

11 Knowledge and knowers in tacit pedagogic contexts

Freemasonry in France

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Introduction

From Basil Bernstein we take the notion of pedagogy as an anthropological means by which societies organize reproduction and change. Pedagogy involves the transmission, transformation and acquisition of knowledge and ways of knowing, doing and being (Bernstein 2000). From this perspective, pedagogy can be analysed in any social context where ‘learning’ is a means for constructing special kinds of persons, a definition that reaches far beyond formal educational institutions. However, as yet, studies in the sociology of education have mostly focused on schooling and universities or, put more generally, formal educational institutions. Few studies have engaged with contexts characterized by informal, tacit or implicit educational practices.¹ To help address this gap, this chapter results from a sociological study of public speaking in Freemasonry as a practice of apprenticeship. Though beyond the traditional foci of sociology of education, this unusual topic mobilizes questions about apprenticeship, democratization and learning of particular skills and procedures.

Freemasonry enacts a particular social form. As described by Bacot (2007), it emerged in eighteenth-century Great Britain as a fraternal society. It now constitutes an association in the French meaning of the term, that is to say it has a very specific legal status, legitimizing the union of people in order to ‘improve society’. With the aim of improving mankind by improving some specific initiated and elected members, Freemasonry has some common characteristics with other philanthropic associations. However, one of its distinguishing features is a very specific method employed in the process of transforming laypeople into masons. This masonic method requires members to ‘reveal’ something they were supposed already to have or to be but which remains until that point tacit (Poulet 2010). While there is a specific ritual to be practised, Poulet (2010) shows this ritual appears to be an ‘empty frame’ in terms of the knowledge to be demonstrated, one that is to be filled instead by characteristics of the knower. I will but briefly summarize this here (see Poulet 2010). What people do in Freemasonry is speak and write about abstract meanings, specifically about symbols. As

learners, Freemasons across all different grades of apprenticeship have to produce some kind of dissertation, referred to as a ‘plank’. This comprises a text of roughly 5–10 pages on subjects that engage with symbolic issues, ‘ritual and liturgy’, philosophical issues, and disciplinary academic borrowings. Such subjects might include, for example, ‘Symbolism in the grade of master’, ‘The set square’, ‘What does learning mean in Freemasonry?’, and ‘What is rationality?’.

If the sociology of education, particularly that influenced by Basil Bernstein or Pierre Bourdieu, has shown that social background helps influence how people manipulate abstract meanings, Freemasonry is a paradoxical object of study. Although it has been strongly élitist during the bulk of its history, the current masonic population is characterized by social heterogeneity (Taguieff 2005). There are no official statistics on the masonic population and its social demographics. As declared in prefectures, the French lodges and obediences only give the number of members. However, available evidence on the masonic population indicates a certain social heterogeneity of membership, with a significant proportion from the middle classes (Galceran 2004). People in Masonry appear to come from different cultural and social backgrounds. While members do not all share the same levels of cultural, educational and symbolic capital, as Bourdieu would put it, they do share and enact together certain practices that one might have assumed to be the preserve of more privileged social classes. This is so, for example, in the practice of planks, that is, in the requirement to both write about abstract issues and to present these reflections in public. The planks and masonic works in general necessitate interpretative reasoning that draws on metaphors, symbols and analogies. As such the planks require the manipulation of linguistic resources for making decontextualized and uncommon-sense meanings. It is this issue that I examine in this chapter. I discuss the characteristics of the masonic form of ‘pedagogic device’ (Bernstein 2000) and show how it can be considered a tacit form. I enact concepts from two dimensions of Legitimation Code Theory: semantic density and semantic gravity from Semantics; and specialization codes from Specialization (see Maton 2014b; [Chapter 1](#), this volume) to explore the structure of relations in the masonic lodge, as realized in the body of knowledge in planks.

The study

All federations of masonic lodges, or *obediences*, draw on symbolism as a universal tool in the expression of reasoning. Such symbolism is a defining feature of Masonry and relates more or less to the tools of ‘real’ building workers. However, the distance between this symbolic basis and the issues that are studied in a lodge can vary in relation to different obediences. While Freemasonry is often associated with social élitism, lodges in France are now characterized by a relatively heterogeneous social composition with representation from a large spectrum of social classes, although this diversity can

depend on variables such as the locale and on the specific nature of obediences. However, what unites all the masonic traditions encountered in the study discussed here is the institutionalized practice of writing and public speaking or, more precisely, the ‘planks’ that the masons have to compose individually on a relatively abstract issue and then present publicly. The length of these documents is variable but they all constitute interpretative reasonings that draw on metaphors, symbolism, and analogical reasoning.

