



<https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-35807>


EDN: YJJURK

Research article / Научная статья

Translocalizing the space of old Nubia in digital narrative: Resemiotized chronotopes as markers of identity

Rania Magdi FAWZY  

Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport, Cairo, Egypt

 raniamagdi@aast.edu

Abstract

Digitality is closely related to and expressed within analogicity, offering a sense of intersectional continuity between the online and offline realms. However, this poses a theoretical and conceptual challenge, particularly when addressing the heterogenous notion of contemporary diaspora as a phenomenon of online/offline and past/present co-constituency. To this end, this article advances a semio-chronotopic approach to reclaiming indigenous identities. It aims at decentering the concept of spatial dispersal by situating diaspora within a temporal continuum. The article investigates the Nubian Facebook* page *Al Nuba Café* in this concern. Deployment of the notion of resemitization enables us to analyse narrative networks of Nubian diaspora as mediatized through digital space. It is found that Nubian online narrative shows a chronotopic condition of coeval alignment in which the two identity events before and after the displacement are kept conflated. The posts are found to blur the boundaries between the spatiotemporal there-and-then of the story and of the here-and-now of the storytelling world. The study concludes that Nubian digital tellings of diaspora are organized within a continuum of specific chronotopes that vacillate between past and present, spatial yearning and temporal nostalgia, statehood and diaspora, roots and routes, delineating an umbrella chronotope of the changing same. This semio-chronotopic conceptualisation of Nubian diaspora acknowledges the centrality of translocal temporality in its manifestation. Accordingly, the study argues that while space is considered the primary measure of diaspora in the analogue contexts, digital context emphasizes a rather the temporal dimension which dynamically participates in the reproduction of translocal diaspora experiences.

Keywords: *chronotopes, digital narrative, hybrid identity, resemitization, translocal diaspora*

For citation:

Fawzy, Rania Magdi. 2023. Translocalizing the space of old Nubia in digital narrative: Resemiotized chronotopes as markers of identity. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 27 (3). 843–864. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-35807>

* Компания Meta Platforms, которой принадлежит данный ресурс, признана экстремистской организацией и запрещена на территории РФ.

© Rania Magdi Fawzy, 2023




This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

Транслокализация пространства старой Нубии в цифровом повествовании: ресемиотизированные хронотопы как маркеры идентичности

Рания Магди ФАУЗИ  

Арабская академия науки, технологий и морского транспорта, Каир, Египет

 raniamagdi@aast.edu

Аннотация

Цифровая информация тесно связана с аналоговой, что проявляется в ощущении непрерывности между онлайн- и офлайн-сферами. Это порождает теоретическую и концептуальную проблему, особенно когда речь идет о гетерогенном понятии «современная диаспора» как о феномене, одновременно представляемом онлайн и офлайн с позиций прошлого и настоящего. В связи с этим в данной статье предлагается семи-хронотопический подход к возрождению самобытности коренных народов. Исследование нацелено на децентрализацию понятия пространственного рассредоточения путем рассмотрения диаспоры во временном континууме. В частности, нубийская диаспора исследуется как хронотопический набор признаков, которые проявляются в ресемиотизированной индексальности территориального перемещения этой диаспоры, имевшего место в прошлом. В статье исследуются посты на эту тему на нубийской странице Al Nuba Café в Facebook*. Использование понятия ресемиотизации позволяет проанализировать нарративные связи нубийской диаспоры, опосредованные цифровым пространством. Обнаружено, что нубийское онлайн-повествование демонстрирует хронотопическое совмещение событий до и после перемещения диаспоры. Нарративы стирают границы между пространственно-временным соотношением хронотопа «здесь и тогда» и «здесь и сейчас». По итогам исследования сделан вывод, что нубийские цифровые нарративы о диаспоре строятся в континууме конкретных хронотопов, которые отражают взаимосвязь между прошлым и настоящим, тягой к пространственному перемещению и временной ностальгией, государственностью и диаспорой, а также корнями и маршрутами, очерчивающими зонтичный хронотоп динамического понятия. С помощью этой семи-хронотопической концептуализации нубийской диаспоры обнаруживается центральная роль транслокальной темпоральности в ее дискурсивной реализации. Соответственно, в исследовании утверждается, что, хотя пространство считается основным мерилем диаспоры в аналоговых контекстах, цифровой контекст тяготеет к временному измерению, которое динамически воспроизводит опыт перемещенной диаспоры.

