

## **‘The words has been immigrate’: Chronotopes in context-shaping narrative co-construction about Taiwanese loanwords with Taiwanese Americans**

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### ABSTRACT

This study argues for the analytical validity of the chronotope in research on context by examining a conversational narrative between Taiwanese and Taiwanese Americans. It offers an endogenous view of context in the sense that chronotopes are anchored by how participants invoke specific time-space representations relevant to the active shaping of context. Furthermore, it adds a historical dimension to the understanding of context as multi-layered in meaning. In the data, participants’ discussion of Taiwanese loanwords creates three connected chronotopes that draw on Taiwan’s transnational history for the narrative co-construction. Finally, the chronotopic analysis demonstrates how identities emerge as time-space coordinates—seventeenth-century Dutch in Taiwan and twenty-first-century Taiwanese in the US—and are used as resources to map a shared background with a Taiwanese origin. The study applies the notion of the chronotope outside of the interview setting and contributes to a more laminated theorization of context in naturally occurring conversation. (Chronotope, context, narrative, historicity, Taiwanese American, identity)\*

### INTRODUCTION

Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of the chronotope<sup>1</sup> (literally meaning ‘time-space’) emphasizes the inseparability of time and space in the artistic unity of literary works. This notion has been adopted by scholars in various disciplines to shed light on the importance of temporal and spatial configurations. For example, literature and film studies have used the idea to examine genres, and linguistic research has used it to investigate the role that context plays in language use. In the present article, this approach is adopted to show, in an endogenous sense, how context ‘can be empirically investigated’ in ways that are ‘relevant through persons’ orientations’ (Buttny 1998:47) by examining participants’ use of time and space in talk to display their local knowledge of context. In so doing, this article also aims to address Wirtz’s (2016:344) point that the chronotope ‘remains more figurative than analytical’ and to contribute to its theoretical development.

Using the chronotope as the main theoretical framework, this article builds on Blommaert’s (2018:2) discussion of its value in ‘critically check[ing] the ways in

which we use the term ‘context’ and shows how language carries invokable histories for narrative co-construction across the boundaries of time and space. It argues that the chronotope in linguistic queries illuminates a dynamic and laminated understanding of context in two ways. First, it highlights the historicity in linguistic construction of time and space. Historicity refers to how individuals engage with the past as opposed to what has actually happened, that is, history, and how that perception of the past comes to influence their present position or even their trajectory into the future (Wirtz 2016; Divita 2019). The employment of the chronotope, Blommaert (2015) suggests, adds nuances to the ‘untheorized’ or taken-for-granted concept of context by focusing on the historical dimension of language—a range of inferences that transcend the scope of local conversations. Individual instances of time and places that carry the past are situated in context and thereby attributed specific meanings for understanding what that context is.

Second, besides conjuring up certain time-space configurations in the interaction, the chronotope invokes corresponding types of characters that occupy the time-space. Central to the concept of the chronotope is the place-time-and-personhood formulation wherein the historical representation of time and space is inhabited by people (Bakhtin 1981:85; see also Agha 2007b; Schiffrin 2009). This in turn constitutes chronotopic depictions of specific personhood that foster a sense of belonging (Agha 2007b). Subject identification takes place through the ‘strategic invocation of spatiotemporal frameworks’ (Divita 2019:53; see also Blommaert & De Fina 2017; Park 2017; Karimzad & Catedral 2018). Participants come to be part of a community or a social category in the local event by reinterpreting their knowledge and managing divergent understandings that arise in the conversation (Blommaert 2015). In this way, the chronotope adds to our understanding of the endogenous sense of context by illustrating how participants ‘orient to their situated identities’ through conversational practices (Buttny 1998:47).

To illustrate the above two points, I demonstrate that the narrative in this study operates simultaneously within three observable chronotopes, with their time and space configurations either explicitly specified or implicitly understood in the talk: the conversation that was recorded (Taiwanese in a Taiwanese American household in the US in 2015), the narrative that was recounted (a Dutch client visiting Taiwan in early 2000s), and the colonial history of Taiwan that was referred to (Europeans occupying then-Formosa in the 1600s). The analysis shows how meaning can be derived from the invocation of a particular time-space, and how Taiwanese American heritage speakers can achieve identity work through historical representations of the social order of Taiwan’s colonial history under Dutch Rule and the transnational migration from Taiwan to the US over the past century.

In what follows, I give an overview of the literature on context and the chronotope. After reviewing the methods and providing some data and participant background, I present three excerpts to show the chronotopic interaction that occurs around the storytelling activity. I conclude with an overview of the contributions of this article to the extant literature on the chronotope as a tool for analyzing context.

FROM CONTEXTS TO CHRONOTOPES:  
HIGHLIGHTING THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION  
OF DISCOURSE

Increasingly more attention has been paid to the importance of context in the field of discourse analysis as something that both shapes and is shaped by the interaction being studied. Noting the trend of conceptualizing talk as interactively situated, Duranti & Goodwin (1992) call for an in-depth scrutiny, moving toward a more nuanced and dialogical understanding of how talk is embedded in social interaction. For instance, Bauman (1992) uses the telling of Icelandic folklores to illustrate what he terms *traditionalization*, that is, how present talk is linked to the meaningful past. Similarly, Becker (1995:288) observes the process of context-shaping that highlights context as a set of relations between utterances and speakers and how ‘we continually attune ourselves to context’. In this sense, context is where the past and the present are mutually informed as we reshape old texts from memory when we make sense of any current language event. Studies discussed below explore how context is ‘talked into being through participants’ particular ways of speaking and orienting to each other’ (Buttny 1998; see also Bauman & Briggs 1990:68 on this point). In this vein, the incorporation of the chronotope as an analytical tool for investigating context feeds both into the dynamic nature of context where interaction occurs and into the historicity that underscores the fundamental linkage between past and present, a multi-layered conception of context in Bakhtin’s dialogical terms.