The research discussed here focused on two obediences: the Grande Loge de France and the Grande Loge Féminine de France, selected for their heterogeneous recruitment, relative stability around debates about initiating women and men separately, and concern with symbolic issues. All masonic obediences are based on the use of symbolism as a universal tool to work and express reasoning but some enlarge this reflexion to social issues, such as planks about socialism. In the study I chose to focus on more symbolic obediences in order to determine the founding of the masonic ‘specialization’. The data collected for this study include official documents (such as constitutions of lodges and obediences), forty interviews with freemasons, and fifty planks given by masons.

Significant work in the sociology of education has identified differences in the manipulation of tools of abstraction according to social origins and educational backgrounds (e.g. Bernstein 1977). The construction of abstract knowledge in planks leads to the question of the sociocognitive tools or sociolinguistic resources in Freemasonry that allow members from different backgrounds to engage in this masonic work. Understanding how the institution shapes the apprentice in this way can throw light on how the apprenticeship of writing and public speaking can transform people, creating and recreating ‘common worlds’ (Ramognino 2005). Specifically, this chapter focuses on the processes of decontextualization and recontextualization of knowledge in the development of planks. It thus relates to Bernstein’s notion of the ‘pedagogic device’ (2000), or the ordering and disordering principles of the pedagogizing of knowledge, the means by which knowledge is transformed into pedagogic communication. Bernstein (2000) indicates that pedagogic discourse is a principle of recontextualization; thus, one has to describe the organizing principles dominating the pedagogic device to show how its discourse produces specific relationships between people and inside knowledge.

To do so I draw on Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), primarily on the dimension of Semantics and its principles of semantic gravity and semantic density. As Maton defines in [Chapter 1](#) (this volume), *semantic gravity* corresponds to the degree of context-dependence of meaning and *semantic density* corresponds to the degree of condensation of meaning (see also Maton 2011, 2013, 2014b). Each can be stronger or weaker along a continuum of strengths. Exploring changes in the strengths of semantic gravity and semantic density in interviews and planks allows us to analyse processes of decontextualization and recontextualization of meanings, to better

understand the role of knowledge in the masonic apprenticeship. Later in the chapter I also draw on the LCT dimension of Specialization and will briefly introduce relevant concepts at that point.

To begin I consider how masonic apprenticeship is to be understood as a kind of ‘pedagogic device’ and hence how it can be analysed with tools from the sociology of education, including LCT. I then focus on metaphors and analogical reasoning in the planks. Finally, I show how these discursive and logical elements can lead to abstraction for members through an exploration of grammatical metaphor, a concept from systemic functional linguistics (see Halliday and Matthiessen 2004).

Freemasonry: a tacit pedagogic device

Tacit pedagogy

For Bernstein, education is an anthropological process constituting relationships for the reproduction of social order. Pedagogy is central because pedagogic modes are the realizations of symbolic control, production and cultural reproduction (Bernstein 2000). As a set of particular skills and knowledge to be transmitted, a ‘pedagogic device’ implies methods, knowledge, skills to learn, to know, to master. As a general social dimension this description not only concerns schooling but all social processes of disciplinarization, or the institutionalization of a pedagogic relationship in order to control the reproduction of a social order. As Bernstein (1977: 37) wrote in relation to schooling: ‘The child’s response to the school is likely to transform the way in which he thinks and feels about his friends, his community and society as a whole’. On this basis, one can consider every pedagogic relationship corresponds to a matrix of transformation, of operations leading to the modification and/or maintenance of social order. Pedagogy is thereby an anthropological institution of disciplinarization. In these terms, Freemasonry constitutes a ‘pedagogic device’ in that it considers the transmission of certain knowledge and skills to be the basis for people becoming/being revealed as masons. However, this raises the question of the kind of pedagogic device this entails.

