



5.7 Waiting for a visitor at a railway station demands a certain kind of spatial behaviour. We need to arrange ourselves distinctly away from others in order to stand out and be obvious to the arriving stranger

relying on you may feel either uncomfortable or aggrieved or both. How close does the stranger need to come to you before you feel the behaviour is inappropriate? To some extent the answer to this question depends upon both individual personality and the conventions of culture.

Consider another scenario in the workplace. You are going to visit someone you do business with who works for another company. You have an appointment and arrive courteously early, but not embarrassingly too early! You enter the office building and find yourself in a foyer confronted by an obvious reception desk (Fig. 5.8). This is only a small business, and so the receptionist sitting behind the desk is doing some deskwork as you arrive. She (we shall decide on a female but of course it could be a male!) looks up and greets you, and you tell her of your appointment and that you are five minutes early. She picks up her telephone to call your host and indicates some nearby seats. These seats are at such a distance, perhaps a couple of metres, that although you are aware that she is talking on the phone you are unable to discern the detail of the conversation. She puts down the telephone, and raising her voice only slightly, informs you that your host is still busy with his previous appointment and asks if you would mind waiting for a few minutes. This you do, busying yourself with the papers for your meeting from your briefcase, as the receptionist returns to her other desk duties. You are far enough apart for these activities to continue without interfering with each other. For a while you may each ignore the other without embarrassment, insult or inconvenience on either side. However as time