Coming from Bakhtin’s (1981) theorization of the way time and space are (re) configured and represented in literature, the chronotope has been found to be useful in the study of context (e.g. a special edition by Lempert & Perrino 2007). Writing about the differentiation and blending of genres, Bakhtin stresses that the chronotope is ‘the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature’ (1981:84–85). It has been applied to works in literary and history studies (e.g. Demoen, Borghart, Bemong, De Dobbelaar, De Temmerman, & Keunen 2010) and has since been adopted and adapted in various disciplines to examine the active shaping of time-space context (e.g. Brown & Renshaw 2006). For example, the combination of ‘once upon a time’ and ‘in a faraway kingdom’ can evoke a ‘fairy tale chronotope’ that is likely populated by a princess and other mythical creatures. In other words, the employment of a certain time and space conjures up matching expectations of the situation and imaginations of the characters in it.

Following this scholarly tradition, this article draws attention to the historical dimension of context in the case of recognizing and negotiating temporal and spatial indicators (deictics) to show that even the local, or micro, utterances are inherently historical (Blommaert 2015). Knowledge of the past, or ‘invokable histories’ in Blommaert’s (2015) terms, is used as meaning-attributing resources in interaction. This relates back to Becker’s (1995) idea that any text would have a memory as we

contextualize the present in the past. Therefore, the social orders that are mediated within these spatiotemporal constructs ‘shape our EXPERIENCE and thus subjective FEEL for history and place’ (Wirtz 2016:344, original emphasis). A chronotope, then, is an identifiable arrangement of time and space through which the perception of and engagement with history is constituted and called into present (Divita 2019). Viewed this way, loanwords epitomize the richness of history in language in that using them inevitably references a relatively more detectible past crystallized in linguistic forms. In employing the chronotope as the main theoretical framework, this article follows Blommaert’s (2018) argument pertaining to the analytical validity of the chronotope by demonstrating how it adds to our understanding of context not simply as a background where stories take place but as a historical world where identification emerges.

THE CREATION OF PERSONHOOD IN  
TIME-SPACE: A CHRONOTOPIC  
VIEW ON IDENTITY

Discourse analysts have also drawn on this concept to examine language in use and have propounded that the *cultural chronotope*, departing from Bakhtin’s initial conception of novelistic chronotope, indicates participants’ positioning in discourse in that these representations are ‘peopled by certain social types’ (Agha 2007b:321). The cultural chronotope, in a similar vein, illustrates how a person is contextualized in interaction that involves or invokes corresponding social relations (Morson & Emerson 1990). Against this background, Blommaert & De Fina (2017) state that identity work can be achieved as discourse is chronotopically organized into recognizable cultural phenomena in specific time-space configurations, based on the ‘person, time, and place triangulation’ that is central to the chronotope (Schiffrin 2009:436).

Studies that build on the chronotope have shown how social actors constantly move back and forth between the spatiotemporal and the sociohistorical (Lempert & Perrino 2007). As Davidson (2007) observes, speakers from post-socialist East German, or German Democratic Republic (1940–1990), combine deictics of a present place ‘here’ (*hier*) and a past time ‘back then’ (*früher*) to discursively maintain a chronotope different from the contemporary pan-German one that is anchored in here and now. Dick (2010) examines the ‘modernist chronotope’ in Uriangatense migration discourse, which projects time-space representations marked by ‘here’ (*aquí*) and ‘there’ (*allá*) between Mexico and the US. The chronotope sketches speakers as certain types of people dealing with two competing themes: ‘getting ahead’ and ‘creating a moral life’ (2010). In line with Agha’s contention, while the chronotope presents temporal and spatial relationships, it also implies a personhood that develops as the story unfolds. In this vein, Woolard (2013) finds three chronotopes in which four Catalan-speaking informants locate themselves in relation to bilingualism in different representations of

the world, leading to the construction of their ethnolinguistic identities (See also Karimzad & Catedral 2018 on this point). In sum, that chronotopic depictions are representations populated by people suggests that a chronotopic understanding of context reveals how participants identify themselves or are otherwise identified by others.

With this emphasis on ‘people’, research in the area can be fittingly enriched by analyzing conversational narratives while heeding audiences’ active role in co-performance (Bauman & Briggs 1990:70). Although studies have stressed that ‘storytellers can influence or alter the dynamics of the storytelling event’ (Perrino 2015:146), how co-present participants influence this dynamic remains to be explored, especially in the investigation of context. Most of the accounts so far have come from interview data (e.g. Davidson 2007; Perrino 2007; Dick 2010; Woolard 2013; Wirtz 2016; Park 2017; see Karimzad & Catedral 2018 for conversational data). Interview entails a unique set of interactional patterns with, notably, the interviewee holding the floor for the most part whereas the interviewer/researcher elicits responses. In contrast, this study scrutinizes a first-person narrative in a spontaneous conversation in which the participants collaboratively contribute to the construction of the narrative. Chronotopic depictions of the event thus become varied and layered because of participants’ active engagement in the narrative event as they take on different roles in the telling, which further reflects the laminated and complex nature of context.

#### NARRATIVE CO-CONSTRUCTION IN TIME AND SPACE

The chronotopic emphasis fits well with the growing attention to the use of time and space as interactional resources in narrative construction (Perrino 2007; Divita 2019). Narrative, in fact, epitomizes ‘a complex construction of multiple historicities compressed into one synchronized act of performance’ that allows for making sense of context (Blommaert 2015:113). For this reason, the chronotope is considered a compatible theoretical concept for appreciating ‘the ongoing co-construction of the interplay between story and storytelling event’ (Perrino 2015:145). In this section I list a few studies as examples of how time and space have come to gain saliency in the field of narrative analysis and how the chronotope has become a productive way of empirically investigating narrative in context (Perrino 2007). The recent shift in narrative analysis from a more structural focus on its textual make-up toward a more situated/embedded understanding of talk in social interaction has yielded studies that treat context ‘not as a static surrounding frame but as a set of multiple and intersecting processes that are mutually feeding with talk’ (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2008:275). Some scholars have pointed out that time and space, often referred to as the ‘orientation’ in Labov & Waletzky’s (1967) model, have long been relegated to the background in the study of narrative, and that they hold importance in the research on narrative.