In its official discourse Freemasonry is described as ‘an apprenticeship’ but it is not supposed to be ‘a school’ (Poulet 2010). The masonic institution of apprenticeship is considered as a tacit pedagogic device, to be differentiated from both implicit and explicit pedagogic devices. The main official object of evaluation is not knowledge but something more like ‘ways of knowing’ and above all ‘ways of being’ (Poulet 2010). However, this evaluation is at odds with the formal enunciation of explicit criteria and with how apprentices are required to transfer what they learn in Freemasonry to ‘be masons’ in their everyday lives. Anderson’s constitutions of 1723, the founding text of Freemasonry, indicate some guidelines for members, not only in the lodge but also in every area of social life, such as relationships

with family, neighbours, etc. However, it is impossible to fail in the masonic career or to be downgraded (Poulet 2010). In a sense, ‘doing is passing’, and presenting planks in public, being assiduous and so on, is ‘doing’. I use the expression ‘tacit pedagogy’ to describe this specific organization of education, one devoid of formal social groups specialized in transmission and formation. In Freemasonry, each apprentice will become a master in a relatively short time and in turn initiate newcomers: there is no specialization in teaching roles.

The examination of official texts and rules of masonic apprenticeship allows for a description in terms of a tacit pedagogic device. This involves a relatively strong framing of people (through grades and the disciplining of bodies through ritual) but at the same time an institutional silence concerning the end results of masonic practice and its knowledge contents. Pedagogic relationships are not frozen but recontextualized over the course of the ritual and the gradual organization of time.

Bernstein (2000) distinguished three ‘rules’ that organize a pedagogic device: ‘distributive rules’ that shape who gets access to what forms of experience; ‘recontextualizing rules’ that shape the nature of pedagogic discourse; and ‘evaluative rules’ that organize pedagogic practices. First, the distributive rules in Freemasonry separate the sacred and the profane. In the masonic context the separation is first one of people, elaborating a symbolic line between initiated people/masons and profane people/non-masons. This distribution in Freemasonry can be usefully described by the Specialization dimension of LCT, and specifically *specialization codes*. Maton (2014b; Chapter 1, this volume) defines four principal specialization codes: *knowledge codes* (emphasizing specialized knowledge, principles or procedures and downplaying attributes of actors as the basis of legitimacy); *knower codes* (downplaying specialized knowledge and emphasizing attributes of actors, such as cultivated dispositions); *élite codes* (where legitimacy is based on both); and *relativist codes* (where ‘anything goes’). The masonic pedagogic device appears to be characterized by a ‘knower code’ in that becoming a learner relies on downplaying specialized knowledge and emphasizing attributes of actors: what matters is ‘who you are’ rather than ‘what you know and how’ (Chapter 1, this volume). Second, *recontextualizing rules* in the masonic context concern people rather than knowledge, recomposing profane hierarchies into masonic hierarchies through grades. At the same time, however, planks present themselves as abstract and thus raise questions concerning the nature of the knowledge involved. Third, evaluative rules in the masonic context organize the preparation and presentation of planks. In this study I argue that the code for making this work is acquired by a tacit pedagogic device.

Accordingly, one cannot find in official texts explicit reference to what knowledge people are supposed to learn in Freemasonry. That which is enunciated by members is thus the principal data for analysis. Here I analyse

through dialogism the different voices that compose a message enunciated by an individual (Todorov 1984). Tacit guidelines are explored through analysis of discourses of different kinds, including those presented as ‘personal opinion’ or ‘personal experience’.

Tacit guidelines for knowers

At this point it is useful to revisit briefly the distinction by Bernstein (2000) between ‘horizontal discourse’ and ‘vertical discourse’. On the one hand, ‘horizontal discourse’ refers to everyday or commonsense discourse and is, among other things, extremely context-dependent and segmentally structured. On the other hand, ‘vertical discourse’ refers to uncommonsense discourse, such as academic discourse, that is coherent, principled and less context-dependent. Where the meaning of horizontal discourse is given by its relations to a context, meaning of vertical discourse is given by relations to other meanings. As Bernstein wrote: ‘The social units of the pedagogy of *Vertical Discourse* are constructed, evaluated and distributed to different groups and individuals, structured in time and space by *principles* of recontextualizing’ (2000: 160; original emphases).

Following the idea of Bernstein, knowledge and individuals are to be analysed complementarily to describe what organization of discourse is mobilized. In masonic lodges, the organization of individuals in apprentices, companions and masters leads to a certain rigidity in the social determination of roles. Moreover, masonic apprenticeship proceeds to the formalization of relatively abstract reasonings using analogy and metaphor – a vertical discourse – by developing the manipulation of abstract meanings. In the masonic pedagogic device, the legitimacy of being selected is first the knower: evaluation is conditioned by some qualities attributed to the learner prior to any kind of knowledge in itself. This participates to the elaboration of a tacit pedagogic device, in which there is no specialization in teaching roles: every apprentice will be a companion and then a master, and everyone is both a learner and a teacher (Poulet 2010).