Keywords: *хронотоп, цифровое повествование, гибридная идентичность, ресемиотизация, перемещенная диаспора*

Для цитирования:

Fawzy R.M. Translocalizing the space of old Nubia in digital narrative: Resemiotized chronotopes as markers of identity. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*. 2023. V. 27. № 4. P. 843–864. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-35807>

1. Introduction

Digitality is closely associated with mobility, hybridity and superdiversity in which communities, particularly ethnic and diaspora ones, constantly reorient themselves to its dynamic affordances, leaving behind traditional structures of belonging and renegotiating their fixed cultural and linguistic repertoires. This

requires adopting new approaches to examine indigenous manifestations, or as the concern of the current study, the timespace organization of how diaspora groups want to represent themselves. To this end, this article advances a semio-chronotopic approach to reclaiming indigenous identities. More specifically, the Nubian diaspora is explored as chronotopic repertoires which are evinced in the resemiotized indexicalities of past displacement. This focus on chronotopicity in identity repertoires is part of an ‘emerging’ theorizing of linguistics that “no longer relies on fixed and stable concepts like community, competence and language but opts for more flexible, fluid and multilayered concepts like sites, activities and (trans)linguaging” (Kroon & Swanenberg 2019: 4). Significantly, this new approach to identity research intends to “...take the increasing complexity of the contemporary, mobile, superdiverse, networked, on/offline global society... as an *explanandum* rather than an *explanans*” (Kroon & Swanenberg 2019: 4, italics in the original). Differently put, adopting a chronotopic approach to explore sociolinguistic phenomena describes the fabric of their manifestations while relating them to other spatio-temporal social structures. Diaspora has been defined in a number of ways, but in this article, it is tackled through the lens of social technologies, ‘networked’, ‘fluid’ and ‘hybrid’ practices and representations (see Salama & Fawzy 2023, Fawzy 2023, Fawzy & El Shazly 2023). The article investigates the Nubian Facebook* (FB) page *Al Nuba Café* from this perspective.

Nubians are a racial, cultural and linguistic minority. The construction of the High Dam in 1963 later resulted in a full displacement of Nubians to Khushm Al-Qerbah in Sudan and Kom Ombo in Egypt. They used to live on the borders between Egypt and Sudan before the displacement. Egyptian Nubians lived in Lower Nubia between the first and the second cataract of the River Nile, whereas Sudanese Nubians inhabited the north of Sudan. Nubians represent an indigenous group who left behind their territory but was able to introduce and maintain their linguistic and cultural practices in their new territory of resettlement, mainly in Kom Ombo, Aswan. The Nubian population is divided now into three groups: Kunuz, Arabs and Fadijja. The Kunuz tribes live in seventeen villages, and speak the ‘Matukiya/Kenzi’ language. The Arabs inhabit five villages and speak Arabic. Finally, the Fadijja who are believed to be pure Nubians inhabited sixteen villages and spoke the Fadijji language. After their displacement, social, *economic*, and demographic factors enforce Nubians to know Arabic language. Both Kunuz and Fadijja speak Arabic since they receive their education at Arabic-language schools. They use Nubian only at home.

Previous studies on Nubians have focused on dialect geographies, language endangerment, representation of Nubians, and attitudes towards Nubian languages (see Abdel-Hafiz 2007, Rouchdy 1991). The Nubian context has been examined from various linguistic perspectives, the most prominent of which are the attitudes of Nubians towards the use of Arabic, pronunciation variables of certain sounds and lexical borrowing, status of Nubian languages and their maintenance. These studies have mainly relied on ethnographic questionnaires, surveys, interviews and field

observations. However, the studies reveal significant findings only on the offline realm of Nubia; while the digital manifestations of the Nubian identity are still under-researched. More specifically, these studies have focused on the socio-demographic characteristics of the Nubian diaspora rather than perceiving it as communicative practices or acknowledging the unfixed and dynamic aspects forming the digital Nubian identity. The Nubian language along with other social and cultural features of the Nubian community have been addressed as relatively fixed in time and space. To address this blind spot, the spatio-temporal structure of digital diaspora and the semiotics of digital narratives are central to negotiating Nubian narrative of displacement in this article. Exploring the digital narrative of Nubian diaspora, the current study focuses on the process of diasporization itself rather than on stable diaspora Nubian groups with fixed linguistic repertoires (see Androutsopoulos & Lexander 2021). As such, the current study shifts the focus from locally anchored Nubian community to translocal digital representations. It examines how diaspora communities use digital technologies in their interactions (Androutsopoulos 2006, Androutsopoulos & Lexander 2021, Brinkerhoff 2009, Heyd & Honkanen 2015).