Bridgeman (2007) posits that temporal and spatial structures influence the way we read and interpret fictional narrative, rather than functioning as mere background elements. Expanding narrative analysis beyond the Labovian paradigm, Schiffrin asks whether narrative can, on a more abstract level, serve as a social and cultural resource ‘for organizing communal ideologies and socializing members of a community’ (2009:422). For instance, P.-H. Wang (2021) analyzes the deictics of time and places in gay immigrants’ coming-out narratives in the US to show how the contrast between before and after migration can be crucial to the discursive construction of the narrators’ gay identity. By the same token, Georgakopoulou (2003) illustrates that the interactional uses of time and space in the conversational stories among three Greek women invoke shared sociosymbolic meanings for the participants in the active construction of spatiotemporal realities. Similarly, Baynham (2003) shows that space/time orientation is constitutive in narrative. He argues that not only can historical time intersect with a narrator’s lifecycle but space in narrative is also inhabited by social relations. With this argument, Baynham considers it legitimate to extrapolate social theorization of broad social practice to narrative construction on a micro level.

In line with Baynham’s point, the chronotope highlights the historical meaning that permeates language. This view is made evident in Perrino’s (2007) study of *cross-chronotope alignment*, where narrators use deictics (e.g. historical present) to align two events situated in separate chronotopes and thereby TRANSPOSE participants to the story world. In this very sense, the chronotope can aptly supplement the extant research on time and space in narrative. The often-cited definition by Silverstein (2005:6) likewise remarks on this point by stating that the chronotope is a ‘particular envelope in the narrated universe of social time-space in which and through which, in emplotment, narrative characters move’. In this article, I follow this approach to show that not only do the time and space around the narrative situate and contextualize it and its participants in the mesh of the multi-layered meanings, but the participants in the storytelling interaction also draw on the historicity in language for the construction of the narrative as well as their identity. The following data and analysis involving the discussion of history behind language and the creation of a Taiwanese American heritage identity accentuate how this is particularly relevant in today’s global society as ‘transnational, crosscultural, and intercultural encounters in our time are much more significant in influencing both historical and individual changes’ (H. Wang 2009:2).

#### BACKGROUND: A PEOPLE-CENTERED HISTORY OF TRANSNATIONAL TAIWAN

Analyzing the conversation about Taiwan under Dutch Rule (then known as Formosa) while considering the immigrant background of the participants aligns with the transnational thinking of Taiwan’s history in a global context, an approach that moves beyond the national framework of analysis and focuses on ‘people’s

history’ (Heylen 2010:11–12, 20; 2012). The Dutch came to Taiwan in 1624 as part of the Dutch East India Company’s trade expansion in East Asia in the seventeenth century. Settlement began in Tainan and later spread to other cities in southern Taiwan such as Kaohsiung until the Dutch lost Formosa to a military leader of the Southern Ming regime, Zheng Chenggong (also known as Koxinga), in 1662. The participants’ discursive construction of Dutch Formosa moves away from treating Taiwan’s local history as part of the Chinese historical development that purports Han ideology (Heylen 2010), corresponding to the transnational approach that transcends the boundaries of nation-state while marking the uniqueness of Taiwan’s history.

Interaction with the Taiwanese American participants, too, reveals more contemporary Taiwanese history involving migration to the US, especially in the late 1960s following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 for those who sought refuge from the dictatorship of the nationalist party in Taiwan. The chronotope, therefore, serves to capture the multiplicity of events that characterizes Taiwan’s history when viewed within a transnational framework and the historicity that is carried in language. As posited in previous studies, a chronotopic view moves these time-space representations to the forefront instead of treating them as the background setting for social actors; despite the difference in nationality and discrepancy in language proficiency, the participants’ shared Taiwanese origin is rendered salient by the chronotopically organized talk as they engage in narrative activity that extracts the historical dimension of these specific years and places.

#### DATA: TAIWANESE IN A TAIWANESE AMERICAN HOUSEHOLD

The data come from a spontaneous conversation recorded when a Taiwanese mother, Jane, and her son, Ping (the researcher of this study), visited their Taiwanese American relatives, Bob and his daughter, Fae, in the US on September 4, 2015. The conversation took place after dinner as participants engaged in casual talk over various topics. The selected segment for analysis began with Fae describing *jiu-jitsu*, a form of martial art. Her contemplating the possible origin of the word inspired Jane to recount a story relating to words in Taiwanese Hokkien that likewise had interesting origin stories. All participants were informed of the linguistic project of family mealtime conversation and gave consent to being recorded. The conversation under study was then transcribed for analysis. The recording was later played back along with the transcript to the participants for verification and approval. Participants, except for the researcher, were each assigned a pseudonym.

Jane and Ping were both born in Taiwan. Jane is a native speaker of Taiwanese Hokkien (commonly referred to as Taiwanese) and speaks Mandarin Chinese fluently. Ping is fluent in Mandarin Chinese but knows little Taiwanese Hokkien. Both Jane and Ping are proficient in English as a result of work and education respectively. Bob is a first-generation Taiwanese American who was born in Taiwan and later

moved to the US at the age of seven with his family. Bob is therefore fluent in English and retains some knowledge of Taiwanese Hokkien spoken by his parents. Fae was born in the US with mixed parentage. She is a native speaker of English and, having taken courses in school, has limited proficiency in Mandarin Chinese. Both Jane and Bob are in their early fifties while both Ping and Fae are in their early twenties. The conversation, which took place in Bob's house after dinner, was in English, the lingua franca for all four participants. The various levels of their understanding of history and of their repertoire in different languages are prominently at play in the conversation. The chronotopic analysis that follows aims to capture the complexity of their discursive identification practices, which suggests the chronotope's analytical utility for elucidating this phenomenon in the changing context. The excerpts presented below were produced at a point when the participants were discussing words in one language that were borrowed from another language. The first excerpt simultaneously serves to describe how the narrative came about.