Discourse and traces of the pedagogic device

The guidelines for writing a plank are not official and the modalities of interpretation are not objectivized as explicit criteria. They can, however, be identified through the discourses of apprentices, such as in relation to the expectation to ‘produce something original’. The following extract is from an interview with a mason:

I’m a teacher! So I tried to give my work a personal turn as we are asked to, but I couldn’t help myself starting by reading books. Although I have seen apprentices after me who realized more personal works than I did first.

Here an implicit expectation is not to produce an academic work, as in 'starting by reading books'. The masonic apprenticeship is apparently considered as something quite different from formal schooling. As we shall see later in the chapter, the texts represent a series of recontextualizations of symbolic elements characterized by a so-called 'originality' of reasoning and putting together things which were separated. Originality also lies in constructing original relationships between arguments and knowledge elements, and more generally creating semantic transpositions from a context to another.

The pedagogy in lodge is constructed on a tension between an explicit and rigid structure of members (apprentices, companions, and masters) and opacity of the guidelines that are acquired tacitly. Analysis of planks reveals indicators of implicit guidelines, especially in relation to what I refer to as *a masonic voice* or the use of institutional discourses as something individually produced by members. Analysis also reveals the coexistence of two roles in one discourse: someone who is initiated both receives and transmits masonic knowledge, ways of knowing and, above all, ways of being. Consider, for example, the following extract from a plank entitled 'secret master':

I want to remind [you], that 'it is easier to do your duty than to know it', that the masonic ideal is 'the accomplishment of duty until sacrifice', and that this duty is as 'unyielding as fate, as demanding as necessity, always obligatory as destiny is'.

The repetition of 'duty' implies something one must do to be a good mason or good apprentice. The speaker presents himself as legitimate in the role of 'reminding' other masons of the right things to do, such as funding good practices and having good habits. At the same time, however, the quotation marks indicate the acceptance of an official discourse, the voice of the institution. It appears that the authority of being a master allows the enunciation of what is 'true' in the official discourse without criticizing it. The positioning of the speaker is grammatically double: the personal pronoun 'I' indicates the legitimacy to speak ('remind') and teach other members (an implied 'you'). The action that is projected (in quote marks), is the explicit wording of the official voice. Nevertheless, the arrangement of official statements in order to produce something presented as an individual discourse corresponds to the tacit instructions of the planks: producing something personal from masonic tools.

From another perspective, consider the following extract from an apprentice's plank in which the speaker both writes what he thinks he is supposed to do and at the same time submits it to the judgment of other members:

Of course I will not make a dissertation of personal interpretation about each symbol that was showed, received, heard since my initiation. This would be weighty, swollen-headed. For me, it would only be the

narration of tasteless catalogue, and I'm not sure there is an interpretation for everything...

If I understood what I have to do in this work, I prefer to demonstrate how much the discovery and the apprenticeship of symbolism in lodge can lead someone profane to convert his/her gaze.

The conversion of 'gaze' refers to the assimilation of something considered as defined or fixed by rules, even though they may not be explicit. The notion of 'gaze' here condenses the notion that understanding masonic apprenticeship consists of the conversion of a way of being, seeing and comprehending things into one that is specifically masonic. In this extract, a mason is tacitly described as 'someone profane' with a certain gaze, implying the masonic gaze is a tool in profane situations. More precisely, the following extract from an interview refers to the role of the 'surveillant' in the making of planks.

[The surveillant] doesn't give the correct version. Precisely he mustn't give the correct version, because there is not a correct version. But he will make comments. He will say 'this is interesting, but this is a cut and paste, there is no personal thought. What you are supposed to do is giving your personal opinion, what you think, and make us think on the possible options of the topic.' The 'surveillant' tries to make someone understand what is the masonic approach.

The tacit pedagogic discourse is like a line between two different postures; the existence of framing is evoked but as something relative and not explicit in its content. Rejecting the concept of 'correcting' as part of the masonic apprenticeship means rejecting the existence of 'good versions', that is, 'good planks'. The expressions of formulae, as in 'make us think' or 'tries to make someone understand', show variability in the status of producers or receptors of knowledge. One can be in one case the 'object' of an action by another or the 'subject' of the same action on someone else.

