

Stereotypes and chronotopes: The peasant and the cosmopolitan in narratives about migration*

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Abstract

Stereotypes are chronotopic (Bakhtin, 1994) in the sense that they make good use of character types in time and space to utter identifiable speech forms and make evident other semiotic displays. This paper argues for sociolinguistics to expand its interpretation of the chronotope to encompass the relationship between “character” and “author” in identity texts. It suggests that conflating author and character in identity scholarship, as is the case in much sociolinguistic research, risks losing an opportunity to understand how people author characters in their narratives to project sets of values and beliefs. Using linguistic ethnography, we report on two migrant women and their interactions among colleagues to illustrate their authoring of two characters, namely the peasant and the cosmopolitan. We show how these specific women mobilize these characters in narrative production to refute harmful traditions and ethnolinguistic stereotypes in favour of cosmopolitan identities which draw on broader geographical and social scales associated with the city.

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成见是具有时空性的表达, 是从时间和空间中抽取不同特征来呈现当下可辨识的话语形式, 同时为其它符号展示阐明意义。本文旨在拓展社会语言学中对时空体这一概念的阐述, 以此涵盖身份认同文本中“角色”和“创作者”之间的关系分析。本文指出, 如大多数社会语言学研究所示, 在身份认同学术讨论中, 对创作者和角色进行异文合并, 使得我们失去了理解人们如何在此类叙述中投射特定价值和观念的机会。通过使用语言人种志研究方法, 我们对两位女性移民与其同事之间的话语互动进行分析报告, 重点说明她们在互动中如何创作两个角色, 农民和世界主义者。我们展示这两位特定的女性如何在叙述过程中流动化她们的上述角色, 如何通过反驳有害的传统认识和人种志语言偏见, 来彰显她们的世界主义者身份认同, 她们来自与城市紧密连接的、更广泛的地理性社会性规模的身份认同。

KEYWORDS

chronotope, identity, migration, narrative, stereotype

1 | INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we draw on two analytical frames, namely the stereotype and the chronotope, to document the interactions of two migrant women with colleagues in two English cities, Birmingham and London. The women, a library customer experience assistant and a community artist, are not known to one another, and work in very different contexts. Winnie is from Hong Kong and works in Birmingham's new city library as a customer experience assistant, answering queries from the public. Margot is from Poland and is a self-employed actor living and working in London. They have both lived in the UK for over 15 years, and are now permanently settled. What the women share, despite their very different biographies, is a migrant background. We examine their interactions with colleagues in the library staff room and the rehearsal space. In their interactions the women talk about themselves, using typifications in the form of indexical icons, stereotypical persona, and emblematic semiotic displays. In the case of Winnie and colleagues, typifications support their friendship and articulate a shared migration history. In the case of Margot, they challenge social categorization of the migrant as she pushes back against restrictive stereotypes. Two stereotypes of the migrant in particular are put to great use and contrasted for maximum effect by the women and their interlocutors. Stereotypes of the “peasant” and the “cosmopolitan” were deployed, differentiated, and demarcated in the women's identity work. Whereas the peasant was backward-looking, uneducated, miserly, and provincial, the cosmopolitan, for the most part, was future-oriented, educated, generous, and well-travelled. However, the cosmopolitan figure was also typified at times as phoney, insincere, and elite. The characterological figures were emblematic of different migration trajectories. The women's alignment to, and distance from, the two figures reveal preferred sets of values about migration, and represent

specific forms of personhood (Agha, 2007). While neither is explicitly named by the participants, they are revealed in the way voices are reported, and values assigned. The cosmopolitan figure represents the “overlapping of cultures,” “coexistence,” “conversation,” and “civilization” (Appiah, 2006), rather than any one set of national values. The cosmopolitan figure indexes the “developed” world of the metropolitan city (Williams, 1985). The peasant, on the other hand, represents “under-developed” rural life (Williams, 1985).

A particular feature of the women's interactions with their peers was the way they deployed time and space in relation to stereotypes about the migrant. Historical time was interactionally linked to the figure of the peasant, and to tropes of traditions associated with the rural, uneducated poor. Personal, biographical, and everyday time was connected to the figure of the cosmopolitan (Woolard, 2013), and to tropes of education, culture, and the arts. The women discursively constructed their own migration journeys as cosmopolitan, distancing themselves from the peasant character. In doing so, they made salient values which emphasized learning, change, pluralism, and enlightenment, often in the face of discrimination.

Theoretically, we draw on the chronotope. Through his analysis of different literary genres, Bakhtin revealed how the “hero” in literary texts is constructed through the author's aesthetic visualizing of time/space. While our focus is on non-fictional and sociolinguistic interactions of everyday life, we argue that mundane conversations have many of the same features typically understood as literary, and which can be found in Bakhtin's theorization of literary genre (Creese & Blackledge, 2017; Tannen, 2007).

We adopt Bakhtin's scholarship on the chronotope to incorporate his interest in [literary] “character.” We tease apart “author,” “character,” and “text” to further theorize identity. Arguing that sociolinguistics has to date conflated two key elements of Bakhtin's scholarship on the chronotope, namely author and character, we will illustrate how keeping them separate in analysis allows for more nuanced accounts of identity performance. We focus on the women's authoring of reliable stock characters to foreground preferred social and ideological positions about migration. We marry Bakhtin's work on character with existing sociolinguistic studies on the stereotype to understand how fluidity, emergence, and becoming simultaneously rely on the fixed, static, and durable in identity work.