#### ANALYSIS: CHRONOTOPIC CONTEXT ANCHORED IN TAIWANESE LOANWORDS

In this section, I present three excerpts from the conversation to analyze how specific time-space configurations have an effect on participants' understanding of context. While the three chronotopes are identified with their respective combinations of time and space, they can be mutually inclusive, interwoven, or 'in ever more complex interrelationships' (Bakhtin 1981:252). The narrative is not merely situated in the conversation where it is told; it similarly shifts the way participants interpret the situation and orient themselves to the talk, leading to the co-construction of narrative as well as the emergence of their ethnolinguistic identities. In these excerpts, meanings are 'historical' in two ways: first, they are about Taiwan's history that the participants have access to, and second, in Becker's sense, they are sets of social relations whose text 'contextualizes the present in the past' (1995:26). The first excerpt shows how the narrative emerges in the conversation as Jane introduces a loanword in Taiwanese Hokkien. The second excerpt illustrates the historicity of language shown in another loanword with which Jane connects the past event in her narrative to the Dutch Rule in Formosa Taiwan. Finally, the third excerpt, in which a Taiwanese American identity is brought into being, shows a more in-depth negotiation between the participants over their knowledge of Taiwan's history.

#### *Context-shaping with invokable histories in Taiwanese loanwords*

Excerpt (1) begins with Bob and Fae discussing whether the word *jiu-jitsu* comes from Japanese or Portuguese. It aims to illuminate the following three points: first,

places, either those in the discussion or those wherein the interaction takes place, are resources for understanding the current context. Second, how powerful these chorotopes can be depends on participants’ access to (un)shared knowledge. Finally, the chronotope serves as an analytical tool for aptly capturing contextual shift in interaction. By mentioning the word, *pháng* (/p<sup>h</sup>aŋ/ ‘bread’ in Taiwanese Hokkien), Jane invokes the word’s historical past as related to the two locales mentioned in the conversation, a prelude to the narrative she is about to tell.

- (1) 1 Bob: I thought it was from Japanese.  
 2 It sounds like Japanese but it’s from Brazil.  
 3 Fae: I thought so too! But then somebody was-  
 4 Yeah, I mean there was some, um, Brazil. Was it Portuguese.  
 5 Portugal came over to Japan actually have a-  
 6 Bob: Hmm.  
 7 Fae: Some similar words in Portuguese and Japanese [because of that.]  
 8 Jane: [ <Yea yea yea> .]  
 9 Like a *pháng*. =  
 10 Fae: =Yeah. [And the-]  
 11 Jane: [The bread?]  
 12 The bread we [eat] we say in Taiwan is *pháng*.  
 13 Fae: [Even in-]  
 14 Jane: You know *pháng*. [Have you heard that? *Pháng*?]  
 15 Bob: [What is that] (.) That came from Portuguese-  
 16 Jane: Yeah, that’s [Portuguese.] *Pháng* is Portuguese.  
 17 Ping: [Yeah.]  
 18 Fae: It came all; the way over. h=

Jane’s participation in this part of the conversation highlights the time-space configuration in the current activity: a native speaker of Taiwanese Hokkien conversing in English with two Taiwanese Americans in the modern-day US. With the interaction taking place in the US, what would otherwise be considered a context where English is the default choice of language is in itself a reflection of the chronotopic organization. Their language choice reveals the normalcy that is determined by ‘WHO they are interacting with WHEN and WHERE’ (Karimzad 2020). This chronotopic understanding of conversing in English as an expected normative behavior demonstrates how participants’ shared ethnic background and their unequal language proficiency are mediated by nationality that comes from migration in the last century. In this first chronotope (Taiwanese in a Taiwanese American household in the US in 2015), both Bob and Fae align vis-à-vis Jane as less knowing with regard to the mentioned Taiwanese word *pháng*, thus marking themselves as Taiwanese Americans with a family history of migration while displaying decreased epistemic certainty with the word (Karimzad & Catedral 2018). As shown in the next section, this combination of time and place gives rise to the creation of certain types of personhood. The chronotope, in this way, foregrounds the

taken-for-granted context: it is not just the word *pháng* placed in an English conversation that singles out Jane as the native speaker of Taiwanese Hokkien in the house but the entire interaction grounded in this particular time-space configuration that portrays the participants as such.

Although Japan and Portugal seem like fleeting subjects in this part of the talk, they give Jane the idea of introducing *pháng* as a way to join the discussion. This decision is far from arbitrary; instead, it outlines the spatial relation at the outset of the chronotopic organization in her narrative. Her choice of word is indicative of how she understands the context in relation to the spatial indicators provided earlier. After all, context is what is relevant to participants and can be readily identified by their discourse (Buttny 1998). Therefore, it is worth noting that the history of the word, which is a loanword from Portuguese (*pão* /pẽw/) by way of Japanese (パン /pãN/), represents the same spatial relation that arises earlier in this part of the interaction. *Pháng*, in this way, instantiates two major points: (i) the places brought up in talk are not just background elements but resources for participants to interpret the situation and, in so doing, contextualize what is being discussed, and (ii) the text, as well as other texts being discussed in the following analysis, is not to be understood merely for its denotational content, that is, its literal meaning, but also in the way it is reshaped into the interactional scenario (cf. Agha 2007a:117). As Agha points out, an interactional schema, contra a denotational one, depends on the 'spatio-temporal occasion of token production' (2007a:117).