The article thus aims at situating itself within the current debate on relating chronotopicity to identity work (Blommaert 2019, De Fina 2019, Fawzy 2022, Kroon & Swanenberg 2019, Li & Blommaert 2019) in general and at filling a gap in the literature of linguistic studies investigating the Nubian diaspora in particular by addressing the following overarching question and sub-questions:

1. How do Facebook* affordances translocalize the Nubian identity?
 - a. How do the *Al Nuba Café* posts bring past practices to the interactional here-and-now as relevant context – to a translocalized Nubian diaspora?
 - b. How do the resemiotized tempo-spatial indexicalities of past displacement enact hybrid and multilayered representations of Nubia?
 - c. What are the temporal tropes representing the Nubian experience of displacement?

To answer these questions, the article draws on the notions of “resemiotization” (Iedema 2001, 2003) and “the chronotope” (Agha 2007, Bakhtin 1981, Oostendorp 2007, Perrino 2007, 2015), to discuss the notions of diaspora, Nubian identity and displacement. Chronotopic analysis situates the Nubian FB page the *Al Nuba Café* within discourses of specific tempo-spatial juxtapositions. Concepts like “coeval alignment” (Perrino 2005) and “cross-chronotopic alignment” (Agha 2007) allow us to view the Nubian digitally mediated experience of displacement as a temporal semiotic phenomenon. Deploying the notion of resemiotization enables us to analyse narrative networks of Nubian diaspora as mediated through digital space. Thus, the notion of “the digital production of displacement narrative” would be crucial in the context of the current study.

This paper is part of a larger project that explores the postdigital sociolinguistic characteristics of the Nubian community at the online/offline nexus (author et al. forthcoming). The project is divided into a research paper and a handbook chapter

in the upcoming Routledge Handbook of Language and Social Media (Tagg & Giaxoglou, forthcoming). For the sake of these projects, six Nubian villages that belong to both the Kenuz and Fadijja tribes, as representatives of the Nubian community resettled in Aswan, are ethnographically observed through repeated field visits. Since the author is not part of the Nubian indigenous communities, these projects have helped her to open a dialogue with the materiality of the Nubian culture and to become an indigenous-ally, which in turn, benefits the current article.

2. Chronotopes of narrative and the resemiotization of identity

Bakhtin's (1981, 1984) chronotope describes the inter-connected realisations of spatial and temporal relationships to provide a better understanding of the kinds of identities and values conveyed in a given literary work. The core argument of the Bakhtinian chronotope is that time and space are substantially connected; time becomes the fourth dimension of space. Time and space relate to each other in the sense that time is only perceived and has meaning in space, and movement in space is also a movement in time. However, the notion of the chronotope is used recently in the evolving theorizing of a sociolinguistics of globalization (Kroon & Swanenberg 2019), that is "a sociolinguistics of mobile resources, framed in terms of trans-contextual networks, flows and movements" (Blommaert 2010: 1). This new chronotopic doctrine underlying sociolinguistic studies challenges earlier Labovian perspective of a sociolinguistics of 'stability' in which identity repertoires are examined as seemingly fixed in space and time (Blommaert 2010, Kroon & Swanenberg 2019). In this regard, the current study is informed by the notion that space (diaspora and displacement spaces) has both temporal and semiotic qualities that are related to identity works.

All semiotic representations are chronotopic (Agha 2007). Agha argues that semiotic representations have a 'temporal-spatial expressions.' That is, semiotic signs must appear as sign-tokens in space and time in order to be experienced. These sign-tokens relate the chronotopes they depict to the chronotopes in which they are experienced (Agha 2007: 322). Oostendrop (2017) points out that the Bakhtinian chronotopes of time, space and body provide a non-binary view of semiotic phenomena in a way that would "lead to a deeper theoretical understanding of semiotic transformations in all their complexity" (1). This notion is related to what Silverstein referred to earlier as a 'duplex chronotopic order' in which semiotic forms evoked in a given context of social interaction "are endowed with significance for social actors insofar as they orient to and/or contest immanent normative defaults established in the implied chronotope of multiply interdiscursive socio-space-time" (Silverstein 2016: 187).

Introduced within the discipline of social semiotics (Halliday 1978), resemiotization addresses the ways through which particular semiotic indexicalities become historicized, recontextualized, and mobilized in social practices (Iedema 2003). It highlights the shifts in the meaning making processes from context to context and/or from practice to practice. To this end, exploring resemiotization is

important in identifying the complex practices of social media (Leppänen et al. 2013).

Resemiotization focuses on the dynamic processes underlying semiotic signs (Iedema 2003, Oostendrop 2017). Exploring the resemiotized motifs of a given text allow identifying which particular semiotic resources, rather than others, are mobilized to function within specific social contexts. That is, resemiotization analysis helps us to answer the questions of “how, why, and which meaning become recontextualized” in particular social contexts (Iedema 2003: 40). Resemiotization underlines the movement of semiotic features from one chronotope to another. Through the resemiotization process, semiotic indexicals move across time and space, flowing from the past events to the present situation and vice versa (Iedema 2001, 2003). Informed by these notions, resemiotization is deployed in the current study to provide a better understanding of the digital representations of the Nubian displacement as a temporal phenomenon.

