

Spatiotemporal scales and chronotopes and mobility

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Linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists influenced by them have shaped a direction of research and theory that understands language differently from linguists who study language as a set of formal structures set apart from everyday interactions (e.g., de Saussure, 1986; Chomsky, 1965, 1986), as “something separate (and separable) from the world, the better to represent that world by removal from it” (Silverstein, 2014, 5). In contrast, linguistic anthropologists have developed an interactional sociolinguistics that treats language and social life as mutually constituted and that is concerned with examining how language resources and repertoires that include patterned regularities around grammar and register, are shaped by interpersonal exchanges and other language interactions and activities that in turn are influenced by socio-cultural and political-economic dynamics in particular social settings. In Blommaert’s (2020, 19) description, this is a “profoundly *sociolinguistic* concept of language: it is not an autonomous or separate object (as in mainstream linguistics), but entirely entangled with concrete aspects of the social world”. And as Agha (2007, 228) put it: “Linguists of a certain type might well say, ‘That’s not linguistics.’”

Language researchers who follow this orientation to language activity as situated and socially constructed face the challenge of what to take into account when interpreting sometimes ambiguous or fluid data, where “knowledge of language is rooted in situation and dynamically distributed across individuals as they engage in practices” (Blommaert et al, 2005, 205) where social organisation and language use are interwoven. The meanings and effects of any instance of language use, in this more expansionist approach to ‘doing linguistics’, must necessarily go beyond a focus on language, in the more familiar disciplinary sense of the term, to take account of both text (or utterance) and context (or social setting) and they must be understood to be intrinsically interwoven or entangled. Such entanglement of the linguistic and the social might well result in a certain degree of interpretive indeterminacy, where linguists doing this work have also to draw on conceptual resources from sociology, political sciences and elsewhere outside of linguistics, where disputes over how the social and material world operates continue to feature.

An initial focus or unit of analysis in doing research of this kind was on the ‘speech community’ as described in Hymes (1996) where the focus was on the socio-cultural or community context of situated social activity that gave shape to language in local settings as “speech styles, on the one hand, and contexts of discourse, on the other, together with the relations of appropriateness obtaining between styles and contexts” (Hymes, 1996, 33). Theorisation and study of ‘context’ has continued since then and spatio-temporal scales and chronotopes are more recent theoretical attempts to draw on concepts and theoretical work from outside of traditional linguistics to make sense of the situated and socioculturally specific nature of language activity in sites of linguistic and social diversity. Scales theory comes from sociology as well as the disciplines of social geography and history, particularly from the work of Wallerstein and Braudel, and chronotopes emerge from literary theory in the work of Bakhtin, who, in turn, borrowed the term from 1930s theoretical physics.

These are two key terms that have been drawn on in what has been termed a sociolinguistics of globalization and they at least partly displace the idea of 'speech community' in the study of language and social context, and replace it with terms that relate more to the changed and changing contexts that feature heightened migrations of people and language across national and continental borders, particularly over the last fifty or so years, in the era of so-called globalization, one feature of which has been the increasingly multilingual and socially diverse nature of local contexts, particularly in Europe and North America, and elsewhere as well, along with the internationalisation of the English language, in particular.

A sociolinguistics of globalisation

The sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert, 2010) is a response to the widely perceived contemporary rise to dominance of a transnational or globalized world economy since the later decades of the 20th century. Initiated and led in its formative stages by Jan Blommaert, along with numerous colleagues and associates, the sociolinguistics of globalization approach has developed ideas and research around the key concepts of mobility, scales and chronotopes. Mobility within this frame refers to the fact that, under conditions of heightened migration of people across and within various kinds of national, regional and other social borders, in search of economic security or safety, along with them "language varieties, texts and images travel across time and space... A sociolinguistics of globalization is necessarily a sociolinguistics of mobility" (Blommaert, 2003, 611). Scale in the sociolinguistics of globalization is offered as a resource for the study of hierarchies of language and inequalities under conditions that include the increased multilingual nature of particular local contexts within a global economy that is seen as constituted by centres and peripheries, where scales draw attention to and are a response to the perception of conditions of social hierarchy and social inequality, particularly with regard to such concepts as "macro and micro, global and local" (Blommaert 2003, 607) as they impact on language ideologies and practices. Chronotope as a concept emerges slightly later than scale in this sociolinguistics but has become a key concept in the approach. The idea of chronotope in sociolinguistic enquiry has been developed as a resource for situating the study of language as situated social activity in distinct contexts that are historically shaped and include people who carry their own varied histories into those contexts. I will introduce the ideas around scale here first and then go on to discuss chronotopes, following the order in which they first came to prominence in sociolinguistics. I will end by briefly outlining some directions of criticism of these constructs.