It is this active interpretation of a word's history that draws out the historical dimension in the chronotope, that is, how participants understand the relevance of the word's past to the here-and-now. The contextualization of *pháng*, consequently, involves a particular time and space, namely, the invocation of a chronotope with a discernible historical dimension. This word carries with it a chunk of history that helps to make sense of the local interaction through the participants' knowledge of its meaningful past. Jane further anchors this talk spatially by adding that *pháng* is what people call bread 'in Taiwan' (line 12). Meanwhile, by repeating *pháng* (line 9, 12, 14, and 16), Jane attempts to bring forth the historical dimension of the word for her interlocutors to grapple with the invocation that has been discussed above. This can be seen as a move to make certain her intended narrative audience has the necessary knowledge of the word beyond its denotational level before she proceeds, especially when Bob and Fae, who are unfamiliar with the Taiwanese language, appear unsure about the rather abrupt introduction of the word (Bob in line 15 for example). This newly arising chronotope, compared to the first one, is relatively less powerful because of its limited accessibility, thus requiring more explanation (Karimzad & Catedral 2018:101). Simply put, Jane's contribution comes with a major contextual shift that calls for an amount of local management relative to each participant's access to the knowledge domain. The chronotope captures this moment by making prominent not only the time-space representation but also the historicity of language.

To recap, names of places are brought into the interaction as communicative resources, as Bridgeman surmises that locations ‘accumulate layers of past history against which we read current activities’ (2007:56). This part ends with Fae commenting on the geolinguistic linkage made earlier by saying in line 18, “It came all: the way over”, with her emphatic intonation on the phrase “all the way” implying the very spatial relation that brings in the second transnational chronotope we see below.

*Drawing historicity from Taiwanese loanwords in chronotopic context*

In excerpt (2), Jane begins the narrative by providing an evaluative remark (cf. Labov & Waltzkey 1967) and by making sure that everyone knows “Dutch” to be referencing a specific historical timeframe in Taiwan. With this central theme, the second excerpt illustrates how participants’ knowledge leads to another chronotope that can overpower the one grounded in the immediate time and space of the conversation. This chronotopic shift substantiates the following three points: first, context is determined based on participants’ perception of place, which is more than the background element in narrative because ‘our association of certain locations with the events that occur in them is particularly strong in our reading of narrative’ (Bridgeman 2007:56). Furthermore, compared to previous studies, the conversational narrative here exemplifies how two chronotopes are interwoven not only because of the narrator’s attempt to do so but also because of co-present participants’ collaboration. Finally, just as there can be a literary chronotope in which narrative characters move, the interaction itself is as much a chronotope in which participants move. Examining the multiplicity of chronotopes shows an identification process (Karimzad & Catedral 2018). Within this time-space configuration, two types of personhood emerge given the way the discourse is organized.

- (2) 20 Jane: And also [uh. And also] very funny (.) You know, Dutch.  
 21 Fae: [The missionary.]  
 22 Jane: Dutch. You know Dutch?  
 23 Bob: [Unintelligible]  
 24 Jane: [Dutch also o]ccupied uh (.) south of the- south of [Taiwan.]  
 25 Bob: [Tainan.]  
 26 Jane: [Taiwan.]  
 27 Fae: [Yeah!] Right!  
 28 Bob: [[I visited before.]]  
 29 Jane: [[For- for]]  
 30 In- in nineteen century. And one time.=  
 31 Bob: =No, no. That was [uh: (.) sixteen hundred.]  
 32 Fae: [The Dutch got around h]  
 33 They were in South Africa. [They were in Asia.] h  
 34 Jane: [And. And you know.]

- 35 And funny thing is, uh,  
 36 One time I have a Dutch customer, [right?] To Taiwan.  
 37 Fae: [Uh-huh.]  
 38 Jane: And < we have a we have a > lunch together  
 39 to a very (.) localize Taiwanese restaurant.  
 40 So um it's all kind of [seafood.]  
 41 Bob: [Local Taiwanese food.]  
 42 Jane: Local Taiwanese food.  
 43 And you know um and I have been uh and  
 44 I order was quite a lot you know.  
 45 Bob: A variety.  
 46 Jane: Yeah, all varieties, yeah. And. And when the foods came,  
 47 Uh (.) all in a sudden everybody is. It was quiet. =  
 48 Fae: =h=  
 49 Jane: =When the first came,  
 50 My Dutch con- customer (.) say something (.) surprise me.  
 51 He said uh, he said uh, Taiwanese,  
 52 but in his- in his- in his mind it's Dutch.  
 53 Fae: [Yeah. h]  
 54 Jane: [h] He said he said h (.) you know the rice noodle.  
 55 *Bí-hún, bí-hún*. [Do you know that?]  
 56 Fae: [Yeah.]  
 57 Bob: Yeah.  
 58 Jane: *Bí-hún, bí-hún* is rice noodle. It's very thin.=  
 59 Fae: =Yeah, I was thinking of making it.

Following the previous excerpt, Jane joins the discussion of the word's origin with her story and she is ratified as a speaker who holds the conversational floor. She begins with the evaluation ("very funny", line 20) in Labov & Waletzky's (1967) narrative model, that is, the storyteller's commentary, to indicate the tellability of her story. Then, she inserts a piece of information about Dutch Rule in Taiwan (line 24). With this information, she ushers in the history chronotope (Europeans occupying then-Formosa in the 1600s), activating the participants' knowledge of the colonial history of Taiwan, in order for them to understand the current interaction and to make sense of the utterances. This is made evident as they subsequently map out the time and space collaboratively: drawing on the historicity of this utterance, the talk is thereby chronotopically organized into comprehensible historical discourse with the word "Dutch" imbued with a meaning that is known to people with knowledge of Taiwan's colonial history and highlights their shared ethnic background.

A marked alignment is established between Bob and Jane when Bob immediately picks up the cue by finishing her sentence with the exact location of the Dutch settlement back then ("Tainan", line 25) and personalizes the location by saying that he has visited it before (line 28). He also corrects Jane's misdated recall ("In- in nineteen century", line 30) by offering the accurate time ("sixteen

hundred”, line 31), thereby displaying knowledge that allows him to co-construct the narrative. The co-construction of the temporal and spatial orientation of this narrative shows that not only is it situated in the context of a casual conversation but it likewise contextualizes the conversation in a specific way such that participants would understand the mentioning of “Dutch” as pointing to a certain time and space in the history of Taiwan. This chronotope, which connects the present talk to a historically meaningful past, characterizes the in-group identity by authenticating their respective contributions to the narrative co-construction.