3. Data and methods

This paper examines Nubian narrative of displacement and belonging in the digital diasporic context of the FB group the *Al Nuba Café*. It explores the resemiotized contexts and chronotopic properties that are indicative of such narratives. In this regard, the notion of “digital diaspora” as an emerging phenomenon of diasporic and transnational communication (Heyd 2016) is central to the current discussion. Data collection started in September 2021 and continued until September 2022. The Nubian identity is viewed in the current article as operating within a sociocultural continuum that is shaped through interaction between and across different temporalities. To this end, the resemiotized indexicalities are traced in the analysis through the posts’ translanguaging selections of emoji, memes, shared videos, and Nubian transliteration and/or translation practices. The total number of posts is 149. However, only posts that deal with the notions of displacement, past experience and the unique Nubian traditions are included in the analysis. Posts that carry different themes are excluded. Posts that are written in Nubian are discussed with old generation Nubians who have first-hand knowledge of the language to translate these posts.

Chronotopes are ‘where dialogues happen’ (Bakhtin 1981: 247). Of much relevance to the context of the current study, the chronotope is argued to unravel the dynamic dialogicity between the world of narration and the world being narrated. The tempo-spatial experiences of displacement and diaspora resemiotized in the *Al Nuba Café* are investigated as instantiating a dialogue between the world of narration and the world being narrated. That is, the chronotopes of the Nubian diaspora and displacement come to reconcile the relationship that exists between these worlds, reflecting on the temporal flow of spatial diasporization through the act of resemiotization.

The resemiotized practices add socio-space-time layers to the Nubian digital diaspora that are worthwhile investigating. To answer the research questions, the

study explores Nubian resemiotized indexicalities that operate on the level of “cross-chronotopic alignment” (Agha 2006, Perrino 2007). The analysis points to the alignment role of the resemiotized chronotopic motifs that bring together the past and present times of displacement and diaspora experiences.

Taking the concepts of the chronotope and resemiotization as theoretical backdrop, the current study departs itself from studies that take space only as the main element in defining diaspora where physical displacement from a homeland is a dilemma. Rather, this study also considers the temporal motifs manifesting the displacement experience, through which the temporal goes hand in hand with the spatial in understanding the process of diasporization.

4. Analysis

4.1. The chronotopes of performance and affect

This section analyses Nubian diaspora as a chronotope that highlights the performative manner of the Nubian community. The interactional text of Figure 1 focuses on the actions performed as reaction to the experience of displacement.



Photo 1

Photo 2

Figure 1. Posts about the trauma of the displacement

The linguistic structure of photo 1 caption is as follows: an Arabic phrase (translation: “Pictures about the displacement”), a group of emojis, a Nubian phrase (translation: “Enough enough (sadness) Nubians”) and two emojis. The caption of photo 2 is written in Arabic, meaning: “this is the reaction of those who lived in

Old Nubia when they are reminded about the displacement”). The historical present of the first photo along with the old lady in the second photo, who is pictured as a witness of the displacement, conflates the past event of the displacement and the present feelings of sadness and oppression as if they were one.

The resemiotized group of old photos that depict the sadness and suffering of Nubians during the displacement infuses the sedimented values of the past experience into the present, temporalizing the space of old Nubia in the context of historical present. The dialectical relation between the *now-time* and *then-time* is visually evident in the second photo. Depicting the old lady as crying when reminded about the painful experience of the displacement represents the Nubian *suffering self* as if staying frozen in time. Photo 2 of Figure 1 along with many other posts that can be said to re-live times of displacement emphasise this notion of the *atemporal suffering diaspora*. The underlined chronotope of performance tells us about the experience of displacement where the homeland is left behind in space but still proximal in time, constantly introducing the present-day past of displacement. Although the two events (the displacement and digital posting) are situated in separate chronotopes (past displacement event and current digital practice), the interactional text is organized within the *here-and-now* temporal frame.

Consider Figure 2 for another interesting use of the resemiotized historical present in the narrative of displacement.



Figure 2. Resemiotized historical present in the narrative of displacement

The post employs both present and past tenses. Historical present is used to tell a past story of a Nubian woman and her children immediately after the evacuation awaiting the ship that would transport them to their new place of displacement. Meanwhile, the uncoeval past is used to refer to the processes of the displacement itself and the building of the High Dam.