Spatiotemporal scales

Scale is definitely the keyword in any analysis of globalization. The term globalization itself suggests a process of lifting events from one level to a higher one, a global one, or vice versa, and a sociolinguistics of globalization will definitely need to explain the various forms of interconnectedness between levels and scales of sociolinguistic phenomena. (Blommaert, 2003, 608)

The idea of different scales of human activity is a familiar one, such as with regard to the differences in uses of language amongst intimates in family or local communal settings in contrast to relations and uses of language between, for example, citizens and state officials in institutional settings, where family and state are seen as different scales of human activity. However, the notion of scale is given a particular and distinctive meaning in the

sociolinguistics of globalization as developed by Blommaert who drew on sociology, on Immanuel Wallerstein’s World Systems Analysis (WSA) in particular, for the idea of the uneven development over several centuries of capitalism as profit-driven economic activity, based on a division of labour at the global level and the development of a world market into a multi-scalar system, consisting of core, peripheral and semi-peripheral regions, along with divisions into rural/urban, regional, national and international scales within and between these regions. Wallerstein, in developing the concept of scalar TimeSpace (e.g., in Wallerstein, 1998, 71), drew on the writings of the historian Fernand Braudel for the idea of multiple time-spans and their effects - in particular, three broad times or ‘durations’ - firstly, that of the *longue durée* (a history of long-term, slow change with recurring cycles); secondly, the *histoire sociale* or ‘*histoire conjuncturelle*,’ a time of “slow but perceptible rhythms . . . one could call it social history, the history of groups and groupings” (Braudel, 1984, I, 20); and thirdly, episodic history, the short time span or history of episodes or events in the daily lives of individuals and places. Wallerstein (2004, 18) identified *the longue durée* as “the duration of a particular historical system”, such as the present system of capitalist production and trade that has lasted over centuries so far, and he drew on this concept of history and social structure to develop a perspective where social structural processes happen at a level of almost timeless rhythms of large-scale motion and change and have a shaping influence on the social histories of groups, as well as on the daily activities of individuals and places. The driver of social activity for WSA is the socio-economic and-political world operating at the level of an integrated and interlinked system, but operating at different scales of activity. Scales point to the situatedness of social exchanges and activities within this interlinked system and include a local scale, a national scale and a global or transnational scale, situated in a hierarchy of causation and influence. Lower level processes operate in specific spaces in shorter time-spans, by way of ‘events’ or episodes in the daily lives of individuals and places, whereas these in turn are shaped by the longer rhythms of particular social or institutional histories, the placed or situated dynamics of cultural practices which are in turn shaped by, respond to and have effect on the almost timeless processes of the *longue durée*, the long-term cycles of human history.

Scales in scales theory in sociolinguistics

Blommaert (2015, 11) suggested that scale in sociolinguistics was developed and presented as a concept that might do exactly what Braudel and Wallerstein used it for: to make fine stratigraphic distinctions between “levels” of sociolinguistic activity, thus enabling distinctions as to power, agency, authority and validity that were hard to make without a concept that suggested vertical – hierarchical – orders in meaning making..