The following extracts from planks by apprentices evoke further the tacit rules of their production: '[A plank] is something one has to build. There are some keywords, as some film directors make a movie from a title'; 'Most of the time I'm not off-topic because I am totally focused on the topic and on what I want to make. And then I do the plank, and that's it'. The reference to the 'keywords' involves a tacit guideline whose appropriation is made by observation, and is little framed because 'keywords' are considered as topics or 'titles'. The second quote completes it by throwing light on how the knower code works in Freemasonry: 'off-topic' refers to the existence of a good way to talk about a masonic subject, but at the same time the nature of a successful plank comes down to the author and his/her personal qualities. This tension between institutional discourse, self-enunciation and tacit pedagogic rules emerges in the structure of planks.

As discussed in relation to the earlier excerpt, ‘secret master’, semantic and lexical analysis of planks reveals at least two voices in the discourse, that of the disciple and that of the teacher (as in the enunciation of official principles), a polyphony that is a discursive mark of the tacit pedagogic device. The voice of the teacher (or masonic voice) corresponds to the utterances of specialized ideas from the masonic field, such as the ritual or the grade. The following extract exemplifies a tension between official and individual enunciation that is clearly evident in apprentices’ planks:

What I consider as a wild interpretation of symbols or masonic topics may only generate ambiguity, mistake and deflection. If the free interpretation of symbolism in lodge were unconditionally accepted, it would be the acceptance of a certain weakness of the topic, of words and of ritual, just considered as simple stands for flights of fancy.

The member’s use of ‘may’ indicates a tacit limit not to be transgressed in the masonic work of producing planks. This explicitly involves a framing of practices and the closing of what is possible to institutional prescripts. Indeed, it corresponds to the idea that not everything can be legitimately said in the lodge. Tacitly, the good use of masonic tools (that is, by a good mason, as the speaker tries to demonstrate) would be the good method to know what can be said and erase what cannot.

Tools for recontextualization in planks

Thus far I have explored the nature of the tacit pedagogic device. Given that it is tacit, instructions for learners in writing planks and presenting it in public do not define or frame precisely the content. I now focus on the ‘plank’, exploring representations of knowledge and relationships between different knowledge, as trace and product of this specific pedagogic device. According to the hypothesis of a knower code of specialization, what makes someone legitimate in lodge are certain qualities attributed to them. However, legitimacy for members in these ‘inner’ terms does not involve a total relativity in the production of knowledge. Planks need to deal with many propositions, and many references, and the symbols that are required are a tool for creating a certain specialization of knowledge, at least in its form.

Symbolism and analogical reasoning

Manipulating symbolic meanings is considered to be a particular feature of masonic apprenticeship (Berteaux 1996). However, if the terms used can be specific, the cognitive operations involved are common and involve logical structures of thinking and reasoning found widely. Thus, metaphor and analogical reasoning in planks refers to what Jean-Michel Berthelot

(1997) calls a ‘hermeneutical pattern cluster’ or set of operations putting together different elements following a certain logic. This ‘schème herméneutique’ builds links among different ideas using the postulate that things belong to related symbolic fields, expressing universal semantics. For Berthelot, the ‘hermeneutical pattern cluster’ is one of the oldest forms of reasoning humanity may have used to understand the world. It does not in itself involve some knowledge or skills specialized to a specific domain of practice. Using symbolic language is at the core of masonic apprenticeship; a symbolic representation of a concept allows relatively broad access to the production of meaning for members. This raises the question of the nature of the ‘hermeneutical pattern cluster’ in Freemasonry that leads members to a formal use of metaphor, analogic reasoning and interpretation of symbols.

What characterizes analogical reasoning is the semantic relationship between two domains: a base domain and a target domain (Vosniadou and Ortony 1989). In planks, base and target domains correspond to disciplinary translations taking knowledge from different fields, for example from philosophy, etymology, and history. Movements from one context to another are realized through different forms of metaphoric tools. Analysis highlights two principal kinds of analogy: what I refer to as lexical analogy, comparing two different lexical contexts; and methodological analogy, comparing ways of thinking and ways of interpreting. These two kinds of analogy proceed by an interpretation producing a metaphoric meaning, which would be expressed in symbols or ritual.

Lexical analogy

With the exception of some rare examples, symbolic elements in planks are borrowings from other domains that have been recontextualized through the prism of masonic apprenticeship. The following pattern is based on the analysis of a plank called ‘egregore’. In this text, the recontextualization of the topic and main concepts involves implicit analogical reasoning from a religious/theological context to a masonic context. The plank structure can be summarized as:

- Religious field (basis domain): Faith – corporal asceticism (tool of comparison) – communion
- Masonic field (target domain): Initiation – (problem at stake) – egregore.