2 | THE CHRONOTOPE AND STEREOTYPE IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

“Bakhtin could be made to work ‘harder’ in sociolinguistics, particularly in relation to the chronotope,” argues Georgakopoulou (2005: n.p.). Sociolinguistics has been drawn to the chronotope in several ways, most recently, for its role in the contextualization of language use. In the “sociolinguistics of mobile resources” (Kroon & Swanenberg, 2019), it is deployed to explain how traditional structures of belonging and attachment lack explanatory force in people's mobile lives (Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton, & Spotti, 2016). In this line of inquiry, the chronotope is the “connection to historical and momentary agency” (Blommaert, 2015: 8) and overcomes “one-dimensional models of meaning” through its multidimensional accounts of time and space (p. 5). What the chronotope provides is “multiple historicities compressed into one ‘synchronized’ act of performance” (Blommaert & De Fina, 2016: 17). Blommaert (2019) speaks of the situated identity judgements which the chronotope supports. People rely on “chunks of history” in the identity work they perform in the interactional present (Blommaert, 2015: 12). Analysis typically identifies the “pivotal reflexive role of the dynamic relations between time and space” (Jaffe, Koven, Perrino, & Vigouroux, 2015: 138) in identity performance. An earlier tradition also drawing on the chronotope in sociolinguistics comes from those

working at the intersection of ideology and interaction. In a longitudinal study, Woolard (2013) invokes the chronotope to analyse the shifting nature of linguistic and national allegiance. She argues the “chronotope enables or constrains character development” (p. 211), and in particular she identifies “the cosmopolitan chronotope” as one which supports positive adaptation to new national ideologies. A cosmopolitan identity indexes an ease with “broader geographic and social landscapes” (p. 221). Woolard's focus is on how protagonists enable their own character development in their narrative accounts. We draw on both these sociolinguistic contributions in our discussion of the chronotope in this article. However, we argue for a further exploitation of Bakhtin to better articulate author and character relationships in sociolinguistic accounts of identity. Bakhtin developed the concept of the chronotope to describe how authors draw on time and space motifs to create literary characters of different types. Sociolinguistics to date has shown little interest in the way characters are authored in identity texts to articulate values and beliefs.

It is therefore important to clarify Bakhtin's conception of character, because “it occupies an essential place in his overall theory of novelistic discourse” (Wall, 1984: 42). Different genres give form to different ideologies, and present different sets of social relationships. Sociolinguistics has drawn most widely on the chronotope in relation to Bakhtin's preferred literary genre, that of the polyphonic novel. Once created, characters in the polyphonic novel should be able to speak for themselves because they are beyond the proprietorship of the author. This interpretation of the chronotope has been widely adopted in sociolinguistics for explaining how identity is never finalized, with ample space for emergence and change. While we have drawn heavily on polyphony in our research (Blackledge & Creese, 2014), our interest in this paper is on another of Bakhtin's timespace motifs, his dis-preferred genre of the epic tale. In the epic tale, characters are tightly controlled by the author, with the single voice of the author dominating. Characters exist exclusively to transmit the author's ideology. Characters are fixed because there is no historical becoming or historical localization. In the epic novel, the character is a “texted hero” who is “ready-made and predetermined” (Bakhtin, 1986: 1). The author assumes proprietorship and “discourse becomes inert and calcified, leaving no scope for further development” (Bandlamudi, 1999: 45). Bakhtin advised against such ownership of the hero by the author. However, he also argued that there are certain benefits to such heroes. They serve as reliable figures for both authors and readers. Their static nature can index sets of values and beliefs. In other words, they serve as cultural resources in social relations (Wortham & Reyes, 2015) in much the same way that stereotypes make metapragmatic evaluations which direct and guide meaning.

Reyes (2009) argues that stereotypes are not necessarily or always discriminatory and prejudicial. Nor is it crucial to determine whether they are “true” or “false.” Rather, they are typical features, approximate descriptors that individuals *need* to move about the world. Without stereotypes, people would be unable to draw on prior understandings of objects or people (Reyes, 2006: 6). They are essentializations or reifications which are not only based on what others do; they also help us to deal with others, to do whatever we do with them or to them. Reyes acknowledges that stereotypes can be fragile as well as stable, and circulate in media discourses with national and global reach, as well as in local discourses. In this paper, we focus on the “stereotypic persona or characterological figure” which Agha describes as an indexical icon (2007: 76) and a “single category of perceivable personhood.” An indexical icon, such as the peasant, clown, miser, rebel rouser, witch, thug, mother-in-law, etc., can be recruited to perform “a type of common lore” (p. 54). Characterological figures, according to Agha, are “highly detachable from the occasions of use and can be reinserted into different situations” (p. 54). Such a figure can be troped upon for humorous or ironic effect. Reyes (2016) suggests that the role of the researcher is to document the circulation of such figures and attend to the “discursive processes that propel images of people into circulation and thus into realms of social life where such figures can be recognized, emulated, parodied, admired, criticized, and so on” (p. 6).

Our specific objective here is to consider how two characterological figures are put into circulation by two women as they interact with colleagues. While recent work on the identity chronotope has more often focused on what Agha refers to as “relational self,” emphasizing “the living—and ever-moving-center of a person's public identity” (Agha, 2007: 238), our interest shifts more to the authoring of “types” as identifiable characters. We argue that the value of these characterological figures, like the hero of the epic tale, comes from their reliable, durable, and unchanging characteristics. The indexical icons of both the peasant and the cosmopolitan are invoked by the two women in this study as sources to challenge harmful images of the migrant, and to create moments of conviviality. While Margot challenges these constructions head on, arguing they are discriminatory, Winnie and colleagues adopt a humorous stance which nonetheless legitimizes and promotes their favoured position of the cosmopolitan. This contrast between the peasant and cosmopolitan has been captured by Raymond Williams in his treatise on “the country and the city.”

Williams (1985) has described the “country” and “city” as powerful terms because, for many people, they index a direct and intense experience and preoccupation. Ideas of country and city shape forms of consciousness through “a history repeated in many lives and many places” (p. 297). Williams argues that, in Britain, images of country and city respond to a society shaped by ideologically abstract ideas of “development,” in which “the preservation of markets,” “spheres of influence,” and “modes of using and consuming” take priority in governing social relations (p. 284). A familiar image of the city is of the developed metropole, the great buildings of civilization, libraries and theatres, towers and domes, featuring “magnificent achievement” (p. 5) and “continual dramatization” (p. 154). The country, in contrast, is on a journey of “development.” Williams points out how “peasantry” in literary writings serves as a generic word for country people, not just to describe people in parts of rural England, but also to belittle literary writers who do not come from the usual privately educated routes. Williams describes Somerset Maugham maligning Thomas Hardy for his rural past (Williams, 1985: 199):

When the ladies retired to the drawing-room I found myself sitting next to Thomas Hardy. I remember a little man with an earthy face. In his evening clothes, with his boiled shirt and high collar, he had still a strange look of the soil.

Williams argues that we should pay attention to such symbols and archetypes in order to understand their “psychological” status (p. 289). In the remaining sections of this paper, we draw on the chronotope and the stereotype to understand not only the enduring reality of the peasant and the cosmopolitan in the lives of people, but also their power to project preferred values in relation to migration.