Blommaert (2010, p. 34) followed this direction to define scales according to space and time in the following way:

	Lower scale	Higher scale
Time	momentary	timeless
Space	local, situated	translocal, widespread

In this perspective, sociolinguistic and discursive phenomena (incidents of talk and/or

writing, but including other kinds of semiosis) are “essentially *layered*, even if they appear to be one-time, purely synchronic and unique events” (Blommaert, 2007, 3). This layering is a result of the fact that the immediacy of interaction and expression is performed by people by way of linguistic resources that bring a history and a socially loaded impetus to that event, and contribute to its shaping, so that unique instances of communication simultaneously point towards social and cultural norms, genres, traditions, expectations — “phenomena of a higher scale-level” (Blommaert 2007, 4). Blommaert (2010, 36) argued, following both Wallerstein and Braudel, that local scales are momentary, situated and restricted, while the codes and literacies of dominant groupings are valued at a translocal level because they are resilient, highly mobile and dominant groups can “jump scales”, that is they can shift from using locally available ways of communicating to higher level or elite registers, that serve to put others ‘in their place’, to silence them, or to assert superiority over them. As Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouk (2005, 198) explain this scalar perspective:

multilingualism is not what individuals have and don’t have, but what the environment, as structured determinations and interactional emergence, enables and disables.

From this perspective, while people might maintain their linguistic (and social) competence when they move across spaces, and even add to their linguistic repertoires, they can nonetheless appear relatively incapacitated, inarticulate and ‘out of place’ when they cross spaces. The processes of mobility, around migrations of people from one part of the globalized world to another create differences in value, for the resources are reallocated different functions. Particular linguistic resources, often those of people in the peripheries of the global economy, do not travel well. To make sense of these dynamics, sociolinguists need to read linguistic events locally as well as translocally under globalized conditions. For example, when (American) English enters the repertoire of language users in a specific setting, carrying with it a translocal authority, it needs to be observed how it creates a new balance of value for the other language varieties in the local repertoire, rather than simply replacing them. Also, that “what is globalized is not an abstract Language, but specific speech forms, genres, styles, and forms of literacy practice” (Blommaert, 2003, 608), including a degree of vernacularisation of the translocal resource to serve specific pragmatic functions in that setting. At the same time, access to such high-status resources as translocal languages is usually subject to inequality of access (Dong and Blommaert, 2011).

As conceived in WSA, the importance of hierarchy and verticality are central to the concept of scales, along with centres and peripheries, as sites of power and powerlessness, stemming from the effects of a world system. But in the sociolinguistic of globalization there have also been attempts to modify the macro-micro, structure-agency determinist implications of a hierarchical scalar model of social power. It has been pointed out that the effects of social power on language use are only always performed or enacted, where people do the work of scaling (for example, by identifying different ways of speaking or writing as lower-scale and inferior) and so scales are seen as not fully predictable in their effects or meanings (Spitzmüller, Busch and Flubacher, 2021). Blommaert (2020,6) in a retrospective on scales theory in sociolinguistics came to acknowledge that

scales carry too much of a suggestion of stable, static and clear-cut distinctions (as when we speak of ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ in relation to scales) and risk being too blunt an object for making the microsurgical distinctions we need to be able to make in actual analysis.

I will go on to introduce the idea of chronotopes now, then briefly discuss examples from the research literature that has drawn on both or either of these constructs, and conclude by pointing very briefly to directions of criticisms of these ideas in social theory and in sociolinguistics.

Chronotopes

The idea of chronotopes was first developed by Bakhtin writing in the 1930s to discuss the emergent novels or *bildungsroman* of the 19th and early 20th centuries. He used the term (coined from his readings about relativity, time and space in Einstein's physics) to identify the relativity of language with regard to its meaning and effects. He did so, firstly, in his assessment of Goethe's creative writing, because of Goethe's insights on historically relative subjectivity, as seen in the characters in his novels: "His seeing eye saturates landscape with time – creative, historically productive time" (Bakhtin 1984, 36). Bakhtin described this manner of seeing time in locality as chronotopic seeing, a visualizing of place as shaped by social activity over time and as shaping the people located there, while in contrast, obstacles and events did not shape the personalities of the ancient heroes in early Greek literature, nor of the heroes of contemporary adventure narratives, who were the same personalities throughout their ordeals and accomplishments.

