish, supported by evidence from other riders, brought a case against the technical director whom she accused of creating a culture of gender discrimination and bullying (Ingle 2016). This is not to say that the representations found in autobiographies are necessarily true. For example, Lance Armstrong's representation of himself in his autobiography as a clean athlete (Armstrong and Jenkins 2000; Walsh 2013), was a representation that turned out to be false. Rather, autobiographies are extended works of self-positioning that negotiate an internal perspective with the external one represented in the public media.

Another remarkable example of this is Graham Obree's (2004) autobiography, which acquaints his readers with his disciplined athlete's mind, original approach to bicycle innovation and experience of suffering from a bipolar condition, culminating in a near-suicide. This internal perspective is notably absent from sporting biographies, which, in contrast, provide a much richer account of historical circumstances even where rider

autobiographies are used as reference resources, as for example in William Fotheringham's biographies of Fausto Coppi (2010), Eddy Mercks (2012) and Tom Simpson (2007).

Celebrity and Identity

Identity in sport is most readily associated with public figures of celebrity, though the other side consists of the fans who support them (Crawford 2004). As discussed above, the media play an important role in packaging celebrities as objects for consumption by their public (Earnheardt et al. 2012). Celebrities are the public identities that embody their sport in the general public media as well as being objects of aspiration and consumption to their fans. In the general public arena, the most elite celebrities will be well-known as representatives of their sports to people who have no interest in those sports (Marshall 2014). Such celebrities often feature in the advertising of products targeted at the general public and in some cases outgrow their sport, as the interest in their glamorous life sustains an interest over and above their sporting achievements. The transcendence of their sport may also be associated with both their commodification through advertising and the sense that they are superhuman. The celebrity, as Daniel Boorstin defined it, was 'the person who is well-known for their well-knownness' who is a myth 'fabricated on purpose to satisfy the exaggerated expectations of human greatness' (1961, p. 58). Graeme Turner, in *Understanding Celebrity*, also defines celebrity as something evoked in the media for the public:

The contemporary celebrity will usually have emerged from the sports or entertainment industries; they will be highly visible through the media; and their private lives will attract greater public interest than their professional lives. (Turner 2004, p. 4)

In the case of sports celebrities, this emergence is triggered by the acquisition of a symbolic prize that marks them out as elite performers. More importantly, winning this prize is itself considered a media event. An example of this would be the sudden rise to fame of the British cyclist

Bradley Wiggins in the UK on becoming the first British rider to win the Tour de France and then the time trial road race at the (home) London Olympics the following month. The focus on Wiggins began as he took over the lead in the Tour, attracting the attention of mainstream British media. At this point, it might be said, Wiggins attained a public status of the kind that would fit with these definitions of celebrity. Although Wiggins was well known to cycle fans and was a multiple Olympic medallist, the exposure he received in winning these prestigious events under the media spotlight expanded his presence to a broader audience. Yet, it could also be argued that this change is one of degree and that to cycling fans he was already a celebrity.

Accordingly, with the interest in cultural iconicity, the focus of celebrity studies has tended to consider the most iconic idealised examples of celebrity who dominate an increasingly global cultural realm. However, in the realm of sport, as the above example of Wiggins shows, identities are also constructed within sporting niches that may have little or no resonance with the public at large. For sports fans or sporting amateurs in contemporary society, sporting identity may be every bit as central to their sense of identity as it is for professionals. Part 2 of this book will focus on the consideration of the identities of cycling fans and enthusiasts themselves, but my interest in this chapter is to consider the narrative and evaluative processes at work in the celebrity's role in evoking his or her own public identity.

Narrative, Evaluation and Heteroglossic Identity

As a way into exploring sporting identity, this chapter introduces narrative as a fundamental resource for evoking identity. It also explores how the evaluative resources of appraisal (Martin 2000; Martin and White 2005) and *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin 1981) can be used to explore recontextualisation as *identity work* across different texts with closely related (ideational) content. These resources are used as a way into the four texts concerning the postrace interview with British cyclist Mark Cavendish that derives from a period in his career where, despite success in races, he

struggled to shake off an image in the public media of being hot-tempered. The texts are a televised postrace interview (Cavendish 2010a), a cynical account of a postrace interview from his first autobiography, *Boy Racer* (Cavendish 2010b), and two reports of his results, one in a British newspaper (Lewis 2010) and the other in a cycle magazine (Cycling Weekly 2010).

Narrative approaches to identity have pervaded recent psychological and sociological accounts of identity because of the ability of narrative to give a sense of cohesion to otherwise transient and disparate senses of the self (Bamberg 1997a; Brockmeier and Carbaugh 1984; Chafe 1980; Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Josselson and Lieblich 1993; Kiernan 2010; McAdams et al. 2001; Ochs and Taylor 1992; Polkinghorne 1991). While identity may once have been conceived of as a relatively straightforward matter of classifying individuals in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, nationality or other broad social groupings, contemporary or postmodern accounts treat identity as multifaceted, often seeping across national or cultural borders through 'transcultural flows' (Pennycook 2007), and as transient or 'liquid' (Bauman 2005), or as problematic sources of 'trouble' (Caldas-Coulthard and Iedema 2008) and sites of inequality (Bauman 2004). These notions of identity all acknowledge the impact of time, place and evaluative context, and are, therefore, a more natural match for narrative approaches to identity that acknowledge the possibility of multiple perspectives and the semiotic structuring of identity.

Psychological accounts of identity, whether in the psychoanalysis of Freud (1962) or the developmental psychology of Piaget (Beard 2007; Piaget 1951) or Erikson (1980), also conceptualise human identity in narrative terms. However, unlike the more recent poststructuralist approaches, these tend to treat narratives as accounts of implicit truths. In Freudian psychoanalysis, the focus is on exploring a narrative of the unconscious and recognising its impact and relevance to the patient's conscious life. Piaget and Erikson explored the developmental stages of human life, thus effectively situating human experience within the broader context of a life-history narrative. Whereas Piaget focused on child development, Erikson drew attention to the impact of middle and old age on the sense of self. Such narrative approaches to psychology have also been associated with neurological explorations of human

consciousness situated in relation to the narrative faculties associated with *autobiographical memory* or *episodic memory* (Belli and Loftus 1996; Fitzgerald 1992; Rubin 1995). Nevertheless, studies of autobiographical memory both question the sense of certainty that people can invest in memories and highlight the way in which memory is linked with consciousness to evoke a sense of self (Draaisma 2006; Wagenaar and Groeneweg 1990). The use of media resources to record events provides a specific perspective and a permanent record of events evoking identities that seep into the public consciousness.

The ability to narrate allows human beings to situate themselves in time and space, giving a sense of coherence to their identities that makes it possible to conceive of a self beyond the present moment in relation to present and past contexts, and it also evokes shared identities in communication with others (Ochs and Capps 2001). This chapter will revisit the notion of autobiographical memory as it has been conventionalised and represented in the form of written autobiography.

From a sociological perspective, the narrative context of historical change has always been important, but the once-prominent focus on broad classificatory accounts of identity as determined by class and gender have become increasingly inadequate in an age in which Big Data is able to capture more complex and shifting patterns of identity and affiliation. As I will discuss in more detail in later chapters, more transient notions of identity are seen as 'liquid', are integrally related to inequalities of wealth and power, and are not only located in individuals but are also associated with communities or organisations. Accordingly, narrative conceptions of social identity, in terms of individuals, social groups and society itself, are increasingly relevant. Moreover, within such accounts, the recognition of the point at which evaluations are made is particularly important both to recognising how identities can be effectively evoked and to critically deconstructing them. In the example explored in this chapter, a public celebrity identity is evoked and negotiated in the form of a public autobiography. Interestingly, the use of an internal dialogue reflects not only a common strategy to evoke empathy in fictional texts but also a narrative approach to finding catharsis in traumatic or unsettling life events, and, as such, is recommended in therapeutic approaches to psychology.

The specific conception of narrative itself will inevitably shape the realisation of or approach to exploring identity. In this chapter, though I will be drawing on a number of features of narrative, the specific focus will be on evaluation, which is arguably the key interpersonal resource of narrative and therefore, in a sense, the point at which identity is most self-consciously shaped. Evaluation is a critical component of the Labovian model of narrative. In their particularly influential account of narrative, Labov and Waletzky (1967; Bamberg 1997c) emphasise the importance of a dramatic *complicating action* and *resolution* as the essential components that make a story tellable. This model also includes situation in time and space (in the orientation phase and through the succession of temporal clauses). These elements should also be considered as highly relevant to a narrative account of identity. Nevertheless, the model also emphasises evaluation as a resource for highlighting the point of the story and the drama of the *complicating action*, and for drawing attention to the identity of the teller. In this sense, evaluation could be seen as the key point where interpersonal resources and identity work are put into action through language and where the sense of identity formation is most salient.

Mark Cavendish and the Tour de France

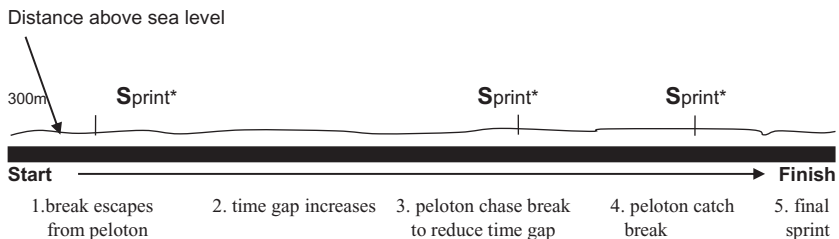
The texts discussed in this chapter concern Mark Cavendish, a British road-racing cyclist competing in the most prestigious road-racing competition in the world: the Tour de France. The Tour de France (hereafter, the Tour) takes place in July, lasts three weeks and covers around 3500 kilometers divided into (21) stages, a 'stage' being one day of racing. Riders race in teams, but, although there is a prize and ranking for the most successful teams, the teams work for the success of individual riders. The overall winner is the rider who completes the total race distance over the three weeks with the least accumulated time.

There is also considerable prestige to winning a stage of the Tour. By the time his autobiography was published, Mark Cavendish had already attained a total of eight Tour stage wins and 41 professional victories in his career, making him the most successful British rider ever.

There are three types of stage in the Tour: the ‘time trial’ where riders ride individually or as a team against the clock; the ‘mountain’ stages, which include riding to the top of two or more mountain roads, typically in the Alps or the Pyrenees; and ‘flat’ stages. Cavendish’s successes have all come on flat stages where the group of riders (the ‘peloton’ or ‘bunch’) has stayed together and he has won the final bunch sprint to the line.

Bunch sprints only occur in relatively flat races, which account for perhaps five or six out of 21 stages of the Tour. They also depend on the sprint teams keeping the pace of the main peloton high throughout the stage so that small groups or individual riders do not escape and win before the peloton arrives. In the final kilometre, teams with strong sprinters will move to the front of the peloton to raise the speed. A lead-out rider will begin sprinting 400–500 meters before the finish line, with the team sprinter riding directly behind him protected from wind resistance. Two hundred to three hundred meters before the line, the lead-out sprinter will pull away, allowing the main sprinter to raise the pace even further in the dash for the finish line. From a rider’s or an informed spectator’s perspective the race follows a narrative patterned around the various possible scenarios. Journalists often seek to elicit this narrative from the rider (see Fig. 2.1).

The high standard and the frequency of races in Europe mean that even participants from other countries base themselves in continental Europe. In recent years, however, cycling has seen a revival in Britain due to the promotion and funding of the sport by a public lottery. This revival



***Sprint:** Intermediate Sprint Point offers a small prize and sprint point bonus

Fig. 2.1 The narrative scenario of a sprint stage

resulted in a remarkable medal haul for Britain in the Beijing Olympics (fourteen of 47 medals were for cycling events), a pattern since repeated in London (2012) and Rio (2016). 2010 also saw the launch of the new British Tour team, Team Sky, sponsored by the British cable television network. Mark Cavendish was one of Britain's key sprint stars of this period on both track and road. At the time of the extracts considered here, he was already one of the most successful cyclists of his generation, a position that has been further consolidated since. Yet, in his first autobiography, he spent considerable time defending his public reputation.

Boy Racer

Boy Racer (2010b) was Mark Cavendish's first autobiography, followed a few years later by *At Speed* (2014). Cycling autobiographies usually follow a predictable generic format. This format is also common in sporting autobiographies or *jockographies* in general, which, as Curtis (2007) summarises, begin 'with an account of the athlete's most memorable play, chronicle how sports got him or her through an unhappy childhood, and track the rise to major league stardom ...' Thus, David Millar (2001) begins with his arrest for taking performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs); Chris Hoy (2010) with his Olympic gold medal-winning race and Lance Armstrong (Armstrong and Jenkins 2000) with his cancer diagnosis, prior to his recovery and his first (of seven) Tour wins. Cavendish's biography aligns with this generic tradition by describing a Tour win on the most prestigious final stage in Paris in Chap. 1 before flashing back to his childhood. However, Cavendish does this within a unique organisational structure that reflects his own claim to fame: his record number of five stage wins in the Tour of 2009, which was also the year he began writing the autobiography. Each chapter of the book focuses on one stage of the race. The chapters are titled according to the stage of the race and subtitled with the start and finish points of the stage. A segment of autobiographical history follows the race description as though the author is reflecting back while riding, and the chapter invariably concludes by moving back to the Tour stage to report the results, including the winners and Cavendish's own position. Figure 2.2 illustrates this structure. These


Textual	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Book chapter					
Ideational 1					
Tour de France	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
2008					
Ideational 2	Childhood	School ~Job	BCF Under 23	BCF Under 23	Turning pro
Autobiography	first bike	childhood races	selection& racing (2004)	training and racing (2005–)	Giro de Italia (2007)

Fig. 2.2 The macrostructure of Cavendish's autobiography

threads may be said to constitute the principal narrative flow of the autobiography, but they in turn consist of multiple anecdotal episodes that both stand by themselves and perform a role in the overall narrative. In Chap. 3, Cavendish describes his interview at the British Cycling Academy where in answer to the question 'What do you want to achieve as a cyclist?' he answered, 'I want to win stages of the Tour de France... Oh, and be an Olympic champion.' In the context of the interview, this underlines his cocky self-assuredness as a young man but also foreshadows the fulfilment of the first of these goals and the failure of the second. The press interview is one such anecdote illustrating the problems he faced along the way.

An Autobiographical Account of a Press Interview

The autobiographical extract focuses cynically on a description of a post-race interview after a day when things had gone dramatically wrong (Cavendish 2010b, pp. 63–66). As Cavendish explains, the usual narrative of the race where sprinters like Cavendish reap a win in a final bunch sprint by being the fastest over the last 100 meters of a 200 km race had not worked out. There were two reasons for this. First, a flat course is conducive to the riders keeping together in a large group (or peloton) because the main obstacle to progress is the wind and a large group can use more riders taking it in turns to work at the front to

maintain high speeds. This advantage was lessened on a climb where speeds were slower. The other reason is related to the fact that riders with a powerful sprint are more muscular and less suited to long climbs where lighter riders will surge ahead. However, teams without strong sprinters try to win flat stages by getting ahead in a small group known as a break. If there is no established break, riders will continually attack in the hope of getting ahead and forming one, so that a typical flat-stage race scenario involves a break staying ahead for most of the race but getting caught at the end. This narrative is illustrated in Fig. 2.1. However, cycling is an unpredictable sport so this scenario does not always play out. Instead, a breakaway group had escaped and the other teams with sprinters had not chased them down, perhaps believing that Cavendish would win anyway. This robbed Cavendish of a chance for victory. The journalist sought to elicit the narrative of the failed race, which Cavendish represents as a face-threatening act. He responded by saying very little. According to the autobiography the interview went as follows:

- Journalist: 'Mark, Mark, can we have a word?'
Mark: 'Okay'
Journalist: 'What happened there?'
Mark: 'What do you mean?'
Journalist: 'Well, you didn't catch the break, did you?'
Mark: 'Well, no——'
Journalist: 'So when did you decide to chase the break?'
Mark: 'Er, as soon as it went ...'
Journalist: 'So when did you decide to start chasing the break?'
Mark: 'When the break went ...'
Journalist: 'Who made the decision to start chasing the break?'
Mark: 'The directeurs, as always ...'
Journalist: 'So what have you learned from today?'
Mark: 'Nothing.'

However, when recounting this event in his autobiography, Cavendish intersperses his reported curt responses with a detailed parenthetical, albeit heavily ironic, recount of the race expressed as his unspoken thoughts.

In doing so, Cavendish recontextualises his taciturn and defensive replies to reveal a lucid and witty (if sarcastic) account of the race and interview, which re-empowers Cavendish as an active participant in the dialogue at the expense of the journalist. The construction of a psychological inner voice serves as a reminder that the use of language in performing identity work can be internalised and that a speaker's intended meanings may not all be readily accessed through a text. Moreover, his use of irony means that consideration in terms of evaluative resources needs to be done with care. He demonstrates five basic strategies for ironically reframing the words of the interview, which challenge the premises of the interview and the specific questions asked.

1. Attitude to the interview itself:

Cavendish is not able to escape the interview and begins by showing his reader his dissatisfaction with having to be interviewed at this point at all:

There are many things that you would like to do when you have just blown your chance in a stage of the Tour de France, but trust me when I say that giving a television interview is a fair way down the list of priorities.

The use of ironic understatement here also implicitly positions the reader as more sensitive to his feelings at the time than the journalist.

2. Challenging the premise of the question as a face-threatening act:

'Did he want a comprehensive analysis, from the start of the stage until the end ... while I was standing here in the pissing rain ...[?]'

'Did he want me to run through how I'd effectively sacrificed three teammates ...?'

'Did he want me to spell it out to everyone at home ... that I'd not so much missed the target as fired a blank?'

3. Uses of physical self-description show how he was attempting to communicate his discontent nonverbally but not being understood:

'I looked at him through narrowed eyes. "What do you mean?"'

4. 'Translation' of what he actually says to his implicit meaning, which he implies is not being picked up by his interviewer:

'You always know you're going to chase a break as soon as it goes. No forget that ... when ... everything [seemed] set up for me to take my first stage win ... we know even *before* the stage that we will chase any break.'

'We assumed ... that a) the guys in the break would start tiring ... b) we'd get some help from the other sprinters' teams ...'

He also uses the word 'translation' to suggest that he suppresses what he feels to avoid becoming the focus of public discussion on message boards and blogs.

5. Finally, he offers a facetious alternative answer to the final interview question—'What have you learned?'—framed as 'as I told my teammates about the interview', which situates them as people with whom he can share his real feelings 'that journalists sometimes ask some stupid fucking questions.'

The fact that Cavendish not only shares this analysis in his autobiography but also describes in some detail the negative feelings he had about the race underlines the difference that context makes to the expression of public identity. Cavendish shows that he recognises the dangers of giving sound bites to the media that can be potentially misconstrued and yet apparently takes advantage of the extended autobiography as a format through which he can appeal to a sympathetic reading. This anonymous journalist is not the only one to receive Cavendish's censure in *Boy Racer* (a strategy far less noticeable in his later autobiography, which offers a more reasoned account of his continuing life story). Nevertheless, exploring this reported interview raises the question of how such postrace interview narratives are expounded as well as how they are taken up in the media. Perhaps fortunately, interviews with disgruntled riders of failed races are rare. Instead, the following sections focus on a postrace Tour interview where Cavendish had won the stage. The postrace interview of Stage 5 of the 2010 Tour was found on YouTube and coincidentally followed a day where Cavendish had also hoped to take the win and failed.

He offered a recount of the race narrative and expresses exhilaration over winning the stage. The recorded interview and my transcription of it were also compared with two reports of the same stage: one in the *Guardian* newspaper and the other in the British cycling magazine *Cycling Weekly*.

Labov and Waletzky (1967) originally proposed a six-part model of oral narrative consisting of (1) an *abstract* that summarises the story; (2) an *orientation* to provide the background; (3) *complicating action* where the main focus of the story is recounted through a series of temporally ordered expressions, typically using the past or historical present (Wolfson 1982); (4) *evaluation* underlining the point of the story; (5) *resolution* explaining how the problem implicit in the complicating action is resolved; and (6) a *coda* that links the story to the moment of telling. They emphasise that not all stages are obligatory, and the subsequent application of this model to a range of conversational and other narrative contexts has helped illustrate how the realisation or omission of some parts can be associated with considerations of genre and context (Bamberg 1997b; Eggins and Slade 1997; Martin and Plum 1997; Norrick 2000; Plum 1988). Here, I have marked the stages of the model on the interview transcript shown in Table 2.5. As the table shows, Cavendish's narrative of the race can be divided into the recognisable components of an oral narrative identified by Labov. Moreover, the ways in which it departs from this can be seen as responding to the very specific demands of the postrace interview context and Cavendish's purpose. The race result is already known, and Cavendish has been asked to provide an account of it. What is important and of interest to the journalist and race fans is Cavendish's perspective on his win. In addition, Cavendish, like many race winners, makes his account into an opportunity to thank his team in public. It is this blending of his public acknowledgement of the contribution of his teammates to the victory with his narration of the race that shapes the interview. So rather than begin with an *abstract* he begins with an *orientation* that frames his account of the race as a tribute to his teammates.

The *orientation* is often concerned with locating the narrative in time and place in order to make it more coherent. However, in this case, the most relevant contextual features are locating this win in relation to the

team's focus on winning the stages at the Tour and Cavendish's failure to do so on the previous day. This helps to underline the significance and importance of the win. It also sets up the achievement of a win as fulfilment of his responsibility to his teammates.

The complicating action is framed by the potential obstacles to winning the race in terms of (1) other riders' implicit needs (Siutsou's need to recover from his injury and Rogers' need to preserve energy to get a good overall position in the general classification [GC] by the end of the three-week race); (2) attacks on his teammates by the other teams; and (3) the unexpected terrain of the finish. As I have indicated in Table 2.1, Cavendish subdivides his complicating action into three subnarratives that effectively retell the story as a resolution of these three complicating factors. These are then followed by Cavendish's overall evaluation of the narrative, which returns to the expression of his own delight in winning the race, something particularly visible in the interview as he seems to be crying with joy. The *resolution* needs little comment; the result is already known to the journalist and viewers and is ellipted. His *coda*, as expected, brings his story up to the present and anticipates the stages ahead.

This basic structural account of Cavendish's narrative is instructive in so far as it allows us to see what he is doing in this interview and how he is implicitly positioning himself in relation to his teammates, and his audience. It is clear that, unlike the interview reported in his autobiography, Cavendish is more than willing to describe the race. Considering that one of the reasons for his reluctance in regards to the race he lost was his concern for the impression it would make in the media, I wanted to find out how this live interview would be reframed in a newspaper and in a cycling magazine.

A Comparison of Race Reports in a Newspaper and in a Cycling Magazine

There are now a wide range of cycling magazines available in Britain. Even limiting the selection to those concerned with cycle road racing, magazines range from those aimed primarily at the bike buyer or amateur

Table 2.1 Narrative structure of the postrace interview

Narrative stage	Content
Evaluation Orientation	<p>Yeah, it means everything, you know ... er.</p> <p>Obviously it was hard this year.</p> <p>And er, we set everything up for the Tour de France.</p> <p>And things haven't really gone our way, the first few days.</p> <p>But, er, you know that was bad luck.</p> <p>But yesterday, you know, the team did amazingly</p> <p>And er, well you know, I let them down massively at the end</p> <p>And er, you know, it would have been easy for them to say, fuh...</p> <p>You know, for them to say what a lot of other people say:</p> <p>'Oh he hasn't got it'</p> <p>But they knew I did.</p>
Abstract Complicating action	<p>And, er they rode incredibly, you know,</p> <p>Kanstantin Siutsou has ridden in front the last few days, you know with bandages all over him.</p> <p>And then er, you know, Maxine [Monfort] was riding today.</p> <p>And obviously Michael Rogers has got GC ambitions riding on him.</p> <p>But the whole team put everything in. Perfect technical finish.</p> <p>We got it from all sides from the other teams.</p> <p>But er, you know, the guys kept their cool.</p> <p>They took us on really early but they wanted to keep us on front.</p> <p>And Mark Renshaw just er did an incredible job.</p> <p>He was fighting Thor, he was fighting with Tyler, he was fighting with Oscar.</p> <p>And er, you know er, I just sat there.</p> <p>And er, I knew that he'd deliver me to the right place, you know.</p> <p>And er he did, you know.</p> <p>And it was just go for the line.</p> <p>It was slightly uphill.</p> <p>We looked at it on Google Earth this morning and it actually looked like a flat finish.</p> <p>But then we had the info relay back off [inaudible], you know, it's no flat. So it put a bit of a shocker into us, then.</p> <p>Because, you know, like yesterday,</p> <p>We had to keep the speed up.</p> <p>Because, like yesterday, it slowed down.</p> <p>But we kept the speed high.</p>
Evaluation	<p>And, it's an incredible feeling!</p> <p>All that emotion.</p> <p>All that er, you know, all that pressure that has built up, all year, you know.</p>
Resolution Coda	<p>And it has finally come to an end.</p> <p>And er, I know for sure we are going to try to win more stages.</p> <p>But, thank God it paid off then, you know.</p>

cyclist to those that focus almost exclusively on the professional sport as well as the artsy *Rouleur*, which publishes a unique style of literary journalism and photography focusing on the real-life experiences of those who just happen to have deep associations with the cycling world. *Cycling Weekly* is not only the most eclectic of these but also the one with the longest history, dating back to 1891. Being published weekly, it is able to provide reasonably up-to-date accounts of both amateur and professional racing, and includes articles on diet, training, events, equipment, history and a range of other topics of potential interest. Nevertheless, articles are short, and interested cyclists could and many probably do read it from cover to cover.

The *Guardian* newspaper is not only published daily but also provides cycling news as a subcategory of sports news, meaning that cycling competes with a wide range of other events in the sporting world. In order to appeal to editors and readers, they may have to make a claim for newsworthiness that goes beyond simply following the sport of cycling. Nevertheless, reports of the Tour, particularly now that it has a number of strong British competitors, are featured regularly.

As reports of the same day's racing available on the newsstands in English, the *Guardian* and *Cycling Weekly* accounts of Stage 5 of the 2010 Tour have a number of similarities. They both have prominent headings designed to catch the readers' attention, they both include a photograph of the race finish with Cavendish shown prominently, and they both include in their narrative accounts of the races a report of Cavendish's interview discussed above. These salient points of comparison are also sites of meaningful differences, suggestive of how the accounts are oriented to (or position) the targeted reader of their respective publications. *Cycling Weekly* headlines with the short title *Cavendish wins his first stage of Tour*. For *Cycling Weekly* readers, who will have had a preview of the Tour and an overview of British contenders' chances, including a focus on Cavendish in the previous week's issue, this must be considered a clear and unambiguous title. 'Tour' with a capital 'T' is a common abbreviation for the Tour de France and is not used for other races even though they may have 'tour' in their title. Moreover, there is only one rider with the name 'Cavendish' riding in the Tour. In contrast, the *Guardian* leads with a heading ('Tour

de France 2010’), a dramatic title (‘Mark Cavendish’s pyrotechnics blow field away’) and an explanatory subtitle (‘British sprinter puts troubles behind him to win fifth stage. “Today is a great sense of relief and achievement”’). This surplus of information seems designed to make it accessible and indeed attractive to the reader who may not be a cycling fan. The photograph used in the *Guardian* was a close-up of Cavendish in the act of sprinting with only a few other riders visible. *Cycling Weekly* had other pictures of Cavendish in the issue, including one on the cover, but the one with the article shows him with his arms raised in victory, having already crossed the line, and with the rest of the peloton visible behind him as if to emphasise the magnitude of his win. Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that whereas the *Guardian* article focuses mainly on Cavendish, *Cycling Weekly* provides information about other riders during the stage. It also includes such details as the race distance, points awarded, race strategy and bike setup, which orient the article to informing the serious race fan. The *Guardian* focuses on the immediate battle between Cavendish and the second- and third-placed rivals, also just visible in the photograph, and provides details of the carnival surrounding the tour. Table 2.2 summarises these differences.

Table 2.2 Comparison of *Cycling Weekly* and *Guardian* articles

<i>Cycling Weekly</i>	<i>Guardian</i>
<i>Cavendish wins his first stage of Tour</i>	<i>Tour de France 2010: Mark Cavendish’s pyrotechnics blow field away British sprinter puts troubles behind him to win fifth stage ‘today is a great sense of relief and achievement’</i>
Title uses abbreviated rider and race name to index familiarity (no subtitle)	Title dramatic and explanatory and uses full names (with informative subtitle)
Picture shows whole bunch at the end of the race	Picture shows Cavendish with only the closest riders
Information about other riders during the stage	Information focuses exclusively on Cavendish (second, third and two main rivals mentioned)
Details of distance, points, strategy, bicycle mechanics	Details of carnival surrounding the Tour de France

Table 2.3 Engagement in Mark Cavendish's autobiographical account of a post-race interview

Dialogic expansion	Dialogic contraction
Admittedly,	Trust me when I say
We assumed and the directeurs assumed ...	He must have seen from the look on my face
... ought to have been ... instead ...	You've just
Everyone could see	Of course,
In normal circumstances,	No, forget that,
I know everyone watching will think	We were wrong
	You always know
	Obviously

Table 2.4 A comparison of three postrace interview texts (differences highlighted)

Interview transcript	<i>Cycling Weekly</i>	<i>Guardian</i>
'...Yesterday, you know , the team did amazingly and er , well you know , I let them down massively at the end and er , it would have been easy for them to say, fuh ... You know , for them to say what a lot of other people say: "Oh he hasn't got it" but they knew I did and er , they rode incredibly, you know .'	'Yesterday my team did an incredible job and I let them down massively at the end. It would have been easy for them to say "Oh, he hasn't got it" like a lot of people have, but they believed in me and did an amazing job again .'	'The team did an incredible job and I let them down. And it would have been easy for them to give up, but then they were incredible again today, rode out their skins and delivered me to the line. I just had to cross it first this time .'

The interview segment quoted in both articles was from what I marked as the *orientation* to the narrative, where Cavendish highlighted his missing out on the stage the previous day. As illustrated in Table 2.4, the *Cycling Weekly* article simply cleans the transcript of interpersonal markers and changes a final 'You know' to 'again'. The *Guardian*, however, has more radical changes, which I can only speculate come either from a later interview by the paper with the rider or as the result of creative translation of his words in a way that makes him sound more informative in written form.

Thus, the use of a model of narrative takes us some way into exploring the organisation of the media interview and repositionings in the context

of news reports and celebrity autobiography. In order to extend this approach, however, some way of further refining the analysis seems desirable. In particular, it would be useful to describe and analyse how evaluation is used. For this purpose, I turn to the resources of *appraisal*.

Evaluation, Appraisal and Identity

The appraisal model (Martin and White 2005) was originally expounded in the context of newspaper articles to illustrate the various ways in which the writers evaluated the people or events described. This model is therefore relevant for exploring both the identity—because evaluations are ways of positioning the self or others as represented in a narrative—and the expression, and therefore implicit positioning, of the speaker.

In terms of the SFL model of language described in the introduction and illustrated in Fig. 1.3, *appraisal* is a resource designed for the analysis of language at the stratum of *discourse semantics*, the level between *lexicogrammar* and *register*. As such, appraisal (see Fig 2.3) is a relevant extension of the narrative discourse moves considered above.

Appraisal and Engagement

Appraisal describes three main resources that may be operating simultaneously at any point in a text: *engagement*, *attitude*, and *graduation*. *Engagement* is concerned with the engagement (*heterogloss*) or otherwise (*monogloss*) with alternative perspectives—that is to say, how far a text engages with, or opens the possibility to consider, alternative interpretations or evaluations of the ideational meanings (situation and actions) being represented. The degree of heteroglossic engagement may increase (*dialogic expansion*) or decrease (*dialogic contraction*). Strategies for *dialogic expansion* may include the use of hedges ('perhaps', 'possibly', 'it seemed that') or the explicit voicing of alternative readings (signalled by phrases such as 'another possibility is that ...'). *Dialogic contraction*, on the other hand, is likely to be marked by the avoidance of such features and by a 'black and white' account that positions the reader as someone

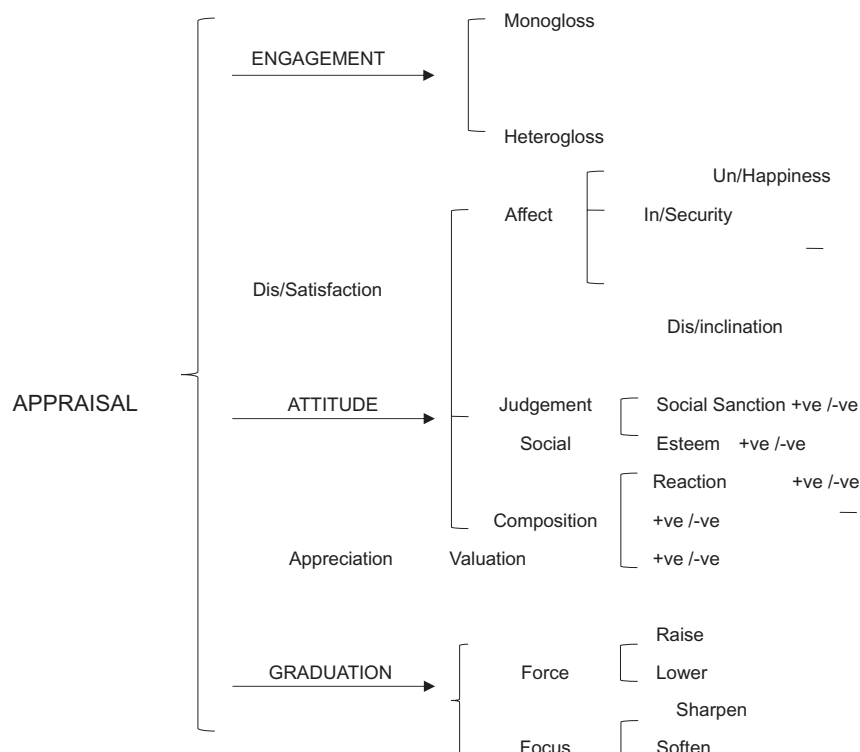


Fig. 2.3 The appraisal model (Adapted from Martin and White 2005, p. 85)

to be informed. Dialogic contraction may involve recognition of competing perspectives and the dismissal of them as potential positions but ultimately consists of the expression of a single dogmatic perspective. In news media of the kind used in the exposition of the model by Martin and White (2005), engagement is principally concerned with perspectives on some reported event. However, when considering texts that are concerned with identity, heteroglossia admits of multiple views of an individual or 'multiple identities'. It is therefore an important resource to examine in the case of 'contested identities', by which I mean identities where there is a disagreement about how an individual is evaluated. Moreover, the tendency to draw on a broad (or narrower) range of perspectives may also be a personal characteristic in itself.

Returning to the interview described in Cavendish's autobiography (2010b, pp. 63–66), the strategy of interpolating the reported interview with unspoken thoughts in itself could well be seen as a move towards dialogic expansion. However, it is also possible to consider the specific expressions used and thereby provide a more detailed picture of his strategy in terms of the resource of *engagement*. As can be seen from Table 2.3, though he does include a range of moves consistent with a strategy of dialogic expansion ('*admittedly*', '*we assumed*', '*I know everyone watching will think*', and so on ...), he also uses monoglossic expressions to close down the meaning. The use of '*admittedly*' opens up the potential for a caveat, in this case reminding himself that two of the 'missed opportunities' were not really opportunities. In contrast, 'trust me when I say ...' closes out other opinions. Indeed, there is a series of propositions that are questioned and then replaced with alternatives. Looking closer still, it turns out that the propositions addressed deal with both his misreading of the anticipated race narrative and expectations about the race as a whole, and the false expectations the journalist has about what he should expect from his interviewee. This also involves the use of other resources, such as his understated, 'Trust me when I say that giving a television interview is a fair way down my list of priorities.' This use of understatement potentially softens his point, as compared with if he had said, 'is the last thing I wanted to do'. The problem is that this understatement is deliberately ironic and thus through emphasis effectively reinforces the monoglossic move. In any case, this emphasis, needs to be considered separately as part of the resources of *graduation*.

Graduation

Graduation consists of two kinds of resources that describe the kinds of emphasis that can be given to language: *force* and *focus*. *Force* can be a way of emboldening (or underplaying) characterisations of individuals, while the tendency to use higher or lower *force* may vary from one individual to another and be culturally variable, meaning that it may contribute to the expression of emotional commitment, which in turn may have

implications for personal identity. In the postrace interview after his win introduced earlier, Cavendish consistently uses expressions of high force—‘it means everything’, ‘amazingly’, ‘massively’ and ‘incredible’—in order to express his appreciation of his teammates and his excitement over winning the race. This is very different from the kind of force implied by the ironic expressions used in his autobiographical account of the interview after losing the race. His ‘a fair way down my list of priorities’ and the even more convoluted but also implicitly violent ‘tell him to stick his microphone where there’s never any sun on the forecast’ evoke his feelings of anger redirected into sarcasm. Appraisal theory focuses on the expression of force through choice of lexico-grammatical forms of verbal expression but also seems well suited to describing things like volume or tone of voice used for emphasis.

Focus is about clarity and preciseness. It describes the degree of precision or vagueness that may reflect an emphasis on interpersonal meanings (Channell 1994; Cutting 2007) as much as pragmatic ones. Where identity is concerned, deliberate vagueness may signify lack of importance (a denial of identity) or avoidance of a topic (for example, to avoid embarrassment), or it may be intended to convey a sense of casualness or friendliness by highlighting the interpersonal over the informational content. On the other hand, precise concrete talk would be expected to feature in technical, professional, or scientific settings where detailed information is important. Part of the way Cavendish redeems himself in his recount of the interview is by providing a lucid account of the race:

Of course that doesn't mean that when four blokes attacked right from the gun this morning—two Frenchmen, Romain Feillu and the eventual stage winner Samuel Dumoulin, the Italian Paolo Longo Borghini and American William Frischkorn ... it was only when the gap immediately went out to ten minutes after fifteen kilometres we sent Adam, Burghi and Bernie to the front.... (Cavendish 2010b, p. 64)

The ‘four blokes’ is vague but subsequently translated into the precise language of rider names and time gaps, giving a sense of Cavendish’s focus on the race and his professionalism.

Attitude

An important role for the resources of *attitude* is the evaluation of others, though the positioning of others inevitably has implications for the positioning of the self (Duszak 2002; Harré and Moghaddam 2003). Each of the three categories of *judgement*, *affect* and *appreciation* can be seen as addressing a different feature of identity. As explained on the appraisal webpage (Martin and White 2015), *judgement* ‘condemns or applauds the behaviour—the actions, deeds, sayings, beliefs, motivations etc.—of human individuals and groups’. It is therefore explicitly concerned with evaluating identities. The division of *judgements* into those of *social esteem* and *social sanction* makes them well-suited to the business of establishing and maintaining positive face, in Goffman’s (1959) sense, when referring to oneself as well as to positive or (more typically) negative others, the evaluation of whom may reveal traits or values associated with the self. *Social esteem* embraces *competence* (here the skill or strength shown by the cyclist), but also *normality* (the degree of conventionality or eccentricity) and *psychological disposition* (determination or commitment), which in a sport like cycling, where mental strength is considered essential, may be closely associated with competence. *Judgements* of *social sanction* evaluate behaviour in relation to the social systems of *legality*, *morality* and *politeness*. For athletes, this is most obviously applicable to their conduct within the rules and ethical traditions of the sport. However, the scrutiny of athletes’ personal lives in the media is a reflection of the fact that the subcultures of sporting worlds cannot be disentangled from the societies within which they exist.

Affect is concerned with emotional evaluations, again important to identity, which are divided into *security/insecurity*, *satisfaction/dissatisfaction*, and *happiness/unhappiness*. Similarly, *appreciation* depicts aesthetic values and is subdivided into *reaction*, *valuation* and *composition*. While aesthetic and emotional evaluations may be made about the world at large, both also have a role to play in defining identity from an outside perspective and in highlighting psychological states. Turning our attention to attitudinal resources in a text is therefore an effective way of exploring moral and aesthetic judgements and feelings. In the case of the Cavendish interviews discussed here, the postrace account of

Table 2.5 A comparison of *attitude* in the autobiographical extract and live interview

Autobiography	Evaluation (rhetorical strategy)	Live interview	Evaluation (rhetorical strategy)
The prospect didn't exactly fill me with glee	Affect—unhappiness (ironic understatement)	Tears flowed	Affect—happiness (metonym)
We felt we were the victims of some cruel practical joke	Affect—dissatisfaction (ironic humour)	It means everything	Affect—satisfaction (metonym)
On a day like this don't expect a charm offensive	Judgement—social sanction— (ironic understatement)	Happy to have added another healthy haul of points	Affect—happiness (metonym)
Even angrier than I'd been when I crossed the line	Affect—dissatisfaction	Take heart from today's result	Affect—satisfaction (metonym)
It's been hard	Affect—insecurity	It is an incredible feeling.	Affect—happiness (metonym)

the stage loss contrasts markedly with the account of the win, as can be seen in the examples show in Table 2.5. The principal resources of the appraisal model are illustrated in Fig. 2.3 and will be explored further in Chap. 3.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed four cycling-related texts concerned with the postrace interview at a period in Cavendish's career when, despite his remarkable success in races, he struggled to attain a positive image in the public media. The race interview reported by Cavendish in his autobiography showed that after losing a race, he was reluctant to say anything about the race or his feelings, which included resentment towards the journalist for being asked to describe an experience of failure, for fear of

being misrepresented in the media. The autobiographical account served as an opportunity to resituate himself and explain both his feelings and the reason for losing the race. The consideration of the televised interview with Cavendish and the reports of the same race, which included extracts from the interview, illustrated how media texts frame and recontextualise other texts and do this in ways that situate them in relation to specific notions of audience. In order to look further into these media resources, I drew first on a Labovian model of narrative and second on the appraisal model of evaluation. Both these resources, I suggested, helped to show up the way language is used to implicitly negotiate identity. Skill in using these resources would seem to be a useful asset for anyone in the public eye. One issue this raises, however, is how far public identities that are construed as positive reflect reality. Sporting celebrities are often evoked as larger-than-life heroes, capable of the impossible; yet, revelations that these incredible feats have actually been achieved through illicit means, such as the use of PEDs, is liable to lead to disillusionment and anger from loyal fans as much as from the general public. Such cases raise important questions about how celebrity identities and their celebration or admonition are handled in the media. These issues will be addressed in the following chapter, which explores the confessional interview of Lance Armstrong on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*.

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3

Coming Clean: Framing and Identity Negotiation in the Oprah Winfrey-Lance Armstrong Interview

Introduction

On the podium, after receiving the award for his record seventh Tour win, in what has since become a tradition, Lance Armstrong was unexpectedly handed a microphone to say a few words to the assembled crowds on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. He was unprepared for this speech, yet what he said was surprising and poignant at the time and seems even more so in hindsight. He concluded his short speech as follows:

The last thing I'll say for people who don't believe in cycling, the cynics and the sceptics: I'm sorry for you, I'm sorry you can't dream big, I'm sorry you don't believe in miracles. This is one hell of a race, a great sporting event and you should believe. You should believe in these athletes and you should believe in these people. I'm a fan of the Tour de France for as long as I live and there are no secrets—this is a sporting event and hard work wins it, so Vive le Tour forever!

For someone bowing out at the peak of his achievements having just received the most prestigious prize in cycling for a record seventh time, it seemed remarkable to hear him say that he was sorry about anything.

One might have wondered, why was he addressing ‘the cynics and the sceptics’? And, why was he asking people to ‘believe in miracles’? His cynical words were linked in the press to accusations of using PEDs (Abt 2005), an accusation he vigorously denied. Was he, like Cavendish, someone unjustly represented by the media? Were the rumours of doping something dreamed up by a French media jealous of this brash American? Or was Armstrong brazenly lying to his public? Even Daniel Coyle (2006), who, while writing a biography of Armstrong, spent a year following him as he prepared for the Tour, seemed unable to answer this question. More generally though, his words raise the issue of authentic and inauthentic identities in the media. How is the public to distinguish truth from lies? And what kind of contextual resources are needed to provoke a public admission from someone who has a lot to lose from doing so?

When Lance Armstrong (hereafter, LA) made a miraculous recovery from cancer and went on to win the Tour a record seven times consecutively, he not only made a name for himself but brought massive publicity to his cancer foundation Livestrong, his sponsors, the Tour (Dauncey and Hare 2003, p. 124) and even the sport of cycle road racing itself (Associated Press 2005; Edmondson 2011). Corporate brands such as Trek, Oakley and Nike thrived on their association with him as cycling took off as a sport in the US. Among other things, LA offered the image of ‘hero’ to the community of cancer survivors struggling to find a positive identity (Brett 2012; Windsor 2015). It was an irresistible narrative of a contemporary hero, captured in the bestselling autobiography *It’s Not About the Bike: My journey back to life* (Armstrong and Jenkins 2000) and embellished in various ways by the media, his followers and sponsors.

Even early on, however, a few journalists challenged this heroic narrative (Walsh 2013, 2015), observing that the really incredible part was his remarkable success as a supposedly clean athlete in a sport plagued by doping. David Walsh also later heard from two people who offered evidence to confirm his suspicions. Emma O’Reilly, who worked as a *soigneur* (team masseuse and assistant) on LA’s team, heard the team arranging with LA to issue a backdated prescription to cover up a positive test for cortisone. Betsy Andreu, the wife of Frankie Andreu, one of LA’s teammates, discovered that her husband was taking drugs to support LA

and had also heard LA describe his own use of PEDs to a doctor while he was in hospital.

LA denied everything and went on the attack. His adamant refusal to engage with journalists on the topic of doping was reinforced by product commercials that evoked an image of a talented athlete who worked hard for his success. One such commercial showed images of him training and returning home on a dark, wet evening with the catchline: 'What am I on? I am on my bike eight hours a day' (Nike 2001). Another showed him leading a group of riders along an offroad shortcut through a forest, with obstacles that he neatly dodges but that cause his followers to crash at various points along the way, until LA returns safely to the road. It was a scene that echoed what had been a lucky escape for LA during the Tour where he had been forced off the road but survived by taking a shortcut across a field, adding to the narrative of his invincibility. Meanwhile, his belligerent denials, later even under oath in court, were followed up by libel lawsuits against David Walsh and Emma O'Reilly. Armstrong not only seemed to possess a remarkable will in overcoming cancer and incredible athletic prowess in being able to win cycling's most prestigious race a record number of times but also seemed in complete control of his public identity.

Nevertheless, when, already long retired, a case built by the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), which included confessions by his (also retired) former teammates and retesting of stored blood samples based on updated medical technology as evidence, revealed that, contrary to his consistent denials, LA had doped throughout his career, he brought shame on himself and his sport. Those incredible victories finally lost all credibility and were officially stripped from him by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), the governing body of cycling that had awarded them to him in the first place. Armstrong's supporters, including his sponsors and cancer foundation, cut links with him, and many of his once-enthusiastic fans now derided him. Meanwhile, the few journalists and others who had once been ostracised for accusing LA were now finally vindicated.

Even so, LA was initially defiant. Following the news of his being stripped of his Tour titles, it was reported that he would be asked to return the yellow jerseys he had been awarded (as well as the prize money)

to race organisers. Instead, he tweeted a photograph of himself lying on his couch at home in front of the seven framed winner's jerseys together with the comment, 'Back in Austin [his hometown] just layin' around ...' (Press_Association 2012). Six months later, he finally confessed publicly in a televised interview with popular US chat show host Oprah Winfrey, which aired on her OWN channel on January 18–19, 2013. During the interview, LA commented, 'The story was so perfect for so long', an admission that his heroic public identity was founded on a narrative that, after all, meant his miraculous comeback was only possible due to the use of banned PEDs his doctor, Michele Ferarri, was able to administer in ways to evade detection. Soon after, Daniel Coyle was also granted a confession interview.

The case of 'the Armstrong lie', as it was later dubbed (Gibney 2013), is an interesting one for the consideration of celebrity identity and the media because 'believing in miracles' is, in a sense, what the notion of sporting celebrity in contemporary culture is all about. As Daniel Boorstin put it, the celebrity is '[f]abricated on purpose to satisfy the exaggerated expectations of human greatness' (Boorstin 1961, p. 58).

Chapter 2 considered the ways in which autobiography may be seen as a resource for sporting celebrities to challenge representations of themselves in the public media, through a comparative consideration of the resources at work in media interviews and reports of them. This chapter focuses on a single text that, nevertheless, incorporates a wide range of texts in order to build a coherent narrative of a once-revered athlete forced to confess to doping and trying in vain to win back his public's approval. It considers an analysis of a televised confession on the Oprah Winfrey talk show with LA, a prominent athlete who had recently been convicted for doping. Media reports following the interview indicate that the confession failed to placate a shocked public (CBS/AP 2013; Middlehurst-Schwartz 2013; ObserverSportStaff 2013). The analysis, which moves from broader contextual considerations to detailed features of the text, shows why the confession proved so ineffectual. The interview included few acts of apology and was dominated by a renegotiation of identity, which drew heavily on evaluative resources. The attempts by LA to defend some features of his original narrative were largely undermined by the rich use of multimodal resources to position him as a liar, a cheat

and a bully, in spite of his efforts to both recontextualise his actions and distance himself from a past self.

I also explore the use of framing and multimodal resources in evoking identities. A multimodal approach provides a way into reading both the multimodal montages which frame the interview and the multimodal context of gesture, facial expression and body language within the interview proper.

The inclusion of a multimodal analysis of the interview serves as an opportunity to illustrate how multimodal resources—including gesture and intonation but also extending into the use of music, camera angles and video montage on television—evoke a more convincing narrative than the verbal alone.