This pattern means egregore is to initiation what communion is to faith. By this analogical reasoning the author of the plank makes a recontextualization of the subject from theology to Freemasonry, where ‘egregore’ is considered as a disciplinary tool. This plank is representative of others where analogical reasoning corresponds to a transfer of a proposition from something known by the author (common knowledge) to something to be

explained (target domain: egregore as a masonic concept) (Grize 1997). What analogical reasoning uses is a relational property more than a simple comparison between two different objects.

Methodological analogy

The following extract is from a symbolic plank, one where the topic is a symbolic reference:

Throughout our initiatory path and elevation ceremonies, we are often confronted to [with] words. Words from biblical origin and more precisely from Hebrew origin, most of the time, and whose real meaning and interpretation we don't always know.

Before I try to develop the interpretation of these words for a kadosh knight, we will try to go into hidden meaning in depth as I'm asking you, my knight brothers, to walk with me a little on the path of kabbalah.

Here analogical reasoning is not as explicit. Nonetheless, we can identify the base domain as the masonic method and the target domain as the Kabbalistic method. From one grade to another, the same tools can be used. Kabala, for example, is a recurrent reference for masons. What is interesting here is the postulate for masons that what they learn in Masonry, specifically the way of learning and of understanding things, is then useable in any context. One would just have to transpose, to translate masonic method any time something is unknown. In other words, methodological analogies establish an experiential connection between different contexts. As long as one is masonic, a tool can be used to understand new topics and issues in any new context. The 'method' is considered as all-encompassing and all members are eligible to improve and develop it.

The process is similar in this extract, suggesting a kind of continuity in the way a mason should comprehend a topic:

We need to leave a conjugal vision of the creation, to leave the idea of one god and his spouse, to express it into time, space, into a succession, long before the world of the living. We need to think from invisibility to visibility to have slowly access to something beyond here, we need to pass from a totemic materiality to an abstract conception.

As interpretation is considered as an unmasking game of meaning through symbols, anything can be apprehended through the masonic method. In this extract, from a plank entitled 'at the beginning', the author use the method of deconstruction for symbols in order to build a 'research' question on a Bible, or, at least, a religious topic.

Analogies and verticalization of discourse

Analogical reasoning focuses on the *commensurability* of contexts – it is based on the possibility that ideas can be transferred, however much they are at the same time transformed. Therefore, the analogical operation involves a kind of ‘verticalization’ of discourse: things can be put together through the enactment of a principle. Knowledge that may be disciplinary or experiential can be integrated with tools of abstraction such as metaphors, analogy, etc. This means that the use of analogical reasoning tools may include condensation, that is, strengthening of semantic density (Maton 2014b). At the same time, the possibility of integrating different contexts in masonic discourses (within planks) allows the possibility of variations in the strengths of semantic gravity, or the degree to which meaning is context-dependent. The concepts of semantic gravity and semantic density enable a description of masonic apprenticeship (analysed through the planks) as into a kind of verticalization. On the other hand, interpretation allows a personalization of written productions and a strengthening of semantic gravity. In one sense, this is the internal tension of the masonic pedagogic device: a knower code of specialization underpinning a logic of electing people by initiation that also engages in the manipulation of non-specialized, non-masonic knowledge to become a resource for masons in contexts other than the lodge.

Knowledge-building through metaphorizing language

As already mentioned, the use of metaphor is a social process of thinking, allowing for condensation in both experiential elements (events, facts) and in disciplinary knowledge through a process of abstraction. On the one hand, this involves producing lexical categories and context-independent knowledge. On the other hand, it helps authors to transpose ethics, moral prescriptions or philosophic issues beyond masonic contexts. As noted above, the trans-contextual properties of analogical reasoning enables a relative weakening of semantic gravity by standing above specific things and contexts. At the same time, conceptualization and concentration of meaning implies a relative strengthening of semantic density, as will be further explained below. Semantic density and semantic gravity as heuristic indicators enable us to describe how a form of vertical discourse is constructed in planks and so how knowledge-building is enabled in the elaboration of masonic concepts.