In the first part of the post devoted to the Nubian woman it seems that the time of the woman’s story and the post’s storytelling time are blurred; as if they belong to the same temporal frame. This representation of the displacement trauma and distress translocalizes the event, emphasizing the *atemporal* manifestation of the displacement experience which transcends the boundaries of the *there-and-then*. This, in turn, configures the trans-temporal chronotopic alignment in relation to the chronotope of performance, constructing complex layers of affiliation between both the *here-and-now* and *there-and-then* Nubia. Figure 3 further emphasizes this chronotopic alignment.



Figure 3. Zoomed in photo of the resemiotized newspaper

Resemiotization here makes it possible to align the spatio-temporal universe of the story (the denotational text) and the here-and-now storytelling event (the interactional text) as “coeval” as if they belong to the same chronotopic frame (Perrino 2007). Interestingly, the key social personae who inhabited the chronotope of performance are women.

The caption of these two photos is written in Nubian language meaning “Oh, my tender mother; oh my tender Shafoka (Nubian nickname)” and “the prettiest lady” respectively. Relying on the depiction of Nubian women in many posts can be argued to add to the representation of the digital Nubian diaspora, what Bakhtin (1981) calls “chronotopic values” through which time and space are “colored by emotions and values” (243). It can be then argued that the posts about experiences of dispersal and displacement correspond to Giaxoglou’s (2018) notion of temporal “ecstatic sharing” which refers to “a mode of sharing centered on the affective intensity of the here-and-now” (13, original italics). These posts involve acts of narrative stancetaking in the space-time of instantons proximity, projecting intense

feelings of empathy and solidarity. This notion is expressed as well in the posts cherishing Nubian heritage and traditions, achieving cross-chronotopic alignment.



Photo 1



Photo 2

Figure 4. The representation of Nubian women as chronotopic value



Photo 1



Photo 2

Figure 5. A group of posts cherishing the royal Nubian ancestry

The FB posts of Figure 5 cherish their royal ancestry, according to Nubian belief, through the historical present by shifting into non-past deixis for reference to past heritage. Photo1 is a screen shot of a video about Kush, the oldest son of Ham and a grandson of Noah and the purported father of Nubians, as they believe.

The caption of the photo is an Arabicized Nubian phrase meaning “peace be upon you people of Nubia.” The caption of the second photo is written in Arabic stating “Nubian pyramids, Kush civilization and Sudanese Nubia are numbered 240 pyramids”. The post affirms that in ancient times there were no boundaries between Egypt and Sudan. Deploying the historical present relates past heritage to the affective passion of the here-and-now. Most of the heritage related posts carry tropes of coeval trans-temporal alignment by relying on the aesthetics of the historical present.

Significantly, resemiotizing the pictures of old Nubian heritage emphasizes the descension of Nubians from civilizations other than the ancient Egyptian. The posts allude to the Nubian civilization being older than the Egyptian one, an idea which is further emphasized by the emojis of the red heart and sparkles. The post stresses as well that Nubians descend from Sudanese ancestors. That is, they are not Egyptians. The resemiotization of past personae and heritage in the present diaspora context allows the FB group to align themselves with their ancestors. Such a positioning is chronotopic in that it represents a Nubian identity embedded in a different temporal frame from the Egyptian society.

4.2. Affective nostalgia: the chronotopes of statehood and distinctiveness

The narrative chronotopes organizing the Nubian online discourses of displacement are mostly attributed to the motifs of affectual nostalgia. Many posts use affective references to past traditions before the displacement to emphasize the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the Nubians. For instance, they highlight their unique and *different* wedding ceremonies, traditional clothes, folklore, special dishes and built environment. The group of posts in figure 6 illustrates this notion.



Photo 1

Photo 2

Photo 3

Photo 4

Figure 6. Group of posts highlighting different Nubian traditions

The first photo states “I liked that phrase and found it the best title. The Nubians used to eat what they grew and wear what they made. The Nubian lady used to spin what came from the sheep in a wooden yarn called karara, making threads and then collecting them to make clothes.” Nubians’ identity is situated in

the posts with a special focus on their distinctiveness. The use of the past tense emphasizes their nostalgic yearning for their past practices. The marked uncoeval alignment stresses the division of labour between their satisfaction and independence in the old days and dissatisfaction now. Carrying the same chronotopic motifs, photo 2 and 3 display respectively two popular Nubian dishes: “Moloukhiya” (green soup made from finely chopped Jew's Mallow leaves) and “el-kabed” (thick bread).

Nubian ceremonies are of great indexical importance as well. Nubians enjoy rich ceremonial events, through which they cherish the tight bond connecting their community and their distinctiveness. This appears in the posts showing their wedding and henna¹ preparations which are unique and are totally different from other Egyptian governorates.