Fae likewise adds to the discussion by evaluating the geographic expanse of Dutch colonies, tying Taiwan into the Age of Discovery under Dutch influence (“South Africa” and “Asia”, line 33). This goes with the transnational framework for thinking about Taiwan’s history: the seventeenth century when it was put on the European map. Her knowledge of history informs how she engages with the current interaction, that is, the historicity of language. The uniqueness of Taiwan’s role in this period in world history also distinguishes Bob and Fae’s present position in the talk. Their remarks are oriented toward the historical aspect of the word “Dutch” before Jane’s attempt to start the story in line 30 (“And one time”). This chronotopic structure, stemming from the historicity in language, gains dominance and overpowers the previous chronotope set in the house because of the increased epistemic certainty (Karimzad & Catedral 2018), that is, all participants share about an equal amount of knowledge about the colonial past against which Taiwan is being discussed.

Jane resumes her story by first providing the same evaluation (“And funny thing is”, line 35), followed by orientation elements that create the story world (“one time”, “a Dutch customer”, “To Taiwan”, line 35). It has been shown that a story, or a narrated event, constitutes a chronotope that is set in a distant zone (a Dutch client visiting Taiwan in early 2000s). This creates a time-space difference that is distinct from the here and now. However, an instance of ‘cross-chronotope alignment’ can be observed here. Whereas Fae’s response (“Uh-huh”, line 37) shows her attention as a listener while telling Jane to continue, Bob’s replies merge the interaction and the story world, connecting the two time-space constructs. Bob’s suggestions for word choice (“Local Taiwanese food”, line 41, and “A variety”, line 45) focus on Jane’s language. For Jane, the discourse is organized around the time and space in the story, but Bob’s focus on her language use in the current conversation establishes a cross-chronotope alignment, connecting the present conversation chronotope that is spatiotemporally anchored in the here-and-now and the narrative chronotope that is set in the past. This is because, while Jane has the floor as a storyteller, Bob has a higher epistemic positioning, when it comes to the knowledge domain of the English language, as a native English speaker. As the narrative is maintained by Jane’s recounting, Bob’s attention to her language evokes the first chronotope (previous section) that acts as a chronotope of normalcy for evaluating linguistic practices (Karimzad 2020). In

other words, in the context of language choice, he has the English proficiency to assume the role of a co-teller and polish the telling of the story.

This discrepancy in language ability once again highlights Bob's nationality and personal history as a Taiwanese American. Jane, afterward, adopts those suggestions and incorporates them into her story through immediate repetition ("Local Taiwanese food", line 42, and "Yeah, all varieties", line 46), reciprocating this alignment. This alignment points to the different categories of identity that participants fall into and foregrounds the transnational connection between the two speakers. Bob's demonstration of his English language ability brings back the first chronotope as the talk is located in the present-day US involving Taiwanese and Taiwanese Americans. This aspect of his identity stands out as his attention to fluent and idiomatic use of English invokes the current chronotope, where language proficiency is used to identify the participants as different people of different nationalities, though sharing the same ethnolinguistic heritage. The chronotope, then, highlights the 'layered copresence' that enables an understanding of participant identification (Blommaert & De Fina 2017). This part of the interaction also underscores co-present participants' role in storytelling, thereby contributing to previous literature an example where narrators or speakers manage the narrative event by inviting hearers to align within different spatiotemporal setups (e.g. Perrino 2007).

*Emergent identities of Taiwanese American in chronotopic context*

In the final excerpt, Jane continues with her story after briefly explaining what *bí-hún* is. The interaction captured here first shows that different chronotopes are not exclusive from each other; at times they merge, depending on what chunks of histories are invoked. The merger of these chronotopes, weaving the participants into an intricate tapestry of multiple times and places, is also the point where Bob's and Fae's identity as Taiwanese American heritage speakers is highlighted.

- (3) 60 Jane: [Yeah yeah *bí-hún*.]  
 61 Bob: [*Bí-hú*.]  
 62 Jane: And my Dutch customer said, "Oh *bí-hún*." [I said,]  
 63 Ping: [h]  
 64 Jane: "Oh how do you know this is a [*bí-hún*?]" This is our language?  
 65 Ping: [h]  
 66 Jane: [He] said, no no no. [h] That's our language.  
 67 Ping: [h] [h]  
 68 Fae: [h] They brought it back with them.  
 69 Jane: Interesting, right? And, and he said couple words is  
 70 Completely (.) exact the same as Taiwanese.  
 71 But the words has been immigrate.  
 72 Fae: That's so funny.=  
 73 Bob: =Yeah.

- 74 Jane: To Holland. [For- for many centuries. h]
- 75 Fae: And it still sounds [so similar. Woah]
- 76 Bob: (I was thinking) that is rare.
- 77 Because there were more Indonesian.
- 78 And they brought a lot of Indonesian food over. But not.
- 79 Jane: Also he can say *jūn-piánn* (.) the spring roll.
- 80 Fae: Oh: really? [h]
- 81 Jane: [Yeah] Spring roll. *Jūn-piánn*.
- 82 Bob: *Jūn-piánn*.=
- 83 Jane: =*Jūn-piánn*.
- 84 It's in during the tomb the tomb sweeping day right?
- 85 You know that in Taiwan we have a (.) *puē-bōng ma*. Tomb.
- 86 Bob: I never got to see that.
- 87 Jane: You [know] (.) on the tomb sweeping day.
- 88 Fae: [Oh.]
- 89 Jane: Uh [[the custom.]]
- 90 Bob: [[Once a year, right?]]=
- 91 Jane: =Yeah. The tradition in the south Taiwan.
- 92 We normally have a spring roll but,
- 93 It's not deep-fried. It's just spring roll.:
- 94 Fae: Right. [Rice] wrap- yeah.
- 95 Bob: [Yeah.]
- 96 Jane: And. And in Taiwanese called *jūn-piánn*.
- 97 Say *jūn-piánn*. *Jūn-piánn kauh*.
- 98 Fae: *Jūn-piánn kauh*.
- 99 Jane: And- and ((claps)) my Dutch customer said, “*Jūn-piánn*.”
- 100 I said, “OH” [hhh.]
- 101 Ping: [h]
- 102 Jane: That's a very typical [h] south.
- 103 Only south Taiwan can speak *jūn-piánn*.
- 104 Fae: [h]
- 105 Ping: [h]
- 106 Fae: [Hmm.]
- 107 Bob: [Hmm.]
- 108 Jane: So I approve [h] their ancestors occupied Tainan and Kaohsiung.
- 109 Fae: [h]
- 110 Ping: [h]
- 111 Bob: They- [they came to Kaohsiung] too?
- 112 Fae: [That's so funny.]
- 113 Jane: Yeah. Tainan. Tainan and Kaohsiung.