Grammatical metaphors and verticalization

Semantic density is defined as ‘the degree of condensation of meaning within socio-cultural practices’, including symbols (Maton 2014b: 129). To explore this in the data, I draw on systemic functional linguistics, and in

particular nominalization and grammatical metaphor (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). The concept of grammatical metaphor refers to a specific use of a process of nominalization that produces two layers of meaning, one is a congruent or typical unmarked meaning realized in a non-nominalized form, such as a process expressed as a verb, and the other is a metaphorical realization, such as a process represented as an entity, where the meaning of a process is still retrievable. The use of grammatical metaphor thus represents a conceptual condensation and a lexical consensus in its utilization (Halliday 1985). As O'Halloran (2005: 83) explains:

The presence of grammatical metaphor necessitates more than one level of interpretation, the metaphorical (or the transferred meaning) and the congruent.... If, therefore, an expression can be unpacked grammatically to a congruent meaning, it is a case of grammatical metaphor.

It is thus expected that an analysis of grammatical metaphor and nominalization could provide indicators for shifts in the semantic density of knowledge, and so insights into the knowledge-building of planks and how individuals from different social backgrounds can be assimilated into the practice of context-independent ways of speaking and writing.

The following extract is from a plank called 'the fire'.

Throughout our history, men have strived to light the burning-bush by themselves and feed it with combustibles, in order to domesticate and multiply it. By doing so, they were trying to oppose themselves to the Lord by saying: 'I am the one who is beyond being itself.' But they are reduced to smoke and ashes in the end.

The human domestication of fire has led to the use of thermal energy. The steam machine depends on the hearth, which transforms static water into a source of energy, and the electric engine harnessed Zeus' lightning from sky to earth. Henceforth, the burning-bush is engaged in a boiler, in a piston engine where it runs along high voltage lines.

In this extract, there are three different operations evident. First, a metaphor: 'burning-bush' is compared with 'fire' and 'thermal energy'. For this operation, Bible references are used as common knowledge and a tool for analogizing. Second, two lexico-semantic domains are mobilized: the 'life of men' is comparable to the 'life of fire'; the steam machine changes water into the same way electric motor transforms the lighting. Third, meaning is condensed as grammatical metaphor, in: 'the human domestication of fire has led to the utilization of thermal energy'. A slightly more congruent meaning might be expressed as: 'men domesticate fire and, therefore, use thermal energy'. However, in this extract, processes become entities, and congruent subjects (actors) disappear. The 'domestication of

fire' is considered as a thing in a causal relationship with something else, 'the utilization of thermal energy'. Resources of nominalization and grammatical metaphor in this way enable the condensation of a multitude of phenomena and events. I also include as nominalization the process of representing a whole clause as an entity, as indicated in double brackets in, for example, '[[What I discovered through this book]] comes from the Mesopotamian basin'. All planks thus contain at the same time indicators of a relatively weaker semantic gravity (analogical reasoning, metaphor) and a relatively stronger semantic density (grammatical metaphor, nominalization).

An analysis of instances of nominalization (grammatical and lexical) and grammatical metaphor across all planks reveals a small number of concepts specific to Freemasonry. That is to say that masonic concepts are a 'patch-work' of other fields of knowledge. Although some of these concepts are recontextualized in the masonic apprenticeship, others keep much of the same meaning from their original disciplinary context. The resources are organized into three categories, depending on the particular nominalization that is mobilized (*in italics*): specific masonic lexicon, disciplinary borrowings, and methodological reifications.

Specialized masonic lexicon:

- *The lighting of small columns* is executed in order;
- (May beauty adorn it!) *This injunction* expresses an interpretative nature;
- *Working until we find our individual midnight* in order to rediscover in our lodge a mystical time outside time;
- In fact, *the interjection* 'you built a masonic desert' suits me in a second degree lecture;
- *Becoming luminous* points to the commitment of consuming oneself as a candle for the benefit of others.

Disciplinary borrowings (theology, history, philosophy, etc.):

- *The priestly ordination* takes place in the apostolic and roman catholic church;
- *Job's laments* do not only suffer from persistent scabies anymore;
- *Fusion* becomes confusion;
- *The dating of those sources* is not possible and *genesis* constitutes a reference point in the quest of a creative principle;
- *Virtualization of our lives* appears more tangible.

Methodological reifications where operations become entities:

- *What I discovered through this book* comes from the Mesopotamian basin;

- *The translation* here is more evident;
- *Your questioning* is enough to define the problematic, but the answer cannot be determined easily;
- *Observing certain of our society's driving forces* should not be forgotten by masons whose project is to promote improvement of mankind;
- *Consulting a computerized dictionary of French language* leads us to make this quote.

More generally, planks are characterized by a diversity of ways of creating nominalized and metaphoric meanings.