Finally, with reference to Goffman's (1975) notion of framing, the analysis explores how the interview is framed on a number of levels within the video montage, which mitigates against LA's attempts to reposition himself favourably with the public.

A Multimodal Approach

As explained in the introduction, an SFL approach treats verbal language as the pre-eminent mode of meaning making but recognises that these meanings are also shaped by the context, which may include other semiotic resources integral to the text itself. A multimodal approach takes this one step further by treating these other semiotic resources as complementary semiotic modes (Kress 2010). Multimodal scholars have worked not only on the development of analytical schemas for specific modes, such as visual (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), film (Bateman and Schidt 2012) and music (Way and McKerrell 2017), but also on the relationships among modes. Hence, in a picture book, the verbal message constitutes one *mode* or *modality* while the pictures constitute another. Visual and verbal *modes* may run in parallel so that visual could be said to illustrate the verbal (or verbal to describe the visual), or there may be a gap between the modes with each contributing slightly different information. This gap between the modes allows for a complementary relationship between them, which can be exploited for such purposes as elaboration or ironic

comment (Guijarro 2014; Hayakawa 2014). A gap between modalities can, for example, be used to represent the gap between the self-perceptions of a character in the story and the perception of that character by others. Hence, when Olivia in the picture book *Olivia Forms a Band* performs as a one-man band for her parents, the line ‘And when she marched in, everyone agreed that Olivia did sound like more than one person’ alone is ambiguous and sounds like an endorsement of her achievement. However, Hayakawa’s illustrations show her family and pets with expressions of horror, and the sound of her instruments is represented by giant words that fill out her side of the page, suggesting a cacophony.

The use of visual and verbal elements will be considered in more detail in the following chapter on manga, but what is relevant here is that visual modalities can be used as evidence that potentially incriminates, or at least undermines, verbal claims. In the case of the televised interview, the multimodal resources are not simply verbal and visual but also include music, voiceovers and video extracts—all of which, I will suggest, contribute to undermining LA’s attempts to redeem himself through his confession. In order to represent this, a description is needed that not only gives consideration to the contributions of these different modes but also provides an account of how they are interrelated. In order to do this, I first describe the initial multimodal montage used to summarise the events relevant to LA’s confession before the interview began, then consider the structural interaction between this, the voiceovers and the interview itself, and finally look at some examples of the interaction between the host and guest—shaped by this immediate multimodal context and created using the resources of television—as a summary of the more general media context in which LA became ensnared. Before doing so, however, it is worth also setting this interview in the context of celebrity confessions.

Lance Armstrong and the Confession Interview

Lance Armstrong was the first cyclist to admit to doping on Oprah Winfrey’s (hereafter, OW) show but this was not the first confession she had aired. Indeed, one journalist described her show as ‘the go-to place

for celebrities wanting to apologise for their indiscretions or unburden their darkest secrets' (IBNLive 2013). Shocking as some of these confessions may have been, they were characterised by the cosy and supportive atmosphere of the show. Other celebrity confessions have included MacKenzie Phillips' admission to an incestuous relationship with her father, Gerald Imes' admission to molesting his sister, Tyler Perry's revelation that he was sexually abused as a child and Lisa Marie Presley's account of former husband Michael Jackson's drug abuse (IBNLive 2013). Lance Armstrong's confession came months after his conviction and many years after the offences. He had denied doping so defiantly (and convincingly) that many who believed him felt betrayed. All of this weighed heavily against a positive reception of the confession, and, in the end, the interview was widely judged as a coup for OW and a failure for Armstrong (Enten 2013).

A Multimodal Montage

Both at the beginning of the show and at key points within it where OW changes the topic (also following commercial breaks), short video montages are inserted into the interview. These montages effectively narrate the important background information related to the interview segment. They also incriminate LA, making clear to the audience what he should be apologising for. For reasons of space, I will focus here only on the opening segment, as its basic strategies are common to the others. The opening video montage lasts only one minute and ten seconds but includes 26 separate film/photographs that, if screen switches within these segments and title screens are included, total 46 distinct screens. These clips also include four quotes from LA (all doping denials), four newscasters reporting on the case, UCI president Pat McQuaid announcing his decision to ban LA from cycling, a podium announcer dramatically heralding his name, and Livestrong supporters applauding and cheering him at a charity event. This montage is held together by a male narrator voiceover and background music, which provide both coherence and a sense of drama. The analysis of these montage segments was done by separating them out and setting them as parallel semiotic segment streams of

voiceover, video image, video voice and music, as well as time stamps. This transcription format is too bulky to reproduce here, so I will provide a written summary instead.

The verbal modalities are the ones most explicitly interrelated, as the narrative voice is effectively shared with the voices of newscasters and with the other voices used as illustrative quotations. This can be seen by the following representation, which shows the voiceover in plain text and the quoted voices in italics:

Live around the world, after years of denial: *(LA:) I have never doped. (LA:) Is there any evidence. Where is the evidence of doping? (LA:) I am sick and tired of these allegations. (LA:) I'm sorry you don't believe in miracles.*; a federal investigation that was ultimately closed: *(Female newscaster:) Armstrong has consistently denied the doping claims; (Anderson Cooper, newscaster:) His lawyer calls the report a witch-hunt;* finally, a reasoned decision by USADA, the United States Anti-doping Agency: *(Female newscaster:) a dramatic twist in the case against Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong; Seven times Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong; (Podium presenter:) Lance Armstrong! (Pat McQuaid UCI president:) The UCI will ban Lance Armstrong from cycling. Lance Armstrong has no place in cycling.* Then, *(Female newscaster:) Abandoned by his sponsors, and his reputation destroyed;* the final blow *(Female newscaster:) Lance Armstrong is stepping down as chairman of the Livestrong foundation.* For months, speculation mounted, would Lance Armstrong ever address *(sound of cheering and applause of Livestrong supporters)* the epic fall in a formal interview? Now the worldwide exclusive: Oprah and Lance Armstrong.

As can be seen by this transcript, the message here is organised like a movie trailer through the voice of the narrator. The whole clip is effectively stretched between the headline 'Live around the world: Oprah and Lance Armstrong', which has been embedded not only with a number of clauses containing an informational narrative to highlight but also with the quotations contained in the video clips. There are three strategies of quotation that reflect the status of the source being quoted. First, the newscasters are used as conarrators since their words complete the voiceover narrator's narrative as parenthetical clauses: 'Then, *abandoned by his sponsors*, the final blow ...' At a level below this, the quotations of LA

and the UCI president are not grammatically integrated but function as illustrative quotations within the narrative and are therefore dependent on the visual information provided in the video to identify the speaker. Finally, the podium announcer's voice and the cheers and applause of Livestrong supporters are effectively background echoes rather than part of the narrative. As such, the verbal content alone constitutes a more or less coherent narrative, particularly if the different audio voices are included. This raises the question of what, if anything, is the general and semiotic function of the visual narrative.

In contrast to the verbal audio narrative, the overall narrator is absent from the visual narrative, but, except for one female newscaster, other speakers are shown clearly in the videos as they speak their words, constituting twelve of the 27 video clips. The remaining fifteen clips all show LA himself, except for one of only press video cameras pointing left. In terms of clothing, he is shown wearing team-cycle clothing, the Tour winner's yellow jersey, casual Livestrong clothing, and suits he wore for court appearances and public events. In terms of actions, he is shown in a still photograph running in a Livestrong charity run and ascending the Tour podium but is predominantly shown speaking with a microphone. He is shown from above and at mid-distance and close up, particularly from the side, objectified for the viewer. Moreover, he is shown throughout as the focus of attention, with the press or those around him looking at him. The podium presenter's voice and the fans' cheers and applause mentioned above were echoes of this. Overall then, what is shown is LA as an important public celebrity.

What is interesting about the choice of images is that none of them show LA cycling or even on a bike. In the later montages, he is shown as a cyclist in still photographs of races, but none of them show him actually riding. This is in marked contrast to the Nike commercials mentioned earlier, which focused almost exclusively on showing him riding or training. Considering the numerous hours of video footage there must be of him riding the Tour, this choice is clearly deliberate. He is portrayed as an important person whose public lie has been widely heard and whose ('exclusive') confession is therefore implicitly valuable. At the same time, he is visually being denied his 'place in cycling', just as Pat McQuaid had decreed.

The images of LA are mainly shown as accompaniments to the invisible speaker's voiceover. Unlike the use of speakers' faces to express their own words directly, the relationship between the images and the voiceover voice is one of ironic inversion. The voiceover tells the story of the downfall of LA while the visual imagery focuses on images of his success. Hence, 'Finally, a reasoned decision by USADA, the United States Anti-doping Agency' is juxtaposed with images of LA making his way towards the podium in order to be awarded his trophy. And, 'Seven times Tour de France winner stripped of his titles' is accompanied by images of LA stepping onto the podium and saluting the public, as though the physical movement of LA represents the progress of USADA in prosecuting him. Similarly, 'the final blow', referring to the separation from his Livestrong organisation, is accompanied by the camera zooming in (a camera punch) and is followed by images of his success in the organisation. This use of an ironic visual narrative that shows before and after is also a compact technique for narrating a complex story in under a minute through the use of complementary modalities.

Music is a modality that easily slips into the unconscious, as our cultural tendency is to focus on the verbal and visual; yet, its overall affect on the mood of this montage is undeniable. A single piece of music was used throughout that had been carefully synched to match the unfolding sense of drama and anticipation. The fast high-key tinkling of a piano used to introduce the segment is later blended with the deep dirge of a cello, setting the heavy mood of the doping allegations. Fast high-pitched violins and drums were also used for dramatisation. For example, Anderson Cooper's emphatic statement that 'His lawyer calls the report a ... witch-hunt', with the word 'witch-hunt' dramatically emphasised, is accompanied by high-pitched violin strings then followed by a short double-drum beat that marks the end of the segment before the voiceover moves on to 'Finally ...' Music, while still a relatively intangible modality, nevertheless clearly plays an important role here in giving the whole segment coherence by not only continuing through it and marking key junctures but also providing an overall sense of mood.

The interrelations of modalities, however, are not confined to this segment alone. Rather, this segment and the other similar ones are part of a complex strategy of framing the interview as a whole.

Framing the Interview

This section explores the overall structure of the interview in terms of framing. I follow a similar approach to Scollon (2008), who in turn drew on Goffman's (1975) framing theory and on Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001). As discussed above, OW and her producers contextualise the interview by telling the story through the use of a video montage depicting the background events and by preceding later segments with further montages. These montages supported the ideational content of the interview by illustrating background events, but they had also been carefully chosen to frame and evaluate these events. In the segment discussed above this was done using a male voiceover, reminiscent of a movie trailer, that serves as a guide to the viewer through LA's rise to glory and fall to disgrace. As discussed above, there were other voices, including those of newscasters and other relevant actors, such as the UCI president. Together with the voiceover, the music provided coherence to the narrative and contributed to its drama through changes of pace. In the later segments, these same resources were used to introduce not only other key events but also other key people in the narrative. There are Tavis Tygart, the USADA investigator, and Floyd Landis, who alerted USADA to LA's doping, as well as other former teammates, who by this point had already made televised confessions and provided information about doping on the team, including Tyler Hamilton, George Hincapie and Frankie Andreu. In addition, Betsy Andreu, Emma O'Reilly and David Walsh are featured as people to whom LA owes an apology. These later segments are framed not with the male voiceover but with OW's voice.

Besides the video montage used to frame segments, OW also framed or supported some of her questions with quotations read from her notes and used a video player in the room as a device to have LA reflect on his former self.

Schematically, the interview can therefore be represented as occurring within a sequence of frames. At the outside is the *voiceover*, which is closely associated with the music, and title screens that frame the segments off from other programming and the commercials that interrupt it. The first video montage is also accompanied by this framing voiceover, and in later framings some video preempts a second layer of montage, which follows.

If, following Goffman (1975), one were to represent the outer layer as *animator* (introducing the event), then the next layer of montage, which is accompanied by OW's voiceover, might stand as the *author* since it is here that the narrative is evoked. Since the interviewer is so closely associated with the author layer, LA is effectively reduced to the role of *principal*.

The organisation of framing constructed within the interview can thus be summarised as in Fig. 3.1. The thicker arrows indicate how the semi-otic resources in one frame contextualise and shape the resources in the next layer. Being at the centre of this construction in the role of *principal*, LA is effectively constrained to confess. The thinner arrows simply indicate that the different modal resources are used in conjunction with each other. Finally, a thin two-way arrow is used to represent the showing of the past clips of LA's doping denials as a focus for comment, or rather to elicit an apology within the interview. Overall, the framing and focus on the specific accusations LA had denied and the people he had hurt through his aggressive denials of drug-taking, as well as the identification of those who implicitly supported him (such as Dr. Michele Ferrari), set up a narrative of his wrongdoing and a clear framework for his confession.

Armstrong's weakened position within this interview context would have been very different from the power he had held as a rider at press conferences and, as will become apparent in the following sections, LA's confession and apology are interspaced with moments of denial and defiance as he tries to take charge of the emerging narrative. The implications for him of confessing were particularly serious for someone who had earned enormous wealth and prestige as a result of a positive image that appeared to have been built on cheating to win races and then on maintaining the lie to protect himself. His attempts to negotiate or deny features of the story that had already been attributed to other observers made him look unconvincing, particularly as clips included those showing him in court making denials in a recognisably similar way.

Apology and Contrition

During the course of the interview there were 21 examples of moves that were concerned with apology. Armstrong used a rich array of grammatical resources for these apologies, reflecting a variety of hedging strategies.

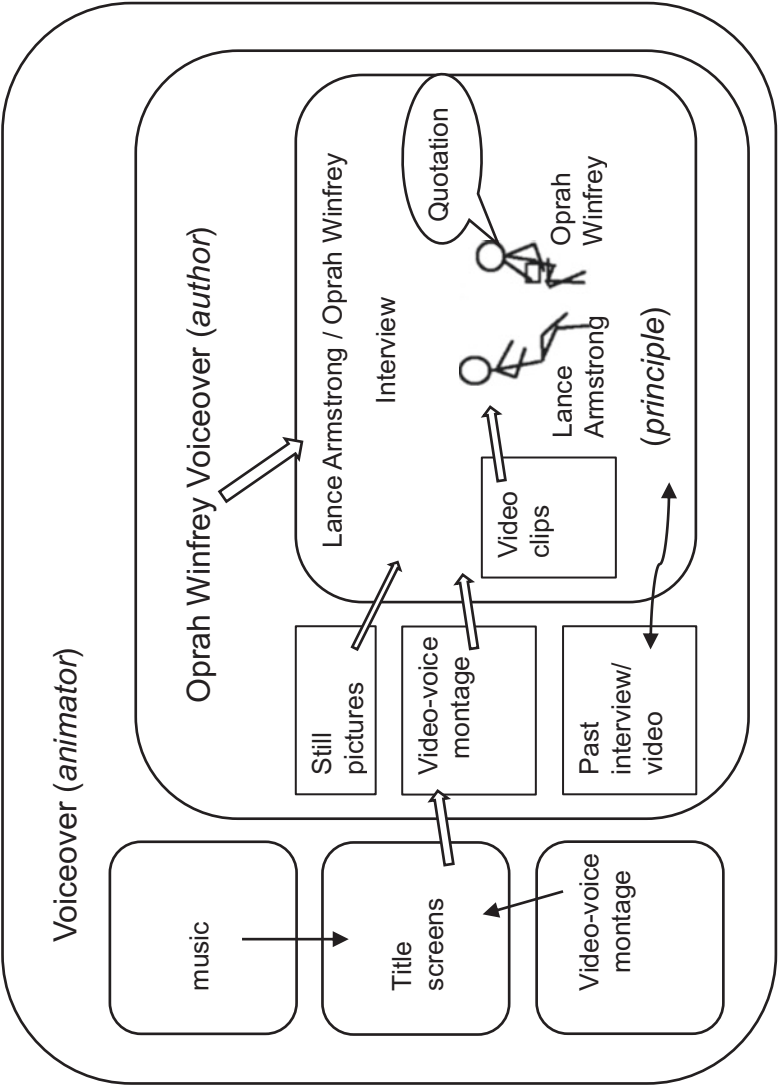


Fig. 3.1 Framing in the OW-LA interview

Around fourteen minutes into Part 2 of the interview, OW repeats her question, 'Do you owe David Walsh an apology?' David Walsh was the *Sunday Times* journalist whom LA had sued for libel over an article implying that he had taken drugs. Armstrong responded with a conditional, 'I'd apologise to David.' Presumably what he means is 'If I met David Walsh, I would apologise to him.' Nevertheless this use of the conditional repositions the question as hypothetical and shirks the metaphor of debt. In contrast, he offers a much fuller apology to 'those millions of people who believed', which breaks down into four moves indicated in square brackets as follows:

- (1) [express sympathy for effects of wrongdoing] 'I say I understand, your anger, your, your, sense of betrayal, um',
- (2) [identify wrongdoing] 'You supported me forever, through all of this, and I lied to you',
- (3) [apology] 'and I'm sorry.'
- (4) [promise to make amends] 'And, and, I will spend, and I am committed to spending as long as I have to to make amends.'

Although this is the fullest apology in the interview, the fourth move is followed by 'knowing full well I won't get many back', an expression of self-pity which may also give the impression that he is apologising in order to win back public support. It also corresponds to the weakest level of apology that one could paraphrase as 'I am sorry it happened for my own sake.' A more involved apology would embrace 'I am sorry this happened for your sake' as in the first move (1) above and then acknowledgement of responsibility and wrongdoing. The four-stage apology above shows that a full apology would embrace a number of moves.

Apology strategies may include avoiding apologies, mitigating or refusing blame and attempting to renegotiate narratives of blame. In terms of the macro structure of the interview, the first part focused on eliciting a general confession and understanding of doping practices but actually failed to move beyond what was already known and saw LA disputing some of this. The second half (actually much shorter) went into further

detail by considering the people whom LA had felt threatened enough by to attack in public, and OW invites him to acknowledge his wrongdoing and apologise to these individuals.

More generally, the pragmatic area of apology negotiated by LA and OW during the interview might tentatively be represented as concerned with four acts of apologising and a variety of options for realising each of them. The four acts are to *confess*, *accept/refuse blame*, *apologise and compensate*. The options for *confess* would therefore be to *admit or deny* wrongdoing or to *identify or blur* (i.e., try to avoid identifying by leaving unclear) the act of wrongdoing. Similarly, *accept/refuse blame* might include *accept, mitigate or refuse*. The specific act of apology itself, in the sense of ‘saying sorry’, would seem to be a matter of either apologising or refusing to apologise, but LA uses a range of implicit apology strategies that could be represented in terms of: *express sympathy* (or not), identify a previous apology (and so, by extension, identify a previous refusal to apologise), promise a future apology (or emphatically deny that an apology will ever be made in the future) and make a conditional apology that at least implicitly demands a condition. The David Walsh apology was presumably simply premised on an opportunity to do so. A conditional apology that actually demanded a condition would potentially be a rather different act. Finally, compensation may be offered as a sign of apology either materially or symbolically. This framework is illustrated in Fig. 3.2.

Evaluation and Multimodality

This section considers the use of *force* (one of the two aspects of the *appraisal* resource *graduation*) in a short segment, which illustrates how other modalities contribute to these evaluations. During this segment, OW raised the issues of LA’s responsibility for doping on his team in response both to a direct accusation from one of his teammates and the conclusion of the USADA report. The report was quoted in the video montage prefacing the section, and OW quotes the teammate’s accusation from her notes. In terms of the *attitudinal* resource of *judgement*, OW develops a *judgement* of negative *social sanction* (that LA forced his

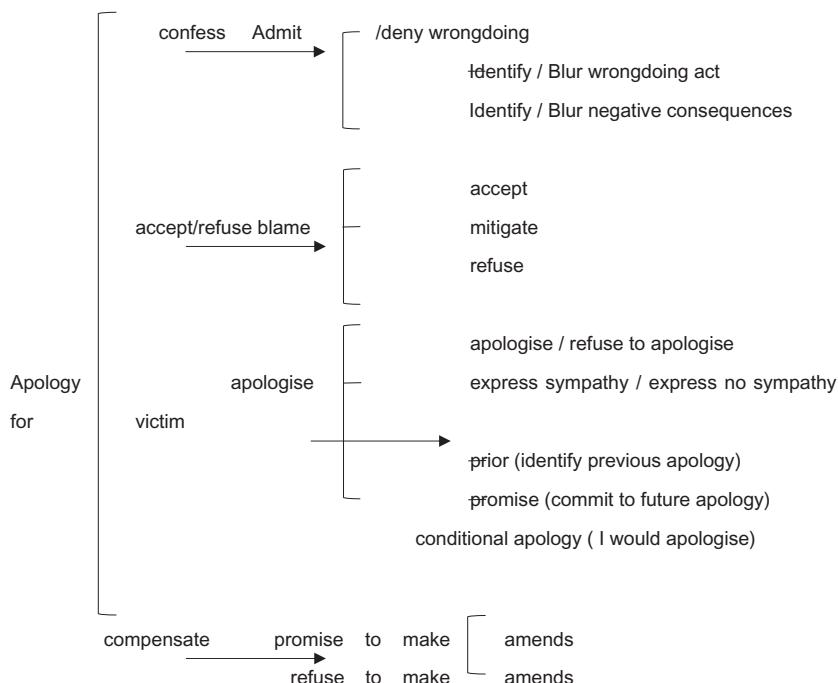


Fig. 3.2 Apology types in the LA-OW interview

teammates to dope) through highlighting a positive *social esteem* among his teammates. However, leaving this conspicuous ambiguity aside, this is also a dispute about how much power LA had on his team, so the issue of force, both in the everyday sense and the appraisal resource, is key to LA's attempts to downplay his influence.

OW (interview): Were you the one in charge?

LA: Er, well, I was the, I was the top rider, I was the leader of the team, I mean I wasn't the manager, the director, the duh-duh-duh.

OW: But if someone was not doing something to your satisfaction, could you get them fired?

LA: ... it depends what they're doing. I mean, if you're asking me, somebody on the team says 'I'm not gonna dope' and I say, 'you're fired'?

- OW: Yes.
 LA: Absolutely not.
 OW: Could you [...?]
 LA: I mean, could I? I guess, I could've. [interrupting rapidly and angrily]
 OW: [looking shocked] You could.

The single underlines in the extract represent the roles being disputed. Armstrong acknowledges his role as 'the leader of the team' but denies having the absolute power of being 'the one in charge'. He therefore positions himself as having less power (and *social esteem*) than OW credits him with. His 'duh, duh, duh' here meant 'etc.' and was accompanied by a hand gesture that indicated that there were many other positions on the team (including manager and director) with the power to make decisions. Meanwhile, LA uses modality (indicated by the double underlining) to assert his claim that he did not have the power to fire people on his team for refusing to dope. However, the apparent softening of force in terms of modality 'I mean, could I? I guess, I could've' is actually spoken with such force and anger that OW looks at LA with shock and fright. In other words, his tone of voice and the look on his face and in his eyes actually raise the force. Whereas in what follows, 'Look, er, er, er', his tone softens as he realises that his anger has betrayed him. This expression of anger is very short, lasting only a few seconds, but it makes him look a very forceful person, undermining what he actually says. A further example of how the speakers integrate the modality of physical gesture into the conversation occurs shortly after the segment quoted above when OW uses a gesture to emphasise LA's importance.

- OW: But you accept that if you are Lance Armstrong, the ...
 [waves her arms with emphasis]
 LA: No. I, I, I take that.

This gesture gives a sense of his importance and authority on the team. Though left unspecified beyond the gesture, this sense is nevertheless taken as understood by Armstrong. In evaluative terms, the gesture itself is effectively an emphatic evaluation of *force* and *social esteem* since it

underlines OW's point that, whatever his official position on the team, he was undoubtedly the key person and someone with considerable influence over his teammates. This gesture is also effective. Unlike the specific words that OW offers to characterise his influential position as team leader, it cannot be quibbled with as the wrong word.

Conclusion

The LA-OW interview was supposed to be a confession and an opportunity for LA to apologise publically for cheating by taking banned drugs to help win the Tour, for lying for years about doing so, and for bullying and suing people who dared to suggest that he might have taken drugs. Instead, LA attempted to use it to renegotiate his identity and the storyline within the context of what had already become public. Although LA showed himself to be a skilled user of evaluative resources, he was largely unsuccessful because of the contextual framework of the interview, which both discredited him as a speaker and undermined the points he contended by integrating evidence supporting his guilt into the framing video montages, as well as in other ways. Moreover, while he defended himself logically, and appealed by both acknowledging and downplaying wrongdoing, his momentary displays of anger were more memorable than his displays of sorrow. It is therefore not surprising that despite confessing to doping he failed to come clean in the eyes of the media. In this chapter, I have illustrated how appraisal can be used in conjunction with an understanding of positioning, intertextuality and framing and multimodality to reveal the reasons for LA's failure and OW's success in controlling the narrative.

The discussion here has also drawn attention to the role of visual resources as a semiotic medium that may be used not only to illustrate the verbal but also to provide a separate and complementary message of its own. Through an analysis of manga and the range of visual and verbal resources therein, the following chapter looks in considerably more detail at the relationship between verbal and visual resources and how they can be used to evoke identities.

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4

Multimodality Identity in Manga: *Yowamushi Pedal* and the Semiotics of Japanese Comics

Introduction

The two previous chapters focused on celebrities in European cycling. In contrast, this final chapter of the section explores fictional cyclists in the popular Japanese manga series *Yowamushi Pedal*. These characters have also, nevertheless, attained a degree of public celebrity, serving as ambassadors for the sport of cycle road racing in Japan. Like many successful manga, *Yowamushi Pedal* was made into an animated series, translated into English and made into a stage play. It also spawned a number of collector goods. In addition, the work was embraced by those promoting cycle road racing in Japan, so these goods extended to cycle shorts and jerseys for the fictional teams represented in the story. The author of the manga, Wataru Watanabe, was already a well-established manga artist with a number of successful manga series already completed when he wrote *Yowamushi Pedal*. The choice of cycling as a topic seems to have reflected his own adoption of the sport, which is also introduced in brief diary-style sections at the back of each book. These sections introduce rides and cycling events in which he participates and show him to be an active cyclist. These sections may seem a kind of indulgence, but they also

contribute to what seems to be his overall aim of promoting an interest in cycling in his readers and indicate solidarity with road cyclists in Japan.

More generally, besides telling a story, *Yowamushi Pedal* is deliberately designed to inform Watanabe's readers about cycle road racing. Although the story is of a fictional high school competition, many of the features of the competition are borrowed from European cycle racing, particularly the Tour. In some cases, these borrowings are even explicitly introduced as such through extra frames diverting from the main narrative. It is perhaps, then, no surprise that he has appeared as a guest at numerous cycling events and even as a guest commentator on Japanese broadcasts of European cycle races. Both he and his characters have therefore become celebrities within the world of Japanese cycle road racing.

The series depicts the adventures of a fictional adolescent schoolboy, Onoda Sakamichi, and his friends and rivals, who are engaged in an inter-high school road race competition in Japan. The way the fictional identities within the comic book are evoked builds on very similar resources to those explored in earlier chapters. Indeed, one of the probable reasons for the popularity of *Yowamushi Pedal* is the rich portrayal of characters, whose growth, experiences and relations are developed over the course of the series. In this chapter, however, I am concerned not so much with the narrative itself as with exploring the ways in which visual and verbal resources are integrated into what, for want of a better expression, one might call a *manga semiotic* that is both verbal and visual. This chapter therefore considers the implications this semiotic has for the identities evoked, including the fictional characters, the author, and readers.

Besides the novel idea of evoking a celebrity who is actually completely fictional, another reason for being interested in manga is its potential as a semiotic system in its own right. The analysis of the LA-OW interview illustrated how visual and audio modes including music contributed important contextual meanings to the primarily verbal event of the interview. Manga could be said to be slightly different from live television because, from the outset, it is created using resources that closely integrate the verbal and visual. Since manga is still essentially drawn by hand, it also belongs to a category of media that predates the digital resources of new media. At the same time, it represents a tradition of evoking fictional

visual identities that implicitly extend into the new media worlds of digital animation and virtual reality.

In order to explore identity resources in the context of manga, this chapter reports on a provisional analysis of multimodal resources in manga focusing on the use of written text. Multimodal analysis drawing on SFL has developed with considerable sophistication, yet there has been little research to date into the multimodal resources at work within Japanese manga. This is perhaps due to the complexity of the visual language of comics and the fact that, unlike picture books, where visual and verbal modalities are separated (as written text and illustration), the modalities of comics are closely integrated. In order to explore the way in which verbal and visual modalities are integrated within manga, this chapter proposes complementary outlines of the verbal and visual resources involved in characterisation, drawing on an analysis of the popular Japanese manga series *Yowamushi Pedal*. The integration and overlap of these resources is discussed through an account of the ways in which written text is used in manga as both a verbal and visual resource.

Language and Multimodality

When one talks of language, as when asking the question, ‘What language do you speak?’ or stating, ‘This book has been translated into the English language,’ the general assumption is that one is concerned with verbal language in spoken or written form, though sign language and braille show that it is possible to have other modes of language. Systemic functional linguistics has also largely followed this assumption in adopting a division between language and context, though it tends to be accepted that meanings evoked through language are dependent on, and shaped by, context. On the one hand, this approach potentially subsumes all meaning-making resources besides verbal language into context; on the other hand, viewing language itself as a semiotic system opens up the potential for analyzing nonverbal semiotic systems. This second option is the one exploited in multimodal research. Halliday (2013) notes that some texts, such as books illustrated with graphs or other visuals, are ‘multimodal’, implying that meanings are created through image as well

as text. He argues that these visual meanings can generally be glossed by language. In this case, visual resources play only a minor role, which is encompassed by the verbal resources. At the same time, Halliday acknowledges that there may be other kinds of texts that are actually ‘multisemiotic’ (Matthiessen 2009), so that language and semiotic systems in other modalities are involved in the construction of meaning. In this case, Halliday suggests that they ‘are manifestations of different semiotic systems not isosemantic with language, and they need to be theorised in their own right’ (Halliday 2013, section 2.3). In this sense, for Halliday, these semiotic systems implicitly fall outside the study of linguistics because they are not verbal and therefore need to be theorised as a separate field of research, which Halliday has nevertheless effectively endorsed in the work of his students and colleagues, who have developed multimodality within the SFL framework (O’Halloran and Smith 2011). Research into multimodality carried out within the SFL framework has begun to indicate that the basic principles of SFL can offer a fruitful way to explore texts where nonverbal modes of communication play a prominent role. Some studies have focused on the way the interaction between modalities is integral to educational contexts (Kress et al. 2001; O’Halloran 1998), and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, picture books have also been a productive focus for multimodal studies (Guijarro 2014), as have digital contexts (Gardner and Alsop 2016). Nevertheless, this research currently occupies a relatively marginal position within linguistics. In defending multimodality, Kress and van Leeuwen go so far as to claim that there has been a cultural bias toward verbal, and particularly written, modes of discourse that has tended to undervalue the semiotic communication of other modalities, but this bias is nevertheless potentially changing:

Societies tend to develop explicit ways for talking about those semiotic resources which value most highly, and which play the most important role in controlling the common understandings they need in order to function. Until now, language, especially written language, has been the most highly valued, the most frequently analysed, the most prescriptively taught and the most meticulously policed mode in our society. If, as we have argued, this is now changing in favour of more multiple means of representation,

with a strong emphasis on the visual, then educationalists need to rethink what will need to be included in the curricula of 'literacy', what should be taught under its heading in schools, and consider the new and still changing place of writing as a mode within these new arrangements. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, p. 34)

This perspective suggests that education and society as a whole, as well as linguistics, would do well to recognise the implications of the digital age as one in which semiotic resources are not limited to verbal resources but rather are spread across a range of modalities.

While it could certainly be argued that face-to-face communication has always been multimodal in the sense that body language, gesture and facial expression are an integral part of communication, the increasing spread of multimedia texts both online and offline has begun to make multimodal approaches to textual exploration seem increasingly relevant. Manga is one genre where multimodal resources would seem to be particularly well developed. Nevertheless, multimodal resources in the context of manga need theorising in ways that are both practically applicable and potentially relatable to the wealth of semiotic theorising that has been done in the realm of systemic functional linguistics.

Multimodal Research and Manga

Research into multimodality has already modelled and described semiotics within images and in the interaction between image and written text (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, 2006), drawing directly on Halliday's functional grammatical categories (Halliday and Matthiessen 2013) and being exemplified in relation to a variety of texts that incorporate image and text (O'Halloran and Smith 2011; Royce and Bowcher 2007) and include the study of children's picture books (Guijarro 2014; Painter et al. 2014). These studies show that the role of images as illustrations in such narratives is far from straightforward and involves a complex interplay of semiotic systems in the evocation of meanings. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this research highlights the ways in which ironies

are evoked through conflicting verbal and visual meanings. Picture books are one type of text that depends as much on visual representation as verbal representation for its meanings, but other genres also need to be explored. As Painter and her colleagues suggest:

Just as the elaboration of a semantically based verbal grammar of SFL (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) was informed by linguistic investigations of many different registers and genres ... so it can be argued that our current understandings of visual meaning need to be further studied through closer exploration of a variety of different visually based text types. (Painter et al. 2014, p. 3)

Another important type of visually based text is the comic book, and Japanese manga in particular is a potentially fruitful area for research where visual and verbal resources appear to have been developed into a complex semiotic system that integrates verbal and visual resources. For example, the renowned manga artist Osamu Tezuka, known for his manga series *Astro Boy* (*Mighty Atom*) and more generally recognised as a grandfather of manga, is quoted in Cohn (2013) as saying about manga, 'I don't consider them pictures ... in reality I am not drawing. I am writing a story with a unique type of symbol' (p. 1). This suggests that Tezuka considers manga an integrated visual and verbal language. It is this 'unique symbol' that is the focus of analysis here.

A considerable amount of the analysis of manga to date has been done in the absence of a specific theory of language and communication with the purely pragmatic aim of instructing would-be manga artists in the practice of their target profession. An English example written by a prominent Japanese manga artist is Hirohiko Araki's *Manga in Theory and Practice* (Araki 2017), but there are other works in English (generally about comics in English) such as Eisener (2008) or McCloud (2006). Nevertheless, there is a growing body of work that seeks to analyse the communicative conventions of manga through linguistic frameworks, including Tjierry Groensteen's (2015) analysis of French comics and Cohn's (2012, 2013) account of the language of American comic books, which draws on his background in transformational generative grammar

to classify visual conventions as well as argue for a grammar of visual conventions. Echoing Tezuka, he outlines the semiotic potential of manga:

Humans use only three modalities to express concepts: creating sounds, moving bodies, and creating graphic representations. I propose further that when any of these modalities takes on a structured sequence governed by rules that constrain the output—i.e. a grammar—it yields a type of language. Thus, structured sequential sounds become spoken languages of the world, structured sequential body motions become sign language, and structured sequential images literally become *visual languages*. (Cohn 2013, p. 3, emphasis in original)

Cohn's three 'modalities' do not easily map onto SFL or multimodal ways of representing meaning, so any multimodal account of manga inevitably involves some reconceptualisation, but his account has also influenced work into the analysis of visual design within an SFL framework, such as the analysis of frame design in comics proposed by Bateman and his colleagues (2016). Finally, Ingulsrud and Allen (Allen and Ingulsrud 2003; Ingulsrud and Allen 2009) investigate the cultural reading habits of manga readers in Japan and even suggest a perspective on this as viewed through SFL's three metafunctions.

Yowamushi Pedal

The example used for the analysis here is the Japanese comic book series *Yowamushi Pedal* (hereafter, *YP*) by Wataru Watanabe. *Yowamushi* literally means 'weak-insect' and is a slang expression used to describe someone as a 'weakling'. Although the name *Yowamushi Pedal* is never used in the comic, it implicitly refers to the chief hero of the narrative whose name is Onoda Sakamichi (with the name *Sakamichi* meaning 'hill road'). Sakamichi is a shy manga 'geek', who unwittingly develops strong cycling legs by riding the 80 km round-trip to Akihabara every weekend on a heavy shopping bike so that he can explore the anime shops there. He hates sports, but when his plans to start an anime club in high school fall apart he finds himself being persuaded to join the cycling club by one

of his classmates, who sees him cycling up the steep hill to the school's back entrance with apparent ease, even singing his favorite animation theme song as he does so. The rest of the series then follows the adventures of Sakamichi and his teammates and rivals through the training and riding of a fictional annual inter-high school cycle road race that covers roads likely to be familiar to cyclists living in or near Tokyo. The series was not yet complete at the time of the analysis, which covers up to August 2015 or Issue 41.

This series was chosen because of the rich representation and character development of participants verbally, visually and narratively. In addition to these fictional characterisations, the author provides explicit representations of himself as a cyclist in a section at the end of each book that also positions the reader as a beginner cyclist or potential cycle enthusiast, initiating the reader into the culture of cycling. One measure of the author's success in this regard is that the series has been praised by those interested in promoting cycle road racing as sport in Japan for the informative way in which it has stimulated an interest in cycling. Further proof of its success is its adaptation into an animated series and stage plays. It has also been used as the basis for an array of promotional goods that reflect the broader identity the series has come to attain as a brand.

It is spurious to speculate on the reasons for this success, but one of the attractions I found as a reader when I encountered the series was the narrative development of characters and the range of representation from extreme caricature to realism. Similarly, I enjoy the way fiction and realism are blended in the narrative and the representation of the scenery and characters. The narrative draws both on professional racing in Japan and Europe and the world of Japanese high school sports clubs. Even the routes that the fictional races follow appear in remarkable detail, as I can attest from riding some of them myself.

Outline of the Study

The study focused on the narrative and conceptual strategies used to represent participants in both verbal and visual modes. In manga, written text is used for a variety of purposes, such as in captions, speech bubbles and thought bubbles, as well as to express sounds or atmospheric moods.

Written text also appears as signposts, notices and branding labels on clothes and bicycles, as well as other features of the landscape. The style in which these different forms of written text appear in manga varies according to usage. For example, some signs may appear in a particular style for the sake of verisimilitude, while brand names or those that mimic them may use the appropriate fonts to make them recognisable. In other cases, the language in speech bubbles or the atmosphere may be distorted to create particular effects and so may the representation of the characters or their surroundings. In this sense, the written text of manga is therefore a part of both the verbal and visual semiotic, and the study focused mainly on describing the ways in which written text was employed as both a verbal and visual resource.

The analysis was based on detailed readings of the text to identify relevant features to be explored, which were followed by closer textual analysis. The features for exploration were recorded in a notebook, and snapshots were taken of the relevant frames or pages using a Kindle edition of the series on an iPad. The qualitative software tool NVivo was used for organising and classifying these images. Finally, a more detailed analysis of individual frames was made using a visual analytical tool called Multimodal Analysis-Image (MultimodalAnalysis 2013). The rest of this chapter outlines a framework for exploring these resources based on this analysis. It should be noted, however, that while these tools are useful ways of recording and building an analysis of visual images, there is, as yet, no way to automate tagging of visual images, though as Bateman et al. (2016) point out in relation to their analysis of visual layout in comics and graphic novels, it seems conceivable that the development of visual classificatory systems in conjunction with the development of suitable software may one day enable automatic tagging and corpus-based analysis.

Verbal and Visual Resources—From Graphical Representation to Genre

As noted above, manga has been described as a unique meaning system that blends visual and verbal resources. Nevertheless, in order to explore manga within an SFL multimodal framework, the visual and verbal

resources will be described independently, followed by examples of how written text, which is normally considered a verbal resource, may also work as a visual resource in the context of manga. In general terms, it can be said that the basic semantic unit of verbal discourse in manga is the morpheme represented through the characters of the Japanese writing system. The visual space is made up of graphical strokes, which make up units of visual meaning that include both physical objects, such as people or elements of the landscape, and lines that represent movement, speech bubbles and so on. These are effectively the visual morphemes (VMs). The point at which we identify a VM may be debatable, but like a verbal morpheme it must be identifiable as a unit of meaning that cannot be broken down further. Thus a brand mark on a bicycle would be a VM, even if it consists of a word such as 'De Rosa' that could be broken down further in verbal semiotics (at least in Italian). One or more morphemes can then make up a word, or, in visual language, one or more VMs would constitute a meme. This level of meaning making is effectively a labelling of the constituent parts of a manga frame.

As well as combining morphemes into visual and verbal 'words', relationships are evoked through grammar. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), in their book *Reading Images*, propose a grammar of visuals that draws closely on the functional categories of SFL grammar, which can be used to describe individual frames in manga, much as functional grammar is used to describe clauses and clause relationships. Ideational meanings are represented through the visual physical and metaphorical depiction and situation within the picture frame. So, for example, in the scene where Sakamichi is hit by a car, the moment of impact is shown so that the scene can be analyzed as a material process (hitting) with the car as actor participant and Sakamichi as the goal participant.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), interpersonal relations with the reader are encoded through the angle of representation and modalities through the style of representation. In this scene, Sakamichi is shown in a less realistic style and at some distance, disengaging the reader from him. This disengagement is further emphasised in the following frame, where he is shown as a very small and featureless figure flying through the air.

In addition, in manga there are conventions for showing temporal relationships, i.e., bubbles represent imagined scenarios. In *YP*, episodes from the past are depicted on a blackened frame.

Textually, since it is possible to describe the visual realisations in verbal terms, one might go along with Halliday's observation, noted above, that visual imagery can effectively be glossed by verbal imagery. However, the particular way that participants and the scene itself are represented means that any translation of this visual frame to a verbal-only text would inevitably change the meaning at least as much as translating from one language to another. Kress and Van Leeuwen work principally with single images to explicate their visual grammar, but manga, which is a multi-frame extended discourse, is also potentially analysable at the level of *discourse semantics*. Moreover, the specific features of manga as a type of discourse, and the regularities and patterns of variation among Japanese manga as a prolific type of published text, mean that there is potential for genre analysis and beyond into the realm of its social function and consumption, as explored by Ingulsrud and Allen (2009).

The scope of multimodal exploration into manga within an SFL context can therefore be represented as in Fig. 4.1 as a parallel account of verbal and visual resources that extends from graphical representation, through the lexico-grammatical strata, to discourse semantics and genre,

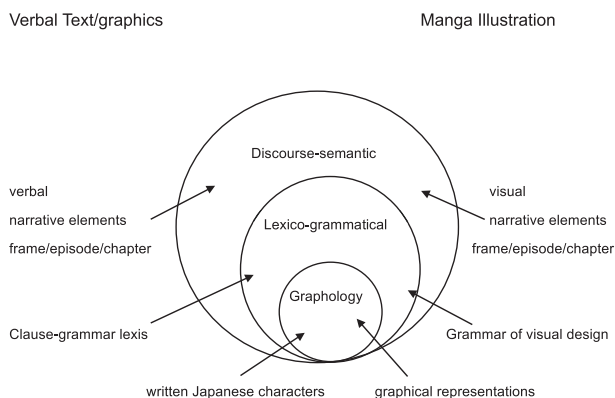


Fig. 4.1 Verbal texts in manga mapped onto the SFL framework

and finally into social discourses. However, the integrated nature of verbal and visual modalities in manga means that a division between the two modalities is not straightforward because written text often takes on features of visual semiotics, as when words are written in exaggerated fonts to represent shouting.

Verbal Resources in Manga

In *YP*, written script is used for a variety of functions. At the graphic level fonts are used systematically according to their purpose so that it is easy for the reader to distinguish between captions, speech bubbles, sounds or atmospheric signals, and text that is embedded into the fabric of the scene represented, including notices or clothing brand marks. Captions are written in a standard printed typeface. Speech bubbles also use this as a default, but fonts are varied to reflect things like volume (large for shouting) or emotional states, sometimes appearing in large flash bubbles or even breaking out of the bubble altogether. Expressions of sound and movement also have more dynamic and varied fonts, and do not have bubbles around them. Writing embedded into the landscape usually becomes largely visual as the scripts used imitate the script that they represent in the real world. This use of different representations of written text reflects a move from verbal to more visual use of written text, and a systematic account of these different uses seemed like a potential way in to understanding how verbal and visual resources are integrated in manga.

The first narrative page of the first issue of *YP* (which follows profiles of the characters and title pages in Japanese and English) consists of five frames that read top to bottom and right to left (or clockwise). The first of these (See Fig. 4.2) is a landscape showing the entrance to a station and its surroundings but with no apparent focus of action. It also appears at first glance to be an entirely visual image. On closer inspection, the reader can see some speech bubbles with the words '*wai wai*' on the top left and right side of the station. Since the words '*wai wai*' do not correspond to actual speech but rather express the sound of excited talk, they may be treated as a behavioural and are not linked with a specific participant. These bubbles are semi-disembodied, though, because there are two

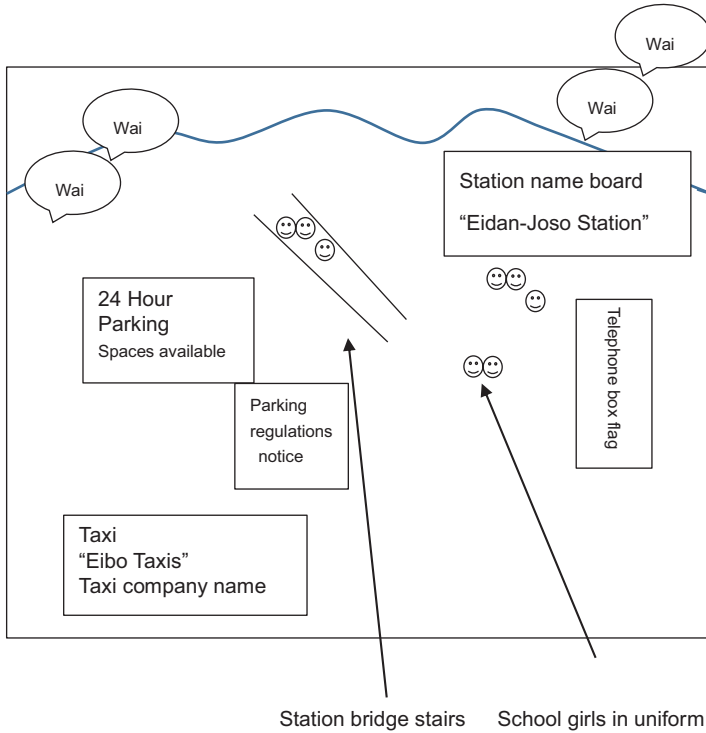


Fig. 4.2 Diagram of frame 1 of *Yowamushi Pedal*

groups of girls wearing school uniforms who could be viewed as the source of the *wai wais*.

On closer inspection there are also several other indications of writing in this first frame, including the station-name placard, a name on a taxi, a car park sign and notice, a banner and some vaguer shapes such as those indicating the station map. In these cases, the writing is integrated into the landscape for the sake of verisimilitude. The parking notice and other signs have no narrative focus except to evoke an authentic scene. For this reason, the actual words of the parking notice are not shown; however, in the case of the station name, it is also *informational*. Since it identifies the station name, it could be classified as *informational-identifying*. Other examples of *informational-identifying* included race numbers and names and class numbers on school sportswear (Fig. 4.3).

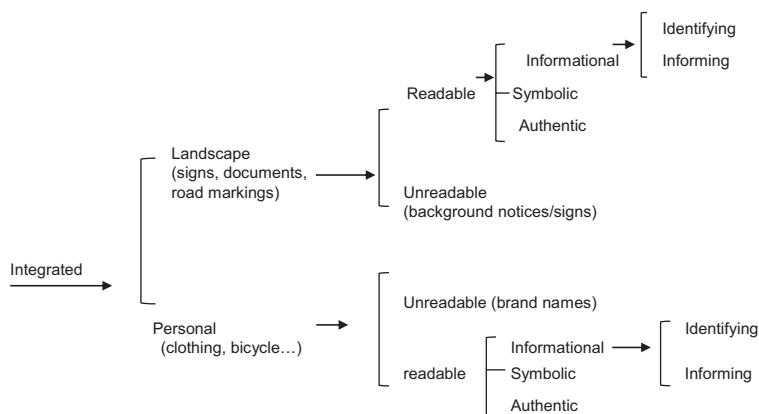


Fig. 4.3 Integrated verbal resources in manga

An example of an informational element of the text that contributes to the narrative would be the title on a cover of a book being read by Sakamichi—*Bukatsudo no Shiori* (*Handbook to School Club Activities*). This contributes to the frame by informing the reader that Sakamichi is reading this handbook. It also serves to introduce the narrative theme of school clubs.

Readable elements of the landscape can be divided into three types: signs to signify authenticity, such as the car park sign or notice, or the banners hanging from the school roof; frames, such as one with the caption *futsu no gakkou de aru* (it is just a regular school); and highlights, such as a notice saying *Nyugaku Omedeto* (Congratulations on Entering School). In the latter case, the meaning of the sign is highlighted to mark the season as the beginning of the school year where such notices are displayed, showing that the setting is indeed a typical school.

Such forefronted written signs that provide only an implicit contribution to the narrative are classified as *symbolic*. Other *symbolic* uses of text would include brand names on clothing or components, in cases where they contribute to the identification or characterisation of participants in the narrative. Since I was interested in exploring the way identities were evoked in manga through characterisation, I separated out the integrated verbal resources of the background from the personal ones used as part of the identification or characterisation of the manga characters. As illustrated in Fig. 4.4 this means that the *Landscape* and *Personal* resources represent a parallel range of possibilities.

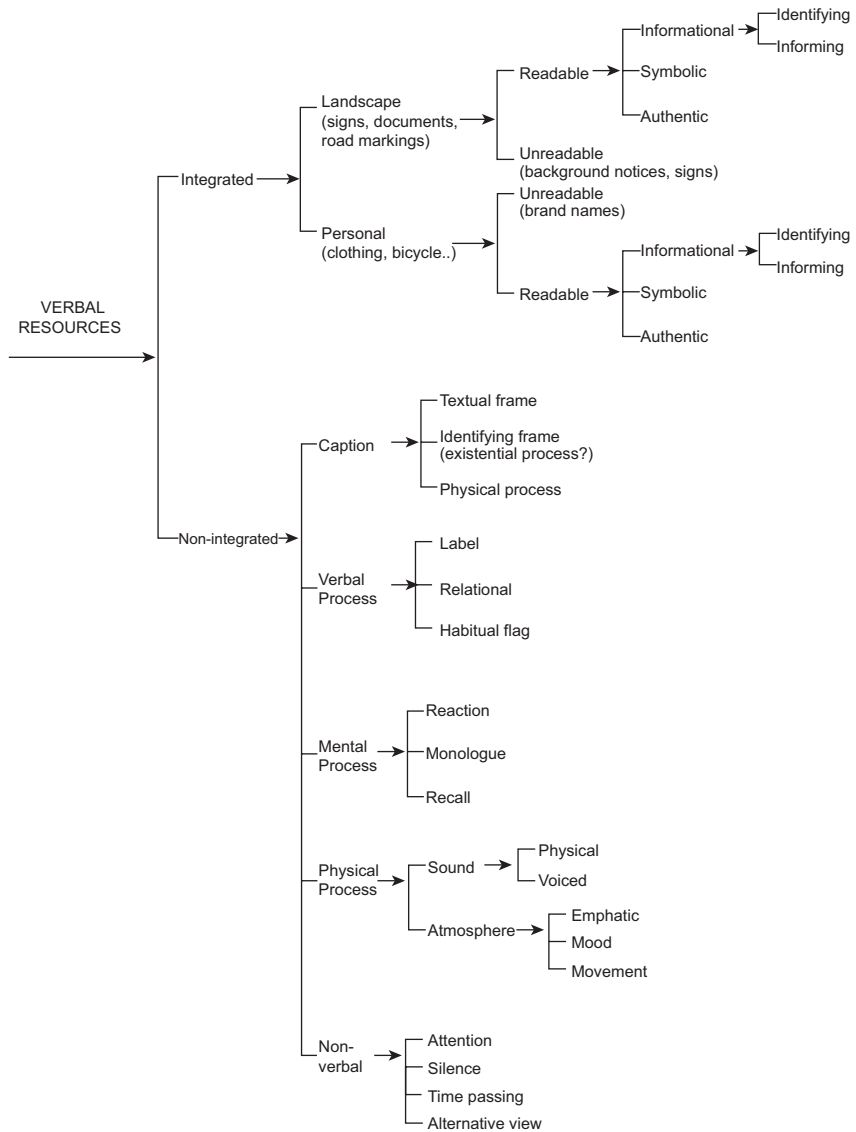


Fig. 4.4 Verbal resources in manga

Nonintegrated Resources

Integrated resources are background verbal resources that are also an integral part of the visual semiotics of manga and serve such functions as identification. They also contribute to the authenticity of the scene and typically mimic the visual appearance of the graphic styles used in the world they represent. Hence brand names mimic those of the brand fonts they represent. This dimension is important but considerably less prominent than the *nonintegrated resources* that constitute one of the distinguishing features of comics, including manga, such as the use of captions, speech bubbles, thought bubbles and other sound effects or indicators of emotion or atmosphere.

Captions are explicitly outside the frame of the scene or events being portrayed. As in the analysis of framing in the LA-OW interview, captions represent narrative voice. In *YP* the narrator has a minimal role that is generally confined to the opening introductory scenes or the description of the characters in the front pages of the book. Even so, there are two principal kinds of caption, which might be defined as *broad* and *specific*. *Broad* captions describe or preface a whole scene, while *specific* ones identify, describe or evaluate people or things within the scene. Hence, *broad captions* are used to identify, describe and label the school, as is indicated in the following rough translation of captions on three successive frames on the same page introducing the school:

1. *Chiba Prefectural Sohoku High School* (caption above distant view of the school)
2. Located on Kodakai Yama (literally: ‘Small-tall Mountain’) in the northern part of Bosou Hanto, fifteen minutes by bus from Gakuen Jousso Station on the Sobu Line.
3. It is an ordinary high school.

Specific captions also represent the narrative voice but intrude into the frame. The animation toys that Onoda Sakamichi likes to collect are introduced with black labels as follows:

1. Figures from the latest DVD games,
2. Character goods.
3. A complete network of Gashapon (lucky dip toy dispenser machines) from old to new versions that [Onoda] loves.
Akiba (Akihabara) has everything he loves.

Although prominent in the very early parts of the first book, such narrative captions are absent during most of the action and otherwise occur as asides from the narrative action to explain facts about cycling.

Speech bubbles are direct quotations of speech and therefore can be described as *verbal process* since they frame the words spoken and as such stand for *verbal process* verbs (such as ‘tell’, ‘shout’, ‘say’ ...). The verbiage within the speech bubbles would be amenable to a separate lexicogrammatical analysis that may also include other kinds of process, an analysis that can already be done using conventional SFL resources. However, from the point of view of characterisation, there are three fundamental ways in which speech bubbles implicitly shape the speaker. One is the *labelling* of others by use of their names or nicknames; another is *relational* verbal interaction or positionings; and the last is the use of distinctive expressions or ways of speaking that serve as *habitual flags*, indicating mannerisms such as Yowamushi’s nervous stammers. Similarly, *thought bubbles* also contain verbiage representing the thoughts of a speaker.

In their most conventional formulations, speech bubbles have a pointer or *tail* directed to a specific speaker, whereas thought bubbles either have no tail or a small circular *thought bubble tail*. Thought bubbles represent *mental processes*. Three principal types of mental processes can be distinguished by their distance from the action of the here and now: unspoken *reaction* to the ongoing action (closest); internal *monologue* (moving into the mental world); and recounts reflecting on past memories—*recall*. *Recall* is also a strategy for introducing episodes from the past, which enables both elaboration of the narrative context and development of the characters. Throughout the series, this shift into recall and past time is represented by the use of black background squares.

The final nonintegrated verbal resources are *physical processes* and *non-verbals*, which between them embrace the range of resources known in Japanese as *giongo* (onomatopoeia) and *gitaigo* (mimesis). Japanese has a

rich array of such expressions (unlike the narrative voice) that pervade the manga series and might be said to be a particularly distinctive feature of Japanese manga more generally. I have labelled the *physical processes* as *sound*, on the one hand, and further subdivided them into *physical sounds* (the creak of a rusty chain) and *voiced* for such unverballed sounds as breathing or the *wai wai* of distant excited voices mentioned above. On the other hand, *atmosphere* can instead be divided according to the dimension of the atmosphere being evoked: *emphatics*, which implicitly evaluate the situation in some way, as when *don* is used to show that a kind of trump card has been produced; *mood*, which has nothing to do here with the grammatical sense but rather signals the emotional context; and *movement*.

Nonverbals comprise specialised resources of *attention*—meaning expressions and resources used to highlight the action (such as the way *don* is used to imply that something is produced, as a kind of trump, to impress people), to indicate silence (the absence of sound), to show *time passing* (indicating time passing rapidly or slowly) and to indicate different viewpoints.

So far I have suggested a tentative model of the verbal resources in manga that attempts to capture their functional role in a highly visual semiotic environment by classifying the range of resources that occur across the manga series *Yowamushi Pedal*. Building on the model proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen for exploring still images, a similar approach could be taken to the description of the contributions of visual resources as illustrated in Fig. 4.5. This model effectively describes all the other graphical marks that are not associated with the graphology of words in terms of their semiotic meanings in this particular manga.

Visual resources are considered here as five fundamental features. *Human* refers to the physical representation of the characters. At first glance, it may appear that there is a wide array of representations of characters over the course of the series. Nevertheless, they can also be broken down into a limited range of meaningful features (face, body, clothes, possessions) relevant to characterisation. Moreover, just as in the appraisal model *graduation* was used to describe the effects of *force* and *focus*, characters in *YP* are shown as either simplified or detailed (as in sharp/vague focus), and those shown in sharp focus may be either realistic or carica-

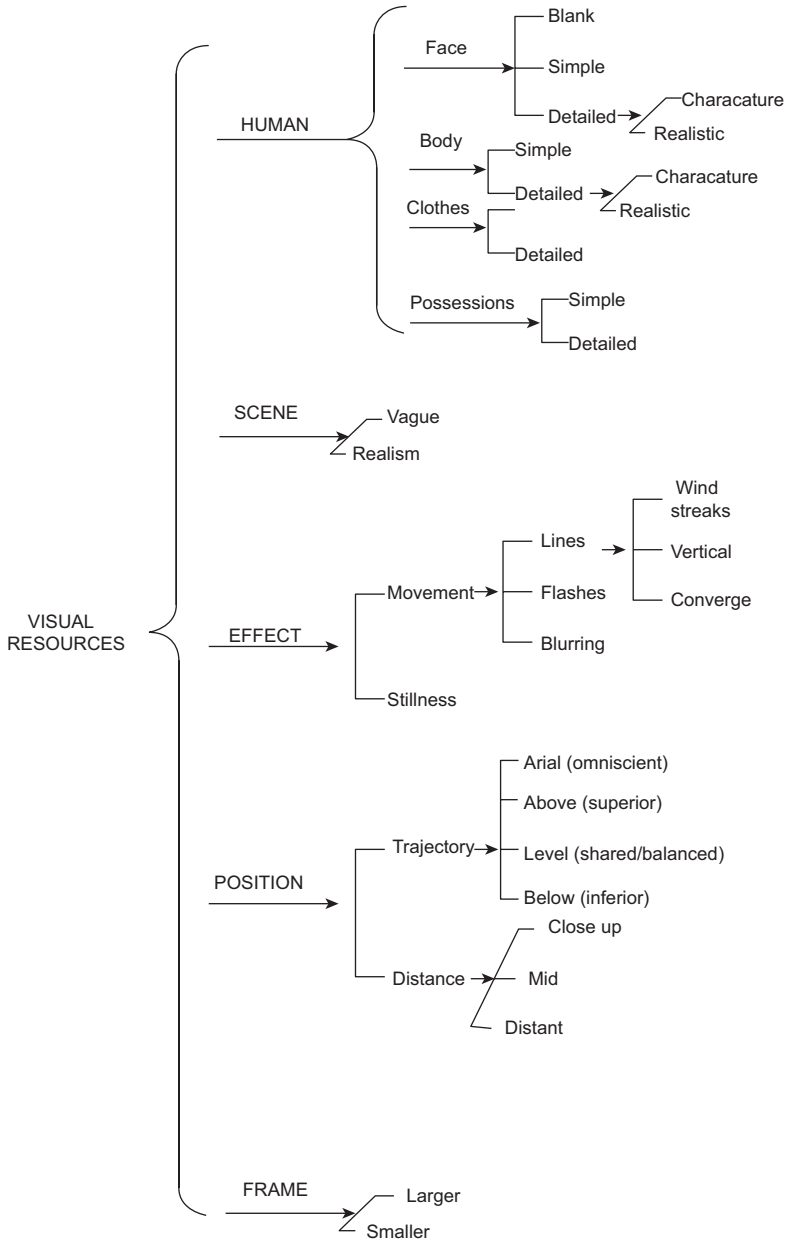


Fig. 4.5 Visual resources in manga

tured. Realism/caricature is a different choice from strong or weak *force*, but in *YP* caricature is closely linked to dynamism. Given that the level of detail and caricature tend to be uniform across a specific realisation of a character within a frame, in some cases an analysis may benefit from collapsing them into a simplified representation of people as either simple, detailed or caricatured. Conversely, finer levels of delicacy may be developed in a fine-grained analysis.

The realism of the *scenery* in *YP* has implications that go beyond the style of representation, as many of the settings, such as the specific routes raced over the course of the events the characters participate in, are actual places that are shown in a remarkable amount of detail, as I can attest from familiarity with many of the roads depicted. While scenery might also be dissected in terms of details of landscape, gradients and curves or the representation of distances, a simple cline from vague is probably adequate at this level.

In the same way that the rich verbal language of onomatopoeia and mimesis in Japanese provides a rich resource for evoking sounds and atmosphere, the regularised use of various lines to depict various effects evokes *speed* and *movement*. The key techniques in *YP* are lines consisting of vertical lines, wind streaks and lines converging towards the horizon. Lack of these features, which also break up the background and even the riders, represents stillness.

Positioning represents the way in which *characters* are placed within the manga frame. This can be depicted not only in terms of relative height in relation to the characters but also in terms of relative distance shown by size, which in turn is dependent on how much of the character is visible in the frame.

Finally, related to this is the actual size of the frame itself, which may even be a small fragment (generally depicting a minor detail). As Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) demonstrate, positioning of people in an image also positions them *in relation to the viewer* and so has implications for the reader, who is also positioned.

For all these resources, their meaning and usage is dependent on their positioning in the narrative, and the constant interplay among all these effects constitutes a dynamic semiotic resource that zooms the reader in and out of the narrative and changes the texture of the effects accordingly.

This overview of resources in *YP* was constructed through an analysis of the resources used over the course of the series. It was only possible to get a sense of the range of strategic choices through an analysis of those that were actually made and, if the description here were extended to further degrees of delicacy or the use of individual features were to be quantified, a detailed analysis of the whole series would be needed. The reason for this is that, in order to describe the range of choices, actual examples need to be found. Even so, a detailed description of these elements would be of little help in analysing the meaning-making resources of manga if it were not combined with an account of the way that these resources interact within a narrative.

In fact, the meaning choices being made are apparent in the context because they occur in nearby frames. This is rather like the traffic light that I described in the introduction to semantic meaning in Chap. 1. The lights themselves represent choices, but the range of choices is readily apparent to drivers because they occur in a definite sequence. In the same way, visual semiotic meanings within a system that is effectively being created by the writer can be more easily interpreted where they are juxtaposed. Hence, while the meanings implied through the detailed realistic representation of a character in this manga can be discerned through the regularised use of such representations in the narrative context, and differing contextual meaning associated with the alternative modes—minimalist or caricatured representations—these stylistic choices would have little or no meaning in a manga if only one mode was used consistently throughout. For example, if a manga were to use a highly realistic detailed style throughout, this style could only have meaning if identified as a specific style of manga in relation to other manga and could not be considered a meaning-making resource in itself.

There is not space here to provide a full account of the way narrative resources interact with these meanings, so I will instead focus on three examples. The first looks at how physical viewpoint is shifted to create a sense of focus on a specific character and how sound effects used over sequential frames can contribute to a sense of realism. The second example considers how time is condensed and stretched over the course of a race and how the visual detail, size of frame and use of special effects

evoke key moments of a race, particularly the final moments of a sprint finish. The final example considers the narrative development of a specific character over several episodes.

In each of these examples, my description is necessarily an interpretative one because I am translating both the original Japanese and the images into written English. I hope, though, that these descriptions will be sufficient for you to get a sense of how both the visual and verbal resources discussed above are realised as narrative resources.

Unlike Onoda Sakamichi, the unlikely hero of *YP*, Imaizumi Shunsuke is a cool, handsome student already experienced in cycle racing. He starts high school with the ambition of getting revenge for the defeat he suffered as a junior high school student. He is introduced to the reader over four pages and around twelve frames in the first volume. The scene begins when he is approached by a girl from his previous school while he is on his way to the locker room where he will change into his cycling gear for a training session on rollers.

At the top of the first page, the frame is split between a narrow frame only a quarter of a page-width wide and a wider one. The narrow frame shows only the school uniform of a girl with her head and feet cut off by the frame, with a second girl just visible behind. It also has a speech bubble with the words '*a, ano*' (a bid for attention that might be translated as 'er, um' in English). This bubble has its tail pointing to the next frame which suggests that the first represents what Imaizumi sees, as he is shown to be much taller than the girl but with his head hanging down and a slight slouch and the girl standing in front of him. The second girl is not shown in the wider frame in which both Imaizumi and the first girl are viewed side on.

This frame also shows that they are standing in a broad corridor near a staircase, a landscape that makes it clear they are inside the school building, and from the perspective of a slightly distant onlooker, as the features of their faces are not shown. Instead, Imaizumi has three short flash strokes almost like exclamation marks, above his head, suggesting surprise. The speech bubble in this frame contains the continuation of the girl's words: 'You are Imaizumi-kun from Ichiba-Daisan Junior High ... Aren't you?' She uses the polite Japanese suffix '*desu ne*' ('Aren't you?') as a sign of deference that would be unusual in addressing someone of the same age as the speaker.

In the frame below she is shown, face only, wide-eyed, as presumably Imaizumi would have seen her had he raised his head at hearing her voice. The speech bubble continues her introduction, explaining that she was at the same school though never in his class, but it is positioned behind her, in the same frame surrounded by diagonal lines that emphasise his movement towards the back of the frame. He appears to have already walked past her as she continues to speak.

By the next frame, he has already moved further in the distance, as represented by the back of a tiny figure, framed by the girl whose body is half-turned towards him, and his head further still, with the '*suta-suta*' sound of his indoor shoes echoing across the linoleum of the school corridor floor.

In the next frame, Imaizumi is only indicated by a dark line, as the back of the girl and two other girls standing close together look down the corridor after him and the conclusion of her speech is shown in giant bubbles that hang above them as if echoing down the long corridor. She explains: 'Actually, I saw you at your last race ... It was so close wasn't it ... second place ... ah ...' This shift to an outside observer's view of Imaizumi brushing past his schoolmate, whose gaze and voice follow him as he disappears into the distance, suggests that while his schoolmate seems to admire him he is not in a mood to be friendly. It also appears that he has completely ignored her and her words.

This impression is contradicted by the final frame of the page, which reveals why he is disgruntled. Imaizumi appears close up. Unlike the earlier close-up of the girl who had large dots for eyes, his eyes are carefully drawn to show the pattern of the iris, making him look handsome. His hand is cupped defensively on the back of his neck and there is a thought bubble behind him with a row of dots on the right and unbubbled words on the left: '*Junyusho*' (second prize) appears in a large bold script and below it 'with such a [big] difference *second* doesn't deserve a prize.'

The next page begins with a frame split between a sign on the doorway with 'boys' changing room' on it and Imaizumi sitting in front of the lockers looking glumly at the floor. In the middle of the page is a frame showing a close-up of the school club entry form in the club information book that has been filled in with his name and 'Cycle Racing Club', and a thought bubble saying, 'Afterwards I'll submit this so that I can participate in the National Championship; I have to race against that guy.'

On the same row is a narrow frame that shows a hand throwing the book into his bag with a '*basa*', a mimetic phrase that suggests an action being performed in an instant. In the same frame is a thought bubble with '*toriaezu*', meaning 'to begin with'.

The final large frame at the bottom depicts Imaizumi zipping up his long-sleeve cycle jersey covered with Shimano brand logos. The characters '*ji-i-i-i*' follow the shape of his arm indicating the movement of the sound of the zip up his body. He has large eyes (again with iris patterns) and sharp eyebrows as he stares out but slightly downwards, evading the gaze of the reader. This time his words appear in speech bubbles on either side of him: 'The closest one is the Inter-high [race].' And, 'Just you wait, Midousuji ...'

These two pages therefore do important work introducing the plot through the thought bubbles that identify one of the heroes of story and name his rival (Midousuji) while showing the disgruntled Imaizumi heading to the changing room to prepare for his training.

As with the video collages in the LA-OW interview, the verbal and visual layers are complementary but do not repeat each other. The bubbles represent the thoughts and words of the speaker but also inform the reader about the plot, while the visuals narrate the physical moment-by-moment action of walking towards the changing room, getting changed and looking at the club entry book. The action shown visually is both a plausible scenario for the words and thoughts that introduce this central rivalry and a symbolic one, which shows Imaizumi changing from a slouching schoolboy to a cyclist ready for action.

The following page is completely taken up with frames showing him training indoors with his bike balanced on rollers. The style of the scene presents a dramatic contrast with the cleanly drawn images of the previous pages. The first page is almost completely taken up with an image of Imaizumi in a short-sleeved jersey and shorts sweating and grimacing. Giant letters on either side of him spell out '*Ja-a-a-a-a-*', representing the sound of the bike whirring on the rollers, and jump out of the frame and overlap the edges and frame above. There is also a big flash bubble with '*ha-a*' representing his heavy breathing. His leg is drawn with vertical lines, giving the impression of blurred speed, and the space around him is filled out with long and broad vertical lines, which also give a sense of movement.

In the small panel above is Imaizumi's view of his handlebars, with three small 'ha' bubbles representing his breathing. His cycle computer shows his speed as 36 kph and heartrate as 192 bpm (probably near maximum).

At the top of the next page is a view from floor level close to the edge of the roller with the sound of the roller represented as 'gara-gara-gara-gara-gara'. In a narrow strip below it, his hair and face are represented by a simple outline with sweat falling from it. Interspersed between two 'haa' breathing bubbles are the words, 'What am I resting for?' and 'At this rate ...'

And in the final frame his face is shown looking left with his knee almost touching his chin and with a further 'Haa' another large 'Ja-a-a-a' and 'I'll never beat him' followed by 'win', which is repeated on the other side as 'win', 'wi-n'. In this case, the different viewpoints of Imaizumi training on the rollers show his determination to beat his rival by verbalising it. The visuals narrate him doing this by showing him in the act of training. The power he exerts is represented by the loud whirl of the rollers, and the different angles give a sense of time passing as he continues to train.

As *YP* is the story of participants in an inter-high school race competition, race narratives are central to the story. The results of the race are by no means predictable, and there is a noticeable contraction and expansion of time in order to represent the key moments of excitement in the race, particularly the final sprint.

A single race is represented over several volumes and generally in some detail. But while tens of kilometres may pass in a few frames, the final 800 metres of a sprint can last for half a book or more, albeit this may be partly due to interruptions by flashback episodes. As with Imaizumi's training, these more dramatic moments are drawn with larger flashes and vertical lines, and the riders themselves are more stylised and exaggerated.

In Volume 18, pp. 33–34, Midousuji is shown sprinting with a tunnel of flash marks blurring out the surrounding landscape with two riders chasing behind in the distance as he reaches the 800-metre mark. The word '*don*' written in huge letters heralds his appearance at the front of the race. The race is by no means over and lasts until page 191–192 with several double spreads showing dramatic moments that suggest the climax of the race before continuing with the words of the riders.

At 250 meters, Midousuji spreads his arms with his two chasers shown far behind him as he shouts, 'I've won.' However, he is wide-eyed and sweat runs from his face, though he looks frozen since there are no speed streaks or vertical lines. Sure enough, the next few pages show him fighting to get to the line.

Then with the goal in sight on page 163 the two riders are much closer, with the picture oriented diagonally and all three riders shown riding out of the saddle with their bikes thrown to one side—sprinting. To show that characters are reaching the limits of their energies, the faces and positions on the bike are increasingly exaggerated. In another race episode depicting the steep uphill finish of Mount Fuji, which itself lasts over two volumes, two of the main riders even grow phantom wings as they dig into their energy reserves and the writer's graphic resources.

In addition to these temporary distortions of characters to convey the drama of the race, characters are also developed through a variety of physical representations reflecting different contexts. As mentioned above, Midousuji is introduced as Imaizumi's rival and he quickly takes on the role of villain because of his grotesque appearance, exaggerated riding style and continuous taunting of Imaizumi, whom he refers to as *Yowaizumi* (literally 'weak'-izumi), through repetition of the word '*kimoi*' ('disgusting'), which he directs initially at Imaizumi but applies to other team members, particular in reaction to any touchy-feely notions such as team-spirit or the love of cycling.

Only after he crashes exhausted by the side of the road is the phrase eventually directed back at him. Ironically, *kimoi* is the way he is represented to the reader throughout the narrative, until the moment he heads to the finish line in the sprint finish described above when the narrative is interrupted with an episode from his childhood. Young Midousuji is recognisable by his saucer eyes but instead is a cute boy who visits his pretty mother in hospital. Telling his mother about his cycling and winning clearly delights her and she encourages him to keep winning for her.

These experiences and the sad death of his mother help to explain his ultra-competitiveness and perhaps imply that he is disgusted by emotional weakness because of the emotional shock he received through his mother's death. On one level this episode, appearing as it does as he approaches the finish line, looks like it will prepare the reader to

sympathise with him and accept him as the sprint winner. In fact, he loses, but the episode does create a visual link from the childhood face of Midousuji to the softer image of him as Sakamichi meets him as he is about to escape from the race ... until Sakamichi persuades him to return.

At the time of writing, the series itself is as yet incomplete, but the structure is such that it looks set to describe inter-high preparation and races over the three years that Sakamichi is in high school. The changes over this period can also represent the largest scale of narrative change and character development. As Sakamichi moves from first to second year, from *kohai* (junior) to *senpai* (senior) and takes on the role of team Captain, he is also given a new bike to symbolise his advancement.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced some of the multimodal resources at work in manga. I have focused on providing an account of the way the resources could be described as interacting visual and verbal resources. Despite the fact that unlike the previous two chapters, which focused on celebrity identities, this chapter discussed characterisation within the fictional realm of manga, there are a number of parallels with the written and video texts considered in those earlier chapters. First, these texts have been concerned with the evocation of identities through narrative and with competing identities and narratives. Cavendish retells the narrative of a race lost that was unpalatable in the context of a postrace interview, drawing on a range of narrative and evaluative resources in the process; LA, on the other hand, is shown losing control of his narrative as his interviewer shapes a confession that he failed to fully endorse. She does this by exploiting visual, video and even musical modes as well as verbal resources to frame him. I have suggested that an analysis of these resources goes some way to describing how she succeeded and LA failed.

Yowamushi Pedal deals with fictional identities in a quite different sense from the contested identities of the previous chapters, yet the account of the interaction between visual and verbal resources, narrative and characterisation is similar. Identities, particularly public ones, are

evoked through semiotic resources so that analysing the way in which they are used can take us some way towards an understanding of public identities as not necessarily false but as necessarily shaped in accordance with the use of semiotic resources.

Applied linguists and critical linguists have long recognised the role of language in shaping meaning and narrative, and discourse approaches, including the analysis of patterns of evaluation, have proved particularly productive in deconstructing identities.

As the analyses of the texts in this chapter have illustrated, semiotic resources are not confined to verbal resources, and traditional media texts of the kind associated with public identities may be better understood by considering such texts in terms of separate but interacting modalities. The relationship between public identity and representation is one that has long been a concern for public celebrities because the media has primarily been a one-way conduit from celebrity via professional media to the public. A distinctive feature of new media, however, is that both the media tools and the identities evoked are those of noncelebrities in semi-public spaces such as forums. This is the area that will be explored in the next section, which considers extracts from an online forum for cyclists.

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Part 2

Identity and Online Communities

5

Having a *Rashomon* Moment: Identity Negotiation in an Online Community

Introduction

This chapter introduces the cycling forum that will be the focus of the three chapters in this section of the book. It also offers a detailed analysis of a specific thread on the forum where participants reveal and indeed become aware of very different remembered perceptions of a shared ride. As such, this picks up on the theme of multiple perspectives—the shaping of experience and identities through narration and evaluation discussed in Part 1 of this book. *Rashomon* is the name of a Japanese movie directed by Akira Kurosawa that presents very different perspectives on the same incident and thus has come to express a perceptual gap in relation to a shared experience. The allusion to a ‘*Rashomon* moment’ leads to a renegotiation of the experience and with it the identities of the participants.

The title of this chapter derives from a forum discussion where early experiences of a club ride are recounted, revealing very different perspectives on the event and causing one contributor to remark, ‘I was having a *Rashomon* moment’, meaning that he began to doubt his own view of events until supported by another participant. As mentioned above,

Rashomon is the name of a Japanese film directed by Akira Kurosawa in which a number of conflicting accounts are given of the murder of a samurai, each reflecting the self-interests of the speaker. Just as the plot of the film revolves around finding an agreed upon reading of the murder, so the participants in the forum work to resolve their different perceptions of a group ride. Identity is explored as a process that happens in the tension between individual and community viewpoints. In addition, as the first chapter of three exploring an online community, this chapter introduces the notion of community identity and the *communities of practice* framework (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999; Wenger et al. 2002), which will be referred to throughout the chapters in this section.

The Internet has increasingly become an arena for the expression of identity, particularly the clustering together of shared identities through social networking tools like *Facebook* and *Twitter* and discussion forums of all kinds. Such resources not only allow for large-scale networking among individuals who are physically far apart but also offer opportunities for negotiating both individual and shared identities among communities with specialised interests. This chapter explores the kind of identity resources available to forum users, focusing on one such community.

Identity Negotiation and Communities

Identity defines who you are as an individual. Yet, just as signs within a semiotic system take on meaning through their relationship with other signs, so individual identities are shaped by their social interrelations with others. The social and psychological reality of *who you are* or *who other people are* is continually displayed, negotiated, asserted, denied, and modified in social situations and through social interaction. Moreover, the identities individuals claim for themselves may vary from one context to another in accordance with the social-relation potential of a situation. At an academic conference, a presenter will play out the role of a researcher closely associated with a particular research project. At home, after the conference, quite different identities may be uppermost, such as parent or spouse, or one based on some personal interest. It is just such a personal interest that is the focal concern for the community whose identity negotiation is explored here, a community of cyclists.

It may sound odd to noncyclists that people who ride bicycles can be seen as a community at all, as people who ride the train, drive a car or walk seem to have no such community. Although riding bicycles is a common form of transportation in Japan, as elsewhere, a *cyclist*, by definition, is someone who rides a bicycle for its own sake rather than simply as a means of transportation. More importantly, cycling evokes a passion among enthusiasts. As Bella Bathurst writing in *The Bicycle Book* put it, sometimes it ‘obsesses people’ (2011, p. x); consequently, cycling communities are rich sites for observing identity work. The obsessive nature of cycling among enthusiasts is nicely captured in books such as *Roadie* (Smith 2008), *On Bicycles* (Walker 2011) and *Bike Snob* (BikeSnobNYC 2010).

Such books help to define cyclists as a community but also highlight subcultural communities within the larger cycling community, including road racers, track racers, triathletes, commuters, touring cyclists and fixed-gear street riders. Besides shared passions, these subcultural communities are defined through shared values and a shared body of knowledge. This is not to say that every member will have the same knowledge and values, though among core members one would expect considerable overlap. The way individuals are positioned or position themselves in relation to the community defines their individual identities. Moreover, the way identities are negotiated through positioning has been extensively described by Harré and colleagues (Davies and Harré 1990; Harré and Moghaddam 2003; Harré and van Langenhove 1999). As Harré and Langenhove explain, ‘The concept of positioning can be seen as a dynamic alternative to the more static concept of role’ (Harré and Langenhove 2010, p. 106). Although my focus will be specifically on cyclists, much of what I observe about identity and community will hopefully have relevance to other online communities.

Intimate and Imagined Communities

Communities of cyclists (or any other collective group) may be said to consist of two kinds, which I will call *intimate* and *imagined* (after Anderson 1991). The *intimate* community consists of other cyclists one knows personally. Most typically, these will be cyclists with whom one

rides or against whom one competes. Such communities are not simply groups of individuals who do the same thing; they also have a structure and dynamic recognised by their members. Some members will be more central, perhaps leaders of the group, and others more *peripheral*. Core members, we can imagine, are likely to be more active cyclists in the community but also more experienced and hence probably more skilled and more knowledgeable about cycling. Considered in terms of Bourdieu's (1986) metaphor of *cultural capital* one might say that within the cycling community there are many currencies of this capital, which would include knowledge and experience, such as mechanical know-how, knowledge of human physiology and training, but also riding strength and skills. Individual specialised knowledges and roles—some of which may be professional (such as bike fitter, wheel builder or cycling coach), others of which may be community specific (such website administrator, ride leader or regular forum and ride participant)—contribute to the potential of the community as a whole. On the periphery would typically be not only less experienced or newer members who learn from the group but also people with appropriate knowledge or skills who are nevertheless not active participants in the community.

The structure and dynamics of communities have been described in a way that is pertinent here by Lave and Wenger (1991; Wenger 1999) with reference to communities of learning, including those of corporate culture, and developed and applied to a wide range of communities (Barton and Tusting 2005). These communities are referred to as 'communities of practice'. Lave and Wenger's *communities of practice* model is based on the idea that communities congregate around specific knowledge and practices and that an important function of the community is the dissemination of community knowledge and the adoption of its practices. This is done through those at the *core* actively sharing their knowledge and practices, and those on the *periphery* voluntarily seeking to adopt these practices and knowledges. A community can thus be represented using concentric circles consisting of a core group, an active group, and a peripheral group, with outsiders outside of this (see Fig. 5.1). The distance from the core implies that these differences form a continuum rather than being discrete. The model implies a more fluid model of learning relationships and identities than those of educational

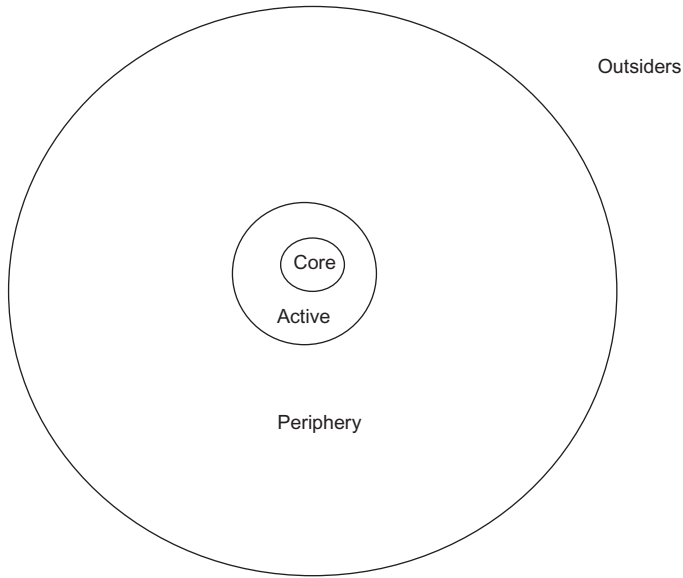


Fig. 5.1 Degrees of participation in a community of practice (Wenger et al. 2002, p. 57)

establishments, such as schools where the roles of teachers and students are fixed and separate. Identities within a learning community are constantly changing as beginners learn from more experienced members and in turn pass on their knowledges. In addition, Wenger et al. (2002, pp. 56–57) point out that members may occupy more or less active roles according to the topic. It is generally an organic conception of communities, though Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) have proposed ways in which such communities may be actively promoted within organisations. That the knowledges and practices disseminated within *communities of practice* do not necessarily have validity outside the community but rather are established norms within the community may indeed be central to the identity of the community itself.

The communities of practice model is potentially compatible with the SFL model outlined in Chap. 1 and explored in various ways in the previous chapters. As with the SFL model, the communities of practice model

sees knowledge as being produced and communicated in the social context. As Wenger-Trayer explained in an interview concerning the origins of the model:

Community of practice became such an important concept for us, theoretically, because it was the embodiment of this view of learning as happening at the boundary between the person and social structure—not just in the social structure or not just in the individual, but in that relationship between the two. (Omidvar and Kislov 2014, p. 269)

This has obvious parallels with Halliday's account of how language develops in children through social interaction. Moreover, what might be considered a key piece missing from the communities of practice model is the role of semiotic resources in doing this. On the other hand, Halliday's model (Halliday 2004) focuses on the interaction between mother and child because his original study focused on the interaction between his son Nigel and Ruquia Husan (Hasan et al. 2005). Painter's study, which builds on Halliday's account of Nigel's language development, also highlights the role of siblings and other social interactions. Meanwhile, Hallidean social interaction is at the heart of the regularities that shape genre and language more generally. The communities of practice model could therefore be seen as a potential link to describe how practices of semiotic usage operate within communities. Online communities, particularly thriving ones like the one discussed in this section of the book, therefore offer a potentially productive focus for exploring how a communities of practice model and a semiotic account of communication, such as SFL, might complement each other.

Cycle clubs (unlike golf clubs, for example) are primarily noncommercial organisations for facilitating communication among riders and transforming cycling from an individual activity into a communal one, whether through rides or races. Cycle racing is governed by a complex code of regulations administered by officials in order to ensure both fair competition and safety. In this case, participants are typically asked to sign documents showing that they understand and agree to abide by these rules in order to participate. Nevertheless, racing etiquette, not to mention the tactics to stay safe and succeed in the race, is something more

likely to be learned in an organic way through participation in races and observation of and communication with more experienced riders. Likewise, although many clubs provide (looser and more voluntary) guidelines to club-ride etiquette, many of the practices evolved to ensure safe and harmonious riding consist of unwritten rules. Shouting and pointing to indicate oncoming obstacles, signals to indicate changes of direction, and the positioning and movement of a pace line, whereby riders organise themselves to exploit the aerodynamic advantages of group formation, constitute fundamental practices. Particular clubs or groups may also develop their own specific practices that serve their needs. For example, lamppost sprints to communally recognised landmarks or ‘wait at the top’ (WATT) protocols (agreements for all riders to wait at the top of an extended climb for other riders to catch up) may be useful practices for ensuring that riders of differing strengths can push themselves on a ride while continuing to ride as a group. In addition to riding practices, cycling has a wide range of knowledges associated with it that are particularly valued in the context of competitive racing, such as training techniques, diet, bicycle fitting, and bicycle mechanics.

Fashion is also relevant to the group identity of cyclists. Specially designed lycra clothing and shoes are considerably more comfortable and practical than any other kind of clothing on a road bike, but they look peculiar to noncyclists. Not wearing proper cycle clothing and, for men, not shaving legs can signal a lack of commitment. Moreover, there are even debates about the appropriate design of clothes. Cycling fans can buy kits in the designs worn by their favourite teams and riders—and may even buy the same high-quality kits these professionals use—but this is sometimes frowned on as the sign of a newbie to the sport. Rapha also created a new kind of controversy among cyclists by creating a very high-quality cycle kit that is also very expensive. Those who can afford it appreciate the quality, while others inevitably envy what may look like a wealthy class of executive cyclists with unlimited budgets (Nash 2016). Cycle clubs, even online ones such as the one described here, have their own kits, and designing the kit itself is a communal project.

Online communities are often virtual ones with all communication being entirely digital. The online cycle club, however, can be seen as more of a cycling community for the digital age. It enables the organisation of

rides and race participation, as with traditional cycle clubs, but it also both enables a broader spread of peripheral participation by online-only participants and makes possible the sharing and archiving of a broader range of knowledge and community history. The club described here illustrates how, with a responsible administrator to maintain the page and active participation of users with a range of relevant knowledges and expertise, the traditional structure of a club committee, a regular schedule for club runs and even fees can be dispensed with, replaced by a more organic organisation where participants themselves largely define their level of participation and their role in the community. At the same time, online forums have their own codes of legitimate practice associated with the practices of posting and sharing cycling-related information. The public nature of the forum also means that it potentially addresses or conceptually connects with broader notions of audience and community, such as the idea of an imagined community (in this case of cyclists).

The *imagined community* refers to other individuals whom one does not know personally but imagines (and indeed believes) exist. The imagined community of cyclists consists of a much wider group of cyclists whom one does not know personally but who are perceived to share the same culture. The term 'imagined community' derives from Anderson (1991), who used it to refer to the community to which members of nation-states are perceived to belong, consisting mostly of people one does not know but with whom one supposedly shares lived experience and cultural beliefs. Just as media outlets such as newspapers and television may serve to galvanise a nation, cycling media, such as magazines and broadcasts of professional cycling, are focal to the *imagined community* of cyclists. Such online media relating to cycling are often linked directly to forum posts for comment.

The forum itself may be seen as a community extending from an intimate group of cyclists, who spend a considerable amount of time together offline and include a broader community of primarily online participants, to a much wider community of cyclists around the world, who may view the posts from time to time. The fact that the forum is viewable by anyone with an Internet connection means that there is a large virtual community of unregistered viewers that corresponds closely with Anderson's notion of an imagined community.

Researching Online Forums

Forums provide a meeting place not only for sharing knowledge and experience about cycling but also for expressing and negotiating identities. They also form an interface between intimate and imagined communities since participants may monitor forums anonymously at the periphery or engage actively with others, even arranging rides with hitherto unknown members. Even among intimate members of the community, forums are an important arena where identities are established, negotiated and played out, though cycling-related activities in the world outside the forum may be the place where identity claims are established. Forums are therefore a particularly rich site for exploring the relation between language and identity.

The resources available for identity work vary from context to context. A face-to-face chat about cycling is very different from raising the same issues in a published article. Online forums are an emerging discourse context offering a new mode of communication that is written and not face-to-face but very interpersonal. Forums are not only interesting emerging social contexts for exploring the negotiation of identity but are also equipped with an array of communicative resources, such as links and smileys, photographs and video. These multimodal resources enrich the possibilities for self-expression while offering challenging texts for linguistic researchers to explore.

The framework I use for exploring the language of identity negotiation in the forum incorporates a range of resources from the use of pronouns to narrative. The data derive from an online English forum for cyclists in Japan, most of whom are foreigners living in Japan. I chose this data source for the following reasons: (1) *Interest*: online forums are an emerging form of personal and group identity, and this particular forum represented a (very active) hub of communication for a cycle club. Not only did it replace the organisation of traditional cycle clubs but it allowed for discussion and consultation on a wide range of cycling-related matters. (2) *Convenience*: the data that constitute this social context is relatively self-contained on the website; it is plentiful, already in digital form, and organised in a way that makes it easy for the researcher to explore. (3) *Continuity*: this study continues the exploration of the relation between

language and identity in cycling in contemporary media discussed in the previous chapters. Although lacking the status of world champions or Tour winners, contributors to the forum nevertheless negotiate public identities as cyclists. The posts on forum participants are openly displayed on the Internet and read by an audience of (registered) contributors and other (nonregistered) followers (as can be seen by information about online users displayed on the site). I work with a 'snapshot' in order to describe the range of resources used by participants to flag or negotiate their identities. These resources include pronouns, synonyms, adjectival and other modifications, and narrative evocations of individuals and of the community.

Appraisal and the Exploration of Online Communities

As with the celebrity identities explored in the previous section, describing the negotiation of identity in the context of online communities can benefit from drawing on appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005) as a tool for analysis, since identity negotiation involves evaluation of the self and others, and appraisal handles evaluation in general. Accordingly, some researchers have found appraisal useful for exploring identity within an SFL framework. Don (2007), for example, drew on appraisal in her analysis of identity in contributions to an email list. Taking a genre-based approach, which focused on social interaction in the list, she demonstrated the usefulness of appraisal in the representation of social actors. Dykes (2011) has also brought appraisal into his analyses of textual identity in parental advice columns. He showed how the readers of such columns are positioned by the writer through evaluation while exploiting other generic resources, allowing the columnist to claim a position of authority. Elsewhere (Kiernan 2010), I have proposed that appraisal is useful for analysing evaluation in narratives concerned with identity and thus particularly so for a narrative approach to identity.

In terms of the Hallidean description of language as a whole, Martin and White (2005, p. 30) explain that appraisal occupies an area concerned with the interpersonal realm of Tenor at the language strata of

discourse semantics. In this chapter too, *Tenor* is a key resource in identity negotiation. I am also concerned principally with discourse semantics but begin in the lexico-grammatical strata and work up from there.

Data Selection and Ethical Concerns

As noted above, the data source for the analysis was an online cycling forum chosen for its overall relevance to the project of this book, which is to explore the semiotic resources involved in communicating identities in new media contexts. New media sources, such as online forums, not only offer new opportunities for researchers to explore community interaction but also raise new issues regarding the ethical collection and reporting of data. Whereas published autobiography and television clips originate in the public sphere and therefore analysis and critique of them follows established academic practices, the use of forums as data sources requires careful consideration in relation to ethical practices and sensitive handling. Such practices as joining an otherwise closed forum in order to gain access to confidential discussions for analysis without informing the members is obviously problematic.

One way to overcome this issue is to set up an experimental forum for the sake of investigation and limit it to those who agree to contents of the data being analysed. The principal problem with this is that the data may not be very useful, as the forum then becomes an empirical object rather than part of the sociolinguistic phenomenon that one is interested in investigating.

The forum discussed here was seen as a thriving socially situated community of practice that exemplified the positive aspects associated with the model (see Wenger et al. 2002, especially Ch. 3) and whose users were both genuinely and actively involved in the community. In this case, an alternative approach might be to try to seek out permissions from all those participating in the forum. With smaller forums, this may be feasible, but, in a large forum with many participants and new members joining regularly, prior consent would be nearly impossible to secure. In addition, in a situation where participants are already protected by handle names and avatars, the act of obtaining consent involves the researcher

in contact with participants, which potentially compromises anonymous participation in the forum. For this reason, I have opted to focus on a forum that, although it requires registration to post, is already viewable by anyone with an Internet connection. In practice, the site log-in statistics suggest that more nonmembers than members view the posts, indicating that the forum already has a public status.

Choosing to work with forum data already in the public sphere is one important ethical choice, but there are other equally important considerations. First, although forums may be in the public sphere, users do not always behave in ways that reflect this and, for example, may include information that either reveals their actual identities or is potentially incriminating in some way. Handle names may also be similar to actual names or in some way reveal the participants' actual identities, or avatars may simply be photographs of the participants. The lack of responsibility that some users show in protecting their own identities can be illustrated by bike thefts that occur when online discussions are seen by thieves.

The personal messaging system on this forum is designed to avoid unnecessary breaches of personal privacy, but it is also up to the researcher to ensure that any data used are fully anonymous as well as to avoid sharing any information that could potentially be construed as libellous or incriminating. In order to ensure this, I have used alternative pseudonyms to those found on the forum and have not included any reproductions of photographic resources on the site. There was little if any of my data that would likely be construed as in any way immoral or publicly offensive, let alone incriminating or illegal, but I have at least tried to ensure that the examples used here are not.

Finally, the focus of the studies described in this section is on the description and analysis of semiotic resources. It is therefore not in any way focused on any viewpoints expressed here that are irrelevant to this discussion. Rather, the examples chosen were selected according to their relevance as examples of the semiotic systems under discussion.

While some researchers may prefer to avoid data where signed permissions are not forthcoming, a rigid conformance to this convention may effectively mean that many current forms of communication cannot be explored and ultimately that descriptions of language will become either obsolete, due to an avoidance of attending to the evolving conventions of

online communications, or artificial, as a result of relying on laboratory simulations. This is not to say that ethical concerns should be overlooked; rather, I believe that researchers should act responsibly, which may mean that some data needs to be treated with considerable discretion (such as confidential or copyrighted material), while other material may deserve critical analysis (such as public declarations by heads of state). I trust that readers will find the examples I have used to illustrate this project of a relatively unobtrusive nature without being overly mundane. Both with the use of this online forum and other projects in this book, I have aimed to work within the guidelines provided by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) (Ess and AoIR 2002; Markham and Buchanan 2012) as well as those suggested by Townsend and Wallace (2017).

The Cycling Forum

The cycling website where the forum resides includes a number of features, such as a photo gallery, classified ads page and links, but most used and appearing in the centre of the main page is the forum itself. The forum is very active, with daily contributions from a wide range of participants on a number of topics. All contributions to the forum consist of posts, which are organised into ‘threads’ or ‘discussions’. Contributors can either add a post to an existing thread or start a new one. The top page shows 25 threads starting with the thread with the most recent post.

When starting a new thread, the first person posting needs to decide on the title as well as choose from one of ten topic forum types divided into four categories: General (1799), Tours and Races (748), Bicycle Technology (144) and Updates and Feedback (57). The numbers in parentheses represent the total number of threads in each forum at the time the project was conducted. Initial posts are usually questions, information or links calling for comment. Subsequent posts respond to previous ones, or the initial one, and may include quotations (from other posts), links to online articles, YouTube clips, images, maps or ride data uploaded from cycle computers and, of course, text, which can be punctuated with smileys appearing as emoticons in text format. All of these allow for a high-context communication, which, while lacking many

features of face-to-face communication, also has many advantages due to the use of links and which, moreover, remains as a permanent resource so that users who encounter problems similar to those discussed can learn from it. Despite the conversational format of forums the ‘discussions’ are effectively broadcast to a wide audience and take on a relatively permanent existence on the website, perhaps lending some permanence to the identities expressed. Replacing the physical presence of the contributor is a profile, which appears automatically beside each post.

The profile is prepared during sign-up and consists of a handle name, a rank (junior cyclist, cyclist, senior cyclist, or directeur), a flag to represent nationality and a location. Members can also upload a picture as an avatar. In addition, the date of joining and the number of posts to date are displayed automatically. Besides the profile, a signature section allows for further personalised customisation. The signature space is usually used for quotations or personal mottos, small graphics or personal blog links, but it also links to classified ads to highlight equipment for sale. The overall layout of the post is illustrated in Fig. 5.2. Although little reference was made to these profiles, they could be said to constitute the faces of the forum participants’ online identities. However, they only become relevant to identity negotiation when they come in for comment. This is rare, but examples include congratulations to a member who reached his thousandth post and a comment on an avatar, which showed

Date, year, time	
Handle name	Title of the thread
Rank (junior cyclist, cyclist, senior cyclist, directeur)	"Messages may directly reply to a quoted section of the text. In this case, the quoted text will appear above (or below) the text."
Photograph (self, bike or picture related to the handle name)	Message (may include links, photographs or screen captures and smilies)
Joined: Month, year	
Location: city	Signature: Favorite (cycling related) quotation or motto, logo, link to homepage or something you want everyone to be aware of (e.g. bike for sale notice)
Posts: (total number of posts to date)	

Fig. 5.2 Post layout

a steep hairpin bend on a thread discussing whether going uphill or downhill was the most enjoyable. An example of a signature quotation was: 'Don't buy upgrades, ride up grades.' This quote neatly alludes to the obsession in cycling with improving equipment and compares it to the importance of training hard by riding up steep inclines; it positions the member as someone more concerned with training than equipment.

On the front page of the forum, the handle name and date of posting for the first and last posts are also shown, together with the thread title, number of posts and the number of times the thread has been viewed. Members signing onto the forum are also reminded of when they last logged on and how many posts have been made since their last visit, and they are alerted to any personal messages. Moreover, handle names of all logged-in members are displayed as well as a number showing how many nonmembers are viewing the site. At the time of data collection there were 2723 threads, which contained far too many posts for this preliminary study, so I decided to work with a snapshot of the data.

The Snapshot

In order to keep resources manageable, I decided to work on describing and analysing a clearly defined portion of the forum. I picked a date and time and recorded all threads displayed on the front page at that moment. The disadvantage of this was that, as with randomly pressing the record start and stop buttons to capture an hour of television, the threads were almost all unfinished, although they included all posts up to that point in time. Either waiting to follow through threads to their end or attempting to select a range of completed threads might have made for more rounded or balanced data. However, the snapshot was a relatively natural choice in the sense that it was exactly what someone entering the forum for the first time at that moment would have seen. More importantly, it provided a reasonable variety and quantity of data. Table 5.1 shows the overall data for the forum at the time of the snapshot, and Table 5.2 shows the general content of the data snapshot.

A numerical comparison of the threads in the snapshot is also indicative of generic differences in the individual threads and, more importantly

Table 5.1 Summary of forum data at the time of the snapshot

Forum type	Forum subclassification	Threads
General forum	General discussion	1480
	Introductions	319
Tours and races	Official [Club] tours	63
	Unofficial tours and short runs	497
	Bicycle races	163
Bicycle technology	Bicycle mechanics threads	144
Updates and feedback	Updates, feedback and admin contact	57
Total		2,723

Table 5.2 Summary of the forum snapshot

Total threads:	23	(29,850 words)
Total posts:	295	(29,850 words)
Average words per post:	102	
Max posts per thread:	47	(6661 words)
Min posts per thread:	1	(24 words)

here, the kind of identity work available to participants. The thread with the most posts (47) began with a link to a press article about the practice of riding track bikes on the road without fitting them with brakes. Although riding a bicycle without brakes sounds dangerous, riders who are able to lock the fixed wheel of a track bike with their feet can stop—a technique known as a ‘skid-stop’. Comments on the article led to a discussion of skid-stops and more generally to a debate over the merits of single-fixed-wheel versus multiple-gear bikes, creating a divide between those who favoured fixed and those who favoured multiple. The length of the thread reflected the divisiveness of the topic, which stirred personal feelings closely aligned with the participants’ senses of identity as cyclists (fixed-gear riders versus multiple-gear riders).

In contrast to this divisive topic, the report of an accident involving a taxi (36 posts) drew together well-wishers and sympathetic criticisms of dangerous taxi drivers. The thread with the next largest number of posts (24) was concerned with the organisation of an ambitious ride over several of the toughest mountain roads outside the city, beginning with invitations and commitments to participate (including assessments of ability to successfully complete the ride) and later concluding with reports and pictures.

The ranking, however, looks very different when words per thread and average words per post are considered. By contrast, these measurements highlight a technical thread concerned with how to replace a broken spoke. Unlike the other threads mentioned, the broken spoke thread was a detailed technical discussion among experts, which included photographs, video and links to manufacturers' manuals. The lengthy descriptions contrasted with the brief goodwill messages to the taxi accident victim and brief commitments or apologies regarding participating in the group ride. The writers on all topics were generally the same, though the technical discussion had a much smaller pool of contributors. Since the topic seems to influence such basic patterns as average words per post, topic type may also influence generic patterns within the forum, with accident threads, technical threads and ride plan/report threads possibly constituting three subgenres.

The topic of the thread also affects the kind of identity work possible. Technical forums, for example, created opportunities to position participants as experts through display of technical knowledge but had less room for other kinds of identity negotiation, such as the positioning of oneself within a group of friends through a planned group ride or expressing one's allegiance or otherwise to brakeless fixies. The generic realisation of identity negotiation is a worthwhile area for exploration. In addition, as empirical research, mapping the relative contributions between core and peripheral contributors to the forum would be an interesting way of developing the idea of the forum as a community of practice. For the remainder of this chapter, though, I will focus on the level of description of identity resources, which might usefully form the groundwork for such studies. I look at the specific linguistic resources through which a contributor can position the self.

Resources for Identity Negotiation

Membership in the forum and use of a profile, including avatar and handle name, provide participants with basic identities. However, contributions on the forum flesh out these identities by drawing on resources ranging from selective use of pronouns to narratives. In this section, I

describe the range of resources based on an analysis of the snapshot from the forum.

The most basic unit for signalling identity is the name. Although the choice of handle name is a kind of identity choice—once chosen it is permanent and so not a resource for identity negotiation. Instead, users who knew each other offline (usually through riding together) as well as through the forum had a choice between using handle names and real first names. Accordingly, the widespread use of first names on the forum was a way of signalling the (more intimate) offline relationship. Occasionally, newer participants who had not established this offline relationship concluded their post with their first name, perhaps so that they too could move onto first-name terms. This distinction was less clear where handle names consisted of or incorporated first names (e.g. Fred31), which could be readily used. In this forum, the use of handle names was therefore the default polite form, whereas first-name use signalled intimacy.

As in other social contexts, the use of pronouns provided an important resource for the signalling of identity. In English, pronouns allow a distinction between self, addressee and other (first, second and third person). In addition, plural forms allow for inclusion of others associated with the self, addressee and other. Yet the English pronoun system is ambivalent when it comes to defining who is included in 'other'. From the perspective of positioning, participants in the forum instead seemed to be drawing on a semantic framework of the kind illustrated in Fig. 5.3, whereby there is not only a distinction between self, addressee and other but also between whether the implied others were specified individuals or not. In the context of the forum data, in the cases where specified individuals were signalled, they were members of the forum (or identified individuals, such as family members), or what I have called the 'intimate community'. In contrast, the unspecified references implied imagined communities such as 'taxi drivers' or 'riders of fixed bicycles' in general. Notably, this model does not map neatly onto the pronoun system as both 'self' (me and others, not you) and 'you and me' are designated by 'we'/'us', while 'other' must be either 'he'/'him' or 'she'/'her'. Despite this,

while there were cases where more than one reading seemed to be possible, the position was generally clear from the context.

Besides pronouns, another strategy used for identifying these positionings was alternative nouns, which were often evaluative terms in themselves. Some examples from the data include ‘a-holes’, ‘badasses’, ‘biker’, ‘cops’, ‘cyclists’, ‘drivers’, ‘gaijin’, ‘gal’, ‘guy’, ‘idiots’, ‘kids’, ‘LBS’ (local bike shop), ‘newbie’ (sometimes ‘noob’), ‘pedestrians’, ‘people’, ‘riders’, ‘snoozers’, ‘wannabes’, ‘yahoos’, and ‘zombies’. A slightly more overt way of evaluating referents was through the use of adjectives or noun phrases. Expressions such as ‘nonexperienced rider’ and ‘really strong guys’ are examples, as is ‘breakaway Charlies’, an expression coined by one participant to describe riders who escape from the group when they feel energetic but return for cover when they tire.

By using such expressions, contributors are able to evoke evaluations without leaving the evaluation of these identities open for debate. In one discussion, evaluations evoked by a contributor were drawn into question. In this case, the positioning was refuted using an explicit topic-comment sentence: ‘[You were] the guy that kept surging forward and pushing the pace.’ Finally, the most complex and detailed resources for positioning and negotiating identities were narratives. Taken together, the resources for representing identity can thus be summarised as forming a continuum from the use of names to the use of narrative, as indicated in Fig. 5.4. As the figure shows, the more complex the resource becomes, the more potential there is for negotiating identity.

Among the narratives there were not only conventional anecdotes about the contributor or some other person or persons but also some more condensed narratives that appeared as a series of follow-up stories on the theme of first-time rides with the club:

- (1) I think with P’s first ride with me and the CycleForum he got hammered out pretty well.
- (2) T was given up for dead on his first CycleForum ride and we even had to layout [sic] boyscout trail markers for him! (that still makes me laugh!)

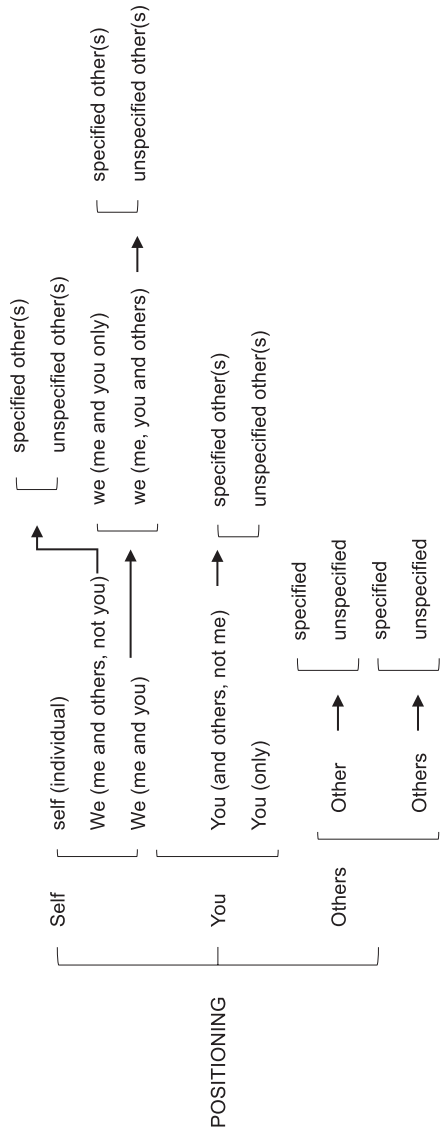


Fig. 5.3 Self and Other positioning


Form	Example	unevaluated
Personal nouns (handle names /real names)	EasyRide, Tony	
Pronouns	I, you, we, they ...	
Alternative noun (synonym)	Newbie, geek	
Noun phrase (adj+noun etc...)	Non-experienced rider, really strong guys	
Comment (actor evaluated)	{you were} the guy that kept surging forward and upping the face	
Narrative		
		evaluated

Fig. 5.4 Increasing evaluation potential for identity resources

- (3) My first ride with CycleForum they showed me this thing called a mountain and made me bloody well ride up it.... In fact several of them. Never seen such a thing on the crit stages in the UK and I came home all beat up.... but a bloody big grin on my face and out on the bike the following day.

Stories (1) and (2) were picked up by the riders involved and elaborated on, allowing them to put a quite different spin on their identities. In all three examples, it is notable that the action of the narratives is cut almost completely for the sake of the evaluation, which is also cumulative across the three narratives. All three riders experienced ‘getting hammered out’, being ‘given up for dead’ or coming home ‘all beat up’, but in concluding the narrative with the ‘bloody big grin’ and ‘out on my bike the next day’ they assert a positive attitude to the rides that these members supposedly share, which indeed is a recurring theme across the forum. As these were the only examples of condensed narratives in the data snapshot, I can only tentatively separate them from fuller narratives.

The following is an example of a fuller narrative with the stages marked in square brackets. The first comment is not strictly part of the narrative but serves to establish the relevance of the story.

[relevance] Great article, it really puts things in perspective.

[abstract] I haven't done too many CycleForum group rides but I felt my first ride was like the bad example.

[orientation] There were 2 really strong guys and 2 newbies (myself and one other).

[complicating action] The Leaders set a pace of 35–40 km/h and we soon dropped the 4 man because he was riding on 20's.

[resolution] It was really difficult for me and I was so winded when I got back home.

[evaluation] I learned nothing and I felt like I was just beat up.

Notably, unlike the previous narratives, this one has a decidedly negative final evaluation. Perhaps for this reason it was challenged by other riders who had participated in the same ride and offered quite different accounts, as follows:

... is this a reference to the ride [summary of route follows] at the beginning of the year? If so, respectfully, you were the guy that kept surging forward and upping the pace every time you got in front. I did my best to hold the group together by keeping a nice steady pace that we could all maintain.

This narrative effectively serves to defend the narrator's leadership, offering a quite different account of the same ride. Interestingly, this reappraisal was supported by another participant with the comment: 'I'm glad I'm not the only one who remembered it that way. Was having a bit of a *Rashomon* moment ...'

Like Kurosawa's famous movie *Rashomon*, events experienced by one person can appear very different from someone else's perspective. However, personal narratives of an event offer an opportunity for others to share in these different perspectives and, as happened in ensuing posts, resolve differences of opinion. On this forum, reports of rides and races often conclude with the varied accounts of riders and their different experiences of the day, each contributing to a sense of individual identity as well as that of the forum as a whole. The linguistic resources available for contributors to do this begin with the relatively subtle choice of naming and use of pronouns but build up to the way narratives are structured and evaluated.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored resources for negotiating identity within the context of an online forum. The description is specific to the communicative resources available to this particular forum. Nevertheless, it incorporates a range of resources typical of those available to online users in other contexts. The use of links, including online ride data, Google and other mapping systems and YouTube, is indicative of a form of communication deeply integrated with technology. The absence of face-to-face contact means that it is disembodied in one sense but that, in another sense, technical resources enable a form of rich communication. Links allow the sharing of concrete references, such as online articles or technical demonstrations, in a richer manner than is possible in a conversation where an article or an observation of a professional mechanic's way of working can only be alluded to in a general way. In such cases, one might say that what is lost in terms of the interpersonal is made up for by ideational (or at least informational) richness. Even so, interpersonal communication was of primary importance in this forum even, though less obviously, where the focus was on technical (and therefore ideational) content. The forum is a place where identities are played out or negotiated and where a range of linguistic resources is available for signalling and negotiating both personal identities and the identity of the community or parts of it.

From the point of view of exploring identity resources, I have suggested that resources can broadly be classified on a scale with minimal resources, such as pronoun use, at one end and narratives at the other. This proposed model would benefit from further refinement across a range of text types, including both online and offline material.

Finally, in exploring identity in language use in this cycling forum, this chapter has highlighted the relationship between language, communication and community. As such, it indicates a possible way forward for the exploration of community dynamics, providing potential empirical validation for theoretical models such as the communities of practice model (Barton and Tusting 2005; Wenger 1999).

This chapter has focused primarily on verbal resources, even though forum users integrate pictures, video or even maps and ride data into their messages. In this case, the key for incorporating such resources is the use of links. Therefore, the next chapter returns not only to the theme of multimodality but also to the use of textual resources through a consideration of links and the resources of *coherence* and *cohesion*.

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6

Making the Link: Intertextual Resources in an Online Forum

Introduction

This chapter explores the use of hyperlinks in a cycle forum in relation to the linguistic resources of *cohesion*. Hyperlinks are not linguistic resources but technical ones. However, they are integrated into the forum in ways that suggest they effectively realise or at least coincide with the linguistic resources of *cohesion*. This chapter therefore explores some of the ways these linguistic and technical resources interact. Among other things, this involves making the linguistic resources more concrete since implicit linguistic connections may become physical ones that are made operational by the click of a mouse. In addition, links integrate other modalities with the text. Links enable the incorporation of multimedia content into the forum, which includes not only photos and videos but also resources for tracking the details of rides and sharing statistical or mapping data. The prevalence of visual memes and the incorporation of other semiotic resources in other modalities in place of the written word are also discussed. The examples used span ride and general discussion threads, and comparative analyses of summary data help to show up differences among the subgenres.

The resources of linking are described within Halliday's *textual metafunction* (2002) associated with *Mode*. The *textual metafunction* is concerned with how texts are framed, interconnected and made cohesive (Halliday and Hasan 1976). *Mode* is also concerned with the medium of communication (written/spoken/visual). These linguistic resources will be introduced here, but the principal focus will be on the use of hyperlinks as a distinctive resource in digital online texts.

Hyperlinks or links are a key resource available to those communicating in online forums but also on the Internet more generally. Links enable users to move from one part of a text to another but also from one text to another at the click of a mouse. This ability is fundamental to navigating the forum but also means that discussions can seamlessly connect with the Internet.

Hyperlinks and the Resources of Cohesion

Hyperlinks can therefore be seen as a distinctive resource very closely related to, if not synonymous with, *endophoric* and *exophoric* reference. *Endophoric* and *exophoric* reference are part of the linguistic referencing resources of *cohesion*. *Endophoric* reference refers to implicit connections made within a text. It describes the use of pronouns, synonyms or other connective resources to track participants across a text. It is principally described in terms of *anaphoric* reference, which points back to retrieve its referent; and *cataphoric* reference which points forward to a referent that will appear subsequently in the text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) also describe another class of referent called *comparative* reference, which refers to something never mentioned directly but existing in some relationship to something that is mentioned. An example would be: 'The others did their best to win, but Cavendish outsprinted them in the end.' In this case, *the others* are defined in relation to Cavendish. These connections help to make the text stick together or cohere as a whole and, as Eggins puts it, 'contribute to the internal texture of the text' (Eggins 2004, p. 34).

Exophoric reference refers to something outside the text. Typically, this will be signalled by deictic expressions, such as 'here', 'nearby', 'then', etc.,

and refer to something in the immediate context. However, there is also a closely related class of referents that draws on cultural *homophoric* reference. *Exophoric* and *homophoric* resources also enable a kind of coherence because they situate texts in relation to context, or, as Eggins puts it, they ‘contribute to the text’s situational coherence’ (Eggins 2004, p. 34).

Homophoric reference may assume a familiarity with some cultural referent that is treated as though it is understood while it is not necessarily known to the reader/listener. In a face-to-face context these knowledge gaps may be renegotiated. However, in a forum, links enable readers to directly access the information being referred to. Even a complete text may be made accessible. Since referring to whole texts rather than simply *participants* is referred to as *whole text referencing*, this practice might be described as *whole text linking*. *Whole text linking* enables articles drawn from any online source to be discussed or commented on in a way that would be difficult to replicate off-line, where distribution of content is more cumbersome, though mobile devices like tablets and smartphones also make this possible. In fact, *whole text linking* makes the access to online content so direct and easy that the practice has become a central textual resource allowing not only for a closer relationship between a discussion text and the object of discussion but also for a range of written, visual, video and other resources. As a result, online texts such as the posts and threads in this forum are increasingly multimodal, and therefore multisemiotic.

This chapter focuses on the various ways in which links are used and the range of semiotic tools they are linked to. As such, it offers a classificatory outline of multimodal resources used in this forum. Some of these resources, such as the linking or the incorporation of pictures into posts and even the ironic use of them, may be familiar; others, such as links to ride data provided by services like Strava or MapMyRide, draw on relatively specialised applications of cycling technology. Such examples show how claims that would be difficult to verify in a face-to-face context can be evidenced in considerable detail online.

Smileys, which automatically appear as yellow faces (which can also be selected from a menu) on this forum, are discussed in conjunction with linked resources to illustrate how the differentiation between the textual resources of written language and the semiotic resources of visual, video

and even audio available online is beginning to blur. The use of communicational resources such as whole text linking illustrates how communicating online is not confined to verbal skill but rather depends on being able to use the full range of semiotic resources available, including links. Links are potentially a more informative and efficient means of communication. The two extracts below illustrate how links enrich the post by connecting to outside resources.

- D1: To start the September thread, here's my garmin chart up thru today: [a snapshot shows an August calendar with distances and times]
Maybe light for most JCF-folks but not too shabby for a 60-year old?
- C2: Today, I led a group of beginner cyclists from S Station to F [station]. The route was planned as: [http://ridewithgps.com/routes/\[route number\]](http://ridewithgps.com/routes/[route number]). Actual was: [http://app.strava.com/rides/\[route number\]](http://app.strava.com/rides/[route number]).

No text stands alone, and explicit links to other texts through allusion or reference are ubiquitous, but the presence of hyperlinks in online contexts offers new possibilities that are changing the way people communicate. In the samples above, D1 and C2 are the first two posts on a forum thread (D and C are participants, and the number indicates the number of the post on the thread). Both D1 and C2 included detailed data about their rides through links. D inserted a snapshot of an online resource that summarised his activities over the month, and C offered links to two different mapping resources. The first is a route-planning resource (RidewithGPS 2017) showing a map and gradient profile that can also be uploaded to a cycle computer to provide route directions. These directions are rather like those of a car navigation system except that they will follow the input route rather than find the shortest one. The second is from Strava (2017), a site that allows riders to upload rides from cycle computers to share online in order to compare and compete to ride the fastest over ride 'segments'. Here, the site provides concrete evidence of the actual route ridden. Such links allow users to communicate in ways that would not be possible offline.

Linking, Cohesion and Intertextuality

Context and intertextuality and implicit or explicit links are concerned with both textual organisation above the sentence level and with the meaning of texts in their situation in the world as well as in relation to other texts (Eggins 2004; Halliday 2002). For example, *genre* describes a text type as duplicating features across different texts, which constitutes an implicit link between a specific text and others in the same genre. Martin and Rose (2008, p. 6) make the point that *genre* recognises both recurrent practices and relations among genres. In addition, explicit references are often made to other texts, for example, to cite evidence for an argument. In SFL, this has been referred to as 'extended reference to macro-phenomena' (Halliday and Matthiessen 1999, pp. 102–103).

Within the text, links provided by grammatical resources, such as pronouns, demonstratives or use of synonyms and definite articles, are used to create *cohesion* (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Halliday and Matthiessen 1999). These are the resources associated with *textual metafunction*, which comprises *lexical cohesion*, *conjunction*, *ellipsis* and *reference*.

Lexical cohesion means using words or phrases (lexis) to connect meaning together (to cohere) to form a coherent message. The simplest way to do this is through repetition. When narrating a story, the main character's name could be used throughout. As repetition becomes tedious, a narrator has three alternatives: (1) omit the name altogether if the subject can be identified from the context and the name is not required for grammatical reasons—this is called *ellipsis*. (2) Replace the name (Victoria) with a pronoun ('she'); this is a minimal strategy to maintain *cohesion* and depends on the pronoun not being mistaken for other people in the context; or (3) use an alternative noun or noun phrase ('the cyclist'). In a narrative, this strategy also allows a character (or scene) to be developed and evaluated in a way that the speaker/writer wishes. Using a *synonym* means using a similar word (cyclist/rider/competitor/athlete), but because it is not the same word the meaning changes. In the forum, links were sometimes used to replace people with photographs, usually not of themselves, for some humorous effect.

In this broad sense, ‘links’ may be said to cover a range of intertextual (*endophoric/homophoric* from above) and intratextual (*anaphoric* and *cataphoric*) referencing, or ‘connecting’, resources. It seems reasonable to suppose that intertextual and intratextual links would be much the same in online contexts as in offline contexts except that the structuring of the Internet around hyperlinks, which allows the reader to move directly from one text (or part of a text) to another at the click of a mouse, potentially changes the nature of links.

Exploring Links in an Online Forum

Although online texts may reproduce or mimic features of offline texts, one of the essential differences between on- and offline texts is the linkage. At the click of a mouse, someone reading the Wikipedia entry on M.A.K. Halliday can jump from the highlighted words ‘systemic functional linguistics’ to another page introducing systemic functional linguistics. In this chapter, however, I look specifically at links used within the interactive context of a forum. Whereas Wikipedia is intended as an informational source for the public, akin to an encyclopaedia (O’Sullivan 2009), online forums are social meeting places. While one of the defining features of the Internet is the linking of information (ideational content), it has also become widely exploited for linking people (interpersonal) around the world through forums and other social networking sites.

Forums are built around sequential exchanges similar to a conversation. In the forum, ‘an utterance,’ (to borrow conversation analysis terminology), is represented by a ‘post’. A sequence of posts is referred to as a ‘thread’ and, as such, is the equivalent of a ‘conversation’.

Following a conversational discourse approach, such as the Sinclair-Coulthard model (Coulthard 1992), there is also a level of ‘exchange’. An *exchange* can be defined as an *initiating* move, followed by *response* and *follow-up* moves. Conversations begin with an *initiation* marking the opening of an *exchange* but may also involve multiple exchanges.

In a physical context, conversations are usually forced to conclude due to the need of participants to engage in other activities. Forum threads do

not have this limitation, as users can engage in other activities and return to a thread. For this reason, threads tend to end when the topic is deemed complete or in some other way exhausted. A ride thread has a predictable timescale. First the ride is advertised, then commitments/excuses from participants follow, and after that any last-minute meeting arrangements are made. The thread ends with the posting of ride reports. Topic-focused threads that are not time sensitive may not only last longer but may also be resurrected for discussion at a later date. In addition, as pointed out in the previous chapter, the Today thread consists of an unfocused topic defined by riders' current activities that is started afresh each month, but it could also be viewed as an ongoing thread that has lasted the entire length of the forum. Of course, topic-focused threads may be considerably shorter, too, and some thread-opening initiations were never followed up. Nevertheless, the *exchange*, which is limited to the *responses* and *follow-up* moves of specific *initiation*, is an important unit of discourse for the analysis of online forums. As in a conversation, *exchanges* are not neatly separated but continually overlap each other.

Within a forum, threads may serve a wide range of functions. In the cycling forum considered here, threads were used for sharing information about cycling; discussing cycling-related issues; organising rides and race participation; reporting on cycling experiences, buying and selling equipment; designing the club kit; and even customising the layout of the forum itself, among other things. Here, I focus on how the use of links facilitates such activities and enables communication by referencing a range of resources, including direct access to online technology.

Since hyperlinks are a feature of Internet technology rather than a property of language, they may not be the most obvious target for linguistic observation. However, they have become an integral part of online reading and communication in social-networking sites and online forums. Moreover, links enable a concrete form of communication because articles or video clips can be linked to a post and become the focus for a discussion. Links allow all participants direct access to the material being discussed without disrupting the post. In short, participants can get on the same page more easily than in off-line contexts, where unfamiliar information may need to be 'filled in'.

Moreover, linked resources need not be restricted to text but may include pictures, video, and online resources, such as the mapping and tracking sites linked to C's post in my quote from the forum above. Each of these linked resources makes it possible to communicate much more than would be possible with words alone. The integral nature of links to such resources was underlined by comments when contributors failed to include relevant links, such as photos of items for sale.

Data Source: An Online Forum for Cyclists

The exploration of threads discussed here began with the same snapshot of the forum introduced in Chap. 5; however, the examples discussed here are drawn from a broader sample of threads observed over a period of three years. As explained in Chap. 5, the forum includes a range of thread types, each of which adapts the potential of links to their purposes in different ways. For example, there are long-running threads for YouTube clips, where YouTube links are shared and discussed, and Today (as mentioned above), where members report on current activities with Strava links, maps or photographs. As shown in the extract earlier in the chapter, at the beginning of each month, somebody starts a new Today thread, so that it will be, for example, 'Today May 2017'. Both Today and YouTube threads include many posts unrelated to those that precede or follow them. In contrast, as already mentioned, threads concerned with a specific ride or event follow a predictable narrative from advertising the event, through agreements to participate and planning, to reports of the event. The practices of linking are an established part of this. Route and meeting-place links provide preride information, and postride reports are likely to include photographs and Strava links. Similarly, threads concerned with mechanical problems and equipment purchases followed a narrative pattern of issue raised→issue discussed→issue resolved. In these threads detailed close-up photographs of the problem may be followed up by textual advice or links to YouTube videos, maker websites or authoritative resources such as Sheldon Brown's detailed instructions of cycle mechanics. The choice of whether to post to an existing thread (and

if so, to which one) or to begin a new one (and if so, which choice of thread type) is the most fundamental link resource and serves to position the post in the forum, but, as these examples show, resources outside the forum are routinely linked.

Referencing Tools in the Forum

Submitting a reply to a post implicitly links it to the previous one, just as a subsequent speaking turn in a conversation does. Assuming that another participant does not submit a response sooner, it will appear immediately after (further down the page) on the same thread. Nevertheless, there is also the possibility that another user may post a reply sooner, in which case a reply may allude to the original post, a subsequent one (or more) or both. A quotation function allows users to indicate the post or part of the post to which they are referring. The quotation will then appear in a box with a banner heading ‘Username said: ↑’, where ‘Username’ is the username adopted by the forum member. The arrow indicates that the quote originates from a previous post. Quotations from other sources appear in a box but without the banner. For simplicity, in quotations from the forum, I have just used a letter of the alphabet to represent the user and quotation marks. Quotation used in this way is thus a linking resource that serves to position the post as a *response* move in the spoken discourse sense outlined above. The quotation function is therefore a useful way to identify responding moves in a forum exchange.

However, there are some complications with this. First, quotation is not always used, and a response may leave implicit what is being responded to or use an alternative link, such as the participant name. At the time I first began exploring this forum, the simple use of names was widespread, but more recently using the @handlename format has become much more common, perhaps because using this format now allows participants to be alerted to the fact that their post is being responded to. A further complication is that a single post may sometimes include multiple quotations, which potentially means one post is part of more than

one exchange simultaneously. Alternatively, such as where the originator of a thread responds to replies from more than one person, a single *follow-up* to several responses may suffice. Finally, quotation is used not only to comment on the content but also on the wording. Consider the following example:

- S29: Y said: 'You're not fooling anyone, you know you love it! S-toge hill repeats, FTW!'
You shut your filthy mouth ;-)

Here, FTW is an ironic abbreviation of 'For the Win', meaning 'Go for it!' (as in game shows where participants choose to go for the big prize). 'Filthy mouth' here could be to flout the playful suggestion that he really enjoyed the steep climb up S-toge or deliberately misread FTW as 'F*** the World'. The subsequent response quotes the comment and adds 'Ha, ha' with an ironic smile on a smiley-face icon. Smiley icons are a linked resource since, on this forum, they are chosen from a menu and are discussed below.

Despite the prevalence of quotation, it is not always used. Occasionally, novice users paste parts in quotation marks (and ask how to post quotations properly), but even expert users often rely on their post as being read as an implicit. Here are some users discussing the removal of a part (the cassette), which is completely stuck:

- J8: I broke the chain whip ...
O9: You are holding the chain-whip in your left hand, the lock-ring tool in your right, leaning over the upright wheel, and pushing down with your right hand, aren't you?
J10: Yes

Because the thread focuses specifically on this problem and only involves a few participants who are charting the progress of the problem, quoting is unnecessary and the report of the broken tool (the chain whip) is immediately understood. In this thread, the first quotation that was used picks up on the playful suggestion that 'If you had started doing those deadlifts like I told you to, this would not be an issue', implying

that building stronger arms might have enabled him to remove the stuck component. This leads to a humorous subtheme of the best way to develop strong arms.

Quotation and subsequent posting are key resources for highlighting associations between and among posts that exist over and above general linguistic resources associated with coherence, such as lexical repetition. This should not be surprising as forum participants draw on a general competence in English as well as a competence in online use and the conventions associated with forums and this forum in particular.

In addition to these resources for links back to previous posts, what might be classified as the ability to incorporate hyperlinks allows users to enrich the content of their post in ways that might be said to not so much compensate for the absence of face-to-face communication as introduce a further dimension to text reading that includes multimodal elements in ways that would generally not be possible offline. Before considering these resources, I will introduce the conventions used for introducing links.

Introducing Links

Unlike webpages in general, links in a forum are not navigational options but integral parts of the message. Accordingly, users signal them. However, the introduction of links in the forum ranges from an explicit use of reference to simply placing the link at a relevant point. This range of choice from explicit signaling to implicit placement, therefore, has parallels with the way posts are related to each other, as discussed above. The most explicit links use demonstratives as the link word (underlined type represents links): 'I use this with my wife.' Here the word 'this' is linked to a picture in an online catalogue of a tent suitable for cycle touring. The catalogue not only provides information about the tent but makes it possible to order one directly. Similarly, the meeting place for a ride is given as, 'Meet Place: Family Mart (HERE)' where 'here' links to a Google map indicating the location of the particular Family Mart store where the riders will meet up. The word 'Family Mart' could easily have been linked to the map as 'this' is in the previous example, or it might have been replaced

with the model name of the tent. However, the use of such demonstratives is widespread in the forum, perhaps because they draw attention to the link. In the same post as the Family Mart link, 'Route: HERE' is used to link to the mapping service Ride with GPS that shows the details of the route, including an elevation profile in a format that can also be uploaded to cycle computers.

Perhaps one reason for this slightly different linking strategy is that users familiar with the Family Mart, which is the regular meeting point, would not need the Google link but could identify it by name. By contrast, the course for the ride did not have a specific name, and describing the route even to riders familiar with the roads in the area would have been lengthy.

A more indirect strategy for introducing links is URL links. Here, the URL is typed out in the post but also acts as a link. This is a common strategy for introducing YouTube clips or online articles. In such cases, the content of the link is generally the main point of the post and will be accompanied by a comment. The comment may include demonstratives ('I found this the other day' or 'Check this out!'), but the demonstratives are unlinked.

Finally, there are 'incidental links' where a relevant word in the text is linked. This approach implies that the link is optional information, rather more like the navigational options of Wikipedia; however, this tends to be done in situations where knowledgeable readers may have enough familiarity with the linked content not to need to access it, such as, for example, in the reference to 'Rule #5', which derives from the Velominati website (Velominati 2013) listing a humorous set of rules that captures the unspoken etiquette of hardcore road cyclists. In this case, referring to the rules by number with an incidental link carries the implication that it should be familiar to some readers already. Similarly, one ride leader made reference to 'a non-beginner-ride such as our T river route Loop', linking the route title to his webpage that introduced the rides and, in turn, offered links to mapping pages. The link therefore publicised his rides and provided interested users with further information. Using explicit, URL or incidental links therefore constitutes the primary choice when inserting links into forums.

A further choice is not to include a link at all but instead paste material directly into the post, rather like quotations but in the form of images. This completely removes the option not to click on the link and thus

allows users to make the content mandatory, though forum links tend to be treated as mandatory anyway. Besides cluttering the post, pasted images from linked sources are separated from their original context. Some users insert images rather than links due to technical limitations. Content derived from personal accounts, such as the Garmin monthly summary, require password access. However, regular users paste from accessible sources either to deliberately decontextualise images or to freeze resources in time.

One rider posted a screenshot from Strava of the online database that allows users to compare ride data captured on their cycle computers. The screenshot showed the rider as the fastest even though he knew he would be dethroned as soon as his friend uploaded his ride data.

Some users adopted the practice of pasting eye-catching images from the Internet as a way of making an ironic comment or emphasising some point in an exaggerated way. Such use of visual imagery might be seen as an extension of the language of smileys, which also offers emotional or ironic comment on the text. For example, in the thread about removing the stuck cassette, where one user had already suggested humorously that regular weight training would help remove the stuck cassette, he posts a picture of a heavyweight weightlifter about to hoist a huge barbell above the advice: 'I have had a few tough to release cassette lock rings. Always found the best approach was to apply even, heavy force to them slowly. Hitting them, or trying to shock them into moving is not going to work.' The juxtaposition is amusing because the weightlifter also looks like he needs to apply heavy force!

Users' own photographs were used for a variety of reasons throughout the forum. Generally, photographs of rides and races by club members were uploaded to the gallery on the forum website. Contributors can either verbally direct readers to the gallery or link to it. Alternatively, some users chose to link to their personal blogs or online image storage services, such as Picasa. Even so, travel logs, including photographs, which looked like blog segments, were uploaded as posts. In this case, images were sequenced to fit a textual narrative. The same format was sometimes used for bike building or renewal projects. Technical threads often included photographs for the sake of diagnosis and reporting of progress, perhaps for the sake of immediacy, though there were also links to online resources, such as manufacturers' manuals or video demonstrations.

Multimodal Resources

For forum users communicating at a distance with text as a primary medium, an important role for links is the availability of multimodal resources, including photographs, video, mapping and data-logging facilities, and other texts that may also include illustrative material. If these resources are thought of as contributing an increasing degree of depth in terms of modality, then the minimum contribution to this would be provided by the availability of smileys that change emoticons into small colored ‘smiley’ faces to signal some emotional expression. Users can select these from a menu that includes some cycling-specific ones, such as a miniature, animated cyclist. Photographs would constitute the next level of increased modality, as they provide still images. As noted above, photographs were sometimes used for ironic comment, rather as smileys would be. However, their real value was in enriching the informational content, such as in illustrating repairs or other projects. Smart phones facilitate this by allowing users to upload snaps taken on the phone directly.

The next level of modality on such as scale would be video, since this introduces a temporal dimension. If a photo can capture a scene from a ride, links to video taken on a GoPro camera add a sense of movement and speed, and the sounds associated with the experience. Online resources such as Strava that continually update ride information and course or segment records might be thought of as having a further additional dimension of time due to their live interactive features. A final classification for modality would be those that are multimodal and include text and images and other multimodal features. The posts themselves might be included in this category.

Links and Functionality

Links of all of the above modalities were used throughout the forum, yet the patterns of link usage and choice of modalities clustered around specific types of thread. For example, the news thread followed a recurrent pattern of linking to online news articles and the YouTube thread to

online videos. Similarly, bike mechanics threads used photos of ongoing work, and *for sale* ads were expected to include current photos of the merchandise. While there is not space here to explore this role of links in association with generic patterns within the forum, this is a worthwhile area for future analysis.

In the meantime, it is worth drawing attention to three primary communicative functions within the forum that shaped link usage: interpersonal, informational and functional. Interpersonal communication included contributions to the pool in terms of race and ride reports, and were enhanced by links to pictures, blogs or GoPro clips; claims for bragging rights enhanced links to Strava data uploads; and humor enhanced ironic links to images, video or articles. While it might be argued that the interpersonal nature of forums means that all communication has an interpersonal dimension, links to news items; advice on how to do something or where to buy something; announcements of future events; information about cycle training, technique, etiquette, mechanics and equipment; and history and events in professional cycling were more focused on informational content and accordingly included links to a wide range of informational Internet resources, such as news sites, blogs, online retailers, manufacturers' manuals and so forth.

Other important functions were, finally, functional activities such as organising rides or race participation, buying and selling items, solving problems, and designing the club kit. Such activities were enhanced by the availability of links to mapping features and online sign-up for races as well as other resources that helped get the job done.

Conclusion

I suggested in the introduction to this chapter that links in a broad sense are important in SFL research because they embrace a range of intertextual and intratextual referencing. In the body of this paper I outlined a framework for the description of the use of hyperlinks in a specific forum. I have looked at how links are introduced, the modalities that can be introduced through the use of links and the functionality of links. For each of these aspects, I have suggested there is a spectrum of choices

available to users, each of which reflects their communicative needs. When exploring patterns of link usage, I found that they tended to reflect the overall generic structure and communicative functions of the forum itself, so that what started out as a description of link usage looked increasingly like a description of communication within the forum. This is perhaps less surprising when one considers that the links serve as a tool to extend communicative resources, rather as the bicycle serves as a device to extend human energy. Just as the contributors to this forum have found that bicycles have enabled them to extend their horizons, links extend their communicative potential in an online context. Nevertheless, more research is needed into this phenomenon. Future work on exploring links in online communication would benefit from detailed studies into specific features—such as their use and distribution in subgenres and their role in interpersonal communication—or from looking in detail at the contribution multimodal features make to the overall message.

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7

The Case of Franz: Identity and Carnival in Online Communities

Introduction

Using Bakhtin's notion of *carnival* as a heuristic device, this chapter examines the case of an overtly false identity in the online forum as an example of identity-as-play. Bakhtin (1984) has argued that carnival as a celebration of laughter and the flouting of social norms in the public realm shifted to the realm of the private with the spread of bourgeois culture. However, this analysis predates the patterns of interaction made possible through new media and raises the question of how this trend proposed by Bakhtin might play out in the online contexts of today. The framework of *carnival* proposed by Bakhtin is therefore used to explore a case of trolling as a potential example of how deliberate flouting of the expectations associated with a credible identity can be used as a form of play to reveal the covert values and assumptions of the online community. Although the case discussed was a relatively innocent and humorous prank, it nevertheless caused some negative reactions. For this reason the case is also considered in the context of a range of more sinister practices using false identities, such as sockpuppetry (using false identities for the sake of deceit and/or profit), catfishing (feigning a romantic interest),

trolling (deliberately leading someone on), the use of bots (automated programs mimicking human beings) or even identity theft (stealing personal information for material gain, such as using credit cards), which have emerged as concerns for Internet users.

Forums, like other forms of social media, are important social spaces for the sharing and shaping of both individual and community identities. This involves such practical activities as organising group rides and sharing technical and other expertise, as well as the more general social practice of sharing cycling experiences. Taken together these activities build the shared community, a fact reflected in the accumulation of online threads, and in the post count and various awards accrued by individual participants. Although these are all serious functions that are generally treated seriously, almost all topics are also potential opportunities for interpersonal interaction through sharing a joke. Consequently, a broad range of humour permeates the forum, as can be seen from the extracts quoted in the other chapters of this section. Humour and laughter often involve ironic inversions of the norm, but one of the most striking examples of this on the forum was catalysed by a false identity: a troll who, as one participant explained, *held a mirror up* to the forum. In this chapter, I explore the three threads in which the troll posted and consider some of the ways in which the troll does indeed hold a mirror up to the forum, inverting the forum's norms and values for the sake of humour.

Whereas the last chapter focused on the renegotiation of an identity, this one focuses on the invasion of the forum by a false identity. It explores the semiotic resources used by the participants to respond to this invasion, revealing in the process the forum's expectations and norms. This invasion is explored using Bakhtin's (1984) notion of *carnival* as a potential way into understanding the behaviour of trolls, who are often ironic and sometimes humorous but perhaps have roots in a tradition of troublemakers seeking amusement at the expense of others (Phillips 2011). Bakhtin suggested that from the time of Rabelais when, as he described it, laughter in the public sphere was at its peak (Bakhtin 1984, p. 115), humour has increasingly been confined to the private sphere, and has been devalued and regarded as more troublesome than amusing. Since his history of literature used to support this idea did not extend beyond the period of modernism, let alone into the age of new media,

Bakhtin's thesis raises the question of what has become of laughter and carnival in our current era and how his concepts of laughter and *carnival* might be applied.

This chapter, then, is about *identity play*. I explore the case of Franz, an apparent imposter in the forum, whose appearance nevertheless sheds light on the beliefs and values of those in the forum by satirising their behaviours. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1984) notion of *carnival* provides a way into contextualising this incident in a social context and in broader human terms.

Trolling, Fake Identities and Alt.realities

In January 2011, a 35-year-old feminist and lesbian named Amina Abdallah Araf al Omari in Damascus, Syria, set up a blog detailing her everyday life there. Her blog and other areas of online participation, which offered journalists and others in the West a source of on-the-ground experiences of life in Syria, became so popular that when she was one day reported to have been kidnapped, the news was carried in newspapers worldwide, causing widespread concern for her safety.

Around the same time, Keisuke Jinushi, a hitherto lonely Japanese businessman who had never had a girlfriend before, met the woman of his dreams and began sharing stories of their happy relationship on Facebook. His story doubtless gave hope to many young men unable to find a girlfriend.

Although there is, of course, no direct relationship between these two stories, the two examples might serve to illustrate how online contexts allow ordinary people to share their lives with the broader audience provided through the Internet and in a sense to validate them. However, both Jinushi's girlfriend and the Syrian blogger turned out to be completely false identities (Addley 2011; Ito 2015). Jinushi apparently invented his girlfriend after taking a selfie with a statue of a woman and noticing it looked like he was with a real woman. He evolved a number of techniques, such as painting his fingernails with lacquer, to take selfies that made him look like he was out dating. In 2015, he published his book *Moso Kanjo (Imaginary Girlfriend)* introducing these techniques.

Meanwhile, by June 2011, after the kidnap story had set off alarm bells as to the authenticity of the blog, a 40-year-old American man and Middle East activist based in Scotland called Tom MacMaster owned up as the real author of the Syrian blog, which included numerous photographs of Syria actually taken by his wife, Britta Froelicher, on a visit there in 2008. Despite pleading that, 'While the narrative voice may have been fictional, the facts on this blog are true and not misleading as to the situation on the ground', and claiming that he hadn't hurt anyone, this admission, like LA's confession discussed in Chap. 3, was met with widespread anger by those who had expressed support for his fabricated Syrian girl.

These two cases raise fundamental questions about the credibility of identity online that stretch back to chat rooms, one of the earliest forms of online social media where handle names and avatars offered privacy protection but were also potentially convenient cloaks for troublemakers.

The protection of identity online is taken particularly seriously, as the stealing of identity data for the purpose of financial fraud or other criminal or antisocial activities is a real danger. The website Scambusters.org claims that ten million people have become the victims of identity fraud, referring to data from the Federal Trade Commission. On the other hand, although, as we saw in the last chapter, online forums can indeed be places where communication and understanding, and with them a sense of community identity, can be deepened, the very features that help protect users from identity theft can also be used as masks to play with or deliberately defraud identities or more generally evoke alternative (fake) realities in the virtual world.

One major difference between the two examples quoted above is that while Tom MacMaster's deception and eventual admission that his blog was a fabrication upset his readers, there seems to have been no such reaction to Jinushi's Facebook posts or his revelation of how they were deliberately set up to deceive. They might therefore be considered as two opposite ends of a spectrum of online deceit, from the potentially harmful effects of MacMaster's ruse, which apparently provoked some followers in Syria to endanger themselves in trying to ascertain the whereabouts

of the fictional kidnap victim, to the harmless prank of portraying a fantasy relationship. Nevertheless, both could also be seen as originating as playful acts of deceit with the potential to become more malicious activities. Moreover, the techniques of online deception link them to a range of destructive online practices, such as sockpuppetry, catfishing, trolling, the use of bots or even identity theft which have emerged as concerns for Internet users.

While trolling is a widely recognised practice, definitions are often vague and highly subjective. The Urban Dictionary defines trolling as:

Being a p***k on the internet because you can. Typically unleashing one or more cynical or sarcastic remarks on an innocent by-stander, because it's the internet and, hey, you can. (www.urbandictionary.com)

This definition implies that 'trolling' signifies a range of negative behaviours rather than a specific activity or online identity. Similarly, Wikipedia describes a troll as:

Someone who posts inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community, such as a forum, chat room, or blog, with the primary intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion. (www.wikipedia.org)

This definition also implies that trolling constitutes antisocial behaviours in the context of social media. For this reason, it is perhaps not surprising that some attempts to define trolling are constituted by a more detailed listing of these antisocial behaviours. As such, they are implicitly more like codes of practice indicating how *not* to behave online.

Elise Moreau (2017), for example, lists ten kinds of trolling, each of which represents a negative practice: insulting, debating, spellchecking, acting offended, showing off, using profanity, posting one-word replies, exaggerating, going off-topic and spamming. All of these practices are no doubt familiar to social media users as perhaps annoying but nevertheless

common ways of behaving online. They are certainly widespread in the forum discussed in this book. Defining trolling in this way sets up the potential for policing such behaviours, with the implication that there is a fairly rigid code of ethical practice to which users should conform.

In a similar vein, Tamer Love Grande (Grande 2010) lists some eighteen kinds of troll, though in this case, they are noticeably positioned as extremists through the use of heavily evaluative labels: the ‘rabid flamer’, the ‘priggish grammar troll’, the ‘profane screamer’ and so on. These labels also imply practices that are more all-embracing in terms of online personas and also include the hidden identities of the stalker and the fraud.

Finally, Dark Psychology (2017) implies that the troll is not so much a hidden identity as a sign of a disturbed psychological identity. Through an assemblage of quotations and examples from across the internet, the site offers a (rather unhelpful) ‘100 plus’ typology of trolls, which it nevertheless reduces to three principal overlapping kinds of psychological disturbance consisting of Dark Feeling, Dark Thinking and Dark Interacting. As shown in Fig. 7.1, the overlap between Dark Interacting and Thinking is represented as ‘mental fakeness or Machiavellianism’; between Dark Thinking and Feeling as ‘mental sickness or psychopathy’; and between Dark Interacting and Feeling as ‘mental instability or

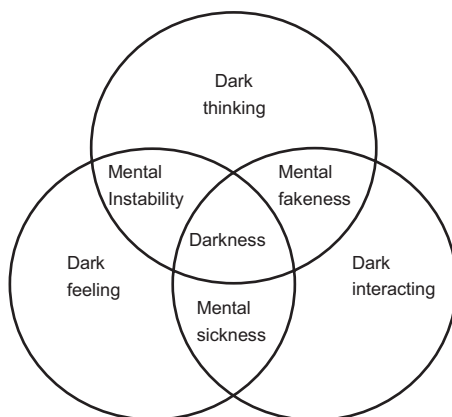


Fig. 7.1 Dark Psychology classification of *troll* types (Source: Dark Psychology 2017)

narcissism'. This approach is interesting because it implies that the very act of attempting to mask an identity reveals the psychological inner state of the user. However, it is a perspective which does not seem to quite tally with either MacMaster's defence of his fake website, intended as a kind of social activism to draw attention to a specific political context, or Jinushi's playful creation of an imaginary girlfriend. Rather, the classification of antisocial behaviours as the products of problematic psychologies overlooks the healthy psychological instinct for upturning expected norms for the purpose of humour and entertainment, which may inadvertently spill into unpleasant and harmful behaviours.

In contrast to these generalised approaches to defining trolling that potentially implicate all users who engage in antisocial online behaviours, Whitney Phillips defines trolls as very specific online participants who, as she explains, 'self-identify as trolls, tend to be intelligent, are playful and mischievous and wildly antagonistic. Additionally, most trolls choose to remain anonymous' (Phillips 2011). In her book *This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things* (Phillips 2015), she suggests that though trolling is often represented as the ultimate antisocial activity, it is interrelated with social impulses already implicitly sanctioned by the media. Phillips, who has been described as a 'troll whisperer' (Eordogh 2015), interviewed just such a self-identified troll in a way that provides some insight into the potential motivations of such people. Her interviewee explains how s/he became a troll as follows:

I decided to create a few alternate personas on these boards to target specific members who happened to be annoying or overly earnest (9/11 'truthers' and various hippie peacenik types for the most part). In other words, people that the real me persona would consider arguing with but knew it wasn't worth the time and effort to try a rational engagement—it was better, more entertaining, to make them mad through nonsensical postings, shock, or distorting their positions. (Phillips 2011)

While this reveals a highly cynical outlook that no doubt could be construed in terms of one of the dark psychologies referred to above, later in Phillips' interview with the anonymous troll, the troll also offers a posthoc rationale of her/himself as an inheritor of social satire and therefore in line

with a tradition of satirical writing. S/he refers to Swift's 'A Modest Proposal', originally published anonymously, as an apparently outrageous proposal to eat the children of the Irish poor. The satirical proposal was therefore intended to reprimand the authorities of the eighteenth century by parodying the language of political rhetoric as well as highlighting the political circumstances that led to the extreme poverty of Ireland at the time:

An open dialogue needs the fringes and radical elements, even when they are satirical, like *A Modest Proposal* [...], which was, to an extent, trolling and just happened to be published anonymously. (Phillips 2015)

This remark could certainly be seen as a slightly disingenuous attempt at justification of a harmful practice, but does open up the question of how far the activities of trolls might indeed be seen as drawing on a tradition of satire and lampooning as an amusing way to undermine the hegemonic practices of powerful elites. After all, trolling could be seen as a way to infiltrate *filter bubbles* colonised by *fake news*, which is created by an increasing dependence on social media for news and by the tendency of web algorithms to automatically customise media environments to their users' interests and preferences (Phillips and Milner 2017).

Marta Dynel offers a more concise definition of trolling. As she explains:

... trolling necessarily relies on deception performed in multi-party interactions, which is conducive to (humorous) entertainment of self and/or other participants, at the expense of the deceived target. (Dynel 2016)

This definition implies a specific practice of deceit aimed at particular individuals. Similarly, Shachaf and Hara (2010) make clear that it is a problematic social practice that takes advantage of the open nature of many online practices to destroy the constructive work of the Wikipedia community, a practice they liken to vandalism. As they explain:

... trolls' behaviours are characterized as repetitive, intentional, and harmful actions that are undertaken in isolation and under hidden virtual identities, involving violations of Wikipedia policies, and consisting of destructive participation in the community. (Shachaf and Hara 2010)

Moreover, they suggest that the fight against such violations is 'one of the main challenges of the Wikipedia community'. This perspective and the damage and hurt caused by trolls should not be forgotten, even though I will suggest that the case of trolling considered in this chapter may have arisen as a form of play and amusement that implicitly extended one of the key dimensions of social media as a form of identity play.

Jinushi's and MacMaster's falsifications, the destruction of Wikipedia content and satirical attacks on political opinions all have both serious intentions and consequences, but the techniques used by trolls can be seen as originating in cultural practices of play and the ironic inversion, lampooning or irreverence towards cultural norms that is at the heart of cultural practices associated with laughter and comedy. The enjoyment of pranks and mischief is a familiar theme in Elizabethan comedy associated with characters such as Puck, who makes the fairy queen fall in love with a donkey-headed fool in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but they also appeal to contemporary television audiences, who enjoy reality TV programmes like *Candid Camera*, which trick their targets into faked distressing situations to elicit emotional responses for the amusement of the audience. While there are numerous potential models of irony and humour that one might use to explore practices such as trolling, this chapter considers an example of trolling in the online forum from the perspective of Bakhtin's notion of *carnival*. It also looks more generally at the way the identities of the troll and the invaded community play out.

Bakhtin's Carnival

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) is best known for his literary criticism, but it is a testament to the philosophical insight of his ideas that his work continues to be seen as highly relevant today and offers useful insight, particularly for sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. In Chap. 1, Bakhtin's notion of *heteroglossia* (also subsumed into Martin and White's model of appraisal) provided a useful framework within which to explore Cavendish's representation of himself in his autobiography where had interpolated a postrace media interview with an ironic commentary to create another voice. This chapter draws on another theoretical concept

developed by Bakhtin, that of *carnival* as a literary practice realised through *Rabelais and His World* (1984). It is proposed that this account offers a potential way of situating the practices of today's social media trolls in a cultural-historical perspective.

Originally completed as his dissertation in 1940, *Rabelais and His World* (Bakhtin 1984) became known to English readers when it was first translated in 1968. *Rabelais and His World* provides a history of carnival based on the thesis that laughter was once central to the public domain but has been increasingly forced to retreat to the realm of the private sphere with the reorganisation of cultural practices associated with the new bourgeois order. His account considerably predates the online practices explored in this chapter but offers a potentially useful framework through which to explore them (Taylor 1995).

The basic thesis of Bakhtin's account of Rabelais is that his work was misunderstood and poorly evaluated by literary critics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because of the very different cultural circumstances that shaped its production. He quotes Voltaire's dismissive appraisal of Rabelais' work as follows:

Only a few eccentric persons pride themselves in understanding and esteeming this work as a whole; the rest of the nation laughs at the jokes of Rabelais and holds this book in contempt. He is regarded as the chief among buffoons; we are annoyed that a man who has so much wit should have made such wretched use of it; he is a drunken philosopher who wrote only when he was drunk. (Voltaire, quoted in Bakhtin 1984, pp. 117–118)

Laughter, for Voltaire, seems to be used as signal of contempt rather than a feature of entertainment. Bakhtin argues that the failure to appreciate Rabelais' work is due to the way that humour has been increasingly marginalised in literature as well as more generally culturally:

The sixteenth century represents the summit in the history of laughter and the highpoint of this summit is Rabelais' novel ... After this... it loses its essential link with a universal outlook ... [and is] [l]imited to the area of the private ... (Bakhtin 1984 p. 101)

He goes on to explain how this fall from the summit of the history of laughter and the cultural practices associated with it makes it difficult to fully appreciate Rabelais from a modern perspective. In order to demonstrate and argue his case, Bakhtin provides a historical account of laughter and its decline, which helps to explain why Voltaire, a product of his own time, would evaluate Rabelais' work in such a negative way.

The fact is that the tradition of popular-festive laughter that informed Rabelais' work began to decline. It ceased to be a living and common interpretation of Rabelaisian images. The authentic aesthetic and ideological key to those images was lost, together with the tradition that produced them. And so the commentators began to look for false keys. (ibid., p. 115)

This notion of the changing milieu of laughter was traced by Bakhtin up to the modern era but nevertheless leaves open the question of what has become of laughter and carnival in a contemporary world that has entered a phase of development impacted by discourses of globalisation, postcolonialism, postmodernism and neoliberalism, among others, as well as the diversification of media that is a major focus of this book. As Taylor (1995) has observed, previous commentators who have taken up this question in the postmodern era have not all agreed. Frederic Jameson (1992) effectively supported Bakhtin's model of a continued decline of humour into the postmodern era, arguing that a decline in parody and laughter has gone hand in hand with a 'dominance' of pastiche. In contrast, Jerry Aline Flieger (1991) argued that the comic was fundamental to postmodernist practices (Taylor, p. 311) as indeed did Linda Hutcheon (1983). However, these arguments, focused on humour in television and film (*Spitting Image* and Woody Allen), predate the advent of social media, which puts what would once have been communication in the realm of the private into the public sphere.

Social media potentially offers users some freedoms that are not possible with face-to-face communication. When using mobile devices, social media platform users are freed of the bonds of space and, to a lesser extent, time, as they do not have to occupy the same spacio-temporal locus. Spacio-temporal dislocation also generally goes hand in hand with a liberation from the identifying restraints of physical embodiment. In a

face-to-face context, the physical body, including gesture and facial expression but also the inescapable features of physical appearance and clothing which provide the most concrete sense of identity, are omnipresent. By contrast the online digital contexts of social media not only offer resources such as handle names and avatars or the ability to post photographs and video, but users have much greater freedom over which resources they enable to convey their identity. This choice of identity resources in online contexts also makes it possible to adopt both playful and deliberately false identities. Yet, while a degree of playfulness is often displayed in the choice of handle names and avatars as well as in the content of topics discussed on this forum, as indeed it is elsewhere in social media, completely false identities, such as in the cases of MacMaster or Jinushi, are probably almost as rare in the virtual world as they are in the physical world. This may very well be due to the fact that the virtual spaces of social media are also effectively both public and under surveillance, and hence implicitly controlled by invisible constraining forces of the kind described by Foucault (1995) in his book *Discipline and Punishment* through his metaphor of the Panopticon.

The Panopticon was an architectural principle associated with Jeremy Bentham and used in the building of prisons, asylums, hospitals, factories and schools that situated wardens so that they were able to easily survey their institutional populations without being seen themselves (Semple 1993). This position not only reflected the power disparity between warden and prisoner but actually created it. The effectiveness of this arrangement was due to the fact that, instead of power being exerted over inmates through direct physical coercion, it created an environment that implicitly internalised a sense of being watched, regulating behaviours in the process.

Today's surveillance technology has encroached into almost all public spaces, effectively underlining Foucault's point about the way such technology extends the Panopticon principle into ever more spaces. Rodney Jones (2017) pointed out that surveillance notices often both address the public these devices supposedly protect and caution potential offenders, effectively making explicit the implicit power of the devices (or those who manage them) to both protect and observe. And, to return to the context of forums and freedom, online forums—while

often treated by users as private discussion spaces—are generally overseen by administrators who have technological resources to block certain kinds of interaction or language use (taboo language). Moreover, as noted when introducing this cycling forum in Chap. 5, while some social media place restrictions on the viewing of content, this particular forum is viewable by anyone with an Internet connection and is actually followed by a large invisible audience, a fact that the negative characterisation of this audience as ‘lurkers’ doesn’t quite do justice to.

Taken together, social media can therefore be seen as social contexts where, despite an illusion of privacy and freedom, emphasised in this case by the obscurity of its niche—overseas cyclists based in Japan—the content of discussions is overseen by moderators, and is open to the public and permanently archived. Indeed, while recent applications like SnapChat have turned this logic on its head, the on-recordness of social media functions as an intentional deterrent (like Foucault’s Panopticon) to antisocial behaviours precisely like those encoded in the broader definitions of trolling discussed above, a situation which would seem to mitigate against the kind of freedoms sanctioned in Bakhtin’s notion of *carnival*.

If humour has increasingly been marginalised through a move of carnival from the public sphere to the private sphere, the policing of humour in social media through notions of trolling may be a further extension of this process. A seemingly intimate joke in the context of a forum can actually be shared by a much larger audience and may even lose this context altogether in the case of events that are picked up and shared, with the incidents felt to be particularly share-worthy spreading quickly to massive audiences and becoming viral events.

In order to consider the relevance of Bakhtin’s notion of *carnival* to the example of an invasive troll in the online forum, I will focus on five features of carnival that also provide a framework for further reflection on the modalities through which identity is constructed and negotiated in virtual digital contexts. The five features associated with carnival, which will be introduced more explicitly in the section exploring the feature, are (1) inversion of dominant social norms, (2) unbridled parody, (3) shared laughter of intimates, (4) the wearing of masks and (5) grotesque imagery. Before turning to these features, however, the appearance of Franz in the forum needs a brief introduction.

Franz

Almost four months before the appearance of Franz, there was an unexpected invasion of the forum by Zippy, George, Bungo and Grotbags, four characters from the British children's television program *Rainbow*, which ran from 1972 to 1992, a period when many of the forum members would have been children (albeit only a few were British). A playful choice of avatars and matching handle names is not unusual in online forums, including this one, but what was surprising was that the *Rainbow* contributors appeared together, in conversation with each other, and wrote posts in character and off topic. Rather than engaging with the discussion they interrupted it with a performance of their own.

One of the forum participants reported on running in a marathon, explaining that, despite injuries during training and despite not training as much as he had hoped, he had achieved a respectable time of well under three hours. Usually reports of achievements in events, if commented on in this forum, were given kudos because, as cyclists, the participants appreciate the effort that goes into producing athletic performance. For this reason, Bungo's sarcastic 'ooh, well done!' suggested from the outset that this was a deliberate intrusion. As it unfolded, the short intrusion turned into a bizarre performance. George suggested that they tried to sign up for a marathon but explained that, 'Whenever we try to sign up, the organisers keep asking us for our real names, not the names of our costume characters, and never believe it is really us.'

However, the original poster takes the interruption unfazed, thanking '@bungle', whom, equally tongue-in-check, he characterises as 'one of my childhood heroes'.

Rather than acting as forum participants, the *Rainbow* characters give the impression of being party gate crashers (trolls in this context), which nevertheless gives them an opportunity to offer an outsider's perspective: 'It appears to be some kind of cycling website, but it is hard to tell with all this nonsense going on. They seem to argue a lot.' One mildly amused British member commented, 'For a second

there I had to check to make sure I hadn't accidentally put Redbull in my coffee again.' By making his own joke about the incident, he both acknowledges and avoids the invasion. These characters were never mentioned again until the appearance of Franz, which prompted one member to suggest that Franz, like the *Rainbow* characters, came from a similar source.

The fictional imposter Franz appeared as a poster on the forum for only three days in June 2014 but made enough of an impression on the community memory that occasional references to Franz have appeared in the forum more recently, as late as two years after the threads concluded. This may seem remarkable if you compare the current data on the forum size (Table 7.1) with the size of the three Franz threads discussed here (Table 7.2). However, this is not a case of picking needles out of haystacks but rather of an event in the community narrative of the forum. As noted, Franz posted in only three threads, all of which were started by Franz himself. The first was a Self-Introduction, the second a Help thread regarding trophy points and the third a self-proclaimed

Table 7.1 Summary of forum data

Thread type	Subcategories	Threads	Posts
General	General discussion	3133	55,614
	Introductions	614	4378
	Blogs	12	128
Wiki		11	84
Rides and races	Routes	108	1001
	Rides	1270	22,615
	Races	335	4330
Tech	Reviews	51	758
	Tech	397	5850
Classifieds		711	2517
Updates and announcements		147	2198

Table 7.2 Summary of data for the three threads started by Franz

Thread type	Title	Participants	Words	Posts
Introductions	Hello	13	1765	36
Help	Trophy points	12	2221	41
General discussion	Welcome back, Franz	17	6253	65

Welcome Back, which turned out to be his unbidden farewell. The three threads overlapped and were generally participated in by the same members.

Patterns of participation were similar to those of other threads posted around the same time and, although Franz as the original poster (OP) would be expected to be a prominent poster, as he was, one of the other participants actually posted more.

Colleen Cotter (2017) has tentatively suggested that false identities might be thought of as either a Type 1 that we ‘unwittingly believe’ or a Type 2 that we are ‘compelled to doubt’. The *Rainbow* characters fall (blatantly) into the second category, but Franz seemed to cause concern because his persona was strategically a fraction closer to a Type 1, a strategy that ultimately proved to be both humorous and infuriating for the other participants but which could, perhaps, be accounted for with reference to Bakhtin’s notion of *carnival*.

Nevertheless, I will suggest that Franz is a cleverly constructed persona that deliberately parodies the many aspects of the culture of this particular forum in a humorous thread, which might be understood as a moment of *carnival* in Bakhtin’s (1981) sense. While some members were annoyed by the parody, others seemed amused by it.

Inverting Dominant Social Norms

One of the most important principles of Bakhtin’s *carnival* was that it was an inversion of dominant social norms. Bakhtin characterised it as the opposite of the strictures of Lent, which represented the self-disciplinary customs imposed by the Christian hierarchy of the Middle Ages. Carnival, in this sense, was about liberation, laughter and a temporary indulgence in aspects of life otherwise prohibited:

... free laughter was related to feasts and was to a certain extent limited by the time allotted to feast days. It coincided with the permission for meat, fat, and sexual intercourse. This festive liberation of laughter and body was in sharp contrast with the stringencies of Lent which had preceded or were to follow. (Bakhtin 1984, p. 89)

This meant not only that laughter replaced seriousness but that everything was potentially turned on its head, including social relations. As Taylor explained:

Not only did carnivalesque imagery offer an alternative to official imagery, but by suspending and/or inverting social hierarchies carnival provided an alternative construction of social relations. (Taylor 1995, p. 20)

Moreover, while carnival was implicitly sanctioned by the authorities, it was a time of freedom and celebration for participants. Later in his account Bakhtin explained:

The carnivalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized *in their own way*, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity. (Bakhtin 1984, p. 255)

Conversely, though, this inversion of social norms and laughter at what is normally taken seriously is also a way of drawing attention to the social strictures inverted by it. For this reason, carnival in the context of a forum may also be a way to understand the community itself.

As noted in previous chapters, a forum such as the one discussed here is already on the fringes of society, existing as it does as a niche primarily for foreign, mainly male, road cyclists. It is nevertheless a community with its own implicit codes of practice that also relate to more general notions of a community of practice. The idea explored here is that the invasion by Franz, who was labelled as a troll, was effectively a moment of carnival characterised by an inversion of forum norms.

When Franz began his first post, he did so in the conventional place for new members: Introductions. For his avatar he used the official logo for the Tour, changing the last two letters of 'France' into a Z so that it read 'Tour de Franz', a name which, as it turns out, represented not only his fictional role as the organiser of training camps but also his role as a lampooning invader.

In Chap. 5, we saw how one new rider was given the impression that the other members were much stronger riders while actually unwittingly revealing his power as a rider. Whatever the case, the new rider played the expected role of *newbie*, retaining a modest view of his own achievements and a respectful attitude towards his fellow riders. As such, he conformed to expected codes of politeness whereby, in Wenger's (1999) terms, a new member is positioned as undergoing an apprenticeship. In contrast, Franz, did not conclude his introduction with a modest, 'I look forward to learning from you/riding with you', as other introductions might do. Instead, Franz wrote: 'I hope I can *contribute to a great cycling life for all*.' This was probably considered innocuous at first, as it was followed by four greetings and an invitation to join a ride. His use of 'contribute' might even have been dismissed as unusual usage by a nonnative speaker of English.

His follow-up, however, made it clear that this was not the case. He ignored the ride invitation and attempted to claim a position as expert, concluding, 'I can't wait to help everyone with their cycling.' As such, Franz narcissistically positions himself not so much at the center of the forum but rather in a way that situates the forum community itself as peripheral to him.

As the threads progressed, Franz caused outrage and hilarity for attempting to position himself at the centre of the cycling world and the forum members as potential beneficiaries of his fictional training camp. Metaphorically, he was like a court jester donning the King's crown on carnival day.

The principal way he achieved this effect was through the inversion of general politeness norms, particularly as they would normally be implied in the context of this forum. Geoffrey Leech (1983), drawing on the kind of general politeness principles discussed in Brown and Levinson (1987), formulated six maxims of politeness. Since then, Leech (2014) has reformulated the maxims to create his eight principles of politeness, but the original maxims nevertheless create a convenient conceptual model against which to show up Franz' breaches of politeness in the context of the forum. Table 7.3 lists Leech's maxims and sets them against examples from the forum.

Table 7.3 A summary of Leech's (1983) politeness maxims with examples where Franz breaches them

Maxim	Contextual meaning	Example of upturning the principle by Franz
Tact	Avoid hurtful/embarrassing Emphasise beneficial	I particularly like [G]'s ride over [O-city]. <i>It is a shame however that he couldn't do it.</i> But don't worry. I will be able to join and give you some tips to make you a better rider soon. <i>So there is no need to sell your kit and retire just yet.</i>
Generosity	Put others first	Would you like to buy one of my hats? I sell them, <i>but only to guys who have a chance of being fast. I have to be careful of my image</i> and not letting everyone represent me as advertising. I'm sure you have heard this before when you try and buy things of company reps. <i>So sorry you can't buy one after all.</i>
Approbation	Avoid disagreement and show solidarity	<i>Please don't side track things, in this thread we either talk about cycling or me.</i> If you want to do 1000 sit ups or push ups that is wonderful. You should join a sit up forum? What ... there is none? That is because no one in their right mind would do 1000 sit ups. Now lets get back on topic. You must not pretend you are better than you are <i>until you are a PRO like me.</i>
Modesty	Minimise self-praise	Ha ha! That's funny, you misunderstand me [forum participant], <i>I mean the mountains are not so tall.</i> But never fear, I will help you conquer them.
Agreement	Minimise disagreement, maximise agreement	Ha ha ha! Yes, sometimes it feels like we are all anonymous doesn't it in this internet world. Alienated, alone. Not trusting anyone or anything. Scared of all we read and see and hear. All we can do sometimes is lash out. Pretend everyone is weaker than us. Trust me I know how you feel ... <i>Well, I have seen others suffering like you. I, of course have loads of friends and followers so I don't have to worry about any of that.</i>
Sympathy	Minimise antipathy/maximise sympathy	

Notably, the examples of politeness breaches in Table 7.3 all rely on the principle of irony and are, therefore, highly dependent on the contextual interpretation of the expressions highlighted in bold. Franz' comment, 'It's a shame however that he couldn't do it', implicitly pours scorn on the ambitious ride that was ultimately cancelled. He links this comment with the selling of his team kit (posted in the For Sale section of the forum) and with the idea of failure and giving up cycling.

Similarly, he enacts a display of meanness by first offering to sell a publicity cap to one of the forum members, then withdrawing it, implying that the member would shame Franz' organisation. This example of disagreement flouts forum rules to keep on topics that are typically related to the general forum theme (*cycling*, here) or that are raised by the OP. Even so, it is unusual to see this invoked in an Introduction, and the formulation 'we either talk about cycling or me' also contradicts the more general principle of interpersonal communication of giving due consideration to one's conversational interactants.

In contradiction with the principles of self-modesty and other-praise, he tells the forum administrator to lower his evaluation of himself while praising himself: 'You must not pretend you are better than you are until you are a PRO like me.' This is a disingenuous comment, which is also nonsensically phrased, since claiming to be a professional is, here, pretending to be better than he is. Franz' disagreement here is over the evaluation of the challenge of Japanese mountains and, implicitly, cycling in Japan generally, a stance which puts him at loggerheads with a local professional cyclist on the forum.

Finally, in terms of sympathy, there is an example of feigned ironic sympathy through the repeated use of 'we', but Franz ultimately drops this pretence with the final, 'Well, I have seen others suffering like you. I, of course have loads of friends and followers so I don't have to worry about any of that.'

These departures from traditional expectations of politeness explain why Franz annoyed some of the forum participants. Yet, in each case these breaches of etiquette are also humorous because they are sudden shifts away from seemingly polite engagement, whether shifting from an offer to sell a hat to withdrawing the offer or from the apparently sympathetic 'I know how you feel' to the opposite.

Taken as a whole, the way in which Franz inverts politeness norms and the expectations of forum users might be seen as a parody of forum participation more generally, a second feature of Bakhtin's notion of *carnival*. Moreover, the spirit of parody is at least partly shared by some users.

Unbridled Parody

Parody uses techniques such as exaggeration and irony to treat serious objects with mirth and amusement. Sometimes it involves mimicking of genre (such as the articles in the British magazine, *Private Eye*, which mimic news reports); in other cases specific individuals are parodied (as in the lampooning of public figures on the American TV show *Saturday Night Live*). In many cases, parody implies deliberate ridicule. Yet, parody also involves entertainment and the prioritisation of laughter, and it is this dimension that Bakhtin highlights in his notion of *carnival*:

For the medieval parodist, everything without exception was comic. Laughter was as universal as seriousness; it was directed at the whole world, at history, at all societies, at ideology ... This is why medieval parody played a completely unbridled game with all that is most sacred and important from the point of view of official ideology. (Bakhtin 1984, p. 84)

As already noted, the deliberate inversion of politeness by Franz can be seen as inverting the social norms of the forum. Since this was done for the sake of humour, it could also be seen as a kind of parody. Moreover, Franz himself was a parody of the forum members in the sense that, while there are always many claims for bragging rights based on ride achievements shared on the forum, Franz was the ultimate bragger who belittled everything except himself. In order to explore this perspective on Franz, I did a keyword search that drew attention to some relevant features.

Keyword searches are sometimes used in corpus approaches to stylistics in literature as a way to explore the relationship between language and characterisation (San Segundo 2017). Repeated words associated with characters in Dickens' novels apparently both help evoke characters as distinct entities and enable a priming effect, whereby these same mannerisms signal the presence of characters in the novel. Might this

same approach tell us something about the way a fictional identity such as Franz is evoked in an online forum and to what extent it might be considered a parody of forum identity?

I did a comparative keyword search for Franz and the other participants using a stop list of common words provided by NVivo (a qualitative software tool) as well as words occurring as noise in the transcripts. Table 7.4 summarises the twenty most frequent words used by Franz. As expected, the list included not only words that reflect the ideational focus of Franz on promoting his training camps ('course', 'training', 'ride', 'beginner', 'cycling', 'coach') but also some other words which seem to have more to do with his interpersonal positioning in the forum ('everyone', 'guys', 'please', 'worry' and 'think').

Franz was unique in his use of 'ha ha ha' or 'ha ha' to indicate laughter but also prominently used 'just' (34 tokens/1405words) and 'one' (32 tokens/n = 1405words) more than any other contributor. As can be seen

Table 7.4 Frequencies of common lexical items in Franz' contributions

Lexical item	Token count
Ha	70
One	34
Just	32
See	30
Now	28
Course	24
Training	23
Ride	21
Everyone	20
Get	20
Guys	20
Worry	20
Please	19
Beginner	18
First	18
Know	17
Cycling	16
Even	16
Think	16
Coach	15

Total word count = 1405 words

from the two sets of examples below, where ‘just’ was used to belittle, patronise or play down his offensive remarks, *one* was used for self-aggrandisement, though the following examples illustrate other incidental occurrences:

But don't worry even though you are *just* starting out ...

I *just* want everyone to succeed

Ha ha. *Just* jokes!

I was called to coach *one* of the Tour de France teams.

I can get you on *one* of my get thin programs

One pedal at a time, no hope but keep going. We are all together on that *one*.

‘Ha ha’/‘Ha ha ha’ to signify laughter was used in a variety of contexts as summarised in Fig. 7.2. As can be seen from this diagram, the principal use of laughter was to accompany ironic strategies Franz used in defending himself against attacks by other members. So when discussing trophy points on the forum, one member asked, ‘Are you sure it is trophy points you want and not comedy points?’ to which Franz responded ‘Ha ha ha ... I can see you are a funny guy.’ Similarly, he laughed off suggestions that he was a woman, deliberate mistakes with his name. and a mistaken attempt to identify him. He also laughed off competing claims of strength, such as the suggestions that he might not be able to keep up on rides in the Japanese mountains. When Franz commented, ‘I’ve seen some of the reports from you beginners in the hills here. Ha ha ha!’ the laughter itself is belittling. However, Franz does also contribute a ‘ha ha ha’ in response to a joke about himself by one of the other members, who suggested that he doubted whether Franz could cycle as well as he could talk himself up. He also uses it when accused of being a troll by one member, who proclaimed:

Y: ... assuming you are a real person and not one of the regular members playing a prank, I think I speak on behalf of many other members when I wish you Franz to choke on a Wiener Schnitzel and drop dead.

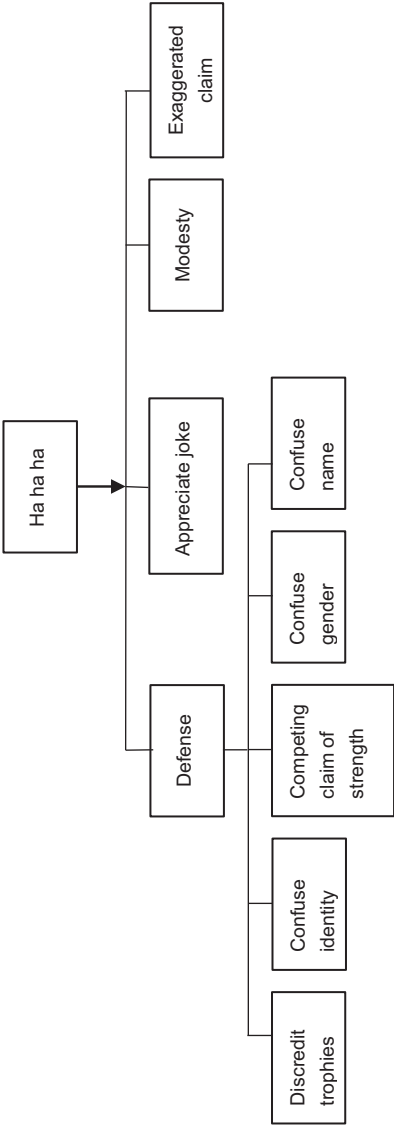


Fig. 7.2 A summary of the use of 'ha ha ha' by Franz

The comment, while implicitly threatening, is expressed in comical terms designed to amuse the other forum participants. Nevertheless, Franz responds in turn, making his own joke out of the attack:

Ha ha ha! Thank you Y, I didn't realise you were the spokesperson for all the members here, But I can see you wish you were. It is OK though. If there is a vote I promise I will vote for you, because you seem like a real statesman!...

Treating the accusation as a joke allows Franz to respond selectively. He does not respond to the accusation of being a troll, but instead focuses on details that do not engage with the attack. Franz also explained that he doesn't eat *wiener schnitzel*. In other words, as the troll interviewed by Phillips and quoted above explained, rather than rational engagement, it is 'better, more entertaining, to make them mad through nonsensical postings, shock, or distorting their positions' (Phillips 2011). In practice, though, the other participants also used irony and humour to respond to Franz.

Shared Laughter of Intimates

As discussed in the previous two sections, the upturning of conventional forum conventions and the focus on parody make the threads involving Franz appear to be moments of carnival brought on through the disruption of Franz. However, Bakhtin also emphasises that carnival is about the shared laughter of intimates. It is perhaps this dimension that might cause us to reconsider to what extent this episode with Franz could be considered carnivalesque. The appearance of Franz is amusing to some participants but annoying and frustrating to others. Nevertheless, even those who appear to be unhappy with the invasion engage in their own ironic play and lampooning of Franz, as can be seen in the contribution of Y quoted above. Like Franz, Y indulges in an inverted politeness with a mock dignity when he declares: 'I think I speak on behalf of many other members ...' Yet, the insult is phrased in an amusing way. In one sense, participation in this thread at all may imply a sharing of laughter, but the reluctance of others to accept this as in any way humorous shows that

these threads are not sanctioned. Rather they seem to be an unwelcome invasion from a stranger. The forum itself, as discussed in Chap. 5, is formed as a shared community of practice that has considerable fluidity and its own practices for sharing humour. The participation in the humour of a spontaneous invasion for its own sake may be in the spirit of this forum, but the fact that some members also resist it may show that this is not sanctioned but invasion by an apparent stranger.

Wearing of Masks

The wearing of masks in the carnival is a way for people to let go of their societal or community identities and play for the sake of laughter. In a sense, it is the mask, the feigned identity, that allows or at least promotes the shared laughter of intimates, the unbridled parody and the inversion of societal norms. Bakhtin characterises it as follows:

The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nick-names. (Bakhtin 1984, pp. 34–35)

Online forums, of course, enable a masked interaction, as all participants are effectively masked by their handle names and avatars. Moreover, throughout the forum they indulge in humorous interaction of a kind that they would presumably avoid in more formal contexts. Even so, the participants of this thread, aside from Franz, are, presumably, all well known to each other through cycling together. Therefore, in a sense, they have become used to an informal level of communication that, while masked to outsiders, is carried out through invisible masks.

The mask worn by Franz, however, is problematic because the status of the mask is not immediately clear. The other members try out various repositionings in attempting to determine the status of the mask. One member treats Franz as a real person and tries to track him down on the Internet. Franz, ironically, perpetuates this possibility by pointing out that his name ‘is just an Internet name’. He is also positioned by several

members as a troll, though Y above leaves open another possibility when he comments, 'assuming you are a real person and not one of the regular members playing a prank'. The possibility that this is a prank by one of the members is explored, with two members being openly accused, but this possibility is never fully pursued and the mask remains ambiguous.

Portrayal of the Grotesque

The final feature of carnival relevant to this discussion is the inclusion of the portrayal of the grotesque. Interestingly, this is not a dimension that is obviously relatable to Franz himself, but there are some examples of grotesque images evoked by other participants in the discussion. Grotesque imagery is associated with the lower body and disgusting or deformed images. Verbally, Y's image of choking would seem to represent an example of this. In addition, there were also some images posted in the thread that evoked a kind of grotesque humour. First, one of the participants, who had not posted on the forum for some time previous to Franz' threads, comments on his state of fitness as follows:

At this point, [I am] all talk and no legs. But after I bang out a couple [long mountain ride route names], I should have some semblance of form. At the moment, though, I'm more this: [picture] Than this. [picture]

The first picture shows a very thin but muscular man, naked apart from shorts, a hat and sunglasses, running at the top of a rocky mountain peak. The second shows an incredibly muscular image of the fantasy hero IronSword, also naked to the waist. The joke focusing on the exaggerated bodily images seems to me to be a good example of contemporary grotesque humour.

Another example of grotesque imagery came out of speculation over Franz' claim to have worked with many European professional riders, including such stars as Alberto Contador. At the time, Contador had recently been suspended for using prohibited substances, which he attributed to eating some beef that was said to contain one of the banned substances. This event was widely discussed in the media, so it is jokingly suggested that Franz may be Contador's butcher. In response to this,

another participant posts a picture of a wrestler referred to as the butcher shown covered by another wrestler, and both of them covered in fake blood. Again, rather than having any logical or serious connection with the conversation, this seems to be a case of sharing a grotesque image as part of carnivalesque humour,

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the invasion by a troll, a faked identity called Franz, appearing in the context of the online forum. Franz was disruptive, and clearly annoyed and perhaps even upset some participants. However, the three threads started by the disruptive visitor were actively participated in, either in challenging the troll or responding with equal irony. Overall, the contributions of the troll were humorous and picked up on the values of the community, systematically inverting them through inverted politeness and exaggerated claims of the kind that, if they had been true, might have been considered enviable. However, they clearly were not and instead seemed to be part of a masked identity worn ironically to taunt the community. Accounting for the motivations of trolls is not easy, as previously shown. While it has been suggested that trolls are antisocial individuals who suffer from disturbed psyches (dark-psychology.co 2017), it has also been suggested that such people actually draw on attitudes already in the media (Phillips 2015). Moreover, trolling is very often oriented around ironic humor, indicating that humor itself is a major motivation; Phillips' troll interviewee even suggested that trolling was part of a tradition of anonymous irony that dates back to the time of Jonathon Swift. Following this suggestion, I have explored the invasion of Franz in the cycle forum in terms of Bakhtin's notion of a tradition of laughter and lampooning associated with carnival. Bakhtin proposed that whereas at the time of Rabelais, the spirit of carnival was at its height in literature, it has gradually been marginalised. If this were the case, *carnival* might be a relevant framework to use to explore the marginalised practice of trolls. In order to do this, I have considered five features derived from Bakhtin's (Bakhtin 1984) account of *carnival*: inversion of dominant social norms, unbridled parody, shared laughter of

intimates, wearing of masks, and portrayal of the grotesque. However, the troll initiates the threads without any sense of sanction to do so or much of a sense of sharing laughter. Nevertheless, several of the participants admit that they find it amusing. In addition, if not the most obvious framework for exploring the invasion by the troll, the features borrowed from Bakhtin's account of *carnival* do prove to be a useful heuristic for exploring the role of humour and irony in these threads as well as in providing some account of the way participants evoke their identities as well as that of the community.

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Part 3

Multimodality, Corporate Identity, and Market Positioning

8

‘Hey You, Thanks for Buying Our Stuff’: Language, Multimodality and Identity in Two Corporate Websites

Introduction

This chapter explores the semiotic resources employed in website design to evoke corporate identity through a comparative multimodal analysis of two cycle-component-maker websites (Shimano 2017a; Surly 2017a). One, Shimano, is the global leader in cycle parts manufacturing and the other, Surly, is an American niche brand that specialises in making affordable steel frames and parts, and targets budget-minded bicycle hobbyists. The comparison shows how image, font and other effects, as well as the organisation of the page, work together to create very different corporate identities. It is proposed that whereas Shimano evokes an aesthetic of engineered polish, Surly deliberately creates an aesthetic characterised here as ‘anarchist-punk’ that reflects its maverick position in the marketplace, resisting the tide of technological progress promoted by companies like Shimano while working in accordance with Shimano’s technological standards, which dominate the marketplace. This extends to the humorous style used in employee blogs and even product manuals, which blend the functional organisation of a manual with the informal style of blogs and forums, such as the one discussed in the previous section.

A comparison of these corporate websites illustrates how they can shape corporate identities. While each website gives the impression that its own use of semiotic resources is 'natural', the comparison shows up different ideological and identity positionings. Whereas Shimano offers a range of products that compose a hierarchy ranging from the most basic product models to state-of-the art technology used by professionals, Surly offers a variety of bicycles in a similar price range but designed for different types of riding, and only one grade of components. Moreover, Surly products focus on making bicycles simpler and less technologically advanced. These strategic differences are reflected in everything from the choice of fonts and images to the language used throughout the websites.

In order to explore identity work within the two websites, this chapter begins with a detailed analysis of two user manuals that provide instructions on basic maintenance of a component. Both manuals perform the same purpose and include recognisably similar resources, but they construct very different interpersonal relationships with the reader of the text. Whereas Surly (2017b) uses a relatively informal tone, it also relies heavily on a textual account that positions its ideal reader as a competent mechanic. Shimano (2017b; 2017c), in accordance with its emphasis on high technology, instead offers two sets of instructions, one for the end user and one for the shop mechanic. The end-user manual (Shimano 2017b) focuses on instructions for safety and provides no information about fitting. On the other hand, the professional manual (Shimano 2017c) uses high-quality illustrations and sparse text to provide the relevant instructions.

Comparative semiotic analyses of product videos, webpage organisation and menus are also used to build up a picture of the very different identity work being carried out by Shimano and Surly within these websites. The texts on the website do not all simply reiterate a consistent image of the corporation but rather offer complementary perspectives that contribute to evoking a sense of the corporate identity. At the same time the texts on the Surly website and those on Shimano's share generic expectations but realise these expectations in different ways. In addition, I will suggest that the remarkable consistency of the respective corporate identities across a range of modalities invites a way into exploring them further.

The principal approach in this chapter is multimodal analysis (Kress 2010; Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, 2006; O'Halloran and Smith 2011), which in turn draws on Halliday's functional grammar (Halliday and Matthiessen 2013) and other semiotic resources within the SFL framework, including genre theory (Martin and Rose 2008) and appraisal (Martin and White 2005).

The analysis is divided into three sections describing a three-part comparative analysis of interpersonal meaning in (1) the user manuals; (2) the macro-structure of homepage design; and (3) the semiotic interrelations among text, image and video resources. The user manuals are two texts that appear inside the respective websites. Both texts can be located after navigating through the paths from the homepage. First, though, the following section briefly introduces the webpage as a site for shaping corporate brand identity.

Corporate Websites

Corporate websites, like many other forms of new media, are constantly changing. Early websites were generally text-based, with links shown in a different colour, as dial-up connections would not permit bandwidth-heavy visual and video resources. The evolution of pages since then has been shaped in part by the development of technology and web plug-ins, and is also driven by changes in webpage design (Boardman 2005). Nevertheless, webpage designers generally use an increasingly rich range of resources for evoking corporate images. Accordingly, approaches to exploring them have become increasingly multimodal (Pauwels 2012). This increase in multimodal resources has also gone hand in hand with differing patterns of interaction between the user and the website, with current sites needing to be attractive, able to draw users in and easy to navigate. Blogger Myia Kelly (2013) characterises the webpage as going through a number of distinct iterations, which she characterises as Antiquity (text only), The Middle Ages (column-based formats with some graphical elements), The Renaissance (features such as Flash enabling a more dynamic appearance), Enlightenment (Cascading Style Sheets [CSS]

enabling separation of website design and content, and improved design sensibilities) and The Industrial Revolution (incorporation of the Web 2.0 dimension of social media). Both the websites discussed in this chapter are continually changing their appearance—the Shimano website even reorganised its fundamental design and structure during the period when I was analysing it. Accordingly, while it is possible to look at monomodal written texts found within the website, such as the written text of the user manuals, any contemporary account of how website design contributes to the language of websites would benefit from considering them as multimodal spaces drawing on a range of semiotic resources to evoke corporate identities.

My aim here is to consider how this is done in terms of both linguistic and multimodal resources, and the relationships among the modalities. As the two main texts and the homepages from which they derive belong to two quite different corporations within the same industry—Shimano and Surly—this analysis also looks at what kind of corporate identity is conveyed and how well it is suited to the marketing of its products.

In her book *Designing Brand Identity*, Wheeler describes brand identity as follows:

Brand identity is tangible and appeals to the senses. You can see it, touch it, hold it, watch it move. Brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes big ideas and meanings accessible. Brand identity takes disparate elements and unifies them into whole systems. (2012, p. 4)

This description suggests that brand identity signals are spread across a range of semiotic resources, so that exploration and critique of such identities benefit from the kind of multimodal analysis developed by Kress and van Leeuwen as well as the many scholars who have contributed to this framework (Dreyfus et al. 2012; O'Halloran and Smith 2011; Royce and Bowcher 2007). The following sections examine ways in which a disparate array of elements, across a range of modalities found in the two homepages, contributes to the evocation of a brand identity.

Two Product Manuals

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Contact the place of purchase or a bicycle dealer for information on installation and adjustment of the products, which are not found in the user's manual. A dealer's manual for professional and experienced bicycle mechanics is available on our website (<http://si.shimano.com>).

Do not disassemble or alter this product.

For safety, be sure to read this user's manual thoroughly before use, and follow them [sic] for correct use. (User's manual: Read Derailleur (Di2): Shimano 2017b)

Hey you, thanks for buying our stuff. We mean it. Please read all these instructions before attempting to install your Fixxer Hub Converter. If you lack mechanical aptitude, don't have the right tools, or can't read or follow these instructions carefully, you're waaay better off having a professional bike mechanic do the installation for you. Our trusty legal counsel compels us to point out that if this installation isn't done properly, YOU COULD DIE riding your bike, which would make us truly sad. (Fixxer instructions: Surly, 2017b)

The two quotations above are taken from the beginning of two user manuals for cycle components. It should be easy to identify both as extracts from product instruction manuals, though the first one uses language that is more readily associated with this genre. Although, there are other differences, the most striking ones are the *interpersonal* meanings. In the first quotation, a typically 'impersonal' tone is evoked through the use of bald commands ('Contact ...'; 'Do not ...'; 'For safety, be sure to ...') and statements of fact ('A dealer's manual ... is available ...') phrased in the formal lexis of what might loosely be called 'technical English'. By contrast, the second quotation uses a casual tone of high interpersonal involvement completely untypical of instruction manuals and phrased in a colloquial register that one might expect to find in an online discussion forum. It could easily be mistaken for a humorous parody of the genre. Nevertheless, while some humor in the second quotation was no doubt intentional, this style is ubiquitous across the product manuals found on the Surly website and, I will suggest, pervades the whole website as an expression of brand identity. This chapter explores the resources used to

create these different interpersonal stances, which in turn reflect different corporate identities. In order to do this, I consider not only the texts from which these quotations were taken but also a range of features of the homepages (from which the manuals were downloaded) from the perspective of interpersonal meaning. As user manuals always include technical illustrations of the product and as homepages incorporate a wealth of multimodal resources, such as photographs, illustrations and other graphics, this chapter also considers to what extent a more comprehensive multimodal analysis of homepages is feasible and relevant to a systemic functional description of corporate identity in homepages. The two examples were chosen because, as can be seen from the two quotations above, homepages evoke very different corporate identities.

The first of the quotations above is from Shimano's user manual for its 'Rear Derailleur (Di2)', a state-of-the-art component for changing gears on a 22-speed road bike, though this paragraph is also found throughout Shimano cycle-component user manuals. The second quotation is the first paragraph of an instruction manual for Surly's Fixxer, which is a component for converting a multispeed wheel into a single-speed fixed wheel. As the single-speed fixed gear was the drivetrain of the very first bicycles produced over a hundred years ago (before freewheels and multiple gears were invented), this product could be said to be targeting the very opposite of state-of-the-art—'retro', if you like. In fact, like Surly's other components, the Fixxer is a niche product that appeals to the needs of cyclists not catered to by major producers like Shimano, arguably the largest and most prominent cycle-components maker in the world.

User manuals are ubiquitous texts in consumer societies today where products are supplied with instructions for use. It is perhaps difficult to locate such texts precisely within Matthiessen et al.'s (2010, p. 221) text typologies, but they would seem to fit somewhere between the functional categories of *enabling* and *recommending*. The *enabling* is the instructions for installation and use, and the *recommending* refers to the warning and safety advice that accompanies these instructions. The comparison below illustrates how the way these functions are realised can also have implications for interpersonal positioning of the user in relation to other parties associated with the product. Two user manuals will be considered: those for Shimano's 'Di2 rear derailleur'—an electronic

gear shifter for high-end racing cycles—and Surly's Fixxer—a niche product that allows multispeed bikes to be converted into single-speed fixed-gear bicycles.

Both user manuals open with two key recommendations: (1) read the instruction manual and (2) have difficult work done by a 'professional (bike) mechanic' or contact the dealer for further help. The second point is supported by a warning that faulty installation or maintenance could result in an accident, which also acts as a disclaimer. In addition, both manuals warn users that products should not be disassembled or altered, and that they are not guaranteed against wear and tear, and both include warnings specific to the product. However, the texts are strikingly different in their use of interpersonal language.

In the Shimano user manual the 'read this user's manual' instruction sentence appears in bold in a font that is much larger than the rest of the text, aside from headings, and that emphasises its importance. The expression 'contact the place of purchase' or variations—'consult a dealer or agency' and 'consult a distributor'—appear six times in the Shimano user manual. In addition, out of thirteen points listed under 'Note' in the 'Important Safety Information Section,' there are two affirmative recommendations for maintenance ('Be sure to check that ...' and 'You should periodically ...'); five warnings of things to avoid ('Be careful not to ...'; 'Do not ...' and 'avoid'); three pieces of conditional advice to solve problems ('If + PROBLEM + SOLUTION') and three points of general information (where to obtain software updates; that the products are not guaranteed against wear and tear; and recommendations for using Shimano lubricants). Following the safety information is a further section on regular inspection with a list of seven points framed by the instruction: 'Before riding the bicycle, check the following items. If any problems are found with the following items, contact the place of purchase or the bicycle dealer.' If the diagrams, which illustrate the names of the parts referred to in these sections, are included, these sections constitute two-thirds of the user manual.

In contrast to the bullet-point lists in the Shimano user manual, the Surly manual integrates its warnings and advice into a flowing text. Unlike the impersonal tone of the Shimano text, the Surly manual seeks to establish a relationship with the user through a casual register that

incorporates colloquial language and unpacks some of the relationships that are usually left implicit in conventional manuals like Shimano's. The overall effect of this is a reworking of the genre, which is humorous—perhaps deliberately so—but which also contributes to the evocation of a corporate identity that is quite different from Shimano's.

The Surly manual begins with the casual salutation: 'Hey you, thanks for buying our stuff. We mean it.' This is surprising not only because of the message of thanks to the consumer, which is absent from the Shimano manual, but also because it is expressed in a very casual register. 'Hey you' is an inexplicit reference that in many contexts might be considered rude, as it deliberately avoids using a token honorific (Sir/Madame) or an explicit reference to the relationship (customer/user). Moreover, the product itself is referred to with the most casual and vague referent 'stuff'. Similarly, while the suggestion of leaving the work to a 'professional bike mechanic' is only made once, it is made in a way that is potentially face-threatening: 'If you lack mechanical aptitude ... or can't follow these instructions' could at best be taken as a very direct style of talk but at worst implies that the user may be incompetent and/or stupid. Moreover, the potential for accidents is bluntly expressed in capitals as 'YOU COULD DIE' and the disclaimer as 'which would make us truly sad'. In terms of Martin and White's (2005) appraisal model the *force* is exaggeratedly high, while the level of *focus* shifts from being very vague ('stuff') to precise ('DIE'). Overall, though, this direct and colloquial style of writing evokes a face-to-face context or the tone of familiarity used in online forums (Kiernan 2012), where some interpersonal expressions used to offer advice in the Surly manual, such as 'you're waaay better off', would be more at home. The word 'way' itself is a particularly informal choice compared with the alternatives 'much' or 'would be much'. Moreover, the additional 'a's in the spelling of 'waaay' ('way') mimic the emphatic lengthening of the word in speech, a widespread practice in informing social networking.

In addition to evoking a more casual relationship with the user through the use of register, relationships that are normally left implicit are made more congruent. Not only is death mentioned but also the 'trusty legal counsel' invokes the lawyers who are there to protect the company against unwarranted claims. The casual 'trusty' softens the expression, making

them sound less threatening compared to, for example, 'trusted legal advisors/team'. The issue of warranty is further unpacked in the section entitled 'Limited Warranty' in a similarly straightforward way: 'Stuff eventually breaks or wears out if you use it enough. That's beyond our control.' The division of responsibility between user and manufacturer is similarly spelled out and concludes with the conditional suggestion that: 'If you do destroy your Surly product, fess up and maybe we can get some replacement parts to keep you riding.' 'Fess up', a colloquial expression meaning to 'confess' or 'own up' (to misusing the product, in this case), softens the situation and positions the company as sympathetic and prepared to help the user, within reason. Overall, the effect is to evoke an intimate relationship with the user that is quite the opposite from that evoked in the Shimano manual, which distances the user through use of bullet-pointed formal advice but also by implicitly directing all communication to a generalised third party, 'the place of purchase'. In addition, detailed instructions for installing the product are actually hidden away in the 'dealer's manual', which is for 'professional and experienced mechanics' rather than the user. This instructional dimension is therefore also worthy of consideration.

While the Surly manual constitutes the complete documentation for the product, the Shimano manual is one of three documents relating to the product on the website. Besides the user manual (2017b), Shimano has a 187-page 'dealer's manual' (2017c), which provides detailed information on installing the whole gear-changing system of which the rear derailleur is just one part. In addition, there is a sheet that provides a list and diagram of all the parts that make up the product together with each individual part's 'Shimano code no'. These codes could be used by cycle shops to order spare parts, which would also not be available directly to users. The separation of these documents, particularly the division of 'user's manual' and 'dealer's manual', positions the end user as somebody different from the person who does the installation. This separation of the user and dealer, the detailed attention given to the installation process and the exploded diagram of the product with coded labels for parts as simple as a washer, screw or spring highlight the product's engineering design. It is therefore not surprising that the language of the installation process in Shimano's manuals draws on the instructional language evolved within the

technological field of engineering (more specifically, bicycle-component development), just as the warnings in the user manual borrow from another specialised field, that of legal documents. In contrast to these specialised areas of language shaping the Shimano manuals, the Surly manual fulfills the same functions in the tone of everyday talk. This approach even extends to the illustrations.

Perhaps one final point worth making about the language of the Shimano manuals is that Shimano is a Japanese company based in Osaka but selling primarily to a global market. The original manuals would have been written in Japanese, but the manuals discussed here are in English and versions of them are available in a total of twelve languages. In contrast, the Surly website and manuals are only available in English, even though their products are sold worldwide. Looked at from this perspective, the Shimano manuals could be said to reflect Japanese cultural norms that call for the separation of roles, such as producer and shop-mechanic, and the use of a formal register for those who are not part of a family, company or inner circle. Moreover, when translating a manual, the translator's priority should focus on ideational resources to ensure that instructions and warnings are clearly understood. Translating the interpersonal resources of the colloquial language of the Surly manual into multiple languages would be a challenging task for translators trained in the technical and legal language of manuals.

Technical drawing is a style of illustration closely associated with engineering. Through the use of black-and-white line drawings, products are represented to show their physical proportions and functional properties in diagrammatic form, stripped of the colours, textures and logos that belong to the separate dimension of aesthetics and graphic design. The use of such diagrams therefore emphasises the functional dimension of the product.

In user (or 'dealer's') manuals, the visual diagrams often form a key *enabling* element, showing *how* something is done. This visual instruction is generally accompanied by written instructions that tell (rather than show) someone how to proceed. An example of exclusively visual instructions would be the assembly diagrams for IKEA furniture. Such instructions enable assembly through showing only. Since such visual manuals avoid the need for (expensive) translation, one might expect that they

would be more common. However, the reason that they are not is perhaps both because a degree of telling is deemed to be required for the instructions and because user manuals perform other functions, including warning the user of the dangers of incorrect installation (with an implied disclaimer) and recommendation of installation by a ‘professional (bike) mechanic’, a term used in both manuals. In addition, as noted above, the Surly manual includes an interpersonal act of thanking the user for purchasing the product, a practice that implicitly brings the manufacturer and user closer together.

The illustrations in the Surly manual appear on the second page of the manual and show the final assembly on the four standard hub widths to which the product can be fitted. The drawings are large enough to be almost life-size and represent the hubs with simple lines in two dimensions. The illustrations in the Shimano user manual are included in the layout on the same side as the text. There are three illustrations that show the derailleur itself and a further three to show the junction box used to reset the derailleur in the case of an accident. The drawings are small and are represented in three dimensions, making them less clear than the bold drawings in the Surly manual. In addition, due to their small size, details are shown using magnified boxes. Besides the product illustrations, a further visual is used consisting of boxes connected with triangle arrows to represent the sequence of steps to clear the protection function. The Shimano dealer’s manual provides much clearer and better-spaced illustrations (also presented three-dimensionally) throughout. Illustrations are generally used to represent the processes described in the text but sometimes do so in ways that could not easily be glossed. For example, there is an illustration on page 42 showing fifteen different ways the cable could be positioned to take up varying amounts of cable slack.

The Macrostructure of Homepage Design

The homepage itself is a multimodal text, which also incorporates a number of *pages* as well as videos, photographs or printable materials (in Portable Document Format [PDF]) such as the user manuals considered above. All these materials are linked by a central page, which is generally

referred to as *home*. Therefore I use the word *homepage* here to refer to the entire *macrotext* or collection of linked materials (*texts*), and *home* to refer to the central page, which provides the starting point for accessing the other areas of the homepage. Just as there are considerable similarities in the overall functions of the user manuals, the homepages of Shimano American Corporation (hereafter, 'Shimano') and Surly have much in common, yet the differences between them, when explored as multi-modal semiotic resources, reveal further means through which corporate identity can be expressed.

The key elements in common on both the Shimano and Surly homes are (1) brand name, (2) search box, (3) menu bar, (4) product highlight, (5) noticeboard, (6) box links and (7) copyright information. All of these sections occupy a more or less permanent area of the page (though as noted already Shimano has changed the overall layout of its page within the year since I began analyzing it). However, product highlights and news are updated regularly to introduce new products or provide other current information. All of the listed sections of the page (home) are also links, so that clicking on them will take the reader to more detailed information. The only exception to this is the brand logo itself, which appears on other pages and simply takes the user back to home. The search-box functions are both run by Google and search only within the homepage.

Menus may seem an unlikely candidate for the expression of corporate identity, but, on careful examination, they actually serve as good examples. The thing Shimano's and Surly's menus share is that they are organised in terms of systemic choice, rather like the systems I have used for describing language throughout this book. Just as SFL system networks move from broad systemic mapping towards instances (instantiation), so website menus move from category to subcategory to specific information, such as a product description. The main difference between the Surly and Shimano menu structure is that the Shimano menu is considerably more complex because of its much larger array of products. First, Shimano is a company that also makes fishing and rowing equipment, and the website at the time of this analysis kept a menu visible above the cycling specialisation menu even after entering the cycling website with choices for cycling, fishing, rowing, corporate information,

‘We Race Shimano’ (information about sponsored riders and teams) and Shimano radio (podcasts) . The cycling menu is then subdivided into disciplines: ‘Road’, ‘MTB’, ‘City & Comfort’, ‘E-bike’, ‘Accessories’, ‘Information’, and ‘Technology’. Each of these has a single plate menu, which offers the user the option to choose a component grade or type. Therefore, as shown in Fig. 8.1, if the user wishes to view the Dura-Ace (CSR9100) eleven-speed cassette sprocket, it can be accessed either through the Dura-Ace menu or the cassette menu. Notice that the product-type menu is actually further subdivided into ‘Drivetrain’, ‘Wheels & Hubs’, ‘Shifting & Braking’, and ‘Pedals’, but no intermediate click is needed. Surly provides one menu bar at the top and another at the bottom of the page, whereas Shimano’s are all contained at the top. The main bottom menu basically duplicates the top one but includes short-cut menus to the three product categories instead of the products menu. The listed content of the menus were almost the same when I first looked at these pages. At the time both had menus for components, accessories, news and information, technical support, dealer locator and a ‘follow us’ link to social media. As you can see from Fig. 8.1 this has now changed. This selection can be seen as offering different choices of interaction on the website that also have different implications for interaction with the company. The majority of space on both websites is filled up with product information. Originally, the only menu choices on the Shimano homepage not found on Surly were ‘Footwear’ and ‘Newsletter Signup’. Instead the Surly menu has ‘Bikes and Frames’ and ‘Image Dump’. Nevertheless, despite similar functional content, the Surly menu employed different terms: ‘components’ became ‘parts and accessories’, ‘accessories’ became ‘gear’, ‘dealer locator’ became ‘dealers’ and ‘news and info’ became ‘blog’. In each case, as with the marked changes highlighted in the discussion of the Surly user manual above, the lexical choices for menu items represent a subtle interpersonal downgrading from the more dignified language of technology and the printed word to everyday language. The choice of the slang words ‘gear’ and ‘dealers’ as menu items might even be said to evoke an underworld trade in illicit substances.

The ‘Footwear’/ ‘Bikes and Frames’ difference reflects their different range of products besides components—Shimano also specialises in

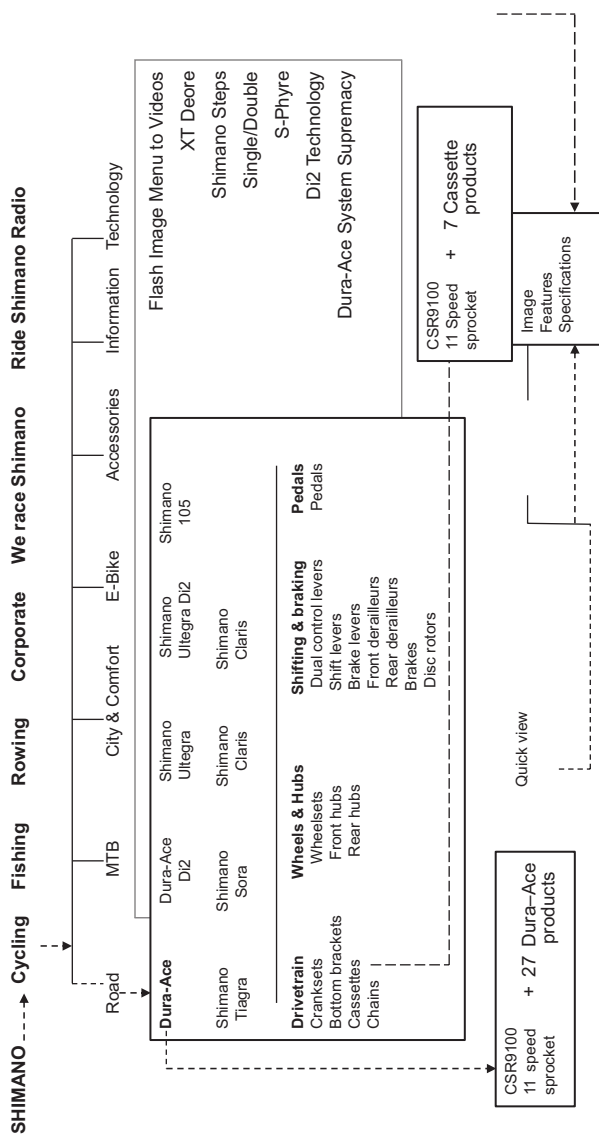


Fig. 8.1 The webpage structure of Shimano

producing cycle shoes, while Surly produces frames and sells complete bicycles. However, this difference has no particular significance for the analysis here.

‘Newsletter Signup’/‘Blog’ is a slightly more relevant difference, as the email newsletter is the electronic equivalent of a mass mailing, a well-established corporate advertising strategy. In contrast, the blog has evolved among social outliers to express views that might be censored in (until recently) mainstream print publications. The Surly blogs feature individual contributions from Surly employees that retain this outlier or anticorporate feel with postings and even poems that focus on riding bikes and drinking beer. Similarly, the bio sections are accompanied by black-and-white photos and offer humorous and self-deprecating self-characterisations:

A rider-slash-Surly fan who somehow bounced like a quarter at a drunken college mixer into what he thinks is pretty much the swellest job a fella could have, it is Tyler’s job to determine how Surly should seek attention to its products and itself generally. He has an extensive background in children’s theater, which is, perhaps not surprisingly, a good fit for the marketing manager of this company.

Far from presenting an image of corporate polish the two long sentences with allusions to drunkenness and children’s theatre, the clumsy metaphor of the bouncing quarter, the unorthodox spelling of ‘fella’ and the slang expressions, such as ‘rider-slash-Surly fan’ and ‘swellest job’, all contribute to the evocation of an identity that is the exact opposite of a marketing manager. Nevertheless, it is precisely this ‘antimarketing’ that pervades the homepage and contributes to the positioning of the company as an outlier with an anarchist cause in providing products like the Fixxer that buck the trend of continuous technological improvement, as spearheaded by Shimano. However, this is jumping ahead of the analysis, so let’s return to the menus.

The organisation of the Surly menu (see Fig. 8.2) might best be described as flat, as each menu leads to a single page. In the case of ‘Parts and Accessories’, this link leads to a menu page where all the parts are displayed with pictures and component names. Clicking on the picture

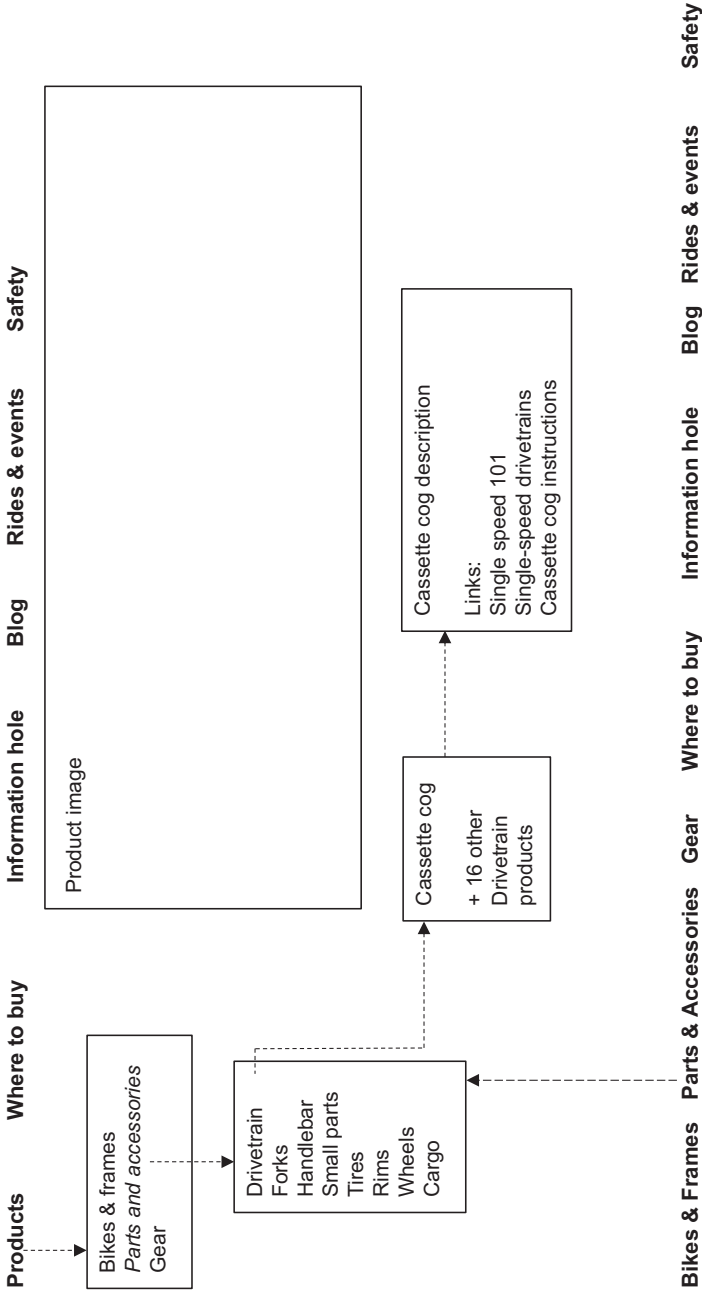


Fig. 8.2 The webpage structure of Surly

takes the user to more detailed information. The use of pictures makes this more intuitive. Although Surly produces a variety of components, there seems to be only one model of each, and the products are generally niche products aimed at a simpler cycling experience (like the Fixxer) or getting off-road and into nature (like their fat-wheel rims as well as their bikes and frames) and away from cycling as a form of competition.

In contrast to Surly's flat menu and picture-based product links, Shimano's hierarchical menu reflects its complex hierarchy of products that target both the various specialties within cycling and the grades of product by price bracket. At the time of the original analysis, Shimano had a three-level drop-down menu choice ('Cycling Discipline—Component Grade—Component') with five cycling disciplines to choose from and twelve grades for 'road bikes'. The choice of grades was listed top to bottom with the top grade at the top and the bottom grade at the bottom. The menu organisation has since been radically redesigned, using large flat tabs (represented in Fig. 8.1) rather than vertical drop-down ones, lessening the hierarchical feel and instead assigning buttons with the brand name of each component grade in its distinctive font as written on the product and packaging. Nevertheless, the hierarchy has been retained with the rationalised eight groupsets (nine if you include the second grade of Claris) displayed left to right, upper to lower in order of grade. The sense of hierarchy could be said to be less overt here but remains central to Shimano's organisation of its respective product identities and of the company itself, and is closely associated with the sense of engineering progress over time. At the peak of the Shimano range of components for road bikes sits Dura-Ace, with the Di2—the electronic shifting version of Dura-Ace—being the state-of-the-art in bicycle components, currently rivaled by the Campagnolo's EPS and SRAM's wireless eTap. The website lists some fifteen versions of Dura-Ace developed since its first introduction in 1973, and lower grades incorporate features that appeared gradually over the years that followed. Shimano therefore offers what they call 'trickle down' technology in the grades immediately below Dura-Ace but also an ongoing potential for upgrades.

The importance of this hierarchical model, and particularly the maintenance of the image of Dura-Ace as the cutting edge of bicycle technology, is easier to understand when one considers the cost to con-

sumers. The current recommended retail prices for the groupset in the UK are as follows: Dura-Ace Di2 groupset is £3040.82, Dura-Ace £1904.91, Ultegra Di2 £1680.82, Ultegra £969.91, 105 £664.95, Tiagra £540.91, Sora £417.91 and Claris £306.69. These prices only cover brakes and gears and the cost of the frame; wheels and handlebars would need to be added to make up the cost of a complete bike. A Dura-Ace Di2-equipped bike with an equivalent grade professional frame and wheels would therefore cost as much as six thousand pounds or more, putting it out of the range of even enthusiastic amateurs unless they have access to considerable disposable income. In contrast, Surly's bikes retail in the UK for from around £500 for the cheaper models to around £1800 for top-end models. This means that while Surly targets enthusiasts seeking long-term reliable bikes, the company avoids the highest end of the market and the pressure to upgrade implied by Shimano's model of continual research and development.

Semiotic Interrelations Among Semiotic Resources

Within both the *page for home* and the *homepage* as a whole, a variety of resources in the visual mode are used to signal the identity of the products and the company. These design elements in the Surly and Shimano pages draw on quite different aesthetics and signal very different corporate identities. The company name 'Shimano' is the family name of the company's founder (Shozaburo), and, true to this family tradition, the company was later inherited by his son Shozo, then Keizo, followed by Yoshizo and the current fifth president Kozo Shimano. It is perhaps no coincidence that the words 'family', 'generation' and 'inherit' are used to describe the relationships between past and present products at Shimano. Surly, on the other hand, is simply an English adjective that means 'bad-tempered and unfriendly'. The name itself is therefore confrontational.

The type-face chosen for brand names is an important part of a company's image, and, though it may be easy to take semiotic analysis of typefaces too far, if one were to do so it is possible to imagine the smooth and sturdy shapes of the Shimano logo as constituting a very different

choice from the rough brush strokes of Surly. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, 221–2) suggest that brush strokes, being close to handwriting, signal individuality, a point that meshes well with the individual nature of Surly's products. More specifically, the Surly logo resembles graffiti. In contrast, while certainly distinctive, Shimano's blue logo looks like a product of industrial design, which carefully balances sturdier sections with thinner ones. All of the typefaces on the Shimano page share a polished machine-produced appearance, while those on the Surly page are irregular and look as if they either have been produced by hand or mimic the typeface of a typewriter with worn keys that does not produce uniform letters. Similarly, the noticeboard appears to have ink smudges on a sheet of lined paper, as though it has been handled by a mechanic with greasy fingers—an effect that has presumably been carefully created by the webpage designer.

Rather like the typefaces, Shimano's product image looks to be one of the most polished, with components lit on a dark background, shining like jewels and borrowing an aesthetic from the advertising of actual jewels. In contrast to this, Surly products, like the rest of the *page*, are generally shown in black-and-white. Unlike the depth and three-dimensionality of the carefully displayed Shimano components, the Surly ones appear to be rough collages with little depth and no gloss or shine. Shimano's featured products are on a revolving menu. They are listed below the 'Flash image menu videos' on Fig. 8.1. Each product also has a catchphrase. Dura-Ace has 'System supremacy' while a feature on mechanics has 'Not all heroes wear capes.' Surly features just one product and no revolving Flash menu. The product at the time was a bike labelled 'Instigator' with a list of synonyms ('Initiator', 'Agitator', 'Formentor', 'Troublemaker', 'Ring-leader' and 'Rabble-rouser') that echo the company's confrontational name.

Besides product images, both websites include promotional videos. The videos on Shimano's site are of cinema quality. One type of video is the product documentary narrative discussed in Chap. 10, which underlines the expense to which Shimano goes to develop their products with the assistance of professional road and mountain bike cycle teams sponsored by Shimano. Interviews with professional riders and mechanics make it clear that this is cutting-edge technology for winning races.

A second kind of video on the Shimano website is the *#believe* video, which effectively makes a link between the ambitions of professional riders and the more modest ambitions of others. It splices together a narrative using segments featuring professional riders Geraint Thomas and Jens Voigt, Paralympic cyclist Sarah Storey, a pair of friends mountain biking in the wilds, a teenage boy who goes to ride a steep hill, and a young child on a bicycle racing his parents along a tree-lined riverbank path. These stories are united by the voiceover narration, which connects them as personal cycling challenges. This video therefore helps make a narrative link between the professional riders in the product-development documentaries and ordinary users, inspiring everyone to ride.

The Surly site does not include professional videos but instead shows a range of videos created by users themselves about Surly products. Many are jerkily filmed and some, like the video of a man who builds a trail of donuts in a forest to ride over, seem eccentric, but they do give voice to users, and each is followed by comments from other users.

The overall aesthetic of Surly is therefore rather like the punk or anarchist aesthetic that emerged in the 1970s as bands designed their own publicity material with limited resources, including low-quality black-and-white photocopy machines. Surly borrows this aesthetic to promote its own brand of anarchy through cycling. As I have illustrated throughout this chapter, the identity signals for this permeate a range of modalities and in doing so are able to create a coherent brand identity that reflects its outlier position in the marketplace and signals an ideology that represents cycling as an opportunity to enjoy freedom closer to nature and in simpler ways that avoid competition. This is quite the opposite of Shimano's representation of its products as on the cutting edge of a rapidly progressing technology evolving out of competitive professional cycling. Accordingly, every aspect of its homepage signals this same polish and sophistication, with the homepage itself undergoing several design refinements even during my year spent exploring the site. Both Surly and Shimano work successfully with the same basic resources on their homepages across a range of modalities to signal their respective identities, but despite superficial similarities they are able to signal quite different corporate identities that reflect their different marketplace positions and philosophies.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of an analysis of two user manuals, considering both verbal and visual features, and a variety of multimodal features of the two homepages where these manuals are available. As both texts were user manuals for bicycle components and both corporate homepages for companies specialising in producing cycle components, there were a number of notable similarities but also a number of differences, which I have suggested reflect the two companies' very different positions in the marketplace and therefore their quite different corporate identities. Although the most striking differences were found in the marked interpersonal choices in the language of written texts, such as those in the Surly user manuals, consideration of other dimensions, such as the use of fonts, photographs of products, or the narratives of videos available on the homepage, also contribute to the evocation of these identities. In this chapter I focused on the ways in which corporate identity is evoked through webpage design and the resources provided by the company, such as product user manuals. I also mentioned that the Surly website included customer videos and that the most recent phase of website innovation has focused on the integration of the resources of social media that allow users to interact by contributing their own comments. A particularly prevalent example of this in corporate websites is the customer review, and so it is to consumer reviews that I turn in the next chapter.

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9

'Sixty-Eight Years on the Same B17': Brooks, Consumer Reviews and Brand Loyalty

Introduction

Using a microcorpus of consumer reviews from the websites of Brooks England Limited (hereafter, Brooks), a traditional leather bicycle-saddle maker, and Wiggle, an online cycle retailer, this chapter explores the uses of narrative and evaluation within consumer reviews. Both corpora include all Brooks saddle reviews on the websites but focus on the subcorpora of two saddles: (1) the Brooks B17 saddle, a historic model dating back to the 1890s and the beginning of the bicycle itself; and (2) the Cambium C17, a rubber saddle introduced in 2013, which mimics the shape and feel of the B17. Instead of leather, the website explains, the Cambium saddle is described as

... featuring a vulcanised natural rubber and organic cotton top. These saddles are perfect for use in performance and touring, providing comfort, durability and flexible performance. Waterproof for exploring cities or the daily commute. (brooksgland.com 2017)

The principal advantage of this material over leather is that it is waterproof, whereas uncovered leather saddles can become saggy with too

much exposure to water, ruining the shape. More generally Brooks saddles are known for their comfort and durability, two features that are the focus of both publicity and consumer reviews.

Online consumer reviews potentially shift the balance of power in evoking product and corporate identities from the corporation with a well-funded marketing budget to the buying public, who can now communicate product experiences to a global audience in an instant. Nevertheless, if companies can keep their customers happy, they also have the potential to develop brand loyalty, something the reviews suggest Brooks has been successful at. Brooks, which has published customer reviews offline since 1937, is a company that has successfully adapted to the new media age by retaining a largely unchanged identity as a traditional producer of comfortable bicycle saddles built to last a lifetime. In exploring the reviews in conjunction with an account of the company today, it is suggested that part of this success may be the appeal to what Bauman has called a *retropia* (2017), where the belief in a future implicit in the quest for the ever-shifting cutting edge of technology (as we saw embodied by Shimano in the previous chapter) has been abandoned in favour of a nostalgic search for the supposedly more enduring identities of the past. In order to see exactly what features are the focus of evaluation in reviews, I explored reviews from the Brooks and Wiggle websites of the two saddle models and undertook an analysis of the narrative and discourse patterns found in them, such as the following one (abbreviated for brevity):

I have a Brooks B17 standard (three hole) saddle which I used for 68 years ... It was first fitted to my taper-tube Selback in 1936, being subsequently transferred over the years to replacement machines ... I have ridden over 220 miles in a day on the B17. And also had the honour of riding in the first of [historical cycle event] ... In 1997 I suffered a recurrence of Polio, and so had a lightweight trike built ... fitted with the same B17 saddle.

Unfortunately, now in my 90th year, I am unable to get on board the trike, due to the Polio ... But as it is it stands under a dustsheet, still with the original B17.

I hope you have found this of interest.

Yours sincerely LL

(brooksendland.com 2017)

The text above is probably recognisable to online shoppers as a product review of the kind now ubiquitous on the many online retail stores that populate the Web. It may seem a little unusual due to its formal tone and letter-style closing, and if you are used to reading reviews of products posted a week after purchase, a review of a product used over a lifetime may also seem remarkable. Nevertheless, linking a product to the user's history is a common strategy in reviews to show a product's longevity or other qualities, and *saddle histories* like this can be found throughout the Brooks website. Instead, this review should, perhaps, be considered as exemplary of the 'unsolicited testimonials' of Brooks saddles, as it was one of the most highly evaluated in terms of 'yes' clicks for 'Was this comment helpful to you?' The 101 out of 103—a paltry number in the context of the millions of likes associated with YouTube or celebrity Twitter—is by far the highest on this website among comments on the B17. In terms of the information provided, the review might be distilled as, 'The B17 saddle will last you a lifetime if you care for it properly.'

The popularity of this review may be due to its convincing testimony of a saddle used over a lifetime. The narrative is also powerful because it captures salient lifetime experiences (abbreviated above) in recounting what might be described as the owner's relationship with the saddle. As Vázquez (2015) has pointed out, reading reviews is as much a form of entertainment as an information search, and this review shares a compacted life history. The 220-mile rides and participation in the historic ride are testaments to the saddle's reliability and comfort, but above and beyond this they are memorable achievements in the history of this saddle and its rider, along with the trials faced by a 90-year-old man afflicted with polio. The narrative is particularly powerful as it highlights the importance of the saddle in the man's life, effectively investing a part of his identity in this object through his experiences with it. The reported use of a saddle over so many years is both a defiance of consumerism, since the saddle outlives the man, and an appeal to consumers to 'invest' their money in this precious object.

In this chapter, therefore, I explore the way this kind of identity investment in products is evoked in the context of online reviews, particularly where the authors indulge in personal narrative, and how, as Bauman (2007, p. 12) has suggested, consumers themselves become commodities

in the act of reviewing. This chapter will therefore focus on the following questions: What kinds of narratives are associated with saddle reviews? How do these narratives contribute to evaluating both reviewer and saddle? In what ways are identities evoked through the saddle reviews? and What are the implications of this for corporate identities?

I chose to focus on the example of the Brooks saddle for a number of reasons. First it is a niche product that has evoked a popular following among its users. According to Harkin's analysis (2011), the commercial environment has changed from one favouring major corporate brands—what he calls 'the big beasts', who could control the market through advertising in mainstream media and target products at lucrative segments of the population—to one favouring niche products that build a following. Brooks represents a niche company dependent on just such loyal followers, and consumer reviews are precisely the kind of word-of-mouth (WOM) resource that one might expect to see in what Harkin calls the 'flocking together' (2011, p. 134 & Ch. 6) of likeminded users. Furthermore, Brooks is one of the few remaining cycle-component manufacturers from the period of the birth of the modern bicycle and one which boasts a history of collecting 'unsolicited testimonials' from and for customers—a practice that considerably predates the now ubiquitous practice of online reviews and thus, like the traditional saddles the company sells, implicitly forms a continuum from previous offline practices to current online ones.

The online reviews currently available on the Brooks site only date back to around 2009. However, Brooks catalogues date back to 1888 and of those archived at the Veteran Cycle Club Library (veterancycleclubarchive.com 2017) the first to include reviews is the second edition of the Brooks 1937 catalogue. On page 36, it includes a selection of quotations that appear to be taken from customer letters under the heading of 'A Selection of Unsolicited Testimonials' with narratives remarkably similar to the ones that can be found on the website today:

... I have ... one of your Cycle Saddles which was purchased ... by my father about 35 years ago ... I transferred it to my own cycle in the year 1908. From that time up to the present I have ridden on it just over 106,000 miles (nearly eleven complete revolutions of my 'Veeder' Cycleometer).

In this case, the dates and the long defunct Veeder Cyclometer (now replaced by cycle computers) give away the period, but the testimonial appears otherwise similar to those found on the website today, including the one quoted above. It reports on an extensive history of a saddle passed from father to son and ridden a considerable distance after that.

Finally, one possible reason for the popularity today of companies like Brooks is closely related to the appeal of nostalgia and the search for Bauman's (2017) *retropia* (2017). Bauman has argued that disillusionment with potential future utopias in the face of the realities of increasing inequalities and environmental destruction are pushing people towards visions of past utopias. In a world of shifting, liquid identities (Bauman and Bauman 2013), building consumer identities (Bauman 2007) associated with enduring products and historical associations offers a way out of the ongoing quest for the ever-shifting cutting edge of technology in favour of a nostalgic search for the supposedly more enduring identities of the past.

What Is a Review?

The sharing of consumer experiences through reviews and online discussions has been dubbed eWOM—*electronic word-of-mouth* (Vázquez 2015). The idea is that the sharing of positive or negative experience of commodities that would once have been done face-to-face among a limited circle of people can now be performed among much larger communities. Personal recommendations or negative experiences of products shared through WOM are particularly meaningful because they are provided by people whose opinions and experiences are trusted. Moreover, the shared choice and evaluation of a product help build the sharing of commonalities that is a fundamental feature of social interaction. Electronic word of mouth is the online and more far-reaching equivalent of this.

Amy Fong (2010) tries to quantify this change, citing consumer research by Technical Assistance Research Programs, Inc. (TARP), that 'on average, an unhappy customer will tell 10 people about their experience, ... on the Internet they have an audience of potentially millions'.

Moreover, such evaluations of commodities can be accessed by anyone indefinitely. On the face of it, the development of eWOM potentially empowers consumers by making consumer feedback public, initially through online communities but now through the established practice of online reviews. At the same time, the potential spread of positive reputations through eWOM makes it a particularly attractive focus for corporations looking to develop their brand image or create a loyal following.

Whereas corporations of the past could manage their image and address it to a general public through a limited number of television channels, situating their products within mass culture, the mushrooming of television channels with the advent of satellite and cable television in conjunction with the even more massive diversification of information and entertainment through the Internet has made this more difficult. Today, the information that reaches mass audiences tends to be whatever has 'gone viral', meaning that it has been picked up and shared throughout the Internet, a notoriously difficult phenomenon for corporations to tap. The diversification of the media and the implicit break-up of the mainstream open up the possibility for more diverse markets and niche products, and even online corporate advertising is increasingly targeted according to the tracking of consumer interests (Commission 2017). As a result, while online retailing and corporate websites offer a complex new environment for marketing and consumption, this environment is also one where consumers are supposedly empowered by the ability to share experiences among communities of consumers and make detailed evaluations of products themselves based not only on advertising produced by the product vendors but by selecting from a vast range of products offered online, and by drawing on both expert evaluations, such as those provided by journalists and those provided by consumers.

As Camilla Vázquez (2015) points out, the advent of consumer reviews has changed the way people shop and, one might add, made consumers more savvy in the process. The other side of this is that people are increasingly defined by their consumption, and consumption itself has become a way of establishing an identity. Producers, for their part, may be under increasing pressure to provide value for money in accordance with consumer expectations but are also able to tap into global markets for online consumption.

The spread of online reviews has gone hand in hand with online shopping and consumption in general. The original reason for this may have been (and to some extent still is) to establish consumer trust in the vendor and the products, but, increasingly, online reviews serve as guides when customers must choose from a wide array of products. Brick-and-mortar retailers make products visible to consumers and provide a physical location with employees who can be addressed in the event of any dissatisfaction, and they can also be peopled by other customers. Online retailers, in contrast, generally emphasise return policies in order to compensate for insecurities about product quality. But making other customers visible through reviews may contribute to a sense that the individual buyer is not alone.

Nevertheless, once consumers are familiar and trusting of online retailers they find that they potentially have access to an array of choices that far exceeds what would be possible in any single physical location. Indeed, even individual retailers such as Amazon or Wiggle are able to stock a larger supply of goods using large warehouses and a network of suppliers than would be possible for normal retail outlets whose customer base is also limited by physical proximity. Beyond that, multiple online retailers can be easily searched, enabling massive choice for even highly specialised products. However, range of choice alone is simply bewildering unless it is possible to evaluate products. As we saw in the previous chapter, retailers' websites themselves are important semiotic spaces for guiding this choice, but online reviews from actual users potentially provide an effective way of assessing the claims made both by vendors and professional reviewers, who, it may be presupposed, tend to support the claims of the vendors. This potentially puts users in a powerful situation, as they can influence the buying decisions of other shoppers. Reviewers in turn are evaluated by review readers who can signal whether or not a review is useful.

The power of online reviews also means that they are targets for abuse. Besides the potential for destructive reviews, fake positive reviews can also evoke a false sense of trust or even create a buzz around a product (Charman-Anderson 2012). Extending the metaphor, fake 'grass roots' support based on reviews actually posted by company representatives has therefore been dubbed 'astroturfing' (Pogue 2011, p. 36). Although

beyond the scope of the study discussed here, one potential task for applied linguistics in describing online reviews would be the definition of parameters for distinguishing fake from genuine reviews.

Consumer motivations for WOM generally were defined early on by Dichter (1966) as intimately related to identity. Dichter proposed *product involvement* (strong feelings about a product), *self-involvement* (attracting attention), *other-involvement* (philanthropic desire to help others) and *message-involvement* (stimulation by marketing message) as the principle motivations behind word-of-mouth. In a more recent consideration of WOM motivations focused on eWOM, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) suggest similar motivations but replace message-involvement with *social benefits* (of forum or review group participation) and financial incentives.

As I illustrated in Chap. 5, equipment evaluation, including sharing knowledge, can be a valuable asset for social communication in a cycling forum, as cycling is a sport where equipment (the right bike) is considered particularly important. It is for this reason that the title of LA's book *It's Not About the Bike* (Armstrong and Jenkins 2000), which focuses on his experience of overcoming cancer, has been decisively challenged by Robert Penn's book/TV series *It's All About the Bike* (2010), which focuses on the building of a dream bike. Of course, cyclists need a bicycle and other equipment in order to ride, but the choice of what bike is both a practical one and a semiotic one that may be influenced by associations with the brand or product. Product reviews can be places where allegiances of trust and image are negotiated or built.

Reviewers may be motivated by financial incentives, a sense of obligation, a spirit of philanthropy, a good or bad experience of the product or company, or even a desire for public or community attention. Reviewers solicited by online retailers may be offered anything from a prize-draw entry to discount coupons to product trials, a practice Brooks employed when introducing their most recent range of non-leather Cambium saddles. Yet even without such incentives or any strong motivations, notifications from retailers encourage review writing.

Meanwhile, in the space between the professional reviewers employed by cycle print and offline magazines, as well as by established YouTube channels such as BikeRadar or GCN (discussed in the next chapter), there have also appeared a number of bloggers who review cycling prod-

ucts. To give just one prominent example, the DCRainmaker blog, which focuses on reviews of technology products related to triathlon—including cycling—offers far more detailed information and testing of products than can be found in most magazines and has accordingly become the go-to source for learning about such products. Unsurprisingly, these blog reviewers are provided with preferential prerelease access to these products though they typically argue for their independence on the basis that the reviewed items are returned after testing.

One might have imagined that corporations would have done everything in their power to quash the potentially damaging effects of negative consumer experiences spreading across the web through social media. In practice, eWOM has gone hand in hand with the move towards online consumption through internet retailers and online services, and has been actively encouraged by them. Moreover, reviewing practices associated with eWOM have spilled out into offline environments to the degree that even areas of life that didn't used to be thought of as areas for consumption, such as education and healthcare (Machin and Mayr 2012), are now commodified and recast as arenas for customer satisfaction surveys and reviews.

If the advent of online shopping and online services and practices of reviewing them has changed the way people consume and the practice of reviewing has permeated increasingly widespread areas of life, it also potentially further deepens the interdependency of identity and positioning of self on consumption. This is true not only in the context of the review, where the reviewer actively enacts the role of consumer, but also in the act of consumption itself, which seeks to fulfill perceived desires intimately related to a sense of self through the attributes associated with the objects of consumption. Bauman takes this logic a step further, suggesting that identity and subject creation are also about positioning oneself as an object for consumption. As he wrote in his 2013 book *Consuming Life*:

In a society of consumers no one can become a subject without first turning into a commodity, and no one can keep his or her subjectiveness secure without perpetually resuscitating, resurrecting and replenishing the capacities expected and required of a sellable commodity. (Bauman 2007, p. 12)

This constant replenishing is enacted not only through such activities as Facebook updates, blog entries and tweets or participation in forum discussions, such as those explored in the previous section of this book, but also through acts of consumption where the chosen products, services and brands effectively write the identity of the consumer, which in the case of online consumption has gradually become readable through online monitoring and targeted through advertising. Advertising then offers further objects of desire for consumption in an endless cycle of consumer positionings. In this sense, the review is an important contribution to this cycle, as the evaluation of the product is made into an object of further consumption by packaging the evaluation product with the consumer experiences, including those involved in positioning the reviewer as a reliable source.

Corporate Image and Consumer Loyalty

Above, I suggested that the association of personal narrative with products was a powerful review technique. It is one that potentially bestows authenticity on and belief in both the reviewer and the product. Ideally, these user perspectives will also mesh with corporate narratives to evoke a desirable identity that consumers effectively buy into when they purchase a saddle. In their own publicity, Brooks picks up on this in a way that is perhaps taken more seriously than appears here:

Sure, Brooks is the oldest continually operating saddle company in the world. But Brooks saddles and the Brooks brand are part of something much bigger than just bikes or bike seats. They are a cornerstone contributor to a larger belief system that upholds everything great about what cycling is—and what it does for us and for our surroundings. Indeed, how it helps define our place in the universe. Transcendent? (Anschutz [2016](#))

The association of products with something that transcends the product itself is an essential part of branding and the reason why the focus of advertising is often not so much to inform consumers about a product but rather to evoke a desirable image. It is therefore worth briefly intro-

ducing the history of Brooks and how they have maintained a fertile niche for their products, long after the move towards lightweight saddles, such as the Italian Brand Selle san Marco's Concor, saw them disappear from the professional peloton.

Brooks and the History of the Bicycle

The association of Leonardo da Vinci with his drawings of flying machines and other inventions ahead of his time made the discovery of drawings of bicycles among his manuscripts, known as the *Codex Atlanticus*, seem plausible to many, but it was almost certainly an elaborate hoax (Hans-Erhard 1998). Perhaps because the bicycle, having no engine, appears as such a simple transportation machine compared with near contemporaries, such as the car (1885), electric underground train (1890) and aeroplane (1903), it is felt to belong to an earlier period. The lineage of the bicycle can be traced back to the two-wheeled *draisine* or *velocipede*, which appeared in 1817 (Herlihy 2004), and the direct-drive *ordinary* (or penny-farthing), which emerged in the 1870s. Even so, it was not until the 'safety bicycle' of the 1880s, which featured a chain drive allowing it to have two smaller wheels and a safer low seat, finally acquired Henry Dunlop's pneumatic tyre in 1890 (replacing solid rubber ones) that the bicycle as we know it today was really born.

The comfort of the pneumatic tyre coincided with another refinement in the form of Brooks leather saddles. According to the story recounted on the Brooks website, John Boutbee Brooks opened his leather shop in New Street Birmingham in 1866, selling leather goods such as horse bridles. He commuted there on horseback until the horse died. Without a means of transport, he took to using a bicycle but found the wooden saddle so uncomfortable that he vowed to create his own. His first prototype was produced in 1878 and patented in 1882, with the classic B17 saddle appearing in Brooks' 1888 catalogue. The B17 was adopted by racers of the day and was widely used on racing cycles until the 1970s and 1980s, when companies such as Selle San Marco pioneered racing saddles with new materials that led to today's lightweight models (Sellesanmarco.

it 2017). Since then, Brooks saddles have disappeared from the professional peloton due to their weight. Today they would be considered extremely heavy on a racing bike, as frames may weigh as little as 700 g and UCI-approved bikes can weigh as little as 6800 g in total. Even the standard racing saddles of today weigh little over 200 g compared with the 520 g of the B17, with the top line commercial ones, such as Fizik's 00 models, weighing a mere 140 g and custom 'weight-weenie' saddles even less. Despite this, Brooks saddles have remained popular with touring cyclists, not to mention participants in cycle nostalgia events such as L'eroica or the Tweed Run, but they can also be found on some of today's exotic fixies.

Meanwhile, after staying with the family for three generations, Brooks was ultimately sold to Selle Royal in 2002, but production remained in Birmingham close to its original site. The company's products are still dominated by their leather saddles, though they produce a range of leather bags and other goods aimed at cyclists.

In 2013, Brooks introduced their first Cambium saddle. The most recent model, the C13, even features carbon-fibre rails, bringing the weight down to a reputed 259 g. This low weight and the publicity it received with recently retired British rider David Millar test riding it over the cobbled roads of the Paris-Roubaix race route suggest that this model is targeted, if not at road racers, then at least at sportive riders who ride lightweight road bikes but may also prioritise comfort.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this project were collected from the Brooks England website and from Wiggle, the UK online retailer that also sells Brooks saddles. Both sites sell other Brooks products, such as bags. However, I decided to focus on saddles because they are the products most directly related to cycling and the core product associated with Brooks. Saddles are products where, in a sense, you cannot fake it, as cyclists may live with other parts that are not perfect, but an uncomfortable saddle can ruin the whole experience. The other side of this is that what is comfortable is a highly individualised phenomenon.

The two websites (brooksendland.com 2017; Wiggle.co.uk 2017) differ in a number of ways, reflecting the different corporate profiles and website functions. Whereas, as introduced above, Brooks is a company whose history dates back to 1866, Wiggle was founded by Mitch Dall and Harvey Jones in 1999. Brooks is primarily a manufacturer. Wiggle is an online retailer selling a wide range of other cycling products, including several other brands of saddles. Wiggle has over 500 employees (glassdoor.co.uk 2017) and a turnover of around £179 million (Roethebaugh 2015) compared with around 40 employees (Mullen and Barnfield 2014) at the Brooks Birmingham factory and a turnover of around £12 million (hoovers.com 2017). The website is a key site of business for Wiggle as an Internet retailer, while the Brooks website primarily displays their company's history and highlights new products. Saddles and all other products can be purchased through the website, but they are also sold in shops around the world as well as through Wiggle.

Wiggle offer a more limited selection of Brooks saddles but at discounted prices. At the time of writing, the B17 saddle was available on Wiggle at £60.48 for black and £71.08 for honey colour compared with the Brooks price of £90, which did, however, include a choice of six colours. At the time of the study, Brooks listed some 57 models of saddle compared with 27 Brooks saddles on the Wiggle site.

In total there were some 703 reviews on Brooks compared with 780 on Wiggle. Seventeen models on the Brooks website have no reviews compared with only four unreviewed Brooks saddles on Wiggle. But the disparity is because, on the Wiggle website, the B17 Standard, the most popular model, had 259 reviews and the B17 Narrow a further 90. The saddle with the most reviews on the Brooks website was also the B17 Standard, but with 98 reviews, followed by the B17 Special with 61.

The Wiggle reviews are designed to show more evaluative information about both the product and the reviewer. Reviews on the Brooks site are divided into 'unsolicited testimonials' and 'unfiltered criticism'. Wiggle instead uses a star rating system ranging from one to five, which is an average of the rating categories of 'quality', 'value' and 'performance'. Reviewers also have the option of listing pros and cons. Finally, both Wiggle and Brooks allow review readers to rate the reviews. Brooks asks: Was the comment helpful to you? with a yes/no option. Wiggle has 'helpful' and 'unhelpful' buttons with a 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down'

symbol, respectively, on the buttons. Brooks includes the reviewer name with all reviews, but Wiggle also includes the following information about the reviewer: interest (road cyclist, mountain biker, commuter), user name, location, country, age range, gender, and level (beginner, regular ...). In addition, although the reviewer name is usually a handle name, review readers can click on the name to access other reviews by the same customer. Wiggle automatically solicits reviews from all customers, though the biographical information and review features are optional and not all customers submit reviews. The additional information included in the reviews on the Wiggle website would seem to potentially position the reviewer as a source of product information in a way that is not necessarily implied by the 'unsolicited testimonials'/'unfiltered criticism' of Brooks' reviews, which builds on a practice of communicating public information to the company itself. How far this is the case and in what ways, if any, reviewers on the Brooks and Wiggle websites differ in the ways they position themselves in relation to readers and the producers or vendors is something that can only be determined through a detailed exploration of the reviews.

The complete corpus of reviews collected consisted of the 1403 saddle reviews on the two websites. For this chapter though, I focus on the reviews of B17 saddles and C17 saddles, representing, respectively, traditional leather saddles and the recently developed rubber saddles. The analysis of the reviews, as with projects discussed throughout this book, was performed qualitatively. Reviews were pasted into Excel files and then uploaded to NVivo (Bazeley 2007). NVivo does include some automated facilities, such as word searches and even keyword searches as mentioned in Chap. 7, but, in this case, NVivo simply enabled all reviews or review segments highlighted as exhibiting specific features to be collected together for comparison.

The reviews were explored from the perspectives of the three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal and textual—and are discussed below in relation to these metafunctions. The ideational focuses on the principal content of the recurrent topics narrated in the reviews. Interpersonal analysis explores the way the reviewer evokes a sense of self and positions the reader, the company and product; and the textual focuses on patterns of narrative structuring.

Product review evaluations are shaped by general expectations of products, the nature of the product and its use by the consumer, and specific expectations associated with the brand and model. A detailed picture of these expectations could be built up through a thematic analysis of reviews that could also be considered in the context of marketing claims and information about how the products are used. As this analysis focuses only on Brooks saddles, a brief account of the general expectations associated with bicycle saddles may help to situate the reviews discussed here.

General product expectations include quality, durability, functionality, value for money, and aesthetics, all of which may be implicitly or explicitly defined by the reviewer. This refinement is oriented to the specific use of the product. Bicycle saddles are one of three contact points on the bicycle (the others being handlebars and pedals). They support the majority of the rider's weight and so are the most important for comfort. Unfortunately, saddle comfort is subject to anatomical variation among riders, position on the bike and even the amount of force exerted by the rider while riding. The determining anatomical feature is the position and width apart of the sit bones, which need to be supported by the saddle. Women's saddles are designed for the wider position between sit bones typical for women, but variation is highly individual.

The relative height of the handlebar and saddle determines the position of the angle of the rider's back. Racing cyclists have the bars much lower than the saddle in order to create a more aerodynamic rider-bike shape to maximise speed, but less flexible riders may find that this position shifts their weight off the sit bones and onto more sensitive parts of the anatomy. For this reason, the lightweight racing-saddle-maker Fizik offers three designs of racing saddle based on flexibility, as less flexible riders need to adopt a less extreme position and saddle, and the saddle must support a greater proportion of rider weight. More force exerted on the pedals means that more weight is effectively supported by the pedals.

Because bicycles are powered by the rider, the weight of components, including saddles, is important, particularly on racing bicycles, such as road bikes intended for riding up steep gradients where any extra weight increases the effort needed to move forward. Brooks saddles were once standard on racing bicycles but are more likely to be appreciated today by

riders who sit in a more upright position, as they are well designed for supporting a higher proportion of the rider's weight. Besides not having to support as much of the rider's weight, racing saddles do not have to act as shock absorbers to the same extent as they used to since bicycles and seatposts made of carbon fibre are designed to absorb road shock.

The principal difference between modern racing saddles and Brooks saddles is that, whereas modern racing saddles are covered, and sometimes padded, solid structures, Brooks saddles are made of a thick piece of leather tensioned at one end to support the rider like a hammock. The principle of the design is that, over time, the weight of the rider on the saddle at the point of the sit bones will eventually mould the saddle to the rider, effectively shaping it to the rider's anatomy. The use of a very thick piece of leather rather than the thin leather covering of lightweight racing saddles, combined with other features, such as the use of rivets to attach the leather to a sturdy metal frame, also has the benefit that the saddle will last a very long time. Another consequence of this design is that the shine or patina of the leather and metal gives them a nostalgic aesthetic, which contrasts with the plastic, carbon fibre and intense coloration of leather on modern lightweight saddles. As a result, the values that one would expect to associate with Brooks' traditional saddles are focused today on comfort, durability and a retro aesthetic.

Ideational Meaning

The principle thematic focuses for evaluation in the reviews were saddle attributes. These were dominated by comfort across both types of saddle and both review sources. Comfort was mentioned in almost every review and was both the main reason for satisfaction with the saddle and the main reason for dissatisfaction. In an example of what one might call a *saddle search* narrative, the writer begins by informing the reader that in two years of cycling the rider has used four saddles and recounts that,

With the first three my backside would begin to offer protest by mile ten or twelve and by mile thirty-five or forty it was an exercise in pain tolerance just to keep riding.

This painful experience is the *complicating action* of the narrative focusing on the painful experiences with previous saddles, and the *resolution* is the discovery of the Brooks saddle, marked prominently as a turning point in this narrative by, 'Hallelujah, John Boulton Brooks be praised!' Such narratives were extremely common on the Brooks website for both types of saddles and were also found on Wiggle. In such narratives, the principal saddle feature evaluated is comfort. Although the word 'comfort' does not occur until the final evaluation—'I cannot praise the comfort of this saddle highly enough', it permeates the whole narrative. Comfort on a bicycle saddle is defined here as 'not making my backside hurt'. It is defined negatively because the ideal of comfort with bicycle saddles in this review (and indeed across many other examples) is feeling nothing. Here this quality of feeling nothing is built up in relation to the opposite of comfort, which is set up as 'an exercise in pain tolerance'. The degree of pain is represented as existing in direct relation to distance travelled: 'With the first three my backside would begin to offer protest by mile ten or twelve and by mile thirty-five or forty it was an exercise in pain tolerance just to keep riding.' By implication, the distance that a saddle can be ridden without pain is therefore a measure of its comfort. The act of tolerating the pain is specifically attributed to a personified 'my backside', which is represented as the arbiter of the pain from 'offering protest' to 'couldn't take it anymore', and from 'far fewer complaints' to finally 'the only thing that doesn't hurt'. Moreover, the saddle itself is evaluated solely in terms of comfort.

The one negative feature of comfort, the period until the saddle is 'broken in', is also a theme addressed by many reviewers. Some claim that no break-in period is needed, others that it is relatively painless and still others that it is a painful challenge, and even some (in 'unfiltered criticism') consider it an obstacle not worth overcoming. As one Wiggle reviewer explains:

This is obviously a very well made saddle, but it is impossible to ignore its flaws. The most obvious is that initially it has the compliance of plywood. Sure it did get gradually softer over time (a long time), but it's just not worth it.

In addition, the most common complaint about both saddle types was that they were *not* comfortable.

Negative reviews often engage in various ways with the saddle's reputation of being comfortable, even in cases where the reviewer had found it uncomfortable.

Contrary to the majority of posts, I'm not all that impressed. I don't know if I have less natural padding than most, but I'm finding it almost impossible to ride without pain in the backside.

The 'less natural padding' implies that the rider's sense of comfort has been compromised by the rider's anatomy. Also the use of the present continuous 'I'm finding it almost impossible' leaves open the possibility that this may not be a permanent problem despite the reviewers' having ridden some 400 miles. One Wiggle C17 reviewer even apologised: 'Afraid I did not get on with it. Lack of any padding at all. Lightweight and looks nice but does not work for me.'

A second key focus for saddle reviewers is longevity, in this case illustrated through a second narrative type, the *saddle history*. Saddle histories, as the examples quoted earlier illustrate, describe long-term usage, even over a lifetime. As the C17 was only recently introduced, there were obviously no examples of such stories, though one rider mentioned purchasing one to replace a well-used B17 because of its waterproofness. In such stories, saddle comfort is at best mentioned in passing and in the 68-year history not at all.

The attractive appearance of the saddles was rarely the focus of the review but rather appeared as a brief additional positive feature such as: 'Oh, and my bike looks the absolute business.' Or the more ambiguous tongue-in-cheek: 'The only negative thing is: Much higher theft probability. Everybody looks at the saddle ...'

One reviewer wrote a whole review focused on the aesthetics of the packaging, ending with only an incidental mention of the saddle's attractiveness. A focus on such a secondary feature would seem to suggest that the reviewer is taking a supporting role in a community where other features have already been thoroughly discussed. As with the saddle search

the writer contrasts the recyclable packaging with the packaging of other products, explaining:

I haven't bought something in years that wasn't swathed in masses of plastic and cellophane. Every single bit of the Brooks packaging can be recycled (almost all paper/card), except for a tiny, tiny piece of plastic that secured the saddle in place in the box.

The review then concludes slightly humorously with: 'Oh—and the saddle is beautiful too!' One general difference between the Brooks website reviews and those on Wiggle was that Wiggle reviewers, with some notable exceptions, were not reporting on years of usage, so there were almost no saddle histories. This was also the case with the reviews of the newer C17 model. Instead, there was a prevalence of what I call *first ride* narratives, which provide detailed accounts of early experiences of riding with the saddle. C17 reviews also include comparison with the traditional leather Brooks saddles. The following is an extract from a particularly detailed review that, like the '68 years narrative' noted above, had a remarkably high tally of yeses (106/110). The reviewer explains that the saddle was bought as 'something more weatherproof' after a 'newish Brooks Team Pro' had been ruined by rain and provides an evaluation of the saddle feel supposedly based on a first ride but including impressions of riding with different angle tilts. As can be seen from the extract below, the reviewer not only offers impressions of different tilt angles but also different perspectives on each:

What does it feel like? ... I later set it with about one degree nose-up tilt, which made the cantle feel flatter and reduced perineum pressure. Set like this, it felt spookily similar to a Team Pro or B17, i.e. it had a distinctly Brooksian feel. In other words, the saddle was comfortable. It never completely 'disappears' in the way that a Brooks B17 can do—you always remember that it's there, but it doesn't ever get annoying.

The reviewer explicitly compared the saddle to others, including Brooks leather saddles, using not only subjective and potentially vague expressions such as 'felt spookily similar to' and 'distinctly Brooksian' but also

the technical 'candle' and medical 'perineum pressure' terms to make the feel of the saddle concrete. 'Perineum pressure'—although unsurprisingly an unusual term in general English—was widely referred to across the reviews when referring to saddle discomfort. In addition, 'Brooksian' is represented as a synonym for comfort, which in turn is associated with 'disappearing', presumably in the sense that the rider does not feel pressure from the saddle while riding.

Having dealt with comfort in general, the reviewer turns explicitly to the problem of numbness, highlighting it with a rhetorical question: 'Does it cause numbness?' The 'explicit relief from numbness' is compared to that of several other non-Brooks saddles before the writer explains:

It offers the same level of protection that, say, a Brooks Team Pro gives you. So, in other words, you feel some of your body weight on your perineum, but not enough to cause numbness. I've not had a problem with chafing inner thighs, which some riders have reported.

The reviewer also highlights the good point of the Cambium's 'textured surface' in relation to use and 'rubbery flex': 'You can move around when you need to, and you stick in place when you need to.'

As mentioned earlier, the Cambium was promoted by the recently retired former professional British road racer David Millar, whose video also appears on the website. David Millar is shown testing the saddle across the notoriously rough cobbled roads used in the Paris-Roubaix race. The saddle flexes with the bumps of the road, suggesting that it provides a smoother ride. The reviewer's final point seems to translate this into the experience of his local roads, which are implicitly of a more common kind than the famous cobbles ridden by Millar:

I ride my stiff-framed bike on a lot of poorly maintained tarmac, and with most saddles the jarring and vibration is very unpleasant, especially at the end of a long ride when I'm tired.

In contrast to saddle histories, this review provided detailed information about riding the saddle. It is a shift in perspective from the narrative

memories encapsulated in saddle histories to an up-close description of what the saddle feels like to ride. In terms of its representation of time and space—Bakhtin's *chronotope* (1981)—the observations seem to be telescoped into one short ride that begins with 'I bolted on a Cambium, and went for a quick 45 mile spin', then ends with 'especially at the end of the ride when I am tired'. But what comes in between tells little about the ride and more about the feel of the saddle in relation to other saddles, and includes practical information such as how the saddle tilt affects the feel. Later, the reviewer even explains the set-up of the bike. Such information is more obviously addressed to a reader who is considering buying one of these saddles—a point that brings us to the issue of patterns of interpersonal positioning in the reviews.

Interpersonal Positioning

Reviews offer consumers the opportunity to position themselves in a variety of ways, in relation to both the products and their audience. Some on the Brooks site, such as the one quoted at the end of the previous section, are focused on providing an informative evaluation that may help potential consumers decide whether or not to try the saddle. Providing a balanced and detailed description of the saddle in use is part of this, but the use of rhetorical questions—'What does it feel like?' or 'Does it cause numbness?'—and their answers both borrow from the language of professional reviews and show awareness of questions potential buyers are likely to be interested in. Other reviewers take the stance that, 'I needed to find somewhere to leave a review of this saddle because I just wanted to say, "Wow". This saddle is super comfortable.' At least, this was how one C17 reviewer on the Brooks website put it. These *wow reviews* sometimes ended with self-focused comments—'I'm in heaven.' Other times the general consumer was more outwardly focused: 'To all out there "Take the plunge", you will like the way it feels.' Sometimes the reviewer addressed the reader more personally: 'All in all, awesome saddle—100% recommend you trying one!' The use of the pronoun *you*, as with rhetorical questions, is a remarkably effective way of positioning the reader as

potential consumer. Rhetorical questions can also be useful to reviewers to position readers in other ways, such as making them sympathetic readers of their narratives:

I bought this saddle off a coworker who rode trick on fixed gears. It was given to him as a gift and he said it was 'too heavy'!!! Can you imagine? One man's trash is another lady biker's treasure I guess.

In this way, the writer is able to dismiss the relevance of saddle weight and align her readers as likely to treasure their Brooks saddles as well. Many reviews also directly addressed specific questions, which were provided with answers. That said, overt addresses to Brooks do not necessarily exclude positioning in relation to consumers, as they could also be seen as performances. The following review uses 'you' throughout to refer to Brooks, but it also attracted 41 of 41 people who found this useful, though 'useful' in this instance might also mean 'entertaining':

Well, now you've done it Brooks ... My entire universe is disrupted and in shambles. You see, I have had unbounded love for three things in my life since the early seventies; my family/friends; my B17; and my B17N. I've lived comfortably with this spectacular assemblage for 45 years. Now with your unbridled deviousness, I am compelled to divide this well of love with a fourth member! Utterly emotionally devastating!

The 'fourth' object of affection turns out to be a third saddle, a Cambium. The attraction of the saddle is expressed entirely through negative evaluations, such as '[r]ewriting my life's core values', that nevertheless imply that the saddle is at least as good as the previous leather ones. It is a particularly amusing review because it talks in exaggerated terms completely unrelated to saddles: 'Darn you Brooks for creating a new universal element that will confound science for centuries.' The review concludes with a mock curse, 'I wish you many sleepless nights for this!' as well as a parenthetical thanks, which expresses the reviewer's real point. 'And I thank you from the bottom of my anatomy' is also an amusing twist on the metaphorical cliché, 'I thank you from the bottom of heart.'

This review also illustrates the problematic nature of automated approaches to understanding evaluation, as a succession of negative comments is woven into an overall positive evaluation through a humorous personification of saddles as lovers.

If this satirical message addresses Brooks with an eye to review readers, other contributions, particularly on the Brooks website, were more like direct conversations with the company, in the form of questions to and recommendations from Brooks. Such exchanges oddly appeared both in the 'unsolicited testimonials' (when they were not, in fact, testimonials to anything) and in the 'unfiltered criticism' (even though they were not necessarily criticisms). In the following exchange, one customer asks for white saddles to be introduced following a limited run of red, white and blue saddles produced to celebrate the London Olympics in 2012:

Q > Hi! Could we now in this Ipad age have White saddles in a range of models (and not just for the very exclusive few!), please.

A > White BROOKS Saddles are much more difficult to make. It takes us more than triple the time than any other colour and lots of leather is wasted in the process. These are the reasons why we can't offer them in the standard range.

Besides situating themselves in relation to potential buyers and the company, reviewers also situate themselves in relation to other reviewers. This is done through comments that indicate shared or diverging experiences and evaluations from other reviewers, and it is also potentially implicit in the use of shared generic patterns. One of the saddle story narratives begins 'Same story as a lot of people' then goes on to recount the reviewer's specific experience of using other saddles before trying a Brooks B17:

I suffered for about 12 years before I finally decided to go against my better judgment and try riding on a hard piece of leather. I was about ready to give up riding ... I was planning on a painful breaking in period but ... my first ride out, I did 125 miles and absolutely felt no pain. So why did I wait so long!

In the overall evaluation, however, the reviewer also engages with the perspectives of those who have not found Brooks saddles comfortable by

acknowledging: 'Not saying Brooks are for everybody but they are most certainly for most everybody.' In terms of the appraisal resource of *engagement* (Martin and White 2005), discussed in earlier chapters, this is evidence of *heterglossia* (acknowledging other perspectives) but is also a form of *dialogic contraction*, as the perspective is limited by suggesting the saddle is for 'most everyone'.

Textual Structure in Review Narratives

The primary *textual* structure of reviews, particularly on the Brooks website, is narrative. The most common of these is the *saddle search* (see above) with the following structure:

Orientation/Abstract:	'I took up cycling seriously about 2 years ago. Over that time span, I've utilized four different saddles.'
Complicating action:	Summary of pain caused by previous saddles
Turning point:	Discovery of Brooks saddle
Resolution:	Positive experience of riding Brooks saddle
Evaluation:	'I cannot praise the comfort of the saddle highly enough.'
Coda:	'No bike I own will ever have a Brooks on it again.'

This was by far the most common structure, though, as noted above, it was often ellipted in various ways, since the next most common type of review was the *saddle story*, sometimes compacted or truncated in the Cambium and Wiggle reviews, which referred to relatively recent purchases. Indeed, overall, narrative structures dominated, particularly on the Brooks website and particularly with reference to the leather saddles.

Nevertheless, the Wiggle website also offered more rationalised accounts of the product. The reason for this may be due to the format of the Wiggle review. Before writing a review, the reviewer first has to complete an evaluation, which orients the writer to highlight evaluation and

pros and cons of the product in the review itself. The following is an example of a review construction of which there were no examples on the Brooks website but which is, in a sense, more attuned to contemporary reviews.

1. Thesis statement: 'You're either going to love a Brooks or you're not—there is no middle ground.'
2. Point 1: How can a hard saddle be comfortable? 'People who are unfamiliar with Brooks always ask me how such a hard piece of leather can be so comfortable.'

Explanation: 'The hardness is EXACTLY why it's comfortable. Try sitting on a soft, spongy saddle (or even a car seat) for hours and you'll see why.'

3. Point 2: The saddle needs a break-in period like other leather items: 'Yes, there is a break-in period.'

Explanatory examples: 'It's just like a baseball glove: you have to constantly use it until the leather conforms to the shape of your hand, in this case, your bottom. It's the same with leather hiking boots.'

4. Point 3: 'You have to protect it in the rain.'

Narrative anecdote: 'I once toured Iceland and stupidly forgot to cover the saddle overnight during a torrential downpour. It was completely ruined. My fault, not Brooks.'

5. Point 4: It is heavy: 'Oh, and if you're looking to lighten your bike, forget it: the B17 weighs just slightly less than a grand piano.'

Rationalisation: 'But then again, if you're contemplating buying a Brooks ... you value comfort above anything else.'

6. Conclusion: 'The B17 is essentially the same saddle for the last 100 years. There's a reason it hasn't been changed.'

The numbers here do not reflect the writer's original paragraph structure, as it was written as four paragraphs, but they do show the structure of the review. From a *textual* perspective, this review is organised into six parts, rather like a classic school essay. The first sentence serves as the 'thesis statement'. It introduces the overall evaluation and the point of the review, which is to highlight the good and bad points of the saddle. The rest of the paragraph addresses the first point about hardness. Point two is the related topic of 'breaking in', point three the trouble with getting the saddle wet, and point four the weight. Finally, the last sentence provides the conclusion.

This structure serves the writer's purpose well. Nevertheless, part of the reason that it is effective as a review is that it has various kinds of narrative elements embedded in it. The underlying meaning of the first point could be expressed congruently as a question and answer format: 'Q: How can you ride such a hard saddle? A: Because the hardness is what makes it comfortable. Softness is actually uncomfortable. For example, sitting on a padded saddle or even a car seat is not comfortable for a long time.' Instead, however, the first point is framed as a habitual narrative: 'People always ask me how ...' This formulation allows the writer to position her/himself as knowledgeable and the reader as interested in being informed, which is exactly the expected relationship between reader and reviewer. The concluding sentence, 'Try ... and you'll see why', is expressed as a command, which consolidates this relationship even though the writer is not expecting the reader to follow up what is implied to be an unwise thing to try.

The break-in period, as with the mention of car seats, is explained in noncycling terms in relation to other common leather items that require such periods, an approach which emphasises that it is a natural process and not a mysterious quality of Brooks. And again, use of 'your bottom', 'you'll' and 'when I'm' draws readers into sharing the experiences and positions them as future users.

In this way, all the important interpersonal and evaluative elements of narrative are incorporated into the logical textual structure of the essay. The anecdote that the reviewer does share about ruining a saddle in a 'torrential downpour' while touring Iceland both shows a crucial weakness of

the saddle in the most dramatic fashion and also offers an image of the reviewer as a happy-go-lucky cycling adventurer who continues to appreciate the saddle even after this failure.

The final point about weight, expressed as ‘it weighs slightly less than a grand piano’, though not in narrative form, uses humorous exaggeration of the kind found in colloquial narratives. This deliberately unhelpful guide to the weight in terms of grams or ounces underlines the reviewer’s point that ‘if you’re contemplating buying a Brooks you value comfort above anything else’. The weight of the saddle is not a selling point.

Overall, in this review, despite highlighting precisely the aspects of the saddle that feature in negative reviews, this is a full five-star recommendation in all categories with several pros (‘great value’, ‘attractive’, ‘comfort’, ‘high quality’, ‘good fit’) and no cons listed.

Comparing this review with the loose narrative life story of LL’s 68 years, and the much earlier one from the first collection of ‘unsolicited testimonials’ seems to suggest that, while there is a clear continuum from those early reviews to those found on the Brooks website today, online review practices are potentially changing things. The skill in using narrative resources is as alive as ever, but what is different is the handling of the audience, whose interest in reading the review to evaluate the product seems to be taken seriously precisely because perhaps it is.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described a project that considered consumer review texts in the very specific context of Brooks saddle reviews. Working loosely in relation to the three metafunctions, I introduced examples from a corpus of reviews of the B17 and C17 saddles. I illustrated how, while the corpus is dominated by specific narrative genres, such as the *saddle search* and the *saddle life history* narratives, these are gradually giving way to the newer ones with condensed timescales, such as the *first ride* narratives, which reflect the fact that online retail-

ers are requesting reviews shortly after the customer has received the product. Meanwhile, the more logically organised reviews found on Wiggle and a more overt positioning of the reader as customer probably reflect the increasing importance attached to reviews as sources of product experience. Ideationally, the focus of attention in reviews of the B17 has changed little, except that it was once considered a lightweight saddle. The newer C17, with different characteristics, has affected this.

The traditional heritage of Brooks England and the use of these saddles on older-style bikes, like those reconditioned for riding in nostalgic events such as L'eroica, makes them promising candidates for what Bauman has called *retropia*—products that hearken back to an anticonsumerist past. The focus in these reviews suggests that fashion and aesthetics are secondary to comfort and pride in a product that lasts a lifetime. In addition, such features as weight and aerodynamics, which dominate state-of-the-art bicycle products, are unimportant. In this sense, the values here fit with Bauman's notion of a *retropia*, but the overwhelming practical focus on comfort in both the traditional leather saddle and the newer rubber ones indicates that Brooks customers may be less oriented by philosophical identification with the past and more with the practical needs of their backsides.

While Brooks saddles continue to be appreciated for their comfort, they have become part of a consumer environment where choices are increasingly expected to be fed back in the form of reviews. In turn, these reviews are intended to help formulate future choices, fueling further consumption. Alternatively, reviews are integrated into a production cycle aimed at developing an improved product. If consumers are willing participants in this commercial cycle, it is perhaps both because they feel that ultimately they too may benefit from improvements. In addition, the products themselves become identity tokens, and people who share these identity tokens, or are considering investing in them, are perhaps potentially seen as belonging to one community. While this chapter has focused on consumer reviews, the next chapter looks at the related phenomena of product improvement and refinement through the concept of *marginal gains*.

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10

In Pursuit of Marginal Gains: Corporate Sponsorship and Brand-Building Videos

Introduction

Chapters 8 and 9 looked at ways in which corporate identities are evoked through corporate homepages on the one hand, and reiterated or reevaluated in the context of consumer reviews on the other. This chapter instead explores how a specific slogan or catchphrase can be used as a focus around which corporate identities can cluster and, in turn, can offer differing interpretations of them. The use of semiotic resources as a focus for identity construction is a concept that has been introduced already. Lance Armstrong revealed in his interview how he saw his fame as being oriented to a story and ‘belief in miracles’. Similarly, in Chap. 8, I introduced Shimano’s #believe video, which offered an image of how the challenges faced by ordinary cyclists parallel those of professionals. More generally, the hashtags and memes of social media have become foci for identification and sharing.

Beliefs, challenge and miracles, or at least the overcoming of challenges, are notions that resonate throughout the history of cycling and are doubtless identified with by the many cyclists who sign up for Strava challenges. However, when Team Sky set out to win cycling’s

most prestigious prize—the Tour—they did so with a very different kind of mantra: *marginal gains*. This chapter explores the notion of *marginal gains*, and the way it has been appropriated and represented as a formula for success in cycling, through a consideration of the way different companies interpret it in the context of promotional videos.

Team Sky, generously funded by the cable television company Sky, set out in 2010 with the ambitious goal of producing the first British winner of the Tour within five years. They succeeded in 2012 when Bradley Wiggins won the race, with his teammate Chris Froome in second place. Team director David Brailsford attributed the success to what he called ‘marginal gains’ or incremental improvements. This chapter focuses on the ways in which the concept of *marginal gains* is interpreted and echoes across the marketing not only of the team itself but of its sponsors through an examination of branding videos.

Videos from three main Sky associates are considered (Shimano components, Rapha clothing and Muc-Off lubricants). Not only was Team Sky successful in winning the Tour but it also spawned a lucrative market for these suppliers, who attracted the attention of the team’s fans. Sky products were used by professionals, but they implicitly had the potential for marginal gains.

It took Bradley Wiggins’ victory in the Tour followed by his gold medal at the London Olympics the same year (2012) for professional cycling to feature in the public consciousness in Britain enough to become front-page news. In a context overshadowed by the doping era of LA, introduced in Chap. 3, it was clearly difficult to ‘believe in miracles’, as LA had urged his public to do, so a new way of framing success in professional cycling was urgently needed. Team Sky, spearheaded by David Brailsford—whose approach had already proved successful for the British Olympic track cyclists—had the answer in the form of what he called ‘the accrual of marginal gains’ which he has explained as follows:

The whole principle came from the idea that if you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improved it by 1%, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together. (Slater 2012)

This philosophy implied considerable attention to detail and was later ridiculed when Brailsford was summoned by parliament to testify and ultimately provide evidence of the content of a package sent to Wiggins during the 2012 Tour. It turned out that Brailsford could not provide evidence due to the team doctor's missing records. This incident threw considerable doubt on the detail-focused ultra-professional image Brailsford sought to evoke for his organisation, and Bradley Wiggins was quoted by *Cyclingnews* as further playing down the relevance of the marginal gains philosophy to the success of Team Sky.

Nevertheless, up until this point, the philosophy of *marginal gains* had seemed a powerful idea. It was picked up by the media and was a highly relevant concept to Team Sky's wealth of endorsing sponsors. In this chapter, I will explore Brailsford's notion of *marginal gains* not as a specific practice associated with his management policy at Team Sky but rather as an ideological meme that was adopted by the team's sponsors in their publicity material and indeed may be seen as epitomising a more general commercial trend within the world of cycling equipment to highlight engineering developments associated with research and development (R&D) as a narrative of development, refining an idea proposed in Chap. 2.

I will argue that the idea of product improvement R&D is an ideology that has been brought in recently, as the engineering associated with cycling has become a lucrative area in the growing leisure industry. It is an ideology that, while it flies in the face of the emphasis on handcrafted materials explored in the previous chapter on Brooks, meshes with cyclists' long-held obsession with maximising their competitive potential, now numerically expressible in terms of improvement savings in watts to attain a specific speed. Particularly since the advent of the use of carbon fibre in building bicycles, there has been a shift from bicycle quality being associated with traditional craftsmanship towards a competitive environment swamped by state-of-the-art R&D in engineering. The spread of the principles of R&D and of product improvement to increasingly peripheral products associated with cycling is at the heart of Brailsford's notion of *marginal gains*. For amateur cyclists, the association of cycling products with the potential for competitive gains is an obvious attraction. Nevertheless, as the examples discussed illustrate, product narratives are carefully developed for successful product positioning.

Marginal Gains and *Kaizen*

David Brailsford, the director of Team Sky, who coined the phrase *marginal gains*, had a brief career as a racing cyclist in France before taking a degree in sports science followed by an MBA from Sheffield Hallam University. Brailsford has said he believes that sport has a lot to learn from business (LondonBusinessForum 2016), and, in an interview with Eben Harrell for the *Harvard Business Review* (2015), Brailsford mentions that his notion of *marginal gains* was influenced by the Japanese management practice of *kaizen*. *Kaizen* is a Japanese word that simply means ‘to improve’. The two characters that make up the word are *change* and *good/correct*—so literally ‘change for the better’. *Kaizen* was a term adopted within the field of business to describe a Japanese approach to both product development and management that focused on incremental improvements. It was introduced to Western management experts through Masaaki Imai’s book *Kaizen: The key to Japan’s competitive success* published at the height of Japan’s economic boom (Imai 1986), though the term has also been described by others (Huda 1994). *Kaizen* was presented as an approach to development that contrasts with innovation in a number of ways. Innovation was represented as a dramatic ‘scrap and build’, short-term, technological breakthrough, requiring large investment and focused on profits. In contrast, *kaizen* was an approach focused on gradual, incremental improvement and continuous maintenance over the long term. *Kaizen* required little investment but great effort and cooperation from everyone involved in an organisation. It depended on a cyclical group-oriented process of *total quality control* (TQC) that was maintained through a continuous cycle of *planning-doing-checking-action-planning* focused on finding ways to solve immediate problems in every facet of an organisation. According to this outlook, Imai explains that ‘problems are the keys to hidden treasure’, as they represent a way forward. In contrast to innovation, which was characterised as individualistic and oriented around a small group, *kaizen* involved everyone in an organisation and an awareness of how one section’s work may affect another. In one sense, *kaizen* is group-oriented, but in another it is an approach that considers the value of each employee’s individual contribution, seeking to promote individual motivation.

The influence of these ideas can indeed be found in many of the things Brailsford has said about *marginal gains*, though his accounts of *marginal gains* are also influenced by issues in sports psychology. Brailsford talked about what he saw as three ‘podium principles’ for success: strategy, behavioural psychology, and continuous improvement (Harrell 2015). Strategy was concerned with identifying the target and quantifying the specific criteria needed to achieve it. In practice, this meant things like examining the power outputs of riders who were successful in the target event and finding athletes who might be capable of meeting these targets. The behavioural psychology part of the formula addressed the idea that a preoccupation with winning an event was actually counter-productive from a psychological point of view. This was also a dimension addressed through the hiring of Steve Peters as team psychologist. Peters is known for his Chimp Paradox (Peters 2012). According to Brailsford, the key to success was to focus not on winning the event (Peters’ ‘chimp’), but on producing the performance that had been targeted through training. More generally, Brailsford underlined that his philosophy was to help human beings become the best that their capabilities would allow. For riders in Team Sky, this meant not only looking for improvements in rider power through training and wind-tunnel tests to improve aerodynamics but also finding ways to improve every aspect of the team and its support for riders—from bikes, clothing, position adjustments and diet to the pillows and mattresses that have come to represent a laughable focus on the seemingly irrelevant associated in the media with the *marginal gains* phenomenon (Brown 2017). Laughable though they may be, these attempts to improve rider recovery were a logical extension of management philosophies like *kaizen*, and the success of Team Sky soon saw once-ridiculed ideas, such as warming down after a race, gradually adopted by all professional teams.

In the wake of the case of the mysterious package of medicine sent to Bradley Wiggins after the Critérium du Dauphiné in 2011 (Walker 2017), Team Sky’s reputation as a team that exemplified attention to detail seemed exaggerated. Cynical critics began to suggest that *marginal gains* was little more than pseudoscientific nonsense anyway (Ross 2017). Even Bradley Wiggins, who appeared in the Muc-Off video discussed here extolling the merits of *marginal gains* (Rapha 2013), later dismissed

it as ‘a load of old rubbish’ (Independent 2017). Other commentators have pointed out that the marginal gains approach encapsulates the notion of scientific method and focuses on a rational approach to development in cycling relevant to other sports and to personal development in general (Syed 2016, 2017). Matthew Syed, writing in the *Sunday Times* sums up the potential of *marginal gains* as follows:

When you start to think about improvement like this, you can find innumerable ways of testing and learning. Most of the low-hanging fruit will already have been exploited by the competition, so true innovation is about finding improvements that the competition hasn’t tested to the same degree. The complexity of each dimension—diet, training methods, skin-suits, recovery protocols and many others—offers ample scope to get ahead of the game. (Syed 2017)

My interest in this chapter, however, is not on whether or not this approach is effective but rather on the way in which Team Sky’s public focus on *marginal gains* has been semiotically reconfigured across media productions associated with the team’s network of sponsors—to explore, in other words, how a slogan can be picked up and interpreted semiotically as a resource for evoking corporate identity.

Team Sky and Its Network of Sponsors

Team Sky takes its name from the British cable television network that acts as the team’s main sponsor, recently joined by 20th Century Fox. In addition to these main sponsors, the team is sponsored by a network involved in providing the team with publicly endorsed equipment and products spread across a range of areas that can all be seen as contributors to finding marginal gains. Figure 10.1 provides a summary of current sponsors as of the time of writing. The diagram shows that sponsors are providers of bicycle components and tooling on the one hand, and clothing, nutritional aids and even training analysis tools on the other. All of these sponsors not only provide equipment to the team but also work with the team in various ways to develop their products. This policy not only means that the team can have products customised to their needs

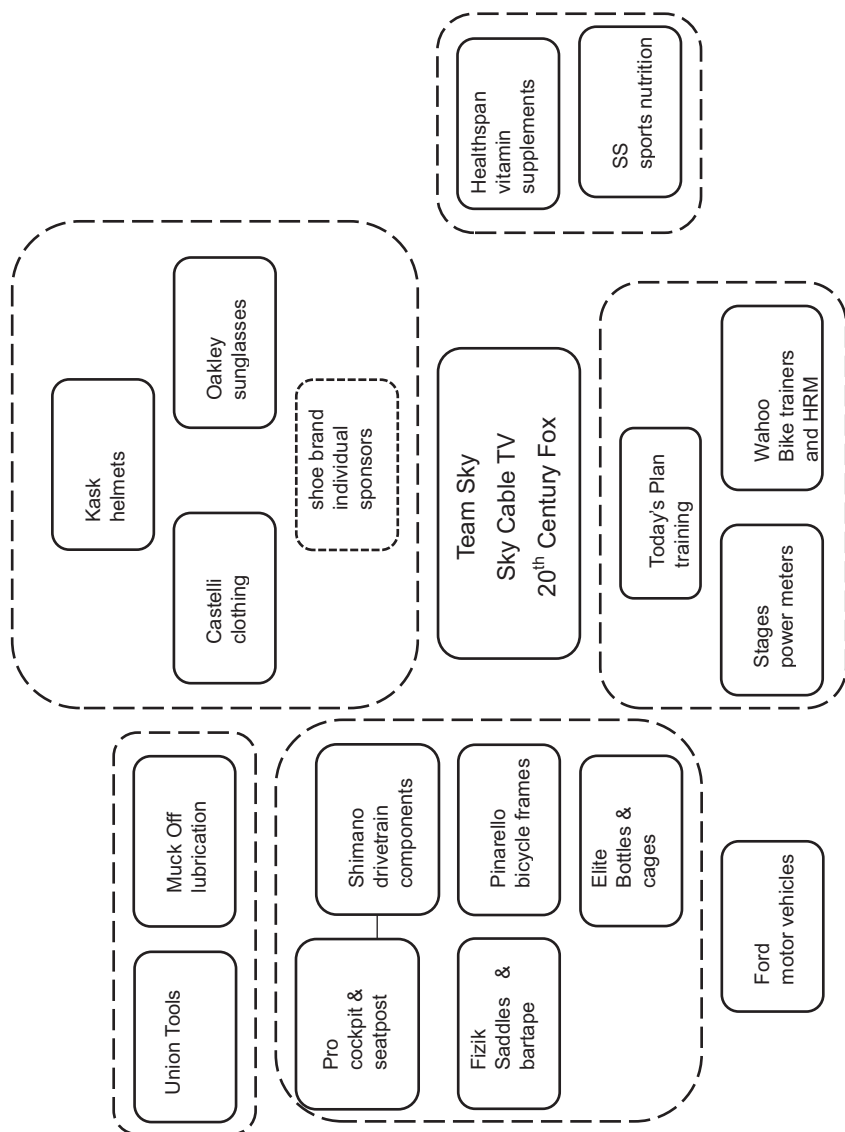


Fig. 10.1 Team Sky sponsors

but also that the sponsors can develop for the growing consumer audience of amateur cyclists products that stand out from those of competitors because of their developmental improvements associated with the team. Having sponsors develop products in conjunction with professional riders is not a new idea, as almost all bicycle brands have a history of developing their products in conjunction with riders. However, having such a broad range of needs addressed by sponsors does underline how the *marginal gains* philosophy is potentially linked to maximisation of profits for these sponsors.

Innovation in Cycling and the Limitations of the Union Cycliste Internationale

There is a sense in which the focus on marginal gains or a *kaizen*-based approach in professional road racing rather than a more dramatic innovation-based approach could be seen as the result of the restrictions imposed on bicycle design innovation by cycling governing bodies, such as the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI). The Tour, even when it raced through the unpaved mountains of the Alps and Pyrenees, was slow to accept the invention of the freewheel to allow coasting, let alone multiple gears, which were not used until long after they were in widespread use by the general public. When Obree (2005) and Boardman (2016) introduced experimental frame shapes and riding positions to break the world hour record their innovations were banned retrospectively. In response to this the UCI has developed increasingly detailed specifications for the shapes and dimensions of every part of the bicycle as well as a minimum weight, meaning that innovations are of necessity marginal. Nevertheless, manufacturers produce new bicycle frames and components every year with claims to have pushed the envelope—within the regulations.

Shimano Dura-Ace

As already introduced in Chap. 8, Shimano's development of bicycle components is represented as one of ongoing improvements, introduced in its top-range Dura-Ace components, and is described as 'trickling

down' to lower-grade components. The examples of *kaizen* provided by Imai (1986) focused on Japanese car manufacturers, but among bicycle manufacturers Shimano would seem the most obvious example of a company constantly working towards minor improvements, which has ultimately led to its domination of the component market. First released in 1973, Dura-Ace was designed to challenge the high end of components for racing and touring bicycles dominated at the time by Campagnolo and has been upgraded approximately every five years ever since (see Table 10.1).

Shimano is well positioned both to answer Sky's demand for technological improvements and to present an image of a company that shares Brailsford's philosophy of *marginal gains*. One of the most salient representations of this idea is their twenty-minute-long publicity documentary movie. *Shimano Dura-Ace 9000 & Di2 9070: The road from development to victory* is a commercial documentary that charts the testing of its new manual and electronic groupsets. The movie focuses entirely on field testing of prototypes with professional riders from Team Sky as well as other teams. The spoken voices consist

Table 10.1 The history of Dura-Ace

Year	Version name	Features
1973	Dura-Ace	Aluminum, five/six-speed cassette option
1977	Dura-Ace 7100	Different chainrings from Dura-Ace
1978	Dura-Ace Ex 7200	All parts optimised to work with six-speed cassette
1980	Dura-Ace AX 7300	Aerodynamic design
1984	Dura-Ace 7400	Shimano indexed shifting system
1990	Dura-Ace 7400 with dual control levers	Shifter incorporated into the brake lever
1996	Dura-Ace 7700	'Stress free' derailleur system
1998	Dura-Ace 25th anniversary	
2004	Dura Ace 7800	Ten-speed cassette; lightweight HOLLOWTECH cranksets
2008	Dura-Ace 7900	Lightweight design (2181 g → 2052 g)
2009	Dura-Ace Di2	Electronic gear shifting
2012	Dura-Ace 9000 Dura-Ace 9000 Di2	Eleven-speed cassette
2016	Dura-Ace R9100/R9150	Integrated power meter Hydraulic disc-brake option Front and rear synchronised shifting

of riders giving their evaluations of the prototypes and answering questions asked of them by Shimano representatives, and the representatives' summary. The movie shows predominantly Sky riders testing the early prototypes in training rides and then focuses on three riders at the Tour of Poland, which is chosen as a suitable testing ground due to its poor road services. The positive impressions here mean that Shimano expands the test to three teams for La Vuelta a España, where John Degenkolb, a rider for the Giant-Shimano team, wins a stage. In a sense, the story portrayed here reveals an obvious weakness in the *marginal gains* philosophy as applied to bicycle technology in that working with manufacturers to develop products can actually benefit rival teams.

Of course, the narrative is not meant to be read like this; it deliberately focuses on the development of the product from the perspective of Shimano as their representatives receive feedback that becomes increasingly positive, culminating in the words of the stage winner. Although the riders in the movie are cycling celebrities, their identities are reduced to product testers whose evaluations are listened to by the Shimano representatives:

Belgium:

Dowsett; 'When I was out the saddle,

Shimano; Mm.

Dowsette; Sort of sprinting,

Shimano: Ah-huh.

Dowsett: Just getting a noise,

Shimano: Yeah.

Dowsette: like something's rubbing.

Shimano: Mm-hm.

Dowsette: Even though I tried it in different gears'

The Shimano representative's minimal responses signal that he is actively listening to the rider. As the story progresses through the different locations depicted in the video, rider feedback becomes more positive. However, the riders themselves are only shown test riding and reporting on those test rides. And even major Grand Tours, the Giro and Vuelta,

are reduced to test locations, since the races are only shown very briefly from the roadside and comment is restricted to the performance of the prototypes. Over the course of the video, rider comments are increasingly positive:

Osaka: 'I'm used to this now. It feels normal. At the beginning you feel there is something missing.'

Belgium: 'When I was out of the saddle, sort of sprinting, just getting a noise ...'

Denmark

(Giro d'Italia): 'Yeah, it's nice. I really like the ergonomics of the hoods and, you know, the brakes have a lot of modulation, and so it makes a really big difference and it's nice to use. And I'm really looking forward to using it at the Giro and seeing how it runs.'

Poland (Tour

de Romandie): 'Yeah, no, it worked perfectly, it worked really well on the downhill. Multishift went over the top of the climb [signalled with hand] and down and into the eleven and off I went, so ... I don't know, yeah it was really nice.'

Spain (Vuelta): 'It feels very comfortable. The levers and that feel very nice. It's er, it's very responsive and quick in the shifting and smooth so, yeah, it's er, it's very good.'

The detail with which the riders are able to evaluate the prototype groupsets shows them to be professional testers as much as professional riders. On the one hand, they are situated both visually and verbally as testers. On the other hand, one of the riders, Stannard, also tries to reposition himself as a potential beneficiary by saying, 'I look forward to using it next year.' Similarly, another rider offers his praise for the braking performance but comments that it may rain and that this will be another test. He also comments that he is hoping that it will not rain, drawing attention away from the product and to his focus on the race. This is not responded to in the clip.

Muc-Off

Unlike the Shimano video, which both visually and verbally frames Team Sky and its riders as part of the R&D process for Shimano products, the Muc-Off interpretation of *marginal gains* is implicitly viewed as Sky-motivated. The video explains how a new cycle-chain lubricant was developed specifically for Team Sky. The lube is a distinctive sky-blue (the Team colour), which makes it visible on the chain. Elsewhere in their publicity, Muc-Off explains that the colour allows mechanics to check that the lube has been fully applied, but in the context of this ad it makes a normally almost-invisible product visible. This project is represented as the result of a four-way collaboration between Muc-Off (represented only visually by the test bottles, test jig and images of the lube), Eastern Jepperson (the head of technical operations at Sky), the mechanics (represented by Allan Williams, the head mechanic) and Bradley Wiggins, the team's key rider at the time. Jepperson, Williams and Wiggins all represent the lube as potentially offering a marginal gain, but their accounts of it differ in accordance with their professional roles.

Jepperson, as befits his role as 'Head of Technical Operations and Commercial' (a title which appears on the screen), situates himself as the person responsible for encouraging Muc-Off to research the new lube in response to requests from the mechanics, an endeavour he recasts as potentially achieving a marginal gain:

It, it basically came from an idea. Pressure from the mechanics. They had some idea that they would like to get out of lube. I think, in general, lubrication is an area that has not really been looked at. And it is one of the areas that we thought there could be quite some gains.

He talks of 'quite some gains' here instead of using the full buzzword, but he underlines that this is what he had in mind later in the ad when he states:

I think marginal gains is part of our DNA, its, it's a way of working, it's what we try to do every day. We try to be a little bit better than we were yesterday.

And, importantly, Jepperson implies that the research into lubrication carried out by Muc-Off makes this possible, acknowledging the usefulness

of the 'testing rig' and 'really, really knowledgeable people' in providing 'solid data'. As already mentioned, the Muc-Off people are not shown, but 'data' is indicated (mysteriously) by a camera shot of the printed image of a dial showing a torque measurement.

In contrast to Jepperson's management perspective, which represents the lube as a product that has been scientifically tested to produce *marginal gains* in an abstract sense, the mechanic, as befits his role as a user in a position to define the desirable qualities of a lube, provides a very concrete account of the desired 'gains', even though he never uses the word. Instead, he explains that the oil needs to be durable enough to last the race and keep the chain running smoothly, but it should not attract dirt, which may, counterproductively, affect gear changing. He relates this to the specific demands of the races in which Team Sky participates:

We needed a lube, um, that could be for any condition. Um, especially long days, classics days, you know, two hundred, two hundred and eighty kilometres. You know, we need something that can last ... I mean, if you have obviously got real hot conditions, bad weather, if you have, you can have gear problems, you need it to stay smooth running at all times. In the past you know, you'd put loads of oil on, and it attracts all the dirt. But then, that affects performance completely. It's that balance getting it oiled but trying not to attract all the dirt and grime.

Williams not only defines the gain very explicitly but represents the mechanic's-eye-view of attempting to apply more oil to combat the problem of its not lasting the race but finding that doing so creates another problem by attracting dirt.

Bradley Wiggins, interestingly, offers a split perspective on *marginal gains*. He represents himself as a senior member of the Sky organisation who recognises the demands of elite competition in the current era:

There's so little in ... people ... the difference between coming first and second in races now. That um, you know, just, just always trying to think ahead ... of your time, and finding the next gain, or the next thing that might just make the difference.... It's everything. You know, and I think the minute you stop trying to find the gain ... that's when you start going backwards as a team.

This aligns him with Jepperson's later comment that *marginal gains* is part of the team's philosophy. Yet he does not actually define a gain, which instead is effectively defined for him with an image of the chain seen running smoothly on the bike. At the point where he mentions 'going backward', the video shows a chain's-eye-view of a rider (presumably Wiggins) sprinting up a hill. In contrast to this rationalised account, however, Wiggins also provides a more down-to-earth rider's perspective on the problem, identified by the mechanics, of the chain losing its lubrication over the course of a long race:

There's so many times in races you hear a lot of other teams' bikes
[close up digital image of an exploded link with blue lubricated parts]
that are just creaking and cranking, 'cause the chains aren't lubed properly.
And to me, that's friction. And to me, that's slowing you down.

Here, Wiggins' evaluation of the detrimental effects of squeaky chains is framed with 'to me' in a way that enables him to implicitly connect this very specific experience to his earlier abstract talk of gains. As already noted, there is no representative of Muc-Off included in the ad, which instead focuses on images of smooth-running chains oiled with the distinctive blue lube. Perhaps this strategy was intended to reflect the fact that a smooth-running chain will indeed be silent. At the very end of the story, which describes the development of the lube in terms of a marginal gain for Team Sky, the final screen shows us the lube packaged for sale with the words: 'AVAILABLE NOW For long distance and harsh conditions—Hand blended from the finest ingredients.' This situates the consumer as the ultimate beneficiary of this project.

Rapha Team Sky Videos

Rapha acted as clothing sponsor for Team Sky for three years between 2013 and 2016. The company prides itself on high-quality and high-priced cycle clothing that can only be purchased directly from the company, either online or through one of their shops. A British company producing high-quality clothing, Rapha seemed a good match for a

British team with ambitions and a focus on getting the best of everything. However, the aesthetic of Rapha's many videos and publications—such as *Rouleur*, which is sold on their website—is more oriented towards cycling as a human challenge than a scientific one. In contrast to the gloss and technical details of most cycling magazines, *Rouleur* focuses on the human narrative. Rapha's clothing promotion videos say nothing about how the clothes were designed or developed but show riders pushing themselves to the limit in dramatic landscapes, reflecting the company founder's passion for cycling and his image of it. Simon Mottram, whom we met at the beginning of Chap. 1, summarised his motivations for founding and developing Rapha as follows:

... the ambitions for the business were always much bigger than creating a little niche and selling some expensive road cycling gear. The business is all about the sport. I think road cycling is the most beautiful sport in the world, and the toughest sport in the world, and I think it should be the biggest sport in the world. (Glei 2010)

Brailsford himself might well be credited with taking some part in making cycling more popular, but Mottram's notion of cycling as a passion seems far removed from Brailsford's emphasis on scientific testing and the challenging of cycling traditions. Nevertheless, a series of twelve human-focused videos on the theme of 'the little things' offers a human-focused interpretation of *marginal gains* in a way that fits with Rapha's cyclist-centred identity. Each video focuses on one person and one small detail of that person's job as presented as narrative snippets. The videos are introduced on Rapha's website as follows:

There is no secret at Team Sky, they simply do all the little things better than anyone else—focusing on the details that matter.

This season we bring you films, photos and words from the people that make up the Team—from the chefs to the mechanics to the riders—discussing all the little things that make Team Sky one of the world's best.

The topics are as follows: Mario, Rusty, packing pockets, the cape, descending, rice cakes, the physio, the wet bag, the smoothie, the bottle

carrier, handlebar tape, and the salute. All of the videos are set to music and are narrated by the subject, the 'little thing', that is the focus of the video and its narrative. In each case, the verbal narrative runs parallel to a film narrative. Unlike the Shimano productions, these are not narratives linked to a history but rather micro-narratives of activities continually repeated by the subject of the video.

Mario

Mario is a team masseur, but, as he explains, his job involves looking after riders in other ways. In particular he is shown preparing the riders' beds. He explains in the voiceover: 'It's the little details. When we make his bed. The rider opens the door and sees fresh, clean linen and sees his own suitcase ...' In doing this, the video gives a face to the much ridiculed practice of bringing the team's pillows and mattresses to ensure that they have a good night's sleep. The riders are never shown, only the man and his work.

Rusty

Rusty reveals a much lesser known detail in his making of banners in support of the team. Rusty is an old man with white hair. He is shown setting up his banner as he describes how he contacted Chris Froome's childhood cycling mentor in Kenya to find an appropriate expression to use. He proudly shows photographs of himself posing with the riders. He is shown picnicking with friends by the side of the road while awaiting a race. Finally, he is seen waving another banner as the peloton flashes by. This is a fan's perspective on the race.

Packing Pockets

The contents of a rider's pockets lie neatly organised on a bed. The rider, Joe Dombrowski, then explains how he packs his pockets for a training ride and why he packs them in this particular way. He is also shown out riding and accessing the contents of his pockets.

The Cape

Rider Peter Kennaugh is shown packing his cape, going for a ride and then putting on the cape while riding along. The voiceover explains how this should be done and offers advice on keeping the right state of mind while doing so: 'Stay relaxed and don't worry about getting it on too quick.' He also mentions the dangers of getting the cape caught and advises stopping if it gets caught on a training ride. He concludes with the brief anecdote of a rider who crashed as he tried to pull his cape out of the front wheel after getting it caught.

Descending

Ian Boswell, introduces the importance of learning to descend well on mountain roads and explains the technique for cornering on a fast downhill. He is shown leaning close to the road, exemplifying a perfectly executed cornering at speed.

Rice Cakes

The team chef is shown cutting a large slab of rice cakes into blocks ready for the riders and explaining why they are a good type of food to take on a ride. He is also shown carefully wrapping the rice cakes in a special kind of foil, something several viewers commented on. The riders are shown taking the rice cakes from their pockets, unwrapping them and eating them.

The Physio

The team physio is shown instructing and assisting a rider in some stretching exercises. He provides an account of both his role in the team and how to carry out the particular stretch that this rider needs.

The Wet Bag

The wet bag video is the only one that explicitly focuses on Rapha's own products. The wet bag is a special bag used to carry all the rider's spare clothes in the team car. It has pockets in it to organise clothes and a waterproof compartment with a mesh cover that allows wet clothes to be put in and partially dried out. In this case both the bag itself and the clothes it contains are Rapha products. The use of wet bags was something introduced by Sky that has since been adopted by other teams. Ben Swift, the rider who introduces the wet bag, explains how it is used during a race and what it contains. The video also shows riders putting on clothing from the wet bag.

The Smoothie

Soren Kristiansen, the Team Sky chef, explains how to prepare a spinach smoothie as he demonstrates making one. He makes fun of his Danish accent by warning viewers that he may sound like a muppet. This self-deprecating joke in his introduction is matched with his final comment: 'You drink it and you can be like Popeye.'

The Bottle Carrier

This video focuses on the most well-recognised job of the team domestique—in this case Josh Edmondson—who supports the team leader during the race by carrying bottles. The bottle carrier collects full water bottles from the team cars, which travel behind the main group of riders in a race, and then delivers them to his teammates. The bottles are carried by being put into the back of the race jersey. With eight teammates needing two bottles each, a full delivery presumably consists of sixteen 500-ml bottles, adding up to a considerable weight. Edmondson is shown filling his jersey with bottles as he explains in the voiceover that packing the whole team's supply into one delivery is an important way to conserve the riders' energy. He therefore represents himself as part of a team that shares a finite supply of human energy.

Handlebar Tape

This video shows Allan Williams, the same team mechanic we met in the Muc-Off ad, demonstrating how to use handlebar tape. In this case, his expertise is demonstrated not simply through his talk but by showing him actually doing his job. He explains how to wrap the tape, but the camerawork explores not only his task, as one might expect in a demonstration video, but also the location of the team mechanic's truck loaded with spare wheels and equipment.

The Salute

The final video of the series is a poem read by an anonymous narrator in the form of a gushing tribute to Team Sky and its hard-working members. Unlike the other 'little things' videos that seem to offer a reconfiguration of *marginal gains* in human terms, the poem instead builds on metaphors of war to portray the riders as heroic soldiers who suffer for the glory of the team. The metaphor of cycling as a heroic battle is certainly echoed in the images of challenge and suffering amid scenes of outstanding beauty found in other Rapha videos. Yet it seems distinctly at odds with the idea of *marginal gains* as it is depicted in the Shimano Dura-Ace development history or in Wiggins' talk of the search for gains in the Muc-Off video. Nevertheless, the 'little things' series does offer a human-focused perspective on the notion of *marginal gains* that is in harmony with Rapha's company image and its own support for Team Sky.

By giving each of these detailed accounts a narrator and by filming from the visual perspective of that narrator, the videos bring the viewer up close to everyday experience. Mastering the ability to descend, as described by Ian Boswell, is an obviously important skill for a professional cyclist, yet putting this video parallel to the other narratives implies that the domestique's work as a bottle carrier, the cheering on of the riders and the bed making are equally important and part of the teamwork that makes up the team. These videos thus provide an interpretation of *marginal gains* as a philosophy of attention to detail for everyone on the

team. Perhaps, indeed, the very power of a motto, buzzword or meme is that it is sufficiently vague for it to be interpreted or narrated in differing ways. Despite the seeming match of interests, Rapha dropped its sponsorship of Sky at the end of 2016, with Mottram explaining that it had not brought in the level of customers he had hoped for. However, they continue to support Wiggins' development team and the top ranking women's professional team Canyon/SRAM, whose brightly coloured kit and bikes make a dramatic contrast with the black of Team Sky.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced branding videos associated with Team Sky and explored some of the ways in which they have provided interpretations of the notion of *marginal gains* and in doing so implicitly situated their organisational identity in relation to it.

For Shimano, *marginal gains* appears to be closely related to the idea of *kaizen*, a Japanese business practice according to which the company is continually modifying and developing its products through small improvements. Instead of releasing new products Shimano has released a series of versions of Dura-Ace, each building on the previous version. The video story maps this process of refinement onto the impressions of riders who in turn are situated as rider-testers. Within this context, however, the riders nevertheless express their autonomy by not only reporting problems but also by situating themselves as customers or race participants who may be at least as concerned with the weather as with the performance of their bicycles.

In contrast to this, Muc-Off situates itself as a collaborator with Team Sky, one that specifically caters to the team's needs. There is no suggestion that the collaboration is part of an ongoing refinement of Muc-Off products. Rather it is branded as an area of achievement in Sky's search for marginal gains.

Finally, Rapha, offers a complete contrast to the technology-motivated development of Shimano in its focus on individuals and the small human skills that contribute to the performance of a team.

In this chapter, I have explored ways in which a professional cycle team has sustained its identity in relation to a single phrase, *marginal gains*, that was intended to capture a philosophical approach. The success of Brailsford's team led to his receiving a knighthood and being heralded as a 'sporting guru', whose philosophy of *marginal gains* was seen as potentially applicable to a wide range of other fields, particularly as promoted by Matthew Syed. Yet *marginal gains* itself came in for attack after it was revealed that even basic housekeeping practices associated with the crucial issue of medical records were not being adhered to when it really mattered. In the meantime, the discriminatory approach to coaching at British Cycling, highlighted by Jess Varnish's claims against Shane Sutton, also seemed to tarnish its image. Then Bradley Wiggins, whom we saw so elegantly defending *marginal gains* in the Muc-Off ad, publicly declared that 'marginal gains is a load of rubbish' after falling out with Brailsford. He was quoted as explaining:

At the end of the day ... marginal gains and all these buzzwords—a lot of the time, I just think you have got to get the fundamentals right: go ride your bike, put the work in, and you're either good or you're not good. (Independent 2017)

What all of this perhaps shows is that in the media buzzwords, like identities, are on shifting ground, and circumstances can lead to re-evaluations at any time. In the following chapter I turn from the negotiation of identity in the media by a cycling team to a new kind of media organisation that is developing a niche within cycling.

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11

Welcome to the *GCN Show!*: Community and Identity on YouTube

Introduction

This chapter explores corporate identity and consumer participation through a consideration of how identities are signaled and evoked on a YouTube cycling channel. Global Cycling Network (GCN) is currently the most successful among English YouTube cycling channels. It recreates cycling as media entertainment, reaching one million subscribers for the first time in March 2017. The YouTube cycling channel is a niche form of entertainment that differs markedly from mass-audience television in that it targets a very specific audience of road-bike-riding cycling enthusiasts. The format reflects a range of cycling-related topics similar to those discussed in forums, such as the online forum considered in Part 2 of this book, as well as in cycling magazines like *Cycling Weekly*, which was introduced in Chap. 2. Like cycling magazines, this entertainment brings together reporting on professional cycling, product reviews, practical information about diet and training and discussion of various topical issues related to cycling. Thus, the subject of cycling is made into a form of entertainment. Yet, the specific way in which this is done allows for the evocation of another identity—that of the YouTube channel itself. Just as

Brooks (in Chap. 9) included an ‘unsolicited testimonials’ section in its catalogues, cycling magazines such as *Cycling Weekly* have always had a ‘letters’ page and other sections where a selection of readers’ voices are shared. YouTube channels are created with a ‘user comments’ facility to allow viewer participation, but channels such as the *GCN Show* have actively expanded these resources by employing user comments in conjunction with other forms of social media, such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

This chapter focuses on the ways in which GCN presenter identities are managed in relation to their audience and those with whom they interact on the show. Consideration is given to the way in which the differing video genres produced for the channel imply differing audience positionings as well as the way audience participation is handled across the central genre of the weekly *GCN Show* videos. The *GCN Show* is a particularly relevant focus since it is both the descendant of the first video from which all the other content on this channel has emerged and is a weekly ‘show’ that introduces the other new content and involves the presenters in a range of positioning activities in relation to their audience. Before turning to these specific issues, however, this chapter will provide a brief assessment of relevant issues in exploring YouTube and an introduction to the channel. Subsequent sections then consider the potential of mapping the broad range of video types available on the GCN Channel in accordance with an account of *registerial cartography* (Matthiessen 2015b); consider how presenter identities and audience positioning, as well as relationships with others who feature in the videos, are managed; and propose a three-point model of generic features that might be considered as potentially impacting the interpersonal positioning of presenters in relation to their audience.

Researching YouTube

YouTube is not an easy phenomenon to explore, as it has evolved into a huge macrocosm that rivals the rest of the Internet in scale and scope and is virtually impossible to visualise in any top-down sense. Unlike the illusion created by Google Earth where users can zoom out from a

mapped location to see it in the geographical context of the local area, city, country or even the whole Earth, YouTube users can generally only see the part of the world they are in, which consists of a video and others that become associated with it through automated search algorithms, or they see a user page, populated by recommendations, or a channel contents page. As with the World Wide Web, searches will locate videos relevant to the search word, which is fine for users but problematic for researchers seeking to understand YouTube as a semi-otic or social media landscape. Benson (2016) draws attention to the inherent problems of attempting to describe a network for which there is a relative dearth of publicly available information. Despite this, he goes a long way towards providing an overview of YouTube, starting as he does with a consideration of the potential it might offer language learners. Benson's book actually represents his study in reverse order, beginning with consideration of the nature of YouTube and its most popular clip and working back to the project that stimulated his interest in the first place. A particularly interesting feature of his study is the adaptation of a model of conversational turn taking (Coulthard 1992) to describe the relationship between a video posting and the comments it receives.

In the study described here, I was also interested in exploring the relationship between provider and audience. However, rather than modelling the overall nature of communication between provider and audience in general, this study sought to theorise how a range of different positionings was made possible within the context of a specific channel nurturing a particular kind of relationship between the channel presenters and the audience. In addition, I was not so much interested in trying to describe the macrocosm of YouTube itself as in examining how a specific *channel* (as the providers' pages are referred to) had colonised a niche by offering a wealth of cycling-related content.

YouTube, as the name suggests, was originally set up as place where people could put their own videos online publicly. TV programs had already popularised the showing of home videos of bizarre happenings taken by ordinary people who had the camera rolling, and these seemed a natural outlet for such videos. It also seemed to be an outlet where ordinary people could get a touch of fame. In Michael Strangelove's book

Watching YouTube: Extraordinary videos by ordinary people (2010), the overview he offers of YouTube is predominantly one dominated by amateur videos. He also suggests that:

Amateur videos are not simply representational practices. They are communicative dialogic events that can provide the basis for community formation. (Strangelove 2010, p. 185)

YouTube is doubtless still largely populated by amateur videos, but it has also grown into a vast world of video material whose viewers number in the billions, making it an effective place to advertise and meaning that the production of hit YouTube videos itself is not only a route to online stardom but a potentially lucrative business. Benson characterises this change as follows:

YouTube's early description of itself as a place to 'show off your favorite videos to the world' aligned the site with wider visions of the Internet as an open, democratic and largely free-of-charge community. YouTube's current description of itself as a site that 'provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small', marries this ideal with a more commercial orientation to the world market. (Benson 2016, Chap. 7)

This change Benson relates specifically to Google's acquisition of YouTube towards the end of 2006 and its policy of expanding through localisation (Hollis 2008). It is a change that potentially offers smaller and more specialised media organisations the opportunity to build a business and communicate with a global audience.

The most highly viewed YouTube videos—such as Psy's 'Gangnam Style' hit, discussed by Benson (2016)—are pop videos. At the time of writing, Wikipedia listed 'Gangnam Style' as having 2.852 billion views, and only three videos in the Top 80 were not pop videos. Accordingly, as with other forms of social media, the most-watched material is produced by people who already have celebrity status beyond YouTube. Nevertheless, there is an emerging space on YouTube between the home videos and the

pop idols where those who have been dubbed YouTubers are emerging. These video creators focus on things like game-playing activities over-dubbed with witty commentaries that are able to entertain people enough to garner massive followings, with the top dozen or so boasting over 10 million subscribers each (Kosoff and Harrison 2015). The Swedish YouTuber Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg, who uses the name PewDiePie, had over 55 million subscribers at the time of writing, making him the current most popular YouTuber. The potential to be able to gather large audiences and with them obtain advertising revenue means that YouTube is also an attractive space for media-based businesses, including those targeting niches not catered to through television.

Welcome to the *GCN Show*

In January 2013, a YouTube channel calling itself the ‘Global Cycling Network’ or GCN uploaded its first video promoting the channel. The presenter, Daniel Lloyd, a former professional cyclist, began with the words: ‘The world of cycling is about to get a hell of a lot less complicated. Welcome to the Global Cycling Network. Subscribe now and your life will become complete. It’s absolutely free.’ During the 7:26-minute clip he repeats the name of the show and encourages viewers to subscribe. There is a brief interview with former professional cyclist and Tour winner Greg Lemond and journalist David Walsh (introduced in Chap. 3) and a cursory perusal of some articles in cycling magazines. Compared with today’s slickly edited clips it was remarkably low key. Lloyd looked like a beginner though the access he claimed to have secured to Pro Peloton suggested that the presenter was the representative of a more influential organisation. Early ironic comments from viewers included, ‘What’s it called again?’ ‘is it free!!!!!!!!!!!!’ and ‘My life is complete!’, as well as advice on improving the sound quality and logo placement. Such comments suggest that interested viewers, if not blown away by what they saw, were willing to humour the show. These early comments, however, also set the tone for a degree of audience participation in the channel that has been enabled in various ways. By April 2017 the channel reached a million subscribers, by which point it had also produced almost a thou-

sand videos with four fulltime presenters and numerous guests. This put GCN firmly at the front of English cycling entertainment channels on YouTube, in terms of both subscribers and videos produced.

Genre and Interpersonal Positioning of Global Cycling Network Video Types

One of the interesting features of the YouTube channel is that it potentially enables new kinds of text to be created with new interpersonal relationships. As the title of the channel suggests, GCN is modelled on a television news channel, albeit one devoted to cycling. The weekly *GCN Show* has up to three of the presenters sitting behind a desk reporting on the week's cycling news. Their interaction is generally scripted and read from an autocue, as television newscasters do. When they are outside the studio, interacting with riders or other key figures in the world of professional cycling, they act like reporters, often carrying large microphones. The studio format can be considered as one where the 'newscaster' is an authority who passes on information about the cycling world to the viewer. However, on a YouTube channel, viewers can also comment on the news and even correct it. For the outside reporter, the cycling personality is the important authentic voice, but, as was discussed in the case of the Cavendish and LA interviews (in Chaps. 2 and 3), it may be framed by the reporter. Nevertheless, these newscasters and reporters are not dressed in suits but wear their GCN cycle kit or casual t-shirts and sweat-shirts emblazoned with their channel's logo (all of which products are sold in their online shop). Despite their credentials as cyclists, and the overall emphasis on providing a wide array of cycling information to viewers, they also exploit opportunities for humour. This relationship is signalled in the presenter introductions on GCN's homepage, which houses their shop and links to all videos. The following is the introduction to Daniel Lloyd, the presenter described above, who hosted the first show:

Dan has been a professional road cyclist for the last 10 years, racing for teams such as the Cervelo Test Team and Garmin-Cervelo. He raced and completed the Giro d'Italia on two occasions and the Tour de France in

2010. In 2012 he rode for the IG Sigma Sport team, at the same time as combining commentary for ITV4, Eurosport, the BBC, and Rai. Dan became lead presenter on GCN after an interview where he drank the rest of the GCN team under the table.

The last line here humorously alludes to his enjoyment of alcohol, and he is associated with drinking at various points in the videos. This kind of association helps characterise the presenters for viewers but also humanises them and creates an angle for making jokes about them. These humourous characteristics are also developed over the course of the show through embarrassing incidents. Hence, Matt is the presenter who is known for having trouble clipping into his pedals and for falling over logs; Simon for his dislike of homemade chain catchers regularly submitted to the hack/bodge section of the show; Lasty (Tom Last) for his ability to make himself miserable on hard climbs, based primarily on one clip where he was visibly suffering. In this sense familiarity with the show and its presenters, who function like characters in a soap opera, evokes a sense of community. Nevertheless, this general observation needs to be explored more fully in order to see how such identities emerge.

Some types of video use very different formats, situating the presenter in rather different ways in relation to the viewer. As there is already a large range of video types that may expand further as the creators think of new ideas for the show, it is not worth attempting to list every generic variant. Instead, I will consider some examples that illustrate how the video genre situates the presenters in different ways in relation to their viewers. I also propose that, for the purpose of exploring identity positioning in the videos, it may be relevant to classify them in accordance with Matthiessen's model of *registerial categories*, which he has developed through the exploration of what he calls *registerial cartography* (Matthiessen 2015a).

Registerial Cartography

When introducing the SFL model of language in Chap. 1, I referred to a way of exploring semiotics from the small-scale units of meaning described by phonemes and morphemes, to lexico-grammatical patterns

(the organisation of words), to discourse-semantic patterns (meaning-making spread over larger stretches of discourse). Above and beyond discourse relations are even broader regularities of meaning described in terms of *genre* (a type of text) and even broader functional varieties of language called *register* (a contextual variety of language). This conceptual scope of language was illustrated in Fig. 1.3 in the introduction. As shown in the model, each of these scales can be considered in relation to the metafunctions of language. That is, it can be considered in terms of the *textual* metafunction (the way the text is structured), the *ideational* metafunction (the world or ideas depicted by the text), or the *interpersonal* metafunction (the way in which the author intrudes on a text or shapes a relationship with the reader). This diagram could be considered as the World Map of SFL with almost no detail. There is another dimension not shown in Fig. 1.3, which is the *pole of instantiation*. At one end of this pole is *system*, which is the abstract structural organisation, and at the other is *instance*, which is a specific contextual use. What Matthiessen has done is to consider the realm of *register* as a resource midway between the *poles of instantiation*, and within *register*, the *ideational* metafunction, and to map this out. Just as a physical map shows how different areas relate to each other, a semiotic map provides an overview of how areas of meaning relate to each other. It is for this reason that Matthiessen uses the metaphorical idea of *cartography* for his project of making maps of functional meanings. *Registerial cartography* refers explicitly to Matthiessen's project, which he has identified as 'systematically describing the registers that make up language' (Matthiessen 2015b). Even though my interest is in the far more modest task of trying to describe how interpersonal relationships between presenter and viewer vary across a range of videos on the GCN YouTube channel, Matthiessen's *categories of register* nevertheless seems a potentially useful tool. Ideally, if one were able to map the generic types of video onto a model of *register* (albeit one focused on *ideational* meaning), it might be possible to also explore the range of interpersonal relationships being evoked across the different *genres*.

Matthiessen's mapping of registers to date identifies eight basic categories of register, which are further divided into seventeen subregisters. He organises them into a wheel diagram to indicate that they are not fully discrete and that one registerial category blends into another at the



Fig. 11.1 Video subgenres of GCN mapped onto Matthiessen's model of *registerial categories*

boundaries. Moreover, this arrangement sets up implicit oppositions from one side of the wheel to the other. Figure 1.4 in Chap. 1 illustrated this, and Fig. 11.1 shows the examples of the *GCN Show* discussed below mapped onto it. I will first briefly summarise these categories, then consider how the predominant registerial influences might provide a useful organising principle for the range of video types on the *GCN Show*. One final caveat I should repeat is that Matthiessen chose to focus on *Field*, meaning 'the field of activity in the context' as his starting point, but my ultimate concern is with *interpersonal positioning* as in the relationships

between the presenters, presenters and viewers, and so on. Nevertheless, considering that the videos are largely organised according to the kinds of activity they are depicting, it is a constructive heuristic beginning. Matthiessen defines the primary types of register as follows:

- **expounding:** contexts where natural phenomena such as cold fronts are explained to help readers or listeners as part of the construction 'knowledge' about general classes of phenomena.
- **reporting:** contexts where the flow of particular human events are [*sic*] chronicled to help readers or listeners construct, keep up with or review events.
- **recreating:** contexts where the flow of particular human imaginary events are [*sic*] narrated to achieve some kind of aesthetic effect.
- **sharing:** contexts where personal values and experiences are exchanged to help interactants relate to one another for example by calibrating their sense of moral values in a work place.
- **doing:** contexts where people are engaged in a joint social activity, using language to facilitate the performance of this activity.
- **enabling:** contexts where a course of action is modelled semiotically and made possible through instruction.
- **recommending:** contexts where a course of action is advised for the benefit of the addressee.
- **exploring:** contexts where public values and ideas are put forward and debated. (Matthiessen 2015b, p. 6)

For this analysis, I will start in the middle of this list with *reporting* because it happens to be the dominant register used in the first half of the *GCN Show*.

The *GCN Show*

For this analysis, I describe a specific episode of the *GCN Show* dated 25 April 2017. It was episode number 224 and was recorded at the Assos showroom in London instead of GCN's usual studio. It was titled 'Remembering Scarponi' because it was recorded just days after the shocking news of the death of the Italian professional rider Michele Scarponi.

The *GCN Show* itself is made up of nine segments as well as an introduction and conclusion. The introduction consists of a two-part video montage. The first part consists of viewer videos, which change from week to week but always show a cyclist or group of cyclists with the phrase: 'From [location/event], welcome to the *GCN Show*.' The second part shows a fixed sequence of cycling moments from professional races or other events from past shows set to an energetic musical soundtrack. When the track finishes, the scene shifts to the studio, one of the presenters says, 'Welcome to the *GCN Show*!' and summarises the main items of the week's show. The other segments are as follows:

1. Racing News (reports of the major races of the week or other cycling-related news)
2. Tech of the Week (an introduction to one or more items of bicycle technology that have been in the news)
3. Cycling Shorts (other items of cycling news stated rather than narrated)
4. Caption Competition (the winner of last week's competition to invent the best caption for the week's photo is announced, and the following week's photo is introduced; one of the presenters suggests a possible caption)
5. Wattage Bazooka (a 'wattage bazooka' t-shirt is awarded to the professional rider considered to have done the most powerful ride over the past week, as well as one based on a viewer's recommendation of him/herself or a friend)
6. Hacks and Bodges (evaluation of bicycle-related creations sent in as photographs by viewers; those considered to be good designs are evaluated as *hacks* and those considered to be poor or dangerous designs are *bodges*)
7. Comment of the Week (one or more amusing comments from the video comments section are introduced together with the relevant section of the video, and one is awarded a prize)
8. This Week on GCN (a summary the GCN videos that will be released over the course of the week)
9. Xtreme Corner (a brief exhilarating clip of some dangerous-looking bicycle action)

The show then concludes like all videos by directing viewers to go to the shop, to give the video a thumbs up, to subscribe and to view videos relevant to the content of the show.

As can be seen from this summary, the first three items on the show are concerned with *reporting*. The format allows the presenters to narrate the main events of the week so that it starts out as a news show with the presenters positioned as informants. More specifically, Racing News is an example of the subcategory ‘chronicling’, since a brief narrative account of each race mentioned is included along with the details of the races:

Matt: The Ardennes Classic week came and went with some really impressive victories. Notably, Anna van der Breggen who took the first ever women’s triple crown, the newly resurrected women’s Amstel Gold Race and a brand new Liège-Bastogne-Liège.

Simon: That’s right. It’s not been the most impressive season so far for her Boels-Dolmans team. But van der Breggen showed that she is the force to be reckoned with this week having won Fleche Wallone, Amstel Gold and Liège-Bastogne-Liège. Solo all three times.

In this case, though the specific stages of the event are not mentioned, the sequence of wins is the main focus, particularly as it turns out that the second and third places in all three races went to the same two riders.

In contrast, Tech of the Week typically reports on new items of cycling technology. The features of the technology are the main focus of this news; therefore, I have classified this as another subcategory of reporting: *surveying*. *Surveying* here refers to the fact that this segment is concerned with keeping track of the new technology market and reporting any new findings:

Simon: ... There’s also a big trade show attached and US brands use it as a showcase to launch new products. Now our mates from GBN were out there and they found one product in particular that they thought might be of interest. [followed by video introducing a product shown at the trade show]

Finally, the section News Shorts provides a brief report of other cycling news items. Like Tech of the Week, this segment is concerned with time-sensitive events that have a narrative dimension to them, but it may also feature expositions of phenomena with which (unlike racing events) viewers may be unfamiliar. Therefore, it falls somewhere between *surveying* and *chronicling*. In episode 224, GCN reports on new cycling infrastructure in Holland:

- Matt: Do you ever get fed up, when you are out on your bike, waiting for lights to turn green?
- Simon and Dan: Oh yeah!
- Simon: Yeah!
- Matt: Well, so do I. But get this. For cyclists in Utrecht in the Netherlands, that could be a thing of the past.
- Simon: Oooh!
- Matt: Due to a revolutionary new system called 'Flow' which basically tells you how fast you should be riding in order to get the green light ... [explanation continues]

The account here includes *explanation*, but the focus in this report is not on understanding the system but rather on being aware of it as a phenomenon, as information about world cycling practices. An *explanation* given to cyclists living in Utrecht to cyclists intending to use the system would therefore have to be classed differently.

A third subcategory included within *reporting* is called *inventorying*. This is a useful term to describe the video series titled *Pro Bikes of the Peloton*. Each video focuses on one bike belonging to an elite professional rider. The technical details are described in some detail. These videos are a continuation of a practice of making bicycles objects of attention, which is widespread in cycle magazines, not to mention in cycle shows or cycle museums. In this case, the bicycle becomes an object of history, of art, or even of desire (bike porn). The bicycles introduced here are also evaluated as being cool or hot. Nevertheless, the primary focus seems to be on collecting an inventory of descriptions of the bicycles used by key riders.

Items 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 on the *GCN Show*, are all concerned with various kinds of sharing activities. The show preview really belongs in the conclusion but was presumably put before Xtreme Corner to keep people watching until the end. The Xtreme Corner video usually comes from a cycling event of the week before but is not treated as news, generally because it is not a road bike event. It is simply there to elicit a shared ‘Whaaaaaa!’ response.

Simon: It’s time now for extreme corner. [all presenters make a cross with their forearms in front of them]. You may well not believe what you are seeing. Make sure you watch closely.

Matt: I don’t believe it.

Simon: No?
[Video of Chris Hoy doing a wheelie on a bicycle with huge tyres played to heavy metal music]

Matt: Fuwaah!

Simon: That was Olympic track legend Sir Chris Hoy wheelie-ing a fat bike. And doing a pretty good job of it.

Matt’s ‘Fuwaah’ and a face of disbelief as he looks at Simon plays out the anticipated response to the unexpected scene.

Items 4, 5, 6 and 7 are *sharing* in the more obvious sense since they all engage with viewer-generated contributions. Comment of the Week picks out one or more of the viewer comments that have already been shared with those who read the comments section but are introduced to all viewers here and celebrated by the award of a prize.

Dan: Comment of the Week now. And the first one comes underneath Si’s look at the Mavic Comet shoes. Er, Fic-ti-tioz with a ‘z’. Says: ‘That awkward moment when Simon tried his best shot at French but got replies in perfect English’ Si,

Simon: Yeah.

Video: Simon: *Bonjour, qu’est-ce que c’est que ça?*

Woman: Er, this is a reinforcement. It goes into the toe. And it protects the foot from being hurt by the cables.

Simon: Ah, OK.

- Matt: A hundred and twenty eight likes!
Dan: I thought that was a good effort at French. You can't help it when they speak better English than you, can you.
Simon: Phew ... [waving arm] I always try my best.

The comment itself recontextualises the video intended to show how some new high-tech shoes were made through a factory tour as an embarrassing and humorous moment. Showing it again here, therefore, is an act of *sharing*, which also underlines the fact that reader comments are being read. The presenters share and appreciate the contributions, but they also position themselves as judges, awarding prizes for the best such contributions. In this case the viewer is evaluating the presenter Simon, but the person who writes the comment is also being evaluated as deserving of the Comment of the Week prize. *Sharing* is also about evaluating the viewers just as the viewers who write in the comments constantly evaluate the show and its presenters.

- Dan: Time now for hack, [all three presenters make a slash sign with their forearms in unison] forward slash,
Matt: Oh, we got it right
Dan: bodge of the week time.
[Picture of back handlebars with an extra red bar with mirrors on it]
This one's from M.C. Mirrors on aluminium tube it
Matt: Oh
Dan: also works for accessories to free up hand space. Now, I think that does a job
Simon: Yeah.
Dan: But, I'm still gonna say bodge.
Simon: Well, I dunno. He's done a nice job, look. He's got different coloured bar tape on.
Dan: I'm not saying he didn't put some effort in.
Matt: I'd probably get tangled up in that.
Dan: I think yeah.
Matt: I'd be straight off.
Simon: [Laughs] I'm gonna say hack. You say bodge.

As can be seen from this example, the evaluation process allows the presenters to take a close look at the viewer's photograph, which Matt also takes as an opportunity to make a self-deprecating joke about his riding skills. Other GCN videos that focus on sharing can also be found in another shorter regular show called *Ask GCN Anything*, which focuses on answering viewer questions, usually on a predetermined theme. Typically, answers are short, but viewers are directed to watch other content.

Moving from sharing to narrating, this episode of the *GCN Show* also included a narrative tribute to Michele Scarponi who was killed by a van that hit him while he was out training. The tribute is given after the title but before the usual segments and consists of a photograph of him riding, followed by his teammates lined up at the start of a race looking distraught. This is followed by a verbal tribute to him, which summarises his achievements and popularity as well as the immediate circumstances surrounding his death. The final photograph he posted of himself playing with his son is shown and finally a humorous video that he took of himself with his pet parrot flying beside him as he rode his bike. This is therefore an example of *recreating* that can be subcategorised as *narrating* in a way that one might want to refine further as *paying tribute to*.

Recreating also includes a category called *dramatizing*, which I use to categorise videos that were primarily focused on amusing viewers or making them laugh. For example, among the 'top ten ...' videos are some that, instead of providing information, lampoon the genre itself. 'Top Ten Things Not to Eat When Cycling' is a series of performances of ridiculous things to eat on a bike, including attempting to eat a slice of pizza taken from a pizza box balanced on another rider's back as they ride along. Similarly, a competition between the three presenters to travel across London by Santander Cycle (or Boris Bikes as they are colloquially known), bus or taxi while taking as many photographs as possible is a variation on bike versus car races in urban settings where the bike inevitably wins. Again this can best be classified as a *recreating, dramatizing* video.

Train with GCN and Spin Class

These videos are designed to be watched while riding an indoor trainer as they give real-time advice on how to perform the workout. They are

therefore *doing* in the subcategory of *directing*. A workout guide talks viewers through the workout while also riding on a cycle trainer. Other riders are visible performing the workout. In this sense the show offers both an instructor and model riders. The viewer is positioned as a workout rider, and onscreen instructions and graphics reinforce the instructor's guidance. The video is therefore oriented around the act of indoor training, which is enabled by the video. As such it relates to other digital cycling workout tools such as Sufferfest (which offers onscreen workout instructions accompanied by race videos), TrainerRoad (which shows only onscreen instructions and power targets but records rides as part of a training program) or Zwift (which offers a virtual landscape occupied by other online riders). Since such videos are 30 minutes or more and consist only of occasional instructions, they are not suited to general entertainment.

OK 50 seconds so we are gonna be moving to hand position two. Start to creep on your resistance just a little bit. Keep an eye on the effort levels. On a scale of one to ten, on a rate of perceived exertion. We are going to be looking to creep up 'til nine throughout. At the moment just building from five to six to seven. Just keep it nice and relaxed at the moment ...

This talk directly shapes the workout by letting riders know both the level of effort the workout should reach and the level they should be at now. The key commands, 'Start to creep up your resistance a little bit' and 'Just keep it nice and relaxed', provide the main instruction, but the information interspersed with this helps shape the focus on the workout. It is therefore an example of the language of *doing*, which facilitates the performance of the exercise.

Maintenance Mondays/How-Tos (Mechanical Repairs)

As in the training videos, in how-to videos the presenter is a trainer and the viewer is positioned as trainee, though this time in relation to bicycle mechanics. However, these videos are edited to show only the essential parts of the process. Therefore, they function as *enabling* instructions rather than *directing*. The time taken to fulfil repetitive or laborious parts

of maintenance is condensed in various ways so that the video is considerably shorter than the time it would take to perform the repair or servicing. The videos are usually five to ten minutes long. In order to achieve such condensation, the video either speeds up (usually to music) or jumps to a completed process. Such videos share these generic similarities not only with other bicycle maintenance videos on YouTube (such as those provided by Park Tool) but also with instructional process videos across YouTube for anything from video-game techniques to cooking pizza. Because these maintenance videos are short and explain processes that could be considered useful information for cyclists, they are suitable for watching even when not performing the maintenance shown.

How to fit handlebar tape is a common topic for YouTube videos (see also the Rapha video mentioned in the previous chapter) because it is something that needs to be done regularly and doesn't require any special tools, but it does require care, and doing it well is a source of pride for mechanics. As it is a relatively quick procedure, wrapping one side can be shown completely in a two-minute clip. This makes it much closer to *doing*. However, with more complex or time-consuming procedures, both the verbal message and visual representation of the process need to be compacted, shifting the video towards the language of *enabling*.

The GCN channel includes three videos on the topic. The first one, from 2013, is divided into four sections marking what you need and the steps of the process. The second is of a professional mechanic who in one take explains to the camera how he does it in the course of his work. During the first part of the wrapping, he refers to the fact that he is wrapping the bars for Dan Martin, whose bike sticker is then shown by the cameraman. He does not divide the process into steps but does happen to make three points: first about tape-tension, then about how to wrap around the brake as he is doing this and finally how to finish as he completes the job. In the most recent video, the presenter includes considerably more information besides the narrated process of wrapping the bars. He concludes the video with a summary to frame the process as one that the audience has not yet completed: ‘

Just remember the three golden rules: tape firmly, tape evenly, and don't be afraid to backtrack if it hasn't quite gone to plan.’

The taping of both sides is shown, but the process is speeded up. Both the verbal and visual are therefore abstracted from the real-time narration of the process, which semiotically moves it from *doing* to *enabling*. In more complex and time-consuming processes this separation is more marked.

Another kind of *enabling* is *regulating*. Meaning is focused on raising awareness of regulations or dangers, which will contribute to enabling an activity. This area of meaning is represented by GCN videos that focus on providing guidelines to newer riders. One example of this is the video 'How to Follow Group Etiquette.' In this case, rather than imparting information about how to perform some action, as in the case of maintenance videos, viewers—assuming that they would already be capable of performing these activities—are educated about what is considered appropriate behavior.

Matt: One of the most important things in relation to safety about riding in a group is to make sure the front riders point out any obstacles in the road. This could be stones, rocks, or even road furniture. RIGHT. [shouts as he points to a plastic bottle on the road] Obviously, the riders behind haven't got clear vision so it is vitally important that we point things out.

Even further from the *doing* is *recommending*. If training videos focus on getting the job done and *enabling* semiotically makes an activity possible through instruction, *recommending* provides more general guidance or suggestions. Some of the how-to GCN videos include such titles as 'Train for Mountains: How to train for climbs when you live nowhere near them.' In this case, the subject is both too large and too open to interpretation to be addressed in terms of *doing* or *enabling*. Instead the video offers advice, which consists of five different techniques designed to mimic the constant effort required to climb hills.

Global Cycling Network's 'Unboxing'

Global Cycling Network is also sponsored by a number of organisations that provide equipment and also sometimes expensive prizes through special competitions, which also serve as opportunities to promote prod-

ucts. This time, borrowing from television genres such as shopping channels and quiz shows, GCN has created a particularly overt and dramatic form of *recommending* as *promoting*. Global Cycling Network's 'unboxing', as it is called, is a very detailed product description loaded with positive evaluations and introduced (always by Simon) with considerable excitement:

We love a bit of tech here at GCN, and I know that you do too. So, I think that you are going to be psyched as well. Because this box contains a big step forward in cycling technology. We've seen it out on the road before, but this is what SRAM RED eTap looks like, if you are lucky enough to get your hands ...

[Simon opens the box and looks in and a beautiful resonating voice sounds. He then closes it and the voice stops]

... on a brand new set.

Here a key part of the promotion is Simon situating himself as someone also excited about the prize, which is represented as the ultimate desirable product. He positions the viewer as someone equally interested. Providing the product as a prize is an effective strategy to get many people to follow his detailed description of the product, as the prize draw is taken from those who correctly answer a question about a detail Simon mentions.

Global Cycling Network's 'First Look'

Exploring on GCN is also potentially a commercial activity, as this is the category for product reviews. One of the key commercial roles of GCN is as product reviewer, and, like other cycling reviewers, it is provided with products to test out and evaluate, which is done in 'first look' videos. This particular genre overlaps with those of other professional YouTube channels, such as Bike Radar, which specialises in road bike reviews, and many amateur productions. One important difference from *promoting* is that the reviewer should not be completely aligned with the product and the selling of it to the viewer but rather should evaluate its merits and

demerits. The following is an extract from a 'first look' at the same product as the one promoted in its 'unboxing':

I've finally got my sticky paws on a version of SRAM's RED eTap groupset. What's it all about then? Why should we care? Well, firstly it is electronic, and secondly, it is wireless. Completely wireless. The derailleurs communicate with the derailleurs using SRAM's own wireless encryption system.

As this brief extract shows, like many such 'first look' videos, the language is actually predominately expository, focusing on the positive features of the product. Nevertheless, the starting point is 'Why should we care?' Unlike the 'unboxing', potential shortcomings such as the battery running out or somebody hacking into the wireless signals that connect the levers to the derailleur are discussed, even though they are ultimately dismissed.

The wireless bit. What it means is that each component will need its own battery. Now you can see them on the derailleurs. That's the neat little black bit on the back. The shifters it's internal and a quite familiar internal circular battery. Now they are harder to get to at the shifter, but they do last a long time. And SRAM think about a year of frequent use. The derailleur batteries on the other hand will get about a thousand kilometers each. To charge them ... Each battery has its own LED to show when the battery is running low. So if it does go flat. It's kind of your own fault.

Using the review format to deliberately head off potential shortcomings in this way could of course lead us to classify this as a covert form of *promotion*.

'GCN Does Science'

Exploring comprises *reviewing* and *arguing*. One kind of *arguing* is performed through testing out ideas in 'GCN Does Science' videos. In this genre, the presenters attempt to test some theoretical issue related to the dynamics of cycling by acting as test subjects. This implies a considerably less authoritative position than those discussed so far since the presenters

objectify themselves as test subjects, though they do also evaluate the results for the viewers. Another dimension of this is that these tests are often intended as rider perspectives on product testing that is done more rigorously by manufacturers under laboratory conditions. Where these are tests of components they may also effectively constitute both a kind of advertising on the one hand and a virtual experience of trying out a product on the other. Various features of bicycle science are alluded to throughout the videos and are often signalled by the use of a pair of large-frame glasses that serve as a ploy to ward off potential accusations of pretentiousness when quoting data from scientific journals.

How a Wheel is Made

The final area for consideration in the model is *expounding*, which consists of *explaining* and *categorising*. Unlike the *doing* and *enabling* categories of *directing* and *instructing*, *explaining* is a form of instructing that is purely cogitative. A relevant example of this is the factory tour, where we are shown how industrial processes are performed that are not intended to be replicated by the viewer. In the video 'How a Zipp Carbon Fibre Wheel is Made', Simon is made 'honorary factory employee for the day' and is allowed to participate in some of the processes involved in building a wheel. In doing so, guided by the Director of Advanced Product Development, Simon takes us through the various processes involved in building a wheel that are performed by a number of different people. He therefore negotiates a role between employee and interviewer with the director while acting as a guide to the viewer. In the following extract Simon starts out in the act of preparing a sheet to be cut, but, as the director begins explaining the process, Simon shifts into questioning the director.

Simon: Right, up-side-down. Bit of overlap.

Director: Just a little bit of overlap ...

[Simon and an employee lower the large sheet they have just flipped over]

Simon: A little bit of overlap.

- [Simon lays sheet down carefully]
- Director: Excellent.
- Simon: Alright.
- [Simon smooths out the sheet]
- Simon: And spread it out. I mean it looks like we're making a pretty big sheet of carbon fiber here.
- Director: Yes. What we'll do is cut it up into different subassemblies once we're done with this layout. And then, and then, that will go onto the rest of the manufacturing process and that will assemble it.
- Simon: And how many layers are we going to need for our rim?
- Director: It depends ...

As with the other examples from the extracts of the various subgenres of GCN YouTube clips that I have introduced in this chapter to map onto Matthiessen's account of *register*, different kinds of activities can be seen to be going on as part of the principal one. In this example of *explaining* there is also the language of *doing*. Accordingly, there are also subtle shifts of identity positionings as they are realised in the context. Even so, these categories not only make it possible to map *variations in register* in relation to each other and video subgenres but also help to account for the ways in which interpersonal resources shape the identities of those depicted and the positioning of the audience.

Matthiessen points out that his categories are descriptions of the ideational description of context, but each of these activities, as realised here, also involves positioning of the identities involved. Hence, the way in which Simon enacts *recommending* through a GCN 'unboxing' or *reviewing* in a 'first look' involves him with the viewer as cyclist and potential consumer, implicit relationships that are also represented as shared interests in the new technology. Notably, in these two closely related genres, the identities and relationships evoked are similar. But the implied identity and relationship with the reader are quite different in a humorous video about what not to eat on a bike, in an evaluation, in a hack or a bodge, or in a training video. These contexts situate the viewer, respectively, as someone to be entertained (with a shared sense of humour); someone who belongs to a community with an interest in finding tech-

nological solutions and who enjoys seeing others' attempts; or someone participating in training exercises. In this sense, the specific focus of the ideational content of the video also shapes interpersonal features.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced YouTube's the *GCN Show*. I have also introduced Matthiessen's registerial cartography project and explored the way it might be used, on the one hand, to help classify the broad range of subgenre types emerging from GCN and, on the other, as a way into exploring both the model itself and its potential for describing interpersonal resources. As I have illustrated, the broad range of video types on this channel meant that examples of all categories could be identified, in a general sense, among either the video types or sections of the *GCN Show*, which was oriented towards interaction. Conversely, it seemed possible to fit all genres of the video onto the model. The only potential problem with this was that in practice some were hybrid or mixed.

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12

Conclusion: Rethinking Interpersonal Semiotics in New Media

In this book, I set out to explore some of the interrelations among language, identity and cycling in what I have characterised as the age of new media. Identity is something that seems to be increasingly important, as, like many things, identities can no longer be taken for granted but have become fluid and unstable commodities that compete in a global environment (Bauman 2004, 2007). In such an environment, sporting identities have gradually emerged as an increasingly fertile area for nurturing new identities (Andrews 2001; Crawford 2004). To those with no interest themselves, a sporting niche such as cycling can be virtually invisible. But for those involved, niche sporting interests can become an important focus on which to construct an identity. As I have illustrated through the examples considered in this book, cycling identity is not just about individual identities or clubs of cyclists, but about the identities of celebrities (Holmes and Redmond 2006; Marshall 2014), online communities of cyclists as communities of practice (Wenger 1999), and a range of commercial, corporate, or organisational identities that have largely become interrelated. Passions for cycling that become central to identity are, as the interview with Paul Smith illustrated at the beginning of the book, fed by the media. For Smith it was imported cycle magazines that served

as a way for him to reach out to the world of professional cycling evoked in his imagination. Today, cycling and its celebrity, community and organisational identities are increasingly connected by digital media, a point that Smith lamented. I have not been concerned here to decide whether or not the advent of digital media is regrettable, but have instead been interested in the ways in which identities are evoked through the media and the impact that specific media resources have on shaping identity.

I have explored this interest through specific examples of contemporary media and in relation to a range of identities. Perhaps more importantly, though, I have used an approach to exploring identity that drew on and sought to develop a functional and socially oriented approach to language. This is important because it would have been difficult to develop a description of identity in relation to cycling if identity was treated as a static notion of *self*, existing inside an individual. By looking instead at identity as it is shaped in media contexts through language, the fluidity of identity as something continually being reshaped through context begins to become apparent. The community of cyclists reflecting back on a past ride led to the recognition of conflicting impressions of the experience and of themselves. The engagement in a variety of generic types in the YouTube channel involved subtle shifts in self-positioning in relation to the viewers.

Conversely, looking at language through the ways it shapes identity draws attention to the immense power of language, particularly when it is used in conjunction with other semiotic resources extending into the context. This was shown in the way that OW framed her interviewee's confession, making it look more like an attempt to renegotiate the degree of his guilt.

I have used the word *text* in the SFL sense (Halliday and Webster 2014) to refer to 'a sample of language' and *language* itself in a broad sense as embracing a range of meaning-making practices. The texts I have explored have included not only older media forms—such as television, print media, and autobiography—but also the newer texts of online forums, YouTube channels, homepages, online commercials and consumer reviews. I have primarily restricted this analysis to focusing on

discourse and narrative resources but have, nevertheless, sought to incorporate a range of analytical tools.

In this book, I have explored a range of semiotic resources for evoking identity. In doing so, I have emphasised how these multiple resources—often emanating from a range of producers that address audiences with varying degrees of overlap and in a range of voices from the traditionally powerful, such as multinational corporations and influential celebrities, to ordinary members of the public—constitute ways of evoking and negotiating identity. The increase, not only in the information about individuals, communities and organisations but also in the multiplicity of channels as well as modes for identity work, suggests that we may perhaps be moving to a more democratic society where identity work is not restricted to powerful multinationals but rather can be and is participated in more broadly by a public at home with the interactive resources for identity work provided by the Internet. While in one sense this seems undeniable, and there are contexts and situations where a powerful narrative can lead to a degree of influence, those with power also often continue to be in positions to mediate opposing voices to some degree. Armstrong was able to defend his lie with a team of lawyers for some time, but, once he had lost the case made by USADA against him and the mainstream media had turned against him, he was remarkably defenceless. This defencelessness may well have been rooted in the fact that a key premise of his narrative, and indeed of all identity work, is that it should not be based on a lie, and LA had been proven to have lied. However, he may also have been defenceless because of the way the story was framed in the media and used as a frame (that underlined both his dishonesty and ruthlessness) in OW's live interview.

This example, like others explored throughout the book, illustrates both the power and the importance of identity in contemporary society and the transient nature of identities that make identity work so vital. More importantly, this book outlines an approach to deconstructing identity work carried out through language and other semiotic resources, which draws on Halliday's comprehensive approach to linguistic analysis in conjunction with the multimodal semiotic approach of Kress and van Leeuwen.

Lastly, it is perhaps worth acknowledging that, as I have indicated, a remarkably wide range of texts can be seen as doing identity work, and this book itself is no exception. Writing this book has allowed me to bring together my personal interest in language and identity—and how they are changing due to developments on the Internet and the technology people use to access it—and my interest in cycling.

The projects described in this books were developed over the last few years, and I have tried to incorporate as much as possible of what I learned during this period. Nevertheless, I am aware of a number of shortcomings, some of which are worth drawing attention to here if only because they may point the way forward to further projects. First, although I have included a range of different texts, there are many other texts that could have been explored. I made mention of Strava and Zwift as widespread forms of social and ‘tracking’ media used by cyclists. These resources are popular and widespread, and incorporate unexplored modalities. To those interested in new media, the absence of a discussion concerning cyclists’ online use of currently dominant new media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on may well seem an oversight in need of addressing. Similarly, while I discussed a specific YouTube channel and an online forum, I did not look into the many prominent cycling blogs that date back to Sheldon Brown’s blog, still seen as an important resource today.

Even the resources I have explored here would benefit from alternative perspectives. So, for example, looking at online forum interaction only tells part of the story that could be usefully complemented by an ethnographic exploration of how ride routines are integrated with digital practices that also shape what happens online.

In addition to there being considerable potential for the range of new media that might have been explored in a project of this title, discussing a range of preliminary studies in the space of one book means that the individual chapter studies have not been developed in as much detail as they might have been. For example, YouTube and online consumer reviews are topics that have already been addressed by book-length projects, and both indicate that more in-depth projects are needed, not shallower ones.

From a methodological point of view, too, I have proposed a number of preliminary models that are in need of verification and modification, which would only be possible through extending and developing the work described here. My methodology is unapologetically qualitative. However, I do see quantification of the number of realisations of systemic choices in texts, or development of collections of examples of instantiation, as a productive way of validating models.

These caveats aside, I hope that you have found the exploration of language and identity in the world of cycling, with a particular focus on contemporary media texts, a useful exercise. Some positive directions for developing the theoretical concerns addressed in this book might include further studies of evolving identity and community media within cycling-specific media such as Strava, Zwift, MapMyRide or a range of emerging cycling apps. Studies of the use of new media in other sports or leisure environments are also needed. At the same time, the development of more genre-specific accounts of multimodality is worth exploring, and the exploration of such texts would contribute to theoretical understandings. Finally, accounts of media and culture in relation to corporate, celebrity, and community identities that take into account the potential of discourse and narrative analysis of language and its associated modalities would benefit from further research. Just as the bicycle itself is an often overlooked and apparently simple invention that offers great potential to human beings, the niche interest of cycling, I hope I have begun to show, offers much to learn about language and identity with potentially much broader implications.

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