When Jane continues with the story, she voices herself and her Dutch client in the story world, recalling the narrative chronotope, a time-space configuration that is peopled by her and her client in modern day Taiwan. This reanimated interchange shows how voicing can chronotopically structure the discourse into narrative. A story world alignment is built between them when they negotiate the authority

of the word. For the story characters, the mutual intelligibility of the word *bí-hún* signals the language contact in the past resulting from the colonial history of Taiwan. Jane previously states that her client believes the word is in Dutch (line 52) and in this excerpt she re-enacts the moment when each of them claims the word to be part of their languages (line 64 and 66). This mutual language use, with rice noodle in Dutch written as *mihoen*, carries histories for participants to unpack and reinterpret. The Dutch client of Jane's in Taiwan is likened to the Dutch settlers in then-Formosa. The individual sense of self, autonomous as it may appear, turns out to be aligned with others because of this shared history. This alignment is also corroborated by the other participants in the narrative event as I show in the discussion below.

While Jane treats the recounted event as a funny story to lighten the conversation and amuse her interlocutors, as seen in her evaluation ("Interesting, right?", line 69), it inevitably does more. Besides responding to the story by producing a matched evaluation ("That's so funny", line 72), Fae also relates it to the colonial history chronotope that is invoked earlier with her remark "They brought it back with them" (line 68), with "them" referring to the Dutch settlers in the seventeenth century. The geolinguistic connection is noted again with the spatial relation Fae refers to. Jane similarly concludes her story with this matching insight ("But the words has been immigrate", line 71) along with the specific location and the time span ("To Holland. For- for many centuries", line 74) because of the meaning attributed by this chronotope. The gist of her story shows how the meanings in each of the chronotopes are intertwined. Even Bob makes similar observations regarding Dutch in the Age of Discovery in lines 77 and 78. At this point, the narrative chronotope blends with the history alluded to in the previous excerpt. The historical dimension of language is made evident not only because of the dialogue in Jane's narrative but also because the word *bí-hún* becomes part of the context-shaping that Becker describes: we shape old texts into new contexts of particular space, time, and social relations (1995:9–10). What is recounted in the narrative is a case where the story characters deal with a text like *bí-hún* that invokes Taiwan history. This past event is then situated in the conversation for the social purpose of carrying on a conversation while making a point about language borrowing. Situated in a new context, the word highlights different social relations: Taiwanese versus Dutch in a historical sense with a colonial past, a piece of knowledge that is chronotopically entrenched in language.

Thinking of another mutually intelligible word that her Dutch client produced, Jane introduces *jūn-piánn* into the conversation. Jane models the word twice, which invites repetition from Bob and Fae respectively either as unprompted (line 82) or as directed (line 98). The repetition instantiates moments when heritage speakers encounter their heritage language from a native speaker, which illustrates 'how social actors in the public sphere are mobilized to think, feel and act' through communicative practices across chronotopes (Agha 2007b:324). This can be seen as the reversal of the social relation observed in the previous excerpt where Bob holds a

higher epistemic positioning in relation to Jane in terms of proficiency in the English language. Here Jane is more proficient in Taiwanese, so Bob and Fae respond accordingly to the word as a way to appreciate it. Appreciation through repetition serves as a way for them to connect themselves to the social order of Taiwan’s history reflected in the words that Jane brings up. This modelling as a social action makes prominent the conversation chronotope that is discussed earlier, rendering salient the persons in this time-space (Taiwanese visiting Taiwanese American relatives in the present-day US). Within this chronotope, the relational positioning contributes to the creation of where they stand concerning the metalinguistic discussion they are having. This process of *entextualization* (Bauman & Briggs 1990), that is, extracting texts from their original context and integrating them into a new one, simultaneously indexes Bob’s and Fae’s shared Taiwanese identity and unshared American identity, which echoes an earlier argument about how their layered copresence illuminates communities and membership therein in terms of participants’ transnational identification practices.

As seen in the interaction, neither Bob nor Fae is familiar with the word, but they both latch onto pieces of the invokable histories that come with it, thereby involving themselves in a chronotopically organized discourse where their sense of belonging to the community takes form. This becomes evident in that the meaning of the word is in fact reconstructed with the necessary information that describes certain social relations (Becker 1995). Starting from line 84, Jane explains that *jūn-piánn* is a special kind of food served during the Tomb Sweeping Day, or *puē-bōng* in Taiwanese, which falls in early April every year. Bob demonstrates his knowledge of the festival (“Once a year, right?”, line 90), overlapping Jane’s utterance and leading her to acknowledge his contribution by saying that it is a tradition in southern Taiwan (line 91). In this way, Bob’s connection to Taiwanese tradition is ratified. His identity as a Taiwanese American thus emerges in the interaction. Likewise, following Jane’s explanation (“It’s just spring roll:”, line 93), Fae shows that she knows the kind of food by describing it (“Right. [Rice] wrap-yeah”, line 94). She displays her knowledge in a different domain to achieve a similar goal—to show her engagement with the topic. This social action qualifies her as a Taiwanese American who can participate in the discussion of traditional food. This combination of temporal and spatial relationships implied in the mentioning of the word *jūn-piánn* goes further to connect the three chronotopes, creating a coherent lineage across the boundaries of time and space. Within these complex configurations, their linguistic behaviors are evaluated, leading to the authentication of an ethnolinguistic identity (Karimzad & Catedral 2018).

Pinpointing the location in southern Taiwan, Jane specifies its connection to a local custom *puē-bōng* (“The tradition in the south Taiwan”, line 91), a special kind of food *jūn-piánn* (“Only south Taiwan can speak *jūn-piánn*”, line 103), and the past of Dutch Rule (“their ancestors occupied Tainan and Kaohsiung”, line 108). This spatialization makes important the location in the narrative event while implying a temporalization from seventeenth-century Dutch colonization

in Formosa, to the visit of Jane's Dutch client in Taiwan and the current conversation in Bob's house in the US. The narrative chronotope draws on Taiwan's history involving Dutch influence, another chronotope that becomes central to the discussion among the participants. This is especially true for Bob and Fae, with their social type as Taiwanese American being made prominent and relevant in the conversation chronotope. A chronotopic connection is made between Taiwanese and Taiwanese American in an ethnic sense of sharing the same cultural background. Each of these time-space configurations as well as their amalgamation towards the end of the excerpt shows how this particular interaction, like other interactions, is sociohistorical in all senses. It aligns with the transnational thinking of the past colonial Formosa, the present Taiwan and the US while also illustrating the dynamic view of context as participants constantly orient themselves and others to the shifting time and space.

#### CONCLUSION

Taking the time and space of a narrative event as a departure point, this study builds on Blommaert's (2018) discussion of the chronotope as an analytical tool for context in sociolinguistics. In this article, I have analyzed the spatiotemporal representations in three excerpts of a narrative event produced in a spontaneous conversation to illustrate how the chronotope helps to reconceptualize our current theoretical understanding of context in two main ways: the historical dimension of language and the emergence of personhood. These two aspects of the chronotope, following Duranti & Goodwin's (1992) linguistic anthropological query among others, serve to reflect the dynamically complex nature of context, moving the scholarship from an early view of context as a social setting to viewing it as a sociohistorically situated form of communication.

First, the chronotope emphasizes the way historicity in specific time-space configurations influences participants' interpretations of the situation. A chronotopic view of context further shows how each utterance carries its own history that is anchored in a particular combination of time and space. For example, both Bob and Fae come to see how the story about *bi-hún* is tied to the history of Taiwan as the chunks of histories represented in narrative time and space are made available to them. The chronotope helps to explain how context is more than a metalinguistic discussion about Taiwanese words; rather, participants are oriented toward the shared knowledge of Taiwan's history and, in making sense of it, use the past as interactional resources for the present narrative activity. Narrative, which is essentially chronotopically organized discourse, draws on invocable histories in language, which contributes to contextualization by affecting our views of meanings imbued in the network of these spatial and temporal relationships.

Second, the chronotope accounts for the conception of identity as interactionally formulated in discourse. A certain personhood is created with the socially shared values that a chronotope attributes to an established and recognizable social

order, just as characters take shape in a literary time-space construct. The chronotopic nature of identity, so to speak, lies in ‘the inner linkages with temporality and locality and in the interplay between individual and social changes’ (H. Wang 2009:2). Therefore, because of the historical dimension of language in this narrative event, what seems like a microscopic analysis in fact alludes to the broader social organization. In this regard, the notions of personhood that arise from these interpersonal communicative practices mark a shift, in endogenous terms (cf. Buttny 1998), away from researcher-ascribed categories toward individuals’ self-identification and then to a sense of their belonging to communities. For example, in terms of language proficiency as a chronotopic condition, Bob’s display of his English proficiency in the narrative co-construction characterizes him as a Taiwanese American who migrated from Taiwan to the US. Heritage speaker, in this sense, is not a priori in the discussion of context; instead, the chronotopic approach reveals that the identity of a heritage speaker is socially organized and negotiated to be relevant in certain time-space configurations. This examination of spontaneous interaction between family members of immigrant origin, therefore, demonstrates the importance of qualitative analysis of heritage language and identity, adding to the sociolinguistic inquiry into heritage language as communicative resources for Taiwanese Americans.

This study is a small step toward a chronotopic perspective on context and more research needs to be done in this direction. First, while this study examines the narrative produced in a spontaneous conversation, as opposed to one that is elicited in an interview, future research should look at other speech activities than narrative to see if the chronotope remains applicable in different situations, for example, institutional talk. Second, this study shows one of the ways the chronotope can add to current research on context, but further differentiation needs to be done regarding how the chronotope aligns with and differs from other closely related theorizations. These include *frame*—participant alignment that can influence and at times, laminate, the definition(s) of a situation (Goffman 1974)—and *contextualization cues*—participants’ use of verbal/nonverbal signals that evoke social presuppositions by relating what is said to past experience (Gumperz 1982). Such notions likewise mark a shift from viewing context as the ‘social and physical environment’ to discerning the emergent nature involving ‘participants in social interactions’ (Bauman & Briggs 1990:68). Limitations notwithstanding, this study has demonstrated that the chronotope can advance our understanding of context in the field of sociolinguistics to examine how social actions are given historical meanings and participants characterized as certain social types in the interconnectedness of time and space.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>In this article, ‘the chronotope’ refers to the theoretical concept whereas ‘a chronotope’ or its plural form is used when a particular spatiotemporal construct is mentioned.

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## APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

((claps))	nonlinguistic action
(.)	noticeable pause
.	falling intonation followed by a noticeable pause
?	rising intonation followed by a noticeable pause
,	continuing intonation
-	self interruption
=	latched utterances by the same speaker or by different speakers
<u>underlining</u>	emphatic stress
<b>CAPS</b>	very emphatic stress
::	vowel or consonant lengthening
[ ]	overlap between utterances
[[ ]]	second overlap occurring in succession
< >	accelerated speech
h	laughter
<i>italicized</i>	non-English word

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