At first, Bakhtin (1984, probably written in 1936-7) identified only this kind of situationally-sensitive creative writing in early modern and contemporary novels as chronotopic writing, but in his next extended writing on chronotopes, in the chapter 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' in *The Dialogical Imagination* (Bakhtin, 1981, probably written in 1937-8 with an added chapter in 1973), he went on to identify a differing chronotopic dimension to all creative prose-writing, including in the 'adventure time' of the Greek narratives, and he remarked in passing that language outside of literature as well "is fundamentally chronotopic" (Bakhtin 1981, 251). He saw these chronotopes as multiple and dialogic within single literary works. 'Major chronotopes' provided the overall narrative structure for particular works and genres of literature, and 'minor chronotopes' shaped particular events and encounters of all kinds. Amongst the minor chronotopes he identified in 18th, 19th and early 20th century literature were 'the encounter on the road', 'the Gothic castle', 'the parlor or the salon', 'the provincial town', the 'idyll' in several forms, and 'the threshold' (Bakhtin, 1981), each of them distinct in the social activity that occurred under particular Timespace conditions.

One chronotope that he focused on in some detail, firstly with regard to 18th century literature, is 'the idyll', and he identified several sub-types, including the love idyll which he saw as drawing on the same pastoral form; the family idyll, and also farming work and craftwork themes, all of them indexing a pre-industrial state of affairs and tempo. Although varied and sometimes mixed amongst themselves in particular literary outputs, these varieties of the idyll chronotope have in common what Bakhtin identifies as "the immanent unity of folkloric time" (Bakhtin, 1981 225) characterized by "the special relationship that time has to space" in the idyll:

an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies,.. where the fathers and grandfathers lived and where one's children and their children will live.. This unity of place in the life of generations weakens and renders less distinct all the temporal boundaries between individual lives and between various phases of one and the same life."

Characteristically, in the idyllic chronotope what Bakhtin calls “basic life-realities” are present in “softened form” and as sublimated to the gentle rhythms of an idealized rural tempo, in contrast to the complexities and disjunctions of everyday life. In discussing various historical examples of the idyll in literature, Bakhtin describes how the “organic time of idyllic life is opposed to the frivolous, fragmented time of city life or even to historical time” (ibid.) in several eighteenth century idylls, and he sees the significance of the idyll in the later development of the European novel as enormous, including a focus on provincality in literature, often in contrast or juxtaposition to the urban or urbane.

In contrast, the chronotope of ‘the provincial town’ in the literature of Gogol, Chekov, Flaubert and others is a site of ennui or “provincial longing: a yearning away from provincial stagnation for another kind of life somewhere else” (Klapuri, 2013, 128), typical of a slowed down, empty and cyclical time:

Here there are no events, only ‘doings’ that constantly repeat themselves. Time here has no advancing historical movement; it moves rather in narrow circles. [...] Time here is without event and therefore almost seems to stand still. [...] It is a viscous and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space. (Bakhtin, 1981, 247-8)

In contrast again, the parlor and the salon, as well as the encounter on the road, are typical of saturated and accelerated contexts in variable spaces, along with “a higher degree of intensity in emotions and values” (Bakhtin, 1981, 243), involving “the weaving of historical and socio-public events together with the personal and even deeply private side of life” (1981, 247).

While it operates as a plot device, the literary chronotope is clearly more than that for Bakhtin. It produces recognisable persons, actions, meaning and values all of them rooted together, in and along with language in distinct and changing social settings, following from Bakhtin’s insistence on the fundamentally social nature of language - “social through its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning” (Bakhtin 1981, 259). He sees the chronotope as addressing “the problem of assimilating real time, that is, the problem of assimilating historical reality into the poetic image” (1981: 251), turning this reality into an image in which lived time becomes palpable. He summarises the central importance of the chronotope as follows:

“In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope” (1981, 84)

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Agha (2007, 321) repurposes the chronotope as a cultural phenomenon, where the chronotope offers a “semiotic representation of time and place peopled by certain social types” in or across particular settings. Language research has since used the chronotope to investigate the role that context plays in social identities and language use, using the focus on timespace to identify the sociocultural and sociolinguistic specificity of any language event in located social activity. Such moments show us “depictions of place-time-and-personhood to which social interactants orient when they engage each other through discursive signs of any kind” (Agha, 2007, 3230). The chronotope in sociolinguistics points to how meaningful signs in time and place coalesce into orientations, narratives and practices, both with regard to how sense is made of what has

gone before as well as how what happens next should take shape. What people are up to, at any given moment where language is being used, their socio-cultural activity, needs to be understood as interwoven or entangled with particular uses of language.

In illustration, Blommaert and De Fina (2017, 2) describe contemporary “student life” at universities as one emblematic example of chronotopic organisation of life and language, where

(t)he specific time-space of student life involves particular activities, discourses and interaction patterns, role relationships and identity formation modes, particular ways of conduct and consumption, of taste development and so forth

Language provides both an undergirding or framing, and is also a product of this specialized life-world and the identity practices of the participants. Chronotopes are theorized here as units of social activity where language frames social roles and is framed by them, and is contextually specific along with social identities, such that “a precise understanding of timespace configurations is essential to account for a great deal of the sociocultural work performed in interaction” (Blommaert 2020, 17). Such language-in-use is always more than the denotational codes of lexicon, grammar and syntax and is also always connotational or indexical, i.e., it points to and is shaped by individual, cultural and socio-political interests and agendas which are identifiable in the ways that speakers and writers express themselves as recognisably certain kinds of people engaged in identifiable socially-situated actions and activities.

Recent sociolinguistic and anthropological research offers several examples of the chronotopic perspective on language and socio-cultural practice with regard to migrants, immigrants and migrant communities, only some of which use a scalar perspective as well. In one influential example of sociolinguistic ethnography, Dick (2010) studied what non-migrants in one Mexican city said about U.S.-bound migration and found that talk about migration was pervasive in everyday conversation, even for people who had never migrated and who might never migrate, because of the social and cultural centrality of migration practices in daily life, including a yearning for a distant, imagined timespace. Dick’s analysis shows how everyday talk was organized with reference to a timespace contrast between ‘progress-there’, that configured the United States in a modernist and progressivist chronotope as a land of socioeconomic mobility, and ‘tradition-here’, that understood Mexico as a place of economic stagnation, echoing modernist constructs from elsewhere, that position certain societies, nations, states or regions as ‘behind’ and needing to ‘catch up’, on the one hand, and morally superior in particular ways, on the other. This chronotopic understanding of place and identity produced cultural images of persons, including backward rural girls, where a young girl in the small Mexican town was described by another as “too country” (2010, 276) because of the way she was seen as too close to a rural identity in her talk and behavior, and where the image of men-as-migrants was a common type. The imagined idea of improvement and progress in the USA was strong enough as a chronotope to endure for immigrants in the USA along with the contradictory reality of their unemployment and hardship in their new settings. Complicating this idealized modernity, however, was a moral overlay, consequent on inherited cultural mores and Catholic church teachings in Mexico, where the USA was seen a place of moral dissolution and Mexico as a land of morality and family. This chronotopic lamination led to a view where transnational migration was seen as a way to make progress but at the risk of moral collapse, while the slower pace of Mexican life was seen as providing time for relations with family and

neighbours, for sociality and morality. Some men who had not left Mexico but who had succeeded locally described themselves as having attained the progressive benefits associated with life in the USA while keeping the cultural benefits of life in Mexico. As Dick (2010, 277) says, “it is important that we address the local resonances of these frameworks and the particular kinds of social and interactional work they help actors accomplish”. Notably, the chronotopic organisation of migration narratives here bear strong echoes of Bakhtin’s examples, such as the slower and idealized time of the rural and family idylls and the ennui of the provincial town.

In a study of migrants that has resonances with Dick’s (2010) study, Creese and Blackledge (2020) report on two migrant women from Poland, with no connection to each other, one in Birmingham and the other in London, who both mobilize characterisations of ‘peasant’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ personhoods or social persona as narrative productions in their conversations with work colleagues and in their discussions with the researchers. The researchers found that these figures of the peasant and the cosmopolitan were deployed widely by these unrelated women, in their everyday speech and in other performances, with strongly similar details to their constructed characterisation, suggesting a wider cultural reliance on such meaning-making resources, and we have seen this similarity with migrants and non-migrants in a Mexican city as well, in Dick’s (2010) study above. The character of the peasant persona constructed in the women’s narratives was “backward-looking, uneducated, miserly, and provincial”, “at best unsophisticated and naïve, and at worse bigoted, blinkered, backward-looking, and intolerant” while the cosmopolitan “for the most part, was future-oriented, educated, generous, and well-travelled”, “worldly, educated, open-minded, and forward-looking”. However, the cosmopolitan figure was also typified at times as “phoney, insincere, and elite” (Creese and Blackledge, 2020, 420), reflecting, again, an ambivalence about the modernist, ‘deculturated’ persona. The cosmopolitan figure is shown as indexing the “developed” world of the metropolitan city (ibid., 421) while the peasant figure indexes “under-developed” rural life (ibid., 422), a clear echo of the modernist/traditional chronotopes of Dick’s (2010) study described above, where the peasant is linked to “tropes of tradition” while the personal biographical and everyday time of these migrant women in the city is linked to the figure of the cosmopolitan. And again, an ambivalence about the figure of modernity is expressed around the categories of insincerity, or inauthenticity in contrast to the more grounded but ‘limited’ figure of the peasant. Creese and Blackledge see the two women as reflexively “authorizing” these “stock figures” in their conversations, in contrast to which they can construct and project their own more nuanced sense of themselves and their characteristics as migrants to and residents in these Western European cities. They see these chronotopic juxtapositions as crucial in elaborating on how “fluidity, emergence, and becoming simultaneously rely on the fixed, static, and durable in identity work”. “Context is complex” they point out (ibid., 429). While it is performed in the here-and-now, the here-and-now is shot through with historical overlays of a chronotopic nature, consisting of constructs of personhood that are timespace products, serving as scripts around identity, morality and behavior in relation to which participants take up positions.

Lam and Christiansen (2022) offer a related study where they pay attention to the online “border-crossing literacy practices” of transnational Mexican migrant youths in the USA. They identify three distinct chronotopic frames: the *family chronotope*, the *hometown chronotope*, and the *transborder chronotope*, where the youths were actively engaged in

constructing situated identity practices and developing and maintaining multiple relations that spanned borders and constructed their social networks: familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political. They drew on media resources to represent themselves, negotiate participation and cultivate relationships with different communities in both their countries of residence and origin, simultaneously enhancing their linguistic resourcefulness towards participation in this range of social sites. Within the specificities and constraints of the family chronotope, they performed family roles with relatives both in the USA where they resided and in Mexico in their towns and villages of origin, where family members still resided. Using Facebook and related resources of writing and visualization, they co-constructed an ongoing family story with near and distant family members. This co-construction was made possible through the enhancement of spatial-temporal narrative resources, including deictics of 'here' and 'there', 'now' and 'then' to separate as well as to blur time and space dynamics, including their taking on an imagined presence in their Mexican family settings. Besides these cross-border family exchanges they were also engaged in identity practices tied to an idea of self that departed from and was in dialogue with both their local identities in Mexico and the USA. They followed on-line influencers and news sites that were Spanish-American and English and from elsewhere than Mexico, and got access to diverse ways of speaking and more cosmopolitan values and ways of being. And through the hometown chronotope, about where they were living in the USA, they developed the talk, values and self-identities of young people in their local environment in their USA hometown setting.

In a further study that echoes the preceding ones here, Umel (2023) describes how Filipino migrants in Germany carry a chronotopic sense of their origins in the Philippines which he calls a *homeland chronotope*, bringing with it familiar clusters of meaning and ways of being, including, notably, the concept of '*kapwa*' or 'shared identity', suggesting a relational self, accompanied by moral-social obligations to treat others with respect and dignity. New immigrants, armed with such chronotopic expectations, navigate through alternative interpellations of timespace, including those of their new home in German urban society, but also in co-ethnic encounters with Filipinos which sometimes turn out to be moments of social judgement, and conflict, where they are snubbed or treated as 'material for gossip', triggering a constellation of perplexing thoughts and emotions, especially 'shock or disbelief' and a deep sense of sadness, in contrast to their chronotopic expectations of social solidarity.

All these studies point out how people's sense of self is shaped by an historical imagination that emerges through dialogical interactions across multiple chronotopes, where

Bakhtin's chronotope is not simply a synonym for framework, orientation, or ideology. It is much more fundamental, productive of subjectivity itself in grounding our experience of temporal and spatial relationships, which themselves structure our experience of being and sociality. (Wirtz, 2016, 344)

Chronotope and scale

Karimzad, in several studies, on his own and with colleagues (e.g., Karimzad and Katedral, 2021) has used scales and chronotopes to describe the variable language ideological orientations of Azerbaijanian Iranian migrants in the USA, in particular, as well as of other migrants from Eastern Europe and West Asia, and also of children in Iran. Drawing closely on Blommaert's several writings on scales and chronotopes along with those of linguistic

anthropologists on chronotopes, he argues that chronotopes function as (differently scaled) 'mobile contexts' (Karimzad, 2020, 108), that produce "identities, behaviors, moralities and indexicalities that are invoked in social interaction to construct and construe meaning", where chronotopes are understood as 'chunks of history', following Blommaert (2015), that shape situated identities. His particular focus has been on which identifiable or 'named' language his multilingual research subjects use in what social contexts. He sees language choice as "an outcome of the interaction of personhoods and scales that determine what collectively sanctioned patterns of language use are relevant and plausible" (2021, 854). In defending his focus on named languages he points out that

while discreteness of languages is not a given thing, once it *becomes* a thing, it affects social actors' practices, realities, and ideals to various degrees—similar to other dominant ideological constructs (2021, 872)

He suggests that chronotopes and scales "enable us to *move away* from ideological categories such as named languages in our analysis, but *not do away* with them" (ibid.) because of the dominant linguistic-ideological and sociopolitical discourses that sustain the view of languages as discrete phenomena. He draws on a scalar understanding of sociolinguistic hierarchy to argue that "the lower the scale of the normative chronotopes participants orient to", meaning the more 'everyday' or non-institutional the social grouping of interactants, "the more the hybridity of their semiotic practices", while "orientation to higher scale chronotopes of normalcy", to do with more nationalist or formal social interaction, the more noticeable are ideologies of discrete languages and monolingualism. He argues that individuals develop understandings of how interaction with specific others operates within certain spatiotemporal configurations and that these understandings of normalcy are developed intersubjectively through social interaction, with regard to whether they interact in one or other 'named' language or in hybrid forms. More specifically, Iranian Azerbaijanis speak Azerbaijani (or Azeri) as their first language, but Iranian language policy considers Farsi as the unifying language of the nation, so Farsi is the dominant language of education, mass media, and administration, with the result that most Iranian Azerbaijanis are speakers of Azeri and Farsi. He argues that individual migrants to the USA develop understandings of how interaction with specific others operates within certain spatiotemporal configurations and that these understandings of normalcy are developed intersubjectively through social interaction, with regard to whether they interact in Azeri, Farsi or English and concludes that they generally regard it as normal to use Azeri amongst other Azeris, Farsi amongst a mixed group of Iranians and English amongst a group that includes Americans or other non-Iranians. He sees these distinctions as following the scales of local, national and international, and as thus corresponding to the idea of stronger or weaker chronotopes on a hierarchical scale. However, he also sees variations that contradict these broad distinctive categories, leading to new norms of interaction "within the flows and contingencies of situated action".