These types of posts significantly act online as a ‘tropic emblem’ (Perrino 2007) bringing past practices to the interactional here-and-now as relevant context to the Nubian identity. That is, the resemiotized tropes presenting their traditions before the displacement serve as a token for their identity, establishing a chronotopic connection between past and present selves. The culture specific tropes are mobilized as well in developing a nostalgic view of Nubia, achieving a collective sense of “displaced nostalgia” (Vanderbilt 1993). Remediating the chronotopes of displaced nostalgia through social media, the posts recruit younger Nubian generations for affiliation. The FB users are recruited as well to witness these cultural manifestations. The younger Nubian generation, along with the FB users, are discursively recruited to serve as denoted characters in the story, achieving “participant transposition” (Perrino 2007). this transposition achieves a “cross-chronotopic alignment” of the displacement experience as users are involved in interactional history of traditions. The technique of “tropic temporalization” (Perrino 2007) achieved by the resemiotization of nostalgic past practices and traditions and the deployment of displaced coeval and historical present to frame past events mobilize users’ reflective stance on the past displacement event and the distinctiveness of the Nubians. This notion is manifested through the digital affordances available to users, such as Comment, React, Share along with using other translanguaging practices. Accordingly, it can be argued that the affective nostalgia to past traditions evokes not just a chronotope of collective identity; rather it is a chronotope of *connective* identity that connects diasporic subjects who are oscillating between here-and-there and FB users. The digital affordances of the FB along with their resemiotized tradition tropes translocalize their Nubian identity

Figure 7 is another interesting example of the trans-temporal tropes associated with the Nubian chronotope of traditions.

¹ A pre-wedding ceremony that takes place the day before the wedding for the bride and her closest female friends and family members. In this ceremony, the female guests sing, dance and apply henna designs to their hands and feet.

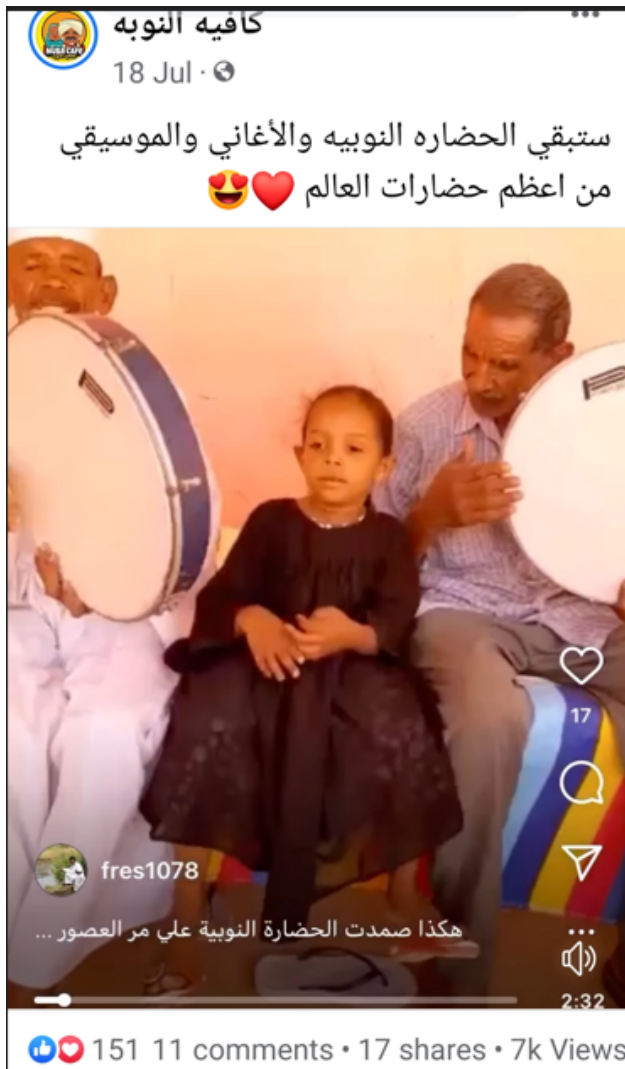


Figure 7. A young Nubian girl as an index of future generations

The post states that “[t]he Nubian civilization, its songs and music will remain one of world’s greatest civilizations.” It includes a video of a child girl singing old Nubian songs with a caption stating “this is how the Nubian civilization has survived through the ages.” The young Nubian girl, an index of future generations, inserts future temporality to the Nubian folklore, emphasizing the continuity and defiant character of the Nubian civilization.