3 | METHODOLOGY

The data presented here come from a large multi-sited linguistic ethnography which studied 19 key participants in four UK cities. The project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council,² produced 16 linguistic ethnographic city case studies which are available on the “TLANG” project website (<https://tlang.org.uk/>). Our approach was to study the way in which social relations were established in everyday interactions in which social and linguistic diversity were the norm, paying careful attention to how signs were produced and interpreted. The overarching research question was, “how do people communicate in contexts of linguistic diversity in city contexts where a range of different languages, varieties and proficiencies are in play?” Our research design investigated 19 key participants as they interacted at work, at home, and at leisure, and focused on face-to-face encounters

and social media exchanges with strangers, acquaintances, colleagues, family, and friends. In each site, we observed each key participant 2–3 days a week for 4 months, audio-recorded them at work and at home for 2 days a week, and video-recorded at work and home where feasible. A typical data set for one thematic city case study was as follows:

- 30+ individual researcher field note accounts amounting to over 120,000 words of observations;
- 30 hours of audio recorded data (work and home);
- 2 hours of video data (work);
- 5 hours of interview data;
- 500+ photographs.

Precedent in the narratives of the two women selected for inclusion in this paper was the way Winnie and colleagues, and Margot, relativized the geographical and social landscapes of countries of origin with current places of settlement. This juxtapositioning allowed the women to challenge traditions they considered at times harmful, but also at other times humorous, or ridiculous. Throughout their narratives and performances about rural India, China, and Poland was a desire to distance themselves from harmful, often gendered, ethnolinguistic identities too tightly defined by tradition. They achieved this by drawing on broader time and space scales associated with cosmopolitan life. This intervention allowed the women to reduce the significance of former identities (Woolard, 2013).

Winnie migrated to the UK in 1990. A full ethnographic account of her participation in the research can be found on the project website (Blackledge, Creese, & Hu, 2016). Winnie married her English husband while in Hong Kong, and shortly afterwards moved to Birmingham where she had two children, now both adults. She did not go to university but describes attending evening classes and lectures to learn about different countries and cultures. Winnie was in her 40s at the time of data collection. She had been working at the library of Birmingham since 1996. She had worked in Birmingham's city libraries for over 20 years as a customer experience and information assistant.

Margot migrated to the UK in 2003. A full ethnographic report is available on the project website (Hua, Wei, & Lyons, 2016). Margot was born in the north-east of Poland, near the Belarussian border. She first came to the UK to visit a friend. She was supposed to stay for 10 days but decided not to return to Poland. She has a BA degree in acting from a drama school affiliated to a UK university, and was working towards a Diploma in Translation at a university in London immediately preceding the research project. Margot was in her early 30s, and lived in East London. She became a self-employed artist in 2014, and describes herself as a theatre maker, producer, and “language obsessive.” With several part-time jobs, Margot's working life was very hectic. Margot's interest in language, performance, and translation meant she was very well attuned to many of the issues of interest to the research team. Throughout the data collection period, Margot was creative with language, engaging in double voicing, irony, evaluation, and parody.

4 | CHRONOTOPIC IDENTITIES IN MARRIAGE AND MIGRATION NARRATIVES

While collecting data in the Library of Birmingham, we audio-recorded an extended discussion about wedding practices which took place in the library assistants' coffee-break. The participants in the discussion were Winnie (a migrant to the UK from Hong Kong), Rachel (a researcher from the project and a migrant to the UK from mainland China), and Anju (a migrant to the UK from India). Winnie and Anju had worked together at the library for some years at the time of the exchange. Anju and

Winnie each had two adult children. As we join the discussion, Anju is telling Winnie and Rachel that her daughter has just broken up with her boyfriend, who happened to be from Hong Kong. Details of transcription can be found in the appendix.

EXCERPT 1: ARRANGED MARRIAGE

W: Winnie (customer experience assistant/key participant)		
A: Anju (colleague)		
RH: Rachel (project researcher)		
1.	A:	young love. ha.
2.	RH:	yes. but will you accept a Chinese to be your son-in-law?
3.	A:	if my daughter loves him. I wouldn't mind. it's just like
4.	W:	you have to encourage her then. I don't mind. I don't mind. tell her you don't mind.
5.	A:	ok it's your son then Winnie. would you like a doctor daughter-in-law?
6.	W:	like daughter-in-law?
7.	A:	yeah. will you?
8.	W:	yeah, why not, I don't mind, I don't mind
9.	A:	there you are then! [laughs] let's arrange a wedding
10.	W:	let's arrange a wedding. ah!
11.	RH:	yeah an arranged marriage! [all laugh]
12.	W:	back into old time oh ah
13.	A:	we are trying to get rid of that. I did promise her that because my wedding was an arranged marriage. and I did promise them that. you know what. I'm not going to let my daughters go through what I've been through
14.	W:	um
15.	A:	so let them make their choice. I mean I was qualified as well. I was from old school
16.	W:	what do you mean by qualified? qualified what?
17.	A:	you know when you are back home if you are not qualified like. let's say. I won't call it xxx level. just like GCSE level.
18.	W:	oh oh educated you mean like qualified oh I see
19.	A:	I was more than qualified. I was going xxx for a degree or more. but still my parents didn't ask for. just you know. ok, just
20.	RH:	marry you off.
21.	A:	and I dunno. I just went along with it.

The image of the wedding, with its characters of the young and happy bride and groom, provides the initial backdrop to this conversation. Anju jokingly suggests that Winnie's son may be interested in her educated daughter. But the picture of “young love” is quickly crushed, and replaced by a picture of the bride shackled by tradition, ignorance, and “old school” principles.

In the opening section, the three women invoke national categories to establish a shared set of values about the acceptability of inter-cultural marriage. They acknowledge that national and ethnic

difference should not interfere with their children's wishes. This common ground allows Anju to suggest "let's arrange a wedding" (line 9). This is both light-hearted and culturally charged discourse. Indeed, it is a joke *because* it is culturally charged. It is permitted because it is not serious: there is no actual suggestion here that an arranged wedding may be in prospect. Rachel picks up the suggestion with an echo, but changes "arrange a wedding" to the more familiar, and more culturally charged, "arranged marriage." At line 12, Winnie responds by locating arranged marriages in the past, saying "back into the old time." Anju agrees, saying "we are trying to get rid of that." Here "that" is associated with the practice of arranged marriage, and the darkness of the past. The interaction captures the chronotopic nature of cultural practices knitting together "generations, anachronisms and obsolete cultural practices" (Blommaert, 2015: 5).

Anju shapes the focus of the discussion by introducing a personal family narrative. She tells Winnie and Rachel that her own wedding was an arranged marriage, and she had promised that she was "not going to let my daughters go through what I've been through." At lines 17–23, Anju relates a short narrative in which she three times repeats the word "qualified." The point of her story is that her education was interrupted by her marriage. In Bakhtin's terms, the short narrative displays rapid heterochrony (Falconer, 2010), moving from the harmful traditions of historical time, through the harsh lessons and realizations of biographical time, to the reconciliation of present everyday time.

Many voices in the interaction work to support the three women's values. For example, great significance is given to "qualified" persona, such as the doctor daughter-in-law. Even Winnie's question, "what do you mean qualified?," allows for further insistence on the importance of education. The three women move across the themes of mixed marriages, arranging marriages, and arranged marriages. Their beliefs about the importance of education emerge, and direct the conversation. While there is no explicit mention of the peasant or cosmopolitan, there is reference to the educated and the uneducated. In the countryside, access to an open marriage market is limited, choice is restricted, as is recourse to law (Williams, 1985). The women argue for access to improvement, intercultural understanding, development, and change. As the discussion continues, the three women extend their interest into customs related to arranged marriage in both China and India.

EXCERPT 2

1.	W:	but all these. all the olden time. when they you know in China. how it used to be like. oh
2.	RH:	arranged marriage as well [inaudible as A and RH speak together]
3.	A:	really?
4.	RH:	you know in old China.
5.	W:	wait. how many years ago? a thousand years ago. arranged marriage?
6.	RH:	not that old
7.	W:	a hundred years ago maybe?
8.	RH:	yeah at least
9.	W:	my my mum was arranged marriage.
10.	A:	oh ours is like still happening. a lot. especially in the countryside. see it's the other way round here. countryside is very rich
11.	RH:	yeah

12.	A:	back home countryside is completely opposite. so it's still happening there Winnie.
13.	W:	still happening oh.
14.	A:	I mean.
15.	W:	the villages or the city?
16.	A:	city as well.
17.	W:	[to RH:] did your parents arrange marriage?
18.	RH:	no
19.	W:	so it's already liberated. isn't it?
20.	RH:	they moved to the city.
21.	W:	oh they moved?
22.	RH:	they got to know each other in the university.
23.	W:	ah
24.	A:	it's different.
25.	RH:	I think that arranged marriage still was there depending, depending on the situation.
26.	A:	that's what I'm saying. like it's your personal. back home still a lot especially on what should I say? dowry and all that as well.

The here-and-now of the tea-break conversation sits in dynamic tension with other timespaces, as discourse moves not only between the synchronic and the diachronic, but also between the “trans-local” and the “local.” While some of the talk is located with reference to broad histories of cultural practices in China, India, and (implicitly) the UK, some is located with reference to local family narratives. In the discussion, chronotopes are invokable histories, elaborate frames in which time, space, and “patterns of agency coincide, create meaning and value, and can be set off against other chronotopes” (Blommaert, 2015: 9). The discussion is replete with translocal and local contexts, as discourse weaves indexically between “old China,” “in China,” “old time,” “a thousand years ago,” “a hundred years ago,” “still happening,” “still was there,” “in India,” “back home,” “the countryside,” “the city,” “the university,” and “here.”

Timespaces are crucial dimensions of the tiny narratives which do so much identity work. Discussion of arranged marriage at the level of the individual scales up to discussion of historical cultural practices in China and India. The identity work going on here is chronotopically organized, with reference to specific timespace configurations. Topics move swiftly from history, politics, and culture to family and personal relationships. Narratives draw on historical, biographical, and everyday time. Spatiotemporal configurations clash, illuminating different world views as newly educated, upwardly mobile, metropolitan graduates are dialogically set against traditional, uneducated, countryside dwellers. Two sets of character types emerge as socially meaningful. The image of the ignorant is contrasted with the enlightened, and the oppressed with the liberated.

A little while later, the three women remember that the audio-recorder has been recording their conversation. Anju jokes to Winnie, “we have it on record, you did accept my daughter as your daughter-in-law.” At this Winnie laughs and maintains the role of the future mother-in-law, and asks how much dowry she should expect from Anju:

EXCERPT 3

1.	A:	what time is it please?
2.	W:	huh?
3.	A:	what time is it?
4.	W:	5 o'clock. I bring this with me.
5.	A:	OK xxx.
6.	W:	yes. oh. I just realize. the conversation we have is recording.
7.	RH:	oh.
8.	A:	that's good.[laughter and inaudible chat between RH and A]
9.	RH:	so which means you are also involved as well. you are involved.
10.	A:	actually we got it on record that you did accepted my daughter as daughter in law. [laughter]
11.	W:	oh my god [laughter] arranged. [laughter as A and RH talk]
12.	RH:	we have our own confirmation
13.	W:	how how much dowry?
14.	A:	uhum you didn't agree to that.
15.	W:	dowry yeah. [laughter and inaudible chat]
16.	A:	she didn't ask for it [inaudible overlapping talk].
17.	W:	OK I can ask now actually [laughter and inaudible talk]
18.	A:	OK. we talk about it later. yeah. yeah. [laughter]
19.	W:	where's your gold ring and everything you get ready for your daughter?
20.	A:	no no no
21.	W:	because otherwise I don't accept her
22.	A:	I just gave her qualification
23.	W:	aw. I know it's good
24.	A:	but you still want to try yeah? [laughter]
25.	RH:	you'll talk about later on [laughter]
26.	W:	in Chinese when they wedding. they got to say how many banquets is it called banquet? how many table? you know you holding the ban- quets for the wedding? is it the Indian do it as well? or Pakistan?
27.	A:	no in India they would say like how many guests you are going to have and how many guests I am going to have.
28.	W:	so how many guests you have?
29.	A:	eh not that many. don't worry! [laughter]
30.	W:	so is it is it girl's family pay for it in Indian wedding?
31.	A:	in India it's girl's family pay.
32.	W:	ok that's ok. It's not bad then.
33.	A:	now in this country when they started to do this boy and the girl. they
34.	W:	share. share.
35.	A:	yeap. not the boy's side or girl's side but the boy girl. now they are you know. like all educated and everything.

36.	RH:	it's xxx family
37.	A:	but back home everything is the girl's
38.	W:	equal
39.	A:	no not equal
40.	RH:	even nowadays?
41.	A:	yeah. but then after the marriage you know they do like. how should I say it. a sort of reception. xxx and that's on the boy's side.
42.	RH:	ok
43.	A:	but still some people back home they still ask for it.
44.	RH:	all right
45.	A:	you know. you have to pay. they will try anything
46.	W:	ok I ah I ah understand now.
47.	A:	you understand it now. ok think about it and how are you going to pay yea. have a lovely weekend girls. it's lovely talking to you
48.	RH:	yea very nice talking to you too
49.	W:	yea see see you next week

The creative capacity of stereotypes is evident in this interaction. As Reyes (2009) points out, stereotypes are not necessarily discriminatory, nor “true” or “false.” In this small piece of theatre, Anju and Winnie take on the roles of mothers of the bride and groom, haggling over the costs of the wedding, including who will pay the dowry, produce the gold, pay for the dinner, etc. All are happy to play along with the stereotype. In an *ad hoc* mini-drama which they play out partly to entertain themselves, partly perhaps because they are now aware of the audio-recorder, and partly in a spirit of competition over their ambitions for their children, Anju makes a theatrical denial that she is offering wedding gifts: “no no no.” Winnie, equally theatrically, insists “otherwise I don't accept her.” Anju, falling back on biographical detail to flesh out her part, privileges meritocracy over plutocracy, and says she will offer only her daughter's “qualification.”

Context is complex: it is performed in the here-and-now, but the here-and-now is a dramatic, fictive timespace in which bridal dowries are argued over, gold is demanded, and educational prowess is offered. Stereotypes are deployed, and underpin the dramatic narrative, as they are agreed upon and disagreed about. The past, present, and future of characters in the dramatic narrative co-exist with the past, present, and future of the individuals taking their parts. What we see are “multiple historicities compressed into one ‘synchronized’ act of performance” (Blommaert & De Fina, 2016: 17), as colleagues use indexical icons in the form of fictive stereotypical characters, namely mothers-in-law, to battle it out for the party they represent. Anju dominates the characters she introduces. Anju's parents stand for old time, the voices of the countryside, and the uneducated arrangers of marriage. The moral force behind her narrative is not to behave like the peasant and her/his negative ways. The interaction creates a moment of pleasant conviviality, drawing on stereotypes to project a shared set of values. On behalf of themselves and their children, they turn their backs on the traditions of the past, laugh at them, and give thanks that their own children now have choices that neither they nor their parents had. These biographical migration narratives show a strong orientation towards the enlightened cosmopolitan.

5 | CHRONOTOPIC IDENTITIES IN PERFORMANCE

Margot is an actor, and generally uses language in playful, animated ways. She draws on recognizable character types in her stage performances and films, to engage with different sets of values. Appiah

(2006) argues that every human civilization uses the arts to reveal its previously unrecognized values or undermine the values it has settled into. As a performer, Margot is adept at turning stereotypes into resources for realizing social actions, which include challenging her audience and the research team to reflect on their own values in relation to migration. The examples we present are of three types. The first is a short film that Margot produced as an entry into a public competition. The second is an audio recording of an interaction with colleagues as they worked together on a new stage performance piece. The third is an interview with a project researcher following the audio recording. As we will see, Margot invokes the peasant and cosmopolitan characters in her performance to raise questions about the stereotyping and discrimination she experiences in everyday life.

EXCERPT 4: FILM: LIE BACK AND THINK OF ENGLAND

In her attempt to secure funds and raise the profile of her work, Margot came across a call for a project with the theme “Lie back and think of England.” In the performance piece, Margot wears a red dress with white polka dots and a scarf, and answers questions from a friendly but inquisitive voice, played by the project researcher, who agreed to be the interviewer asking Margot questions about what she is doing and who she is, while cooking a potato dish. The full film is nearly seven minutes in length. There are three main scenes.

Scene one: Margot peels potatoes in the garden and declares that she is doing an art project.



Scene two: Margot moves into the kitchen and describes a recipe for cooking potatoes.



Scene three: Margot sits at the table and eats the potatoes with relish.



In the three still images from the film, we can see that Margot makes strategic decisions about dress and scenery. In scene one, we are in the garden, near to the earth where the potatoes have been extracted. Straight from the earth, they are taken to the kitchen, where they are prepared and brought to the table. The headscarf, fingerless gloves, faux fur coat, and timeless polka dot dress appear to be selected for their peasant appeal, but also for their arty look. In the piece, Margot displays a playfulness in which she parodies a foreign-born artist who cannot escape her positioning as an outsider from Eastern Europe. In the following extract, Margot is in the kitchen cooking and describing how to make boiled potato. Her reference to *The Guardian* is to an English liberal national newspaper that has a weekly food supplement.

1.	M:	it is a potato dish I found in the last week's Guardian at the weekend. it is an Eastern European dish that people of that region have. maybe on Sundays if they are not busy toiling. you know. in the field and stuff. so. I think it is nice. I think it's going to be really nice.
2.	Q:	can you just tell me something about yourself?
3.	M:	yeah. of course. my name is Margot. I'm a Londoner. I've lived here since. you know. always. since... always always lived here. I really like it here. I'm an artist. I dunno know what else. what else would you like to know?
4.	Q:	where were you born Margot?
5.	M:	um it's a "t" at the end actually so you pronounce that Margot ["t" pronounced very strongly].
6.	Q:	Margot ["t" pronounced very strongly]
7.	M:	yeah I know it's an unusual name. but you know it's an artistic name. so. um I mean my family are living. from what I know. from the reported history. they lived somewhere in Eastern Europe or Russia. I do not know. actually. but I'm local.
8.	Q:	are you living in East London?
9.	M:	yeah. yeah. this is where I made my home. it has been my home. since always.
10.	Q:	why East London?
11.	M:	it is just a great place. people are really nice. there is a lot of artistic inspiration everywhere. there is a lot of cultures mixing all the time. you know there is lot of migrants' influences kind of meeting here in Hackney. it's just great. it is just a joy to watch that. you know.

Note. M, Margot (artist/key participant); Q, Interviewer (project researcher).

In this short film, Margot invokes the figure of the peasant, an image which immediately yields metaphors. In Eastern Europe, people make potato dishes if they are not “toiling in the field.” Sundays provide a day of rest from their labours. Eastern Europe is a non-determinate place, and its people are of a “region” rather than a country. Eastern Europe is conflated with Russia, as people are said to live “somewhere” in that area. Her character in the film is named after the actor herself but carefully distinguished through the pronunciation of the final consonant /t/. This is said to be an “unusual” and “artistic” name. When invited to talk more about herself, “Margot” the character contrasts the peasant with the metropolitan. She is “a Londoner” and has “always always” lived in London. The character refuses to know about her ancestry as an Eastern European, or the “reported history” of family connections. Her heritage is not “there” but “here,” “I’m local” as she puts it. Home is East London, which has “always” been home: a place of cultural mixing, of artistic inspiration, a nice place, a great place, a meeting place. The performance of the peasant figure in the garden making potatoes stands in contrast to the voice of the East London artist who finds “joy” and inspiration from the cultural mixing of migrant influences. The characterizations of the peasant and the cosmopolitan are doubled-voiced and parodied. The short piece is heavily critical and ironic. It is critical of people who do not know about different nationalities in Eastern and Central Europe, critical of people unaware of the pronunciation of “Margot,” critical of the liberal elite (*The Guardian* readers) who uncritically celebrate icons of cultural and ethnic differences, including food.

However, some values are more clearly aligned to, and preferred. She is a Londoner and local. The character refuses to be defined by the past, and favours the continuities of the present. The “always” and the “local” of East London are preferred to the opaque settings of the past. The text is heterochronic (Falconer, 2010), with temporal and spatial certainties contrasted with maximum effect. Her place of birth and her family’s location are not fully known. These peasant characters are closed, and located in the past, in an unchanging rural landscape. This contrasts with the character in the present, who is alive and open to all the experiences of living in East London. The clash of time and space within the film illuminates the tensions migrants face as they navigate the different identity positions assumed about them. The text is also heteroglossic, comprising many voices in tension with one another (Hua et al., 2016). The artist character speaks directly to the liberal elites (including the research team), to romantic notions of cultural diversity, and also to the ignorance and discrimination of stereotyping migrants as all the same. As Hua et al., (2016) argue in their original analysis of the film, “The mockery, and indeed the ingenuity of the piece, is that these celebratory claims about cultural diversity and mixing are part of the character’s manoeuvres to assume a cosmopolitan identity” (p. 32). The character is fictional, but it draws upon Margot’s personal experience of being an artist living in London.

EXCERPT 5: SHOUTING POLISH

In this recording, Margot is working with two male collaborators in a rehearsal space. Nigel is another artist who is improvising and discussing ideas with Margot about their next performance piece. Alfie is a technical assistant who will help produce the piece for the stage. They are in the early stages of designing the piece and have been discussing using “bad” German in the performance. We join the recording as Nigel has suggested that Margot also uses “a bit of Polish” in their play. Margot is against the idea because she considers it would reinforce stereotypes.

N: Nigel (artist)

M: Margot (artist/key participant)

A: Alfie (technical assistant)

1. N: can I ask that you think about whether you could bring a bit of Polish in? I'm not saying it's important but I think if you could think of a way of bringing a bit of Polish in. it would just add an extra

2. M: mm
3. N: thing.
4. M: I just I just feel very self-conscious speaking Polish on stage I just.
5. N: do you?
6. M: not in the way like oh I'm I'm not shy to speak it. but I find it hard to justify it
7. N: but if you're a Polish person.
8. M: yeah paradoxically I find it hard to justify it because
9. N: why should you find it hard to justify it just out of just out of interest?
10. M: because then. bec- because to me it's like something different if the two of us agreed that we are speaking languages that neither one of us speaks very well or at all
11. N: yeah
12. M: then we're just toying with an idea. but it's just easy if I'm just like now I'm gonna speak Polish [marked, mockingly proud] because I can! um
13. N: yeah but I speak English because I can
14. M: (...) yeah (...) but this is an English-speaking
15. N: maybe
16. M: audience and I think the stakes are not high enough for me for example if I speak Polish and then English. look at me. ain't I great! whereas people they just speak one language. I'm just generalizing our audience
17. N: mm
18. M: they only speak. hardly anyone from the audience are going to understand Polish and then
19. N: and couldn't you say for instance that ok we're the last two people in this space you insist on (..) badly speaking German or trying to speak German couldn't you at least have the consideration and politeness to try try to learn a bit of Polish which is what I would speak if if you could understand any of it.
20. M: because in my in my head every time you. this is this is awful but every time I think of Polish being used on stage the only the only the only times I heard that being. that being done in kind of English context.
21. N: mm
22. M: is when somebody is like playing stereotypical
23. N: oh Margot
24. M: Polish person.
25. N: that's not a reason for not doing it then
26. M: and then just shout out stuff like
27. N: if that's part of what's going on in your head then I think you should do some of it in Polish.
28. M: if I can pass it as normal conversation.
29. N: that's entirely valid.
30. A: character and like just cos he doesn't understand you you still feel the need to speak Polish. so maybe so maybe when you get angry with him you maybe shout at him in Polish or something or
31. M: but that's exactly what I'm talking about I don't want to be doing that because to me it's like
32. A: it's a stereotype to you.
33. M: yeah
34. N: why? hang on. what. being angry is a stereotype?
35. M: no shout in your native language when you are cross with somebody.

This is an uncomfortable conversation, in which different values appear to be at play. While Nigel and Alfie adopt a “liberal” perspective that multilingualism should be used to challenge a monolingual audience, Margot’s view is more cautious. She appears to believe that the hegemony of English is so well entrenched that for her to use Polish would perpetuate stereotypes about other languages and their speakers. Nigel and Margot are debating different beliefs about language. Nigel believes that Margot should use her Polish, and that the English audience should accommodate to hearing something they don’t understand, while Margot argues that Polish should not be used symbolically in such a way. To do so would be to stereotype the language, and its speakers. In particular, “shouting” at an English-speaking audience in Polish would reproduce damaging stereotypes.

In line 7, Nigel imposes a national identity on Margot—“but if you are a Polish person,” which Margot grudgingly accepts, but counters with “paradoxically I find it hard to justify.” Margot’s thinking appears to be that, while it is acceptable to use bad German because neither of them “speak” it, she is not willing to use Polish unless she can “pass it as normal conversation.” She speaks of high stakes in using Polish and supports her arguments by stepping out of the rehearsal space into an imaginary encounter with the audience: “Now I am going to speak Polish because I can” (line 12) and “Look at me, ain’t I great?” (line 16). Both utterances mock herself as a bilingual in a monolingual environment. Her proficiency as a bilingual sets her apart, and potentially positions her as arrogant. In line 30, Alfie aligns with Nigel’s attempts to encourage Margot to use Polish, and suggests, “so maybe when you get angry with him you maybe shout at him in.” But this is exactly the kind of stereotyping Margot wishes to avoid. The iconic value of languages is at stake here. While Margot is prepared to use German in this way, she will not allow Polish to be similarly exploited. She will only use Polish if it can pass as “normal conversation,” and is not used symbolically. While Polish in normal conversation might index multilingual London, its presence front stage, shouting at the audience needs careful justification. Margot stands against using Polish in an emblematic display.

While neither the peasant nor the cosmopolitan are explicitly mentioned, they nevertheless lurk as backstage figures. “Shouting” in Polish is metonymic of an uncouth, out of control figure, while Polish in everyday normal life signposts cosmopolitan London. While both Alfie and Nigel struggle to understand Margot’s argument, they accommodate to it. Both ask further clarification questions, and Alfie in particular appears to summarize Margot’s argument when he says, “it’s a stereotype to you.” These rehearsals are multi-layered contexts. On the one hand, the setting is a rehearsal space to negotiate what characters will say and do, and how they will do and say it. On the other hand, the people with different biographical histories learn from one another about how they see the world differently, and how they respect that difference (Appiah, 2006).

The topic of this conversation was picked up by the researcher in an interview. Margot explained why she did not wish to use Polish.

EXCERPT 6

I didn’t want to make it about Polish language just for the sake of it. I didn’t want to at any point have a conversation about migration or be the token foreigner I’m that in in like every other casting anyway. I don’t want to transfer it to my work that I do with Nigel and Alfie because there is no need I think. I don’t know, BBC is doing great job of stereotyping migrants anyway so I don’t need to like fortify that.

The BBC’s stereotyping of migrants relates directly to Margot’s own personal experience of being the “token foreigner.” In an extended account, she went on to describe an episode in which a BBC director failed to attend to her nationality despite employing her in her “Polish” capacity.

EXCERPT 7

for example the director when we were running through the first scene and I'll be speaking something like ok and he has the script in front of him it's like oh yeah and the Polish interpreter goes whatever but then later on he didn't remember that I was Polish interpreter. it's like and the Russian woman says. I'm like (banging on the table) I'm not Russian. I didn't say that because I thought it's counterproductive. I want this relation to be as easy as possible for me. to remember me that I'm easy to get on with. and next time he needs Russian Polish [marked] whatever actress that he's gonna call me so I can't be like. actually shut up. because that's two different countries. I can't do that so inside I was like it's hard to me. it was evident that to him it didn't matter that country if he could remember Russian he could easily remember Polish but what for? it's not really important.

Margot finds this treatment unacceptable. She experiences the director's lack of concern for her nationality as discriminatory.

EXCERPT 8

I try to not take it personally but I do take it personally because I ca- I can't come up to you know somebody from of of of black skin I can't be just like. oh you black people whatever you're from. that's offensive right? Because somehow I'm Eastern European I'm white I speak English maybe it's ok to say like oh Polish yeah I can speak a bit of Polish o kurwa (fuck) this kurwa that. or Polish. Russian. whatever. you know to me. it is a big difference.

The catch-all category of Eastern European is offensive. But she is caught in a double-bind. Like many actors, she needs work, especially prestige employment from the BBC, but she is aware that in accepting work she also perpetuates the very stereotypes she wishes to resist.

EXCERPT 9

and then again stereotypes like. if I agree to. because it's convenient for me to play a Polish nurse. because that means good money and it's BBC and stuff. but then they will. what are they actually doing are they being patronising and actually they make me play a stereotype which then is being relayed to a wider audience and then the audience's perception of foreigners is the stereotypical one or are they actually genuinely reflecting the society.

She is also very much aware that, although arts institutions like the BBC may insist on using stereotyped Polish figures, their demand for proficiency in English is exceptionally high.

EXCERPT 10

but still you have to justify it again and make it sound really good in English cause that's the language of communication not your little Polish. you know you guys running around there in the field.

Here, the peasant figure emerges again in Margot's discourse, belittled in the arts, "toiling away in the field." Margot rejects the simplicity of these stereotypes. When asked by the project researcher about

categories such as Polish, foreigner, artist, she demands a more sophisticated and nuanced account of her identity be recognized.

EXCERPT 11

1.	A:	do you see yourself as a foreigner a foreign artist or something?
2.	M:	I see myself as a Londoner this whole thing about oh I'm not foreign. I'm a Londoner. I think I am a Londoner though um um yeah but to many people I'm a foreigner. I'm the token Polish girl in the crowd
3.	A:	but you feel more a Londoner than Polish?
4.	M:	(...) I'm Polish because I was born in Poland and because that's what formed me during my forma- formative years. and London is something I chose. so I think they're both equally valid states of being.

Note. M, Margot (key participant); A, project researcher.

As is now evident, many of these tensions regarding identity, discrimination, migration, and language are central to the short film Margot submitted under the theme “Lie back and think of England.” She makes use of the characterological figure of the peasant, dressed in headscarf, peeling, cooking, and eating potatoes. She also draws upon the cosmopolitan to parody the liberal elite who espouse multiculturalism and diversity. But there is also evidence of a truer and core “relational self” in play. The Londoner is not closed off in the way the peasant and the cosmopolitan is. Margot is very much in charge of the authoring process in her short film, which she uses to reveal her values and beliefs about migration. The peasant and the cosmopolitan are both indexical icons recruited by Margot to perform “a type of common lore” (Agha, 2007: 54). Both figures are recognizable, and Margot parodies and criticizes them both. She tropes upon them for both humorous and ironic effect. Nevertheless, she performs a clear preference for the London metropole.

6 | DISCUSSION

The peasant and the cosmopolitan are expressive forms of social personae. They served to communicate preferred and dis-preferred sets of values which extend beyond the interactional moment to document trajectories of migration. We found the two characters assisted the women in negotiating the geographical and social landscape of life in British cities in the first half of the 21st century. They provided contrasting “images of man” (Bakhtin, 1981: 85, in Woolard, 2013: 211) which served the women well as they scaled their own biographies from birth in Hong Kong, China, India, and Poland to settlement in Britain. The universalism of the backward peasant and the erudite cosmopolitan as widely recognizable character types provided the women with a reliable and steadfast paradigmatic contrast in which to project a preference for change, development, and professionalism. The mobilization of the peasant and the cosmopolitan provided the women with a means to critique their pasts, join liberal and widely circulating discourses about diversity, and critique harmful stereotypes about ethnicity. The city as a locale enabled time and space configurations which supported identity as heterogeneous and polyphonic. The cosmopolitan chronotope held the social conditions for identity transformation.

The migration narratives examined in this paper disavowed the traditions of powerful individuals in isolated rural locales. Rather, they endorsed life in the city and stressed “the press and excitement of so many people, with so many purposes” (Williams, 1985: 5). The women projected an unequal dynamic between country and city with the latter advanced for its access to law, growth, and different forms of capital (Williams, 1985: 147) while the former closed down these possibilities. To be a

migrant in 21st century Britain was to claim entry to the city's public buildings, centres of culture, and places of learning. The women argued for access to the city's spheres of influence, the libraries, theatres, and universities.

The figures of the peasant and the cosmopolitan were deployed widely, implicitly or explicitly, in both everyday speech and performance pieces. Typifications of the peasant figure were at best unsophisticated and naïve, and at worse bigoted, blinkered, backward-looking, and intolerant. The cosmopolitan was for the most part worldly, educated, open-minded, and forward-looking. Both stereotypes served as a “moralized behavioral script” (Blommaert, 2017: 96), in relation to which people took up positions. Anju, Rachel, and Winnie all aligned with the cosmopolitan in the present as they talked about their children and their hopes for the future. Margot was more ambivalent about essentialization, and critiqued the peasant and the cosmopolitan. Her observations were layered, critiquing the peasant character through the eyes of the seemingly sophisticated, but ultimately discriminatory liberal cosmopolitan. However, overall she also showed a strong preference for a metropolitan Londoner identity.

Stereotypes served as a metapragmatic resource to negotiate identities in socially meaningful ways. In particular, characters were put to good effect in the creation of humour and in-group cohesiveness. Winnie and colleagues and Margot each authored the character of the peasant and the cosmopolitan in their migration accounts and retained authorial control in the message they represented. However, it is also evident that they took up different stances. The three women in the library staff room invoked stereotypes effectively in their role play as mother of the bride and groom, to have fun with traditions which ultimately they viewed as harmful to their gendered selves. The peasant persona in particular was pushed into the limelight to create moments of conviviality and laughter. Parodying arranged marriages, dowries, and wedding finances allowed them to view the peasant as clown or jester. There was a sense of the carnival in these interactions. However, such light-heartedness was also serious, given the political, social, and cultural enormity of the topic.

Margot also invoked the peasant stereotype in her film. The peasant was troped in highly recognizable ways through dress (headscarf and bright clothes), setting (close to the earth), language use (toiling, soil, fields), and artefacts (potatoes). She made similar use of the cosmopolitan liberal who reads *The Guardian*, and loves diversity and the arts. Moreover, Margot articulated her awareness of stereotypes in her improvisational theatre work. She was careful to manage the character of the peasant in her stage work with Nigel and Alfie. She was exacting in what she would allow in relation to language, identity, and culture. Shouting in Polish was forbidden because of its stereotypical power in otherwise highly restricted monolingual English contexts. Margot's rebuttal of the generalized shouting “Eastern European” was central to her ongoing identity work. While the women in the library staff room juxtaposed the peasant with the cosmopolitan, using the approximate features of the educated doctor and university graduate in positive identification processes, Margot was more hesitant. She was aware that those who position her in particular ways draw upon these characters to devalue her. She may be well-travelled, multilingual, and highly educated, but this did not stop a BBC director reproducing harmful stereotypes.

Bakhtin developed the concept of the chronotope to describe the interrelationship between author and character in time and space. All features of the chronotope are made to work in the identity narratives we have analysed. The narratives provide evidence of the women authoring characters, and transmitting ideology, morality, and values. The focus in this paper has been on the “epic” characters of these narrative pieces. Like Bakhtin's epic (anti) hero they can be relied upon not to change. In the peasant, there is no “historical becoming” or historical localization. As Bakhtin points out, characters like the peasant are “ready-made and predetermined” (1986: 13). Their invocation indexes the “durability and continuity of human identity” (Bakhtin, 1994: 19). In the narratives we have examined, the peasant is authored to mark historical and closed time. The peasant toils in the fields, upholding traditions, reflecting “old-time.” Time and space are configured as distant from the contemporary

present. The cosmopolitan, on the other hand, appears more often in present and future spatiotemporal configurations. When Winnie, Anju, and Rachel debate mixed ethnic marriages, or role play arranged marriages, it is to their children's future they refer. When Margot describes the joy of the multicultural city, however layered with irony this may be, she highlights the “always always” of living in London. The local and the present are the space and time frames of the cosmopolitan. Margot refines the cosmopolitan further by aligning with the London metropole. Evident in the migration narratives is the huge amount of “semiotic labour” (Agha, 2007) that takes place. The women constantly refute the harmful image of the peasant in favour of the enlightenment of the cosmopolitan. They are authoring their own identities through the characters they ‘write in’.


7 | CONCLUSION

Through the authoring of character types, the women carefully dissect images of migration which are made to stand for sets of values around which to (dis)affiliate. The peasant and the cosmopolitan serve as cultural resources in social relations. They are inserted into narratives to counter negative images of migration in favour of more pleasing images. In authoring such accounts, the women create moments of power and control in their preference for some images over others.

This paper has argued that theorization of the chronotope in sociolinguistics would benefit from including all elements as originally conceived by Bakhtin, those of the author, character, time, and space. Often in sociolinguistic scholarship the author and character are conflated in discussion about identity. When character is held apart from author, we can view the agentive nature of identity work, as people project their values. In the case of the cosmopolitan, the women gain from aligning with characters that are about development (Williams, 1985), defining themselves in relation to the city and its centres of culture and learning.

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ENDNOTE

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APPENDIX

Key

xxx	indeterminate speech
?	rising intonation
.	falling intonation
!	animated tone or exclamation
(.)	marked pause length in seconds
[]	additional information