Fault lines in scalar, chronotopic sociolinguistics

In a paper titled 'Are Chronotopes Helpful' Blommaert (2020, 16) asked "do we really, truly need yet another word for context?" and argued that, indeed we do, because other attempts to read context have been seen to be limited, such as in Conversation Analysis where the wider social setting that shapes particular interactive moments is not given due attention, and in Critical Discourse Analysis where, in contrast, language is seen as a mere

symptom of the social, which ‘happens’ elsewhere rather than as an intertwined part of it. Scales and chronotopes are attempts to get beyond those limits, but it needs to be noted that there were disputes in sociology and social geography around scales at the time when they were first incorporated into a sociolinguistics of globalisation and there are some differences between Bakhtin’s idea of chronotopes and how it has come to be used in sociolinguistics of globalization studies. To talk about scales, first: Marston et al (2005, 418) argued that the construct of scale as an epistemology that is tied to a global-to-local continuum diverts attention from the concrete details of people’s action and interactions in the spaces where they reside and act. They suggested that we should resist conceptualizing processes as operating at scales that hover above these sites. Shields (2006, 149) thought that the centre-periphery distinctions in WSA and scales theory might be Eurocentric and technocratic – just because something is happening ‘over there’ doesn’t mean it is taking place at a different scale and that we need to think instead about a “socially produced *order of difference* that can be heterogeneous in and of itself”. Shield’s point is that situated discourses about place and identity are best seen as accomplishments, often contested ones, rather than systemic effects. Van der Pijl (2009, 180) criticizes scales theory as systemic and functionalist, where

(a)ctors *may think* they make choices, but in fact they make these as functional components in a larger organism. Indeed the argument is that they act to maintain the system as a whole without necessarily being aware of that. That is what is called *functional behaviour*.

Law’s (2004) view was that the global is situated, specific, and materially constructed in the practices included in each specificity. There is no system, global order or network, Law (2004: 10) argued. “Instead there are local complexities and local globalities, and the relations between them are uncertain.” Featherstone similarly (2006, 370) argued that “the management of uncertainty, task predictability and orderly performances were much easier to facilitate in the ‘relatively complex’ organizations of modern industrial societies”. A global society, on the other hand, he argued, “entails a different form of complexity: one emanating more from microstructural arrangements that institute self-organizing principles and patterns”. In this light, we might re-examine what it means to refer to sociotemporal scales in sociolinguistics, what it means to upscale or jump scales as regards language use and whether we do indeed need an idea of scales to talk about situated meaning-making in contexts of social differences, inequalities, regulation, standardisation practices and disputes.

Secondly, the differences between what Bakhtin did with chronotopes and what sociolinguists who work with scales along with chronotopes do, needs some attention. Time (TimeSpace) in the scalar perspective, draws on Braudel’s time-scales where instances of language interaction are part of the momentary, situated and passing events of situated daily lives, whereas the higher scale corresponds to that of the *long duree* of slow structural time, where global languages are seen to lie, along with the language resources of elite groups at any point along the various continua from periphery to core, where lower scale is associated with “diversity, variation” and higher scale with “uniformity, homogeneity” (Blommaert, 2010, 35). In contrast, Bakhtin’s chronotope “provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events” (1981, 250). It is about the immediacy of moments, events and encounters, their representability, where situated time can be slowed down, accelerated, saturated or empty, or variations thereof. Chronotopes “do more than

merely render history palpable; they also express the experience that goes along with this palpability” (Keunen, 2010, 41). They are not about layered, systemic and hierarchical time and so don’t really fit a scalar perspective in the sociology of globalization.

In closing

In a footnote in his discussion of problems around conceptualizing the idea of ‘speech community’ in the contemporary diversifying world, Silverstein (2014, 5) referred to the “series of confusions and theoretical dead-ends – as well as unsatisfactory proposed replacements – that result from sociolinguists’ lack of sophistication in social and semiotic theory”. The question is, then, whether these applications of scale and chronotope in a sociolinguistics of mobility transcend that criticism or not.

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