The translanguaging styles of the traditions posts, which underline as well the nostalgic reference to old Nubia, are significant in highlighting the distinctive character of their identity. The *Al Nuba Café* posts deploy a plethora of emojis that index Nubian ethnicity (e.g. flag, modified skin toned men, crocodile, crown, red triangle) and evaluative stance (heart to signify love, and broken heart to signify yearning to old Nubia). Figure 8 presents the most used emojis by the FB group:



Figure 8. The most used emojis by the FB group

The emojis index Nubian iconic emblems that highlight their indigenous and distinctive origin. These emojis are small informal cues that release dense indexical motifs of translocalization.

Just as their ceremonies, clothes, folklore and food reflect their indigenous presence, their resemiotized spatial repertoires are of significant chronotopic value. Chronotopes of old Nubian nature are resemiotized as a particularly evocative source of Nubian distinctiveness. Sharing motifs of their built environments chronotopizes a space-based identity that closely relates itself to old Nubia. This notion is further illustrated in the following section dealing with the chronotope of the road.

4.3. The chronotope of the road: Routes and roots

The motifs of the chronotope of ‘the road’ (see Bakhtin 1981) in the context of the *Al Nuba Café* can be argued to establish spatiotemporal dialogues between Nubian indigenous past and diasporic present, highlighting the dialectical tension that exist between them. Before further explaining this point, it is worth noting that the two notions of diaspora and indigeneity essentially differ from each other; the former foregrounds the concepts of mobility, hybridity, and uprootedness, while the latter centres around belonging, authenticity, and rootedness (Gopinath 2018, Kalra,

Kaur & Hutnyk 2005). That is, the relation between indigeneity and diaspora is a dialectical relation that identifies the difference between them as a “tension between *roots* and *routes*” (Reed 2015, author’s italics) where manifestations of indigeneity are productively enabled by the experiences and possibilities of the diaspora (Desai 2011). As such, deploying the chronotope of the road would be beneficial in explaining the dialogical intersection of these concepts in the instance of the Nubian diaspora.

Of much relevance to this discussion is the FB posts resemiotizing Nubians’ post-displacement architecture. It acts as a significant motif of the road chronotope, emphasizing the notion of a Nubian state within the Egyptian state and highlighting their Nubian agency with its clear impact and presence in Kom Ombo’s built environment. Nubians decorate both the inside and outside walls of their houses with symbols of the old Nubian ecosystem – the most significant are palm trees, the Nile River, birds, and the sun – to reproduce and revive the aesthetics of their lost land.

Much of the *Al Nuba Café* posts share photos of their old and new built environment, their home architectures and graffiti thus staging a dialogue between their current diaspora condition and their past indigenous presence. The group shares posts that display the architecture of the Kenuz villages: Gharb Aswan and Gharb Suhial where Nubians capitalize on the spatial repertoires of Old Nubia to create touristic attractions, emphasizing a sense of space-based identity (see figure 9).

The FB posts emphasize that Nubians still summon spatial composition elements from their old land. Thus, their architecture is a spatial marker through which they distinguish themselves from their Upper Egyptian neighbours’ built environment. Their belonging and authenticity are instantiated through superdiverse online context of mobility and hybridity in which they are intersected.

The notion of spatio-temporal mobility (*routes*) as a motif of the road chronotope is significantly evident as well in the posts’ translanguaging techniques of hashtags and code mixing. Figure 10 illustrates this notion.

This post includes underpinning hashtags that affiliate the posts with the Nubian Heritage Day commemorated on the seventh of July. It is worth noting that self-authentication is practiced in this post and other similar posts through multilingual hashtags that bring together English, Arabic and Nubian. Significantly, these multilingual posts along with the accompanied multilingual hashtags foster translocal interactions.

The hashtags function as translocal manifestations of self-authentication, positioning and belonging. They use English, Arabic, and Nubian to include a wider base of FB users while stressing their authentic Nubian identity. Correspondingly, the hashtags can be argued to perform glocal identities in the translocal and superdiverse space of FB. These multilingual practices instantiate a translocal process of *glocalization* through which the *Al-Nuba Café* negotiates dynamic scales that traverse the global and the local, “with the local appropriating elements of the

global that it finds useful, at the same time employing strategies to retain its identity” (Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou 2007: 143).

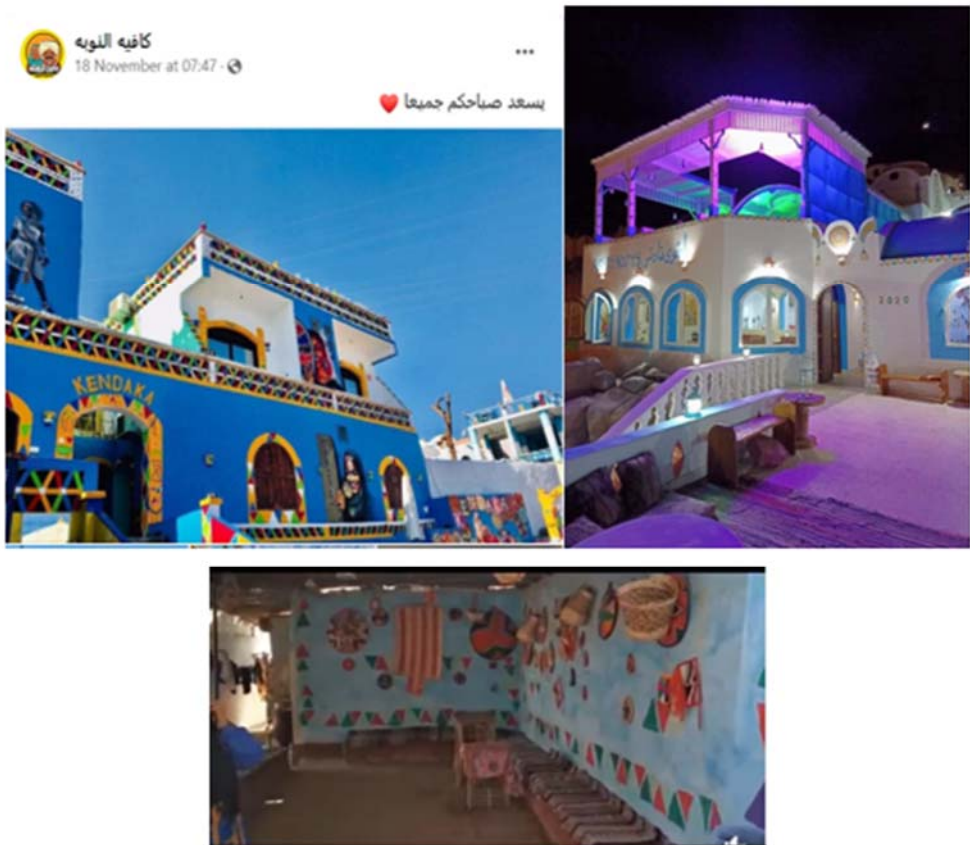


Figure 9 Nubians' post-displacement architecture

#يوم_النوبه_العالمي_7_7
#НОПИН_ОУГ_СОСМОСАЛЛИ
#اليوم_النوبه_العالمي
#International_Nubia_Day
#NubianHeritageMonth

Figure 10. Reviving the Nubian Heritage Day through multilingual hashtags

Considering the arrangement of the post languages, it can be argued that Arabic and English become the contextualization and the semiotic cushioning strategies used to unforeignize the Nubian. Seeking a wider base, such multilingual parentheticalizing indicates a higher degree of trans-spatio-temporal manifestations.

5. Discussion

Focusing on the digital affordances available to online diaspora communities shifts the focus from socio-demographic properties to communicative practices. Differently put, the focus is then on the process of diasporization itself rather than on stable diaspora groups with fixed linguistic repertoires (Androutsopoulos & Alexander 2021). Digital affordances and the superdiversity features characterizing online technologies are argued to offer a kind of “identity repertoires” (Blommaert 2005) that enact a multilayered and hybrid online community. Informed by this, Nubian diaspora is examined in the current article as being manifested through digital linguistic practices and semio-chronotopic repertoires. This view connects diaspora to spatio-temporal narrative and semiotic practices available to online communities, adding a translocal dimension to the notions of diaspora and displacement.

The resemiotized posts of heritage and traditions are seen as an unchanging relic of the past. They bring past practices to the interactional present as relevant context to the Nubian identity. The resemiotized indexicalities are found to be closely associated with temporal toposes that associate some past diaspora practices with the here-and-now of the present. Resemiotized indexicalities of food, ceremonies, and built environment introduce the Nubian identity as a symbolic construct that is appropriated within culturally specific practices (see Bilá & Ivanova 2020, Eslami et al. 2023 for identity formation in interaction), constructing a sense of temporal continuity among the past, the present, and the future. Correspondingly, the online Nubian identity is found to be fluid and interactive in essence, where the entailed resemiotized “TimeSpaces” are kept anew, manifesting timeless patterns of identity representations. A stratified identity structures are then evident. It is through the *Al Nuba Café* resemiotized indexicalities manifested in multimodal posts, multilingual hashtags, interdiscursive videos and many other translanguaging practices that the superdiverse and hybrid features of the Nubian diaspora identity are asserted. Differently put, manifestations of translocality are unