

Triangulations: navigating distance in interaction

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Distance as a conceptual metaphor has been often invoked with respect to linguistic categories, such as tense, mood, and pronouns. This paper will argue that as a spatial metaphor *distance* is primarily indexical in nature and crucially requires reference to three points of orientation. Thus, for example, Reichenbach's (1947) account of tense posits three deictic points for calculating tense: 'E' (the event), 'R' (a point of reference) and 'S' (point of speech). In Ide's 1992 discussion of *wakimae*, the system of Japanese honorifics, which is conceptualized in terms of psychological *distance*, again three deictic points are distinguished, whereby "the speaker indexes his/her sense of place in relation to the referent and addressee, and in the situational context" (299). Hence the deployment of *distance* in meaning making is analogous to the concept of *triangulation*, yet another metaphor that is taken from navigation in which the location of one point is determined with respect to two other points.

The specific linguistic phenomena to be discussed here are the Bulgarian discourse markers *ami* and *ama*, both adversative connectives meaning 'but', and how they function as indexical signs in interaction. Specifically, it will be shown that similar to honorific forms, these discourse markers function as part of a larger system of identity to index social *distance*, e.g. between interlocutors, as well as epistemological *distance*, e.g. between speaker and event. More specifically, they are used for interactional and reflexive *positioning*, understood here as a "discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines" (Davies & Harré 1990). The choice of discourse marker then can signal social distance from the "deictic I" or the localization in an in-group or out-group. The speaker's choice of *ami* versus *ama* then must be understood as part of a dynamic process of *triangulation* in which the position of the "deictic I" is located along a continuum of *proximate/distal* relative to addressee, referent and situational context.

References

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