I have organized the specific masonic elements in two functions: *fragmentary nominalizations* (ritual, constitutions, books extracts, etc.) and *incorporating nominalizations* (references to major concepts such as initiation, tradition, and general operations of masonic work).

Incorporating nominalizations mostly appear in proximity to the pronoun 'we' or equivalents (us, our, etc.). They refer to founding concepts of masonic identity and condense meanings that relate to the masonic apprenticeship in which all members are symbolically constructed as part of a whole.

Fragmentary nominalizations mobilize masonic concepts and lexicon in a different way. They take the form of either direct quotes and indirect quotes from the practices of masonic ritual and performative words for setting up sacred space and time, as in: *lighting of small columns*, *getting out from profane time*, etc. These fragments could be reported in inverted commas. *Injunction*, *adopting a sacred time*, etc. condense some operations of the ritual but broaden this other semantic domain. *Injunction*, for example, refers to some indication given by the masonic ritual but broadens this to any injunction like semantic proposition.

The other kind of quote condenses operations and ritualized practices, defined by their repetitive character. So for example, 'installing the ritual system' refers not to parts of the ritual but to a condensation of these practices into something more general. These nominalizations indicate a verticalization of discourse through the condensation of meaning, contributing to the recreation of a collective consensus and semantic cumulativeness of individual experiences in apprenticeship (Martin 2007). What is interesting in the results of these inquiries is both how speciality is constructed as a fundamental part of identity, and at the same time what possibilities are opened by the verticalization of discourses.

Conclusion

In this chapter the writings of 'planks' in Freemasonry have been analysed in terms of their employment of resources of analogical reasoning as abstraction, lexical metaphor and grammatical metaphor, and their effect for knowledge practices interpreted in terms of strengths of semantic

gravity and semantic density. Doing so helps reveal verticalization processes in the discourse produced by these actors. Social origins and educational backgrounds of actors are diverse in Freemasonry and yet, in varying proportions, these indicators are present in all planks. This suggests that masonic apprenticeship produces a verticalized form of discourse but one accessible to all members. Mobilizing abstract meanings typically entails at least an apprenticeship, access to which is unequally distributed in society. From this perspective, then, the use of metaphor and analogical reasoning through symbolic language in Freemasonry appears to function as a means of enabling a relative transcendence of social determinations based on the use of widely shared, commonplace competences.

This analysis has aimed at making explicit a tacit pedagogic device. In Freemasonry, the paradoxical point is, on the one hand, to build pedagogic discourse underpinned by a knower code where what counts is who the knower is more than what or how s/he knows. However, on the other hand, this specialization code does not involve an ‘emptiness’ of knowledge in the apprenticeship. In fact, people ‘learn’ in Freemasonry how to deal with abstract meanings, borrowed from the legitimate fields of knowledge production (philosophy and history, for example) while the institutional discourse does not explicitly require the discourses of secondary or tertiary education.

The complexity of the link between knowledge and knowers is particularly well expressed by Foucault, writing about discourses, and discourses on discourses:

Commentary limits the unpredictability of discourse to the action of an *identity* that takes the form of *repetition* and *the same*. The authorial principle limits this unpredictability through the action of an *identity* that takes the form of *individuality* and the *I*.

(Foucault 1970: 30)

This sums up the stakes of analysing knowledge and knowers in a tacit pedagogic device. Though based on a knower code, the logic of election of new members enables people with very different backgrounds to engage in an apprenticeship in manipulating abstract meaning. However, at the same time, this logic of authorship does not express a relativist code, where ‘anything goes’. If many disciplines are drawn upon, it is always within a logic which could be described as its broadest as the commensurability of discourses. This allows for the expression of multitudes of diversity, not only as a serialization of opinions, but with the possibility of a semantic deliberation: what can be expressed in a common language with few ‘official’ interpretations — the symbolic tools.

As a space dedicated to writing and public speaking, masonic experience is the experience of ‘having a voice’. From this viewpoint, research on how

abstract discourses are elaborated, outside of politics or educational field-works, reveals the sociology of democratic practices. The latter is a tool to describe the social modalities of understanding, such as integration into a community (belonging, common language tools, and integration of individual experiences). In the case of Freemasonry, manipulating analogy and metaphor of language is a social tool for commensurability.

Note

- 1 See Carvalho (2010) for a study enacting LCT to explore informal learning in a museum; see also Maton *et al.* ([Chapter 4](#), this volume).