Making English local
Chronotopes in language policy discourse

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This study examines the role of chronotopes in a municipal campaign to make English the official language. Drawing on theories of scale, localism, and chronotopes in discourse, this article traces how 30 town residents situated the English language in local and US history through talk and gesture. By evoking two contrasting chronotopes as they created and interpreted the language policy, people positioned monolingualism as a local tradition and multilingualism as a new, outside threat. Yet these chronotopes of local time and distant time were also recursive and fluid in two key ways. First, the US could be aligned with or against the local, which allowed English-only advocates to simultaneously criticize the nation and appeal to an idealized US past. Second, some critics of the policy reconfigured the chronotopes in order to posit multilingualism as the more authentic local tradition. These moves allowed the people involved to support, redefine and resist the English-only movement.

Keywords: Bakhtin, chronotope, English, English-only movement, discourse, gesture, language ideology, local, language policy, nationalism, scale

1. Introduction

In 2010, Lino Lakes, Minnesota passed Resolution 10-68, which established English as the town’s official language. More than a dozen other small communities have passed similar legislation over the last decade in predominately white, native-English-speaking rural and suburban parts of the US, but as one of the first in this cohort not to be challenged in court, Lino Lakes’ Resolution underscored the increasing prominence of local language policy.¹ Previous studies have

¹ The communities include Argyle and Easton, New York (Applebome 2010); Farmers Branch, Texas (ProEnglish 2007); Queen Anne’s County and Carroll County, Maryland (Knezevich 2012); Hazleton, Pennsylvania (Dick 2011); Polk County, Wisconsin (Kremer 2014); Albertville,
documented the implications of such policies for immigrants (Dick 2011) and students (Lo Bianco 2007); however, their discursive relationship to the broader English-only movement and to national identity formation remains less clear (de Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak 1999, May 2001). Indeed, these communities are participating in the long history of US arguments for monolingualism, but on a local scale and at an urgent pace that at first seem far removed from the more familiar sweeping national- or state-level campaigns that claim English as a traditional, timeless component of US culture (Baron 1990). Yet in the meetings and documents that comprised the Lino Lakes campaign, spatial and temporal scales are continually constructed and negotiated through discourse, rather than taken for granted. People often voiced their opinions on the resolution by articulating how they thought the policy, the town, and they themselves fit into political geography and history. This paper explores how the people of Lino Lakes situated the English language in space and time, in order to show how localism shapes the formulation and effects of language policy.

Space and time are not distinct in the discourse of this campaign, but are instead “interwoven” into what Bakhtin (1981) calls chronotopes (252). This concept captures the way that space and time are intrinsically connected, yet open to alternate configurations, both in people’s discourse and in their lived experiences. In Lino Lakes, participants in the public hearing deployed two contrasting chronotopes, which I call local time and distant time, each associated with different models of personhood (Agha 2007b) and “emotions and values” (Bakhtin 1981, 243). The local chronotope is characterized as stable, traditional, and tranquil, yet besieged by the instability and chaos of the distant chronotope. While these chronotopes prove durable throughout the campaign, they are also fluid and recursive (Irvine & Gal 2000). Although most people situate the town and the English language in local time, and other languages and other nations in distant time, the status of the rest of the US is much more contingent. Because the chronotopes can project onto multiple scales, the US can be aligned with or against the local, such that Lino Lakes can function alternately as a model or as a foil for the rest of the nation. Furthermore, some people reconfigure the chronotopes significantly, in order to posit multilingualism as the real local tradition, and English monolingualism as the new incoming trend. Policymakers and the public voiced all of

Alabama (Doyle 2009); Carpentersville, Illinois (Kotlowitz 2007); and Homer, Illinois (The Economist 2010). English-only policies were proposed but ultimately unsuccessful or repealed in Jackson, New York (Wright 2011); Nashville, Tennessee (ProEnglish 2008); Forty Fort, Pennsylvania (Staub 2010); and Anne Arundel County, Maryland (Knezevic 2012). This list includes the communities that received the most media coverage, but is not exhaustive: Kotlowitz (2007) estimated that at that time, 35 cities and counties “have passed or are pending passage” of English-only laws.
these possibilities throughout the campaign, which suggests that the English-only movement’s position in history and geography is less stable than is often assumed. Given that these new local policies are being successfully enacted, however, that lack of stability is actually an effective discursive strategy, since being untethered from nationalism gives the English-only movement a renewed sense of flexibility.

In the following section, I develop in more detail the disciplinary and historical shifts that have led to increased attention to scaling processes, as well as the potential for chronotope analysis to illuminate these processes. I then give an overview of the present study, before turning to discourse analysis of a public hearing leading up to the Lino Lakes vote. I analyze how people deploy, and occasionally disrupt, the two chronotopes and how they position the US and the English language.

2. Shifting scales in language policy

Language policy research is increasingly attuned to questions of scale (Hult 2010). This recent turn acknowledges that people have always had to negotiate which scales are relevant in a given situation (Blommaert 2010; Wortham and Rhodes 2012). At the same time, scale is particularly important in a moment where language policies thrive in increasingly varied and localized domains (Canagarajah 2005; Dick 2011; Spolsky 2009). This work has shown that scale connects to discourse in a number of different ways. Discourse is scalar, and scale is discursive: while “discursive processes operate within and across space and time” (Hult 2010, 8), these same discursive processes also produce our knowledge about space and time. Blommaert (2010) theorizes that people can discursively “jump from one scale to the other” (33) through “small formal cues that release dense indexical meanings” (36). Upscaling is not just discursive but ideological, in that higher scales are often associated with authority and value.

The phenomenon of local English-only policies, however, shows that scale is a more dynamic and complex issue. Scale and discourse are deeply reflexive in these cases, in that language policy discourse produces a sense of locality, yet also relies on the nature of local governments and small communities that make these policies easier to pass than they are at the national level (Spolsky 2009, 172). Furthermore, when small communities create language policies, the people involved are not necessarily attempting to upscale their linguistic authority and identity. Upscaling only happens if people believe that discourse “from nowhere” is more valuable than the token, the contextualized, the local, the situated. Indeed, valuing the voice from nowhere is a pervasive language ideology of the Enlightenment and modernity (Bauman and Briggs 2003). However, competing language ideologies create
an atmosphere where downscaling can be just as powerful as upscaling. Being a voice from nowhere can be advantageous, but so too can taking pride in being an “authentic” voice “from somewhere” (Woolard 2008, 304; see also Duchêne and Heller 2012). Thus, cases like Lino Lakes’ policy raise new questions about how both researchers and policymakers understand and view scale.

Research on local language policy, the ethnography of language policy, and chronotopes offers some ways of addressing these questions about scale, each with its own affordances and constraints. I first discuss the strengths of local and ethnographic approaches, before turning to the reasons why theories of chronotope hold perhaps the most potential for understanding cases like Lino Lakes. Recent scholarship has attended to the moment-to-moment interactions that go into creating, implementing, and negotiating language policies at every scale, and especially at the local level (Ramanathan and Morgan 2007). The rise of local and ethnographic approaches marks a turn away from language policy research’s tendency “to fall short of fully accounting for how micro-level interaction relates to the macro-levels of social organization” (Johnson 2009, 139), a turn that makes possible new insight into how “policy texts and discourses are interpreted and appropriated by agents in a local context” (Johnson 2009, 142). As Johnson implies, there have been more broad sketches of language policies than studies of people’s lived experiences with such policies. Backhaus (2012) points more specifically to a “scarcity” of city-level language policy research (226). This tendency to focus on the macro scale is rooted in the field’s history, which began with colonial and postcolonial governments deciding which languages to nationally mandate, tolerate, or forbid (Spolsky 2004, 57).

Within the US, however, there has never been such explicit formation of a national policy (Marschall, Rigby, and Jenkins 2011, Menken 2008). There have certainly been many highly visible attempts to pass national policies. Previous studies have focused on this goal to make “English the nation’s official language” through a “constitutional English Language Amendment,” and on the accompanying rhetoric of “linking language to God and Country sentiments: national unity, loyalty, strength of purpose” (Crawford 1992, ix, 17). In terms of discourse, too, some of the English-only movement’s most visible discourse has appeared in large-scale venues: congress, in online discussions, in promotional materials from U. S. English, and in state legislation, and has focused on education and immigration (Lawton 2008).

Overall, however, English-only policies have been more successful in becoming law when they remain more local than national, more implicit than explicit, more unevenly distributed than centralized, and more cyclical than consistent (Baron 1990). During World War I, for example, county “councils of defense” censored German-language newspapers in collaboration with the US postal service
Later in the twentieth century, English continued to be a local issue, as its status was codified (or not) by individual schools, in cases like *Lau v. Nichols* in San Francisco and *Martin Luther King Junior Elementary Children et al. v. Ann Arbor School District* in Michigan. This localism may seem paradoxical, since the US may be more monolingual than ever, but Johnstone (2013) notes that linguistic leveling actually often leads to heightened local discourse and ideologies about language (56). Since 2000, English-only activists and organizations like U. S. English and ProEnglish have increasingly, and successfully, focused on passing policies in small towns and counties.

While laws are necessarily situated in particular spatial jurisdictions, these policies always have a temporal component as well, often in order to link standard English with an idealized past. Tradition and monolingualism go hand in hand in these narratives, despite the fact that the United States has never been monolingual. In eliding this country’s rich history of multilingualism and linguistic diversity, these narratives facilitate a “systematic forgetting” of the linguistic past (Trimbur 2006, 580). Thus, while local language policies may be particularly visible in the twenty-first-century US, they are also part of these larger historical and ideological patterns. Much of the research on these language ideologies has focused on the local’s potential as a site of creative, subversive resistance to policies made at the state or national level that further marginalize students, immigrants, multilingual people, and people of color (McCarty 2011; Johnson and Johnson 2015; Tardy 2011).

Local language policy, however, is not necessarily about bottom-up resistance to linguistic oppression. In addition to being locally “experienced” and “resisted” (Ramanathan and Morgan 2007, 449), language policy is also locally *created* and *imposed*. Grassroots activism may be local, “but so too” are more conservative acts like “signing a presidential decree, an email memo to all staff from the vice-chancellor of a university or the Queen of England’s Christmas Day message” (Pennycook 2010, 7). Furthermore, locality is not a stable or transparent quality. Certain people, concepts, and utterances come to *seem* local or more universal through particular discourse strategies, and some speakers have more “access” to those scaling strategies than others (Blommaert 2010, 36; Hult 2010). In light of this wide range of power-laden valences, Pennycook (2010) calls for “far more rigor in our thinking about localism” if we are to “understand that all views on language are located in certain histories and articulated from certain perspectives” (5). The ways that discourse produces locality are especially salient for city-level language policies that dictate which places should be included in an English-only-speaking enclave.
Because people often articulate the local by connecting it to certain histories, identities, and affects, chronotope theory proves especially productive for studying these policy debates. This theoretical framework is valuable because it takes a more holistic view of how discourse and scale shape each other; and because it acknowledges the way that space and time are often discursively fused, rather than discussed as separate issues. Bakhtin (1981) defines chronotope as the way that time discursively “thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible”; likewise, space becomes “charged, and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history” (84). While Bakhtin focuses primarily on chronotope in the novel, he also extends his analysis to chronotopes in the “real life” experiences of readers and writers (131, see also 253). Scholars in discourse analysis have brought the concept to bear on a wider range of texts and interactions, especially people’s perceptions of globalization, migration, and modernity (Davidson 2007; Dick 2010; Woolard 2013).

Irvine and Gal (2000) suggest that discursive differences can map onto multiple levels of differentiation, through what they call “fractal recursivity” (38), and Dick (2010) has extended this notion to chronotopes in her fieldwork with Mexican non-migrants. Chronotopes have been studied at a number of scales, from representations of individual language and literacy practices (Prior & Shipka 2003) to the linguistic landscape of a city (Pietikäinen 2013) to the cultural differences between entire regions and nations (Davidson 2007). Chronotopes may be also articulated through multiple other embodied (Prior & Shipka 2003) and non-embodied (Pietikäinen 2013) modes of communication in addition to spoken and written discourse.

Chronotopes do not merely describe configurations of space-time, but also what types of people can and should inhabit those fields (Agha 2007b). By elucidating how people construct and align themselves with recognizable fusions of space, time, and identity, chronotopes “engender certain possibilities for action” (Jack 2006, 53–4). Affect is also an important element: work on modernist (Dick 2010), regulatory, and transitory chronotopes (Pietikäinen 2013) has demonstrated that even when people agree on the space-time-personhood configuration of a chronotope, they may still disagree about whether that configuration is a cause for celebration or for anxiety.

These previous studies have largely focused on how people creatively deal with monolingual or essentialized multilingual language policies, anti-immigrant sentiments, and other forms of oppression that constrain their language use, mobility, and life chances, but sites like Lino Lakes are where those policies are created, and where English comes to be concretely associated with certain people, places and times. In order to grasp the resistance to the English-only movement, then, it is crucial to understand the chronotopic discourse of the movement itself. To that
end, I will explore the role of chronotopes in this campaign, to show how the policy does not just describe the use of English in a certain place starting at a certain time, but instead actively constructs a sense of English as local and timeless, while also leaving the meaning of those terms open to revision.

3. Overview of the study

This paper draws on data from a larger study of the discourse of English-only policymaking in several US communities, from the drafting process to implementation. Starting from the perspective that people create language policies through “co-construction” processes that are “dynamic” yet “grounded” in shared context (Perrin 2011, 346), the primary focus is on interactions among the people involved. These people include elected officials who shape the policy text itself as well as other community members who shape the policy’s interpretation, circulation, and uptake. In this paper I focus on a July 26, 2010 video recording of a public hearing in Lino Lakes, which functioned as an opportunity for stakeholders to articulate their views on the policy specifically, and on language, citizenship, and immigration more generally.2 In describing a similar policy in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Wilgoren (2002) characterizes this type of policy as an “unwelcome mat” on a town’s figurative front stoop: the campaign is more about the process of sending a message to outsiders than about actual internal enforcement. Indeed, the discourse of this hearing traveled beyond this one event; people’s statements circulated in news coverage for years afterwards (Yuen 2012) and then cited by more recent advocates of English-only policies as an inspiration and precedent (Young 2012).

3.1 Site

Lino Lakes is a small suburb of Minneapolis in Minnesota, one of the nineteen US states with no official language. The town has grown in recent years from 16,000 in 2000 to over 20,000 in 2010, although the demographic makeup has varied little (U. S. Census 2010). In both 2000 and 2010, over 90% of residents identified as non-Hispanic and white. In 2010, 91% identified as white, 2% as black, 2% as Hispanic, 3% as Asian, 0.1% Native American, and 2% multiracial. According to the American Community Survey (2012), 95% report speaking only English. Of

2. The City of Lino Lakes temporarily posts videos of public hearings on its website. This video was transcribed in 2012, when the video was still available online. The policy text and the public hearing agenda and minutes remain available at http://www.ci.lino-lakes.mn.us.
the remaining 5% who speak at least one other language, 85% report also speaking English “very well,” which means that 99% of Lino Lakes residents speak English at least “very well.” The town’s median household income is $98,195, which is almost double the Minnesotan and national median (U. S. Census, 2010). Shortly after the city enacted Resolution 10-68, Money Magazine (2011) listed the town as one of the country’s “Best Places to Live,” based on the criteria of “plenty of green space, good schools, and a strong sense of community.” Overall, then, Lino Lakes is a growing suburb where the vast majority of people are white middle- or upper-class English users.

3.2 Participants

At the public hearing preceding the vote in Lino Lakes, the people involved included the four city council members, the mayor, the city attorney, 25 residents who gave statements, and several more residents in the audience. The city council members all spoke for a few minutes at the end and beginning of the event, and residents’ statements lasted from 1–5 minutes each. The statements are not intended to be representative of any particular public sphere, but to capture the views of the residents involved in the debate. As Tardy (2009) suggests, certain genres in language policy debates allow certain voices to be heard, and, more importantly, taken up (284). In this case, the genre of the public hearing may be more accessible to people used to public speaking, or those who have lived there longer, and less accessible to those who work at this time of day (6–8 PM in the evening) or who are newer to town.

3.3 Data analysis

Tracing chronotoposes necessitates an interpretive, situated, semiotic approach. This approach is premised on an understanding of discourse as dialogic and indexical (Bakhtin 1981; Silverstein 1979), and of chronotoposes as embodied and representational (Prior and Shipka 2003). From this perspective, the purpose of analysis is to interpret how meaning emerges and is negotiated in the course of multimodal interaction (Norris 2004). Accordingly, the event was transcribed for a range of semiotic features, including words, speed, emphasis, intonation, gesture, and the use of texts, in order to take into account the wide variety of practices and

Leeman (2004) has documented the problematic ways this survey orders its questions, prioritizes home language, and categorizes answers. Usually, however, that design leads to underestimating people’s English proficiency, which makes the 99% figure even more remarkable.

Analysis focused on chronotopes that appeared durable across the hearing, as well as those moments when people shifted their perspectives or reconfigured those chronotopes. Sometimes, people index chronotopes more referentially, as in one man’s utterance that he has “seen the country go down the drain” in his lifetime. Identifying and interpreting chronotopes is complex, because they are not necessarily expressed in referential or linguistic forms. They may be more indexical, and only meaningful in the context of the interaction, the event, or more widely circulating discourse about the English-only movement. For example, chronotopes are often expressed through deictic words like here, there, now, then, this, that, we, you, and they, that only point to meaning in the immediate context (Davidson 2007, 214). Interpretation then focuses on what people might mean when they say, for example, that they have “been here” since “back then” in relation to the rest of their statement and to their dialogic engagements with others. Chronotopes may also be articulated through other modes of communication, including silence. For example, the absence of deixis can also be meaningful, by making utterances seem more like “timeless truths” (Agha 2007a, 44) or more up-scaled (Blommaert 2010).

Gesture is also a salient way of articulating chronotopes, because both gesture and chronotopes function to represent temporal and spatial movements and relationships. In terms of political discourse, formal genres like public hearings and debates tend to constrain people’s choices of modes, so that they must rely heavily on their voices and their hands, as opposed to other types of movement, or to using other tools or technologies (Cienki 2004). Although gestures can perform a variety of functions, and can be more or less connected to other modes (Norris 2004, 28), only gestures that seemed to “participate” in or “elaborate” on the chronotopes appearing in the co-occurring spoken discourse were within the scope of this study (Lempert and Silverstein 2012, 171; Goodwin 1994, 624). In other words, I include gestures in analysis not because they are distinct from talk, but because they are connected to talk.

4. Transcription Key:

| (. ) | Brief pause (one second or less) | word | Emphasis or loudness |
| :   | Elongation                        | >word< | Rapid talk            |
| -   | Cut-off or self-interruption      | ((cough)) | Researcher’s description of events |
| (h) | Audible breathing or laughing    | word* | Moment of a key gesture |
4. Local language policymaking in action

4.1 English as a local tradition

Arguments in the public hearing hinged primarily on English’s relationship to local tradition. There was little discussion of the inherent nature or value of the English language, and this absence marks a departure from claims about the superiority of English’s supposedly large vocabulary or elegant grammar (Pennycook 1998, 145). There was also no discussion of the legality of the policy, which makes this case different from earlier English-only policies that were censured mid-campaign or challenged in court (Crawford 1989; Dick 2011). Instead of focusing on the linguistic or legal, then, the debate focused on the spatiotemporal.

People animated English by situating it inside or outside the chronotope of local time. Both critics and supporters of the policy valued this chronotope as a bastion of stability and familiarity, which a resident named Gerald Clausen exemplified in his statement:

(1) In all the Council Meetings I’ve come to, since way back, when they were having Council meetings, English was the word. English is-, nothing wrong with it. (h) It’s the country’s (.) language and why not continue to use it? So, I say English is-, should be the word, should be the language, and that should be it. An-, and anything and everything that has to do with the government of this country. That’s the way I look at it. It’s been that way-, it’s been that way, since all I’ve known.

English is valuable to Clausen because it has “been that way” “since way back” in both the “city” and in “this country.” He alternates between the present perfect tense “It’s been” and the present tense “it’s the country’s language,” which creates a sense that English is in continuous use. He makes this point even more explicitly when he asks, “why not continue to use it?” This rhetorical question suggests that the policy debate is not over whether to enact an English-only norm, but whether to perpetuate it. In terms of spatial scale, his perspective runs counter to some common ideologies about English as global or spreading (Lillis and Curry 2010): he does not claim that English is or should be universal, but rather situated in his local context. In this moment, local can refer to either the city or the country, although as I discuss in the next section, many people have narrower definitions.

Another speaker, Charlene Elmquist, evokes this chronotope of local time even more succinctly, perhaps because she was one of the last to speak and seemed to echo many of the ideas voiced earlier in the event. She justifies the resolution by stating:
(2) English is our common language, and that is the common language of
Lino Lakes, and of the land, so I do support the resolution. Our country’s
language has been English.

As in the first example, she collapses temporal distinctions when she says English
“is” and “has been” “our” way of communicating. The referent for “our” is em-
phatic yet ambiguous: Elmquist repeats the word twice but in the first usage, it is
not specified whether the in-group refers to the country, the city, or “the land.” She
is also looking at the city council members during her statement, so “our” could
also index the audience in the room. These first two speakers align English with
local time, and local time with tradition and desirability, which is representative of
a broader discursive strategy. This process becomes more forceful, however, when
people contrast local time with its chronotopic alternative: distant time.

Just as locality is stable, traditional, and monolingual in this discourse, so too
does distant space take on a temporal and ideological dimension. People tend to
juxtapose the local with the distant, such that distant time is fast-paced, chaotic,
and populated by multilingual people. To return to Clausen, he describes this sec-
ond chronotope in the last minutes of his statement, first by narrating what he
perceives as broad societal changes in immigration and language use:

(3) I never have any problem if they learn the language of English, we talk to
them in English. And most of them have no problem learning English.
And so now, all of a sudden, now, we’ve got a-, an influx of all kinds of
people coming from all over the world. (hh) You know it’s like the tail
wagging the dog.

He contrasts longtime, local native English speakers and people who have had
“no problem learning English” with an “influx” of diverse newcomers who are en-
croaching on the local chronotope “all of a sudden.” Notably, Clausen takes a more
nuanced view of local history than in the first example, by acknowledging that
there at least have been some multilingual residents. However, he still frames these
people as quickly assimilating to English, rather than remaining multilingual over
time. His animal idiom further dramatizes the local/distant distinction between
a static center (“the dog”) disturbed by an erratic periphery (“the tail wagging”).

After broadly characterizing this clash, Clausen then narrows his focus to in-
dividual people, by performing an imagined conversation between himself and
one of the “people” coming into the local area. He starts from the perspective
of a multilingual immigrant through the use of reported speech, before voicing
his own rebuttal:

(4) You know, you-, you got to do it my way (hh) because this is the way we do
it >back where I came from< ((rotates hands at arms length)). Well, no; no,
we do it ou::r way. We’re English. We’re United States citizens. We’ve been here and-, guys are dyin’ on the battlefield to have this privilege and now (.) they’re trying to change everything and I don’t like it.

He meshes language differences between English and other languages with geographic differences between “here” and “back where [immigrants] came from,” which suggests that language is determined primarily by place of origin. At the moment when Clausen says “back where I came from,” his arms left his sides and rotated off to one side (Figure 1). This gesture captures the distant chronotope’s

<table>
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<th>Transcribed Audio</th>
<th>Transcribed Gesture</th>
<th>Video Still</th>
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<td>I never have any problem if they learn the language of English, we talk to them in English. And most of them have no problem learning English. And so now, all of a sudden, now, we’ve got all kinds of people coming from all over the world. (hh) You know it’s like the tail wagging the dog.</td>
<td>Rests hands at sides</td>
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<td>You know, you-, you got to do it my way (hh) because this is the way we do it &gt;back where I came* from&lt;. Well, no; no, we do it ou::r way. We’re English. We’re United States citizens. We’ve been here (h) and-, guys are dyin’ on the battlefield to have this privilege and now (.) they’re trying to change everything and I don’t like it.</td>
<td>*Moves hands away from body while rotating them in a circle</td>
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Figure 1. A local resident evokes a chronotope of distant space, chaotic time, and multilingualism.
sense of rapid change. Within this framework, Clausen also views the local-English configuration as preferable to other languages used in other places. This aspect comes through when he says that "they" are bringing "change," and that he "[doesn't] like it." He also laughs in the middle of voicing his imagined interlocutor, which could index the anxiety of a public speaking situation but also portrays the multilingual immigrant as a laughable figure. The contrast set up in this excerpt is multifaceted; the spatial, temporal, linguistic, and affective dimensions combine to make English seem valuable but at risk.

The statements in this section represent a broader pattern of distinguishing between two chronotopes. Both speakers define the chronotopes fairly capacious, however. When they refer to "here," it is usually unclear whether they are referring to the city, the country, or both. While many other participants also treat the city as local, the status of the rest of the US is quite variable. Given English-only's association with a one nation-one language ideology, this variability was unexpected. In the next section, I examine how people strategically position the US in relation to local and distant times, and to what end.

4.2 The city in and against the United States

The speakers who framed English as a local tradition were divided as to whether the US was part of that tradition or not. These disagreements over the scope of the English-only movement played out through processes of iconicity and fractal recursivity (Irvine and Gal 2000). When the local/distant axis of differentiation maps onto the global scale of the US versus other nations, then Lino Lakes is meaningful as an icon of the US. The chronotopic distinction, however, can also map onto smaller scales, such that Lino Lakes is posited as the exception to the rest of the US. The excerpts discussed above take the former approach, by talking interchangeably about the city and "our country." The town's mayor, however, illustrates the smaller-scaled approach. For mayor Jeff Reinert, the policy is worthwhile precisely because it goes against the national norm. At the beginning of the public hearing, Reinert makes his point in multiple modes as he contrasts his policy with ones from Washington, D.C.:

(5) OK. Not bad, >a little< ((waves policy text side to side in right hand)), little different than what you see (.) ((switches hands)) come out of Washington ((shakes text up and down in left hand)). Only two pages.

Up through the word "different," he waves the paper copy of the policy in one hand, before quickly switching the text to the other hand by the time he says "Washington" (Figure 2). This gesture emphasizes the divide he perceives between Lino Lakes and the federal government in Washington, D. C., while his words
suggest that what Lino Lakes is doing is “not bad” compared with the national alternative. His reference to the policy’s brevity may be connected to the then-recently passed, lengthy Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare. Reinert’s statement thus reinforces a contrast between local simplicity and distant excess.

Later in his statement, he scales down the two chronotopes even further, by contrasting Lino Lakes not just with the nation but with other nearby towns. When Reinert is explaining the rules of the public hearing, he claims that his audience is not so much Lino Lakes residents as outsiders:

(6) The way we do it in Lino Lakes is that we allow, um, comments to be four minutes long. Um, I will gently tap on the gavel when your time is up, and um, if anybody, uh, (.) is disrespectful-, >and the only reason I bring this up< is because, uh, we have been communicated by, um, some ve(h):ry disrespe(h):ctful people. Um, not from Lino Lakes.

Figure 2. The mayor contrasts local policy with national policy.
Although Reinert has just finished referring to Washington, D.C., in this moment he seems to index the more local geographic area. He continues the pattern of treating Lino Lakes as a place of timeless traditions: there is a “way we do it in Lino Lakes.” By explaining that he has to “bring this up” because of “disrespectful” people “not from” there, he seems to suggest that those same outsiders may actually be present at the city council meeting. His voicing of the phrase “very disrespectful” lies somewhere between a scoff and a laugh. Given this reference to outsiders right after his use of “we,” this use of “we” seems to be more about excluding outsiders than addressing insiders (Petersoo 2007). This statement is thus similar to the others in that English is localized, yet distinct in that the US is not considered to be part of the local.

While the mayor creates a stark contrast between the town and the nation, others mesh the two possible scales to depict the US as more of a liminal site. For example, a resident named Carl Elmquist aligns the US first with distant time and then local time in rapid succession:

(7) Since my 62 years on this earth, I’ve seen the country go down the drain. I’m sure you ((points to the city council)) have too. […] If you want to come in this country, you learn English. You don’t-, there’s no (. ) ifs, ands, or buts about it.

He perceives the US as degrading over time, yet he also talks about “this country” being monolingual in the present. This statement may seem contradictory, but also has the potential to be persuasive. In Elmquist’s framework, the US is an English-only place, which means Lino Lakes is as well. At the same time, the country has “go[ne] down the drain,” but he sees Lino Lakes as a possible model for improvement. Through deploying these chronotopes recursively, he can appeal to US nationalism while also arguing for local intervention.

This recursivity and fluidity continue to appear later on in his statement as well. Elmquist recalls the biblical narrative of Babel, for example, and then wonders aloud how the story maps onto his own life:

(8) God confused them, put in a:ll the different languages, so, they couldn’t operate. They couldn’t function. And it seems to me that that’s kind of the way Minnesota’s going. I hope Lino Lakes doesn’t go that way. And, this country’s going that way.

He hedges his statement, by saying that the state “seems” to be “kind of” Babel-esque, but that he “hope[s]” Lino Lakes is not. Still, he is more certain about “this country,” thereby continuing the mayor’s pattern of disavowing the rest of the nation. In this section, I have discussed the discourse strategy of framing the US as alternately local, distant, or sometimes both in the same utterance. While that
pattern gives the English-only movement a powerful sense of flexibility, I now turn to another way that people can complicate chronotopes that actually undermines, rather than bolsters, arguments for English-only policies.

4.3 Reconfiguring chronotopes as a mode of resistance

While most people associated local time with English and distant time with other languages, the staunchest critics of the resolution did the opposite, in order to frame multilingualism as more of a homegrown tradition than an outside threat. A teacher named Nancy Charden, for example, depicts multilingualism as a Minnesota institution. She begins by describing her contemporary work environment in a school 16 miles from Lino Lakes, and then compares that description with the region’s past:

(9) The school that I work at happens to have a very large population of English as a second language children. What I believe I witness every day is (. ) new families that come in, register in our (. ) office, that have been only off of an airplane a day, or two. The children come in. They do not know how to speak English. They are put into a classroom with many, many others, and maybe half a classroom that speaks English. It isn’t long before they do learn the language, but these children get on the bus at night, and they go home (. ) to parents who (. ) don’t know the language, and are having a hard time learning it. I don’t-, I believe that that picture is the exact same picture (. ) as many generations ago.

From Charden’s perspective, there may be “new families,” but not new levels of immigration or multilingualism. Instead, she argues that the situation has remained the “exact same” over time. She evokes local time, in that Lino Lakes is framed as stable. Furthermore, in other moments in her statement, Charden talks about enjoying her job and her community, so local time still has a positive valence. What goes against the grain, however, is that she links multilingualism and immigration to this local chronotope.

Another speaker, Rob Scarlett, makes a similar point in his discussion of the land he owns. However, while Charden focused on recent “generations,” Scarlett is highlighting an even longer historical time scale (Wortham & Rhodes 2012). He treats English as the interloper and other languages as the norm:

(10) The property we live on now was originally owned by a German immigrant, uh-, who bought it from the territory (. ) of Minnesota, and spoke German and no English. And his family, uh, for generations, spoke no (. ) English here in this fine city (. ) of Lino Lakes. The people before here, of course, spoke Lakota, uh, the original language of this area.
Both Charden and Scarlett reference multiple “generations” of people who did not just speak English. While the former focuses on children, the latter focuses on adults who were successful enough to buy the property even though they spoke only German and were not born in the area. Scarlett also gestures to the indigenous people who lived on the land even earlier and emphasizes that Lakota was the “original language.” His statement disrupts the narrative that some other people endorse of Lino Lakes as inherently, originally English-speaking.

While these people’s statements were in the minority, they were also legitimated in several ways. When Scarlett paused for dramatic effect after calling Lino Lakes a “fine city,” several audience members laughed appreciatively. After the fact, he was quoted in several news articles (Rosario 2011; Yuen 2012). For her part, Charden, the elementary school teacher, was one of the few people to identify their occupations explicitly. While some of the people at the hearing mentioned that they worked in “business” or something similarly general, mentioning an exact occupation was less common and the fact that she did so seemed to add to her ethos as someone qualified to speak to language issues in education and the workplace. This discursive strategy of reconfiguring the chronotopes was therefore taken up to some degree, rather than completely marginalized (Tardy 2009).

Just as critics can frame other languages as an inside tradition, so too do they position the English-only movement as an outside threat. For example, Scarlett gave an alternate account of the policy when he was quoted in a newspaper article:

(11) My hypothesis is that this brand of ‘hate’ is imported from outside of Minnesota; has a few followers here. […] What would have been, in the past, a bunch of people all dressed up in white robes and pointed hoods, is, today, a much less visible bunch of people who have learned to talk in code. […] Pro-English, U.S. English, and English Only are all code words for ‘whites only,’ in my opinion.

(Rosario 2011)

In this framework, English-only ideologies have been recently “imported” from other parts of the US and from other institutions. Furthermore, he links this movement to hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan, in order to suggest that while there may be a long history of nativist sentiments in Lino Lakes, those sentiments have only been expressed in linguistic terms by organizations like ProEnglish and U. S. English. The distant, threatening chronotope, then, maps onto English and white supremacists, and not onto other languages and people of color. He is drawing on the same chronotopic discourse as his neighbors, but with very different effects.

While he references political shifts, it is more common for people to use this strategy in economic terms. For example, an administrator named Laura Higgins expresses her concerns about the policy coming in to threaten the local business
community. Here she speaks in her official capacity as the president of the Chamber of Commerce:

(12) We have some concerns as to what this would do to our business community, to attracting businesses to relocate here, to expand here, and to attract high talented workforce. Today I spoke to one of our chamber members who owns many restaurants in the metro area. He’s very well respected, he’s known for his philanthropy, and he mentioned that some of his staff members, English is not their primary language, and he would feel very uncomfortable moving to a city that had such a proposal, because he would not want his staff to feel unwelcome. And so, from a Chamber’s perspective, we’re very concerned to what this could do for our community and for the image of the economy in Lino Lakes.

Here, Higgins frames English-only not as an inherent part of Lino Lakes culture, but rather something that would be “done” to “our” community. By emphasizing words like “relocate,” “expand,” and “today,” she stresses the exigency of the issue, and suggests that if something is going to come in to the community from the outside, it would be preferable to have new businesses rather than new policies that would marginalize people who do not speak English as “their primary language.” As in the previous example, then, she actually uses the local/distant dichotomy to argue against the policy.

Despite the disruptive potential of these dissenters’ statements, even these pointed criticisms still rest on the premise that there is a salient distinction between the local and the distant. Furthermore, there is a persistent sense that the former is superior and the latter is threatening. There is also a lingering assumption that, by definition, one community uses only one language at a time; the only question is whether that community should be the size of a town or a nation. “[B]eing territorially out-of-place” is still considered “transgressive,” for people as well as for languages and political movements (Di Masso, Castrechini, and Valera 2014, 356). This strategy thus relies on the essentialist inside/outside dichotomy even as it reconfigures the chronotopes to anti-English-only ends.

5. Conclusion

While the Lino Lakes resolution has been hailed as part of a new, “local […] trend” (ProEnglish 2010), analysis of the campaign suggests that the policy’s relationship to the broader local English-only movement is more complex. Spatial and temporal scales in this case are not backdrops taken for granted but are actively constructed and negotiated through the use of chronotopes. People consistently
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contrasted stable, local time with chaotic, distant time. While local time usually included Lino Lakes and the English language and excluded other nations and other languages, the US can fit into either chronotope, which allows English-only advocates to simultaneously criticize the rest of the country for not being sufficiently monolingual while also appealing to an idealized monolingual, US past. While most people at the town’s public hearing supported the policy, some criticized its legitimacy while still deploying the same chronotopes by arguing that multilingualism is actually more of a local tradition than English monolingualism. Thus, situating the policy in particular scales was a discourse strategy that transcended participants’ differences. At the same time, the opposing chronotopes are capacious enough to vary in their recursivity and precise meaning. These findings have several implications for future work on chronotopes and on the politics of English.

Within discourse studies, chronotopes have primarily been studied in the context of people who have crossed and been crossed by national borders, including migrants, refugees, indigenous people, and borderlands residents, rather than the people policing those borders. There has been little work on the chronotopes of the English-only movement, but as the Lino Lakes case suggests, this is a fruitful line of inquiry. Silverstein (2003) echoes much of the work on US language ideology when he describes the English-only movement as a “fragile precipitate of sociocultural processes,” and focusing on chronotopes offers a way to understand in detail how that precipitate can discursively emerge, change, and even dissolve (537). These discursive processes are not limited to spoken and written discourse. While chronotopes may appear in a variety of multimodal texts and interactions, gesture may be particularly resonant with chronotopes because they are both often deployed to convey meaning about space and time. Furthermore, while there has been extensive work on how language policies fit into US history, or where they exist (and should exist) around the country, those two questions of scale — when and where — prove to be analytically inseparable for the people who make and live with such policies.

This study also complicates how we understand the politics of the English language. The fact that US towns are making English the official language of particular territories is in some ways difficult to reconcile with emerging evidence that English is becoming increasingly “international” (Lillis and Curry 2010, 24), and that communication is increasingly more about mobility, resources, and repertoires than about discrete languages (Blommaert 2010; Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur 2011). These processes are ultimately interdependent, however, in that “locality” only becomes “meaningful” in the context of a “world-wide network” (Blommaert 2010, 77; see also Johnstone 2013; Spolsky 2009, 8). Similarly, purifying a language into one codified form only becomes meaningful in the context of hybridization and fragmentation (Bauman and Briggs 2003).
In addition to positioning themselves in opposition to the global, the people involved with this policy also distance themselves from the nation in striking ways. The English-only movement is increasingly less reliant on nationalist understandings of geography and history, but not in the same way as in the language movements that Heller (2011) observed “embracing globalized heterogeneity and mobility, defanging English, playing with the vernacular and other hallmarks of Romantic nationalism, and making terrible fun of the purists” (183). English and purity are thriving even without a nationalist underpinning. Future research on precisely how these processes shape language practices and ideologies is crucial in a context where a new, rapidly growing wave of English language policies in the United States is succeeding precisely by seeming traditional and local.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Spencer Schaaffner, Michèle Koven, Paul Prior, Gordon Hutner, Jason Ahlenius, Silas Cassinelli, Samantha Plasencia, Anna Robb, Elyse Vigiletti, Jon Stone, colleagues at the 2013 American Association for Applied Linguistics conference, Michał Krzyżanowski, and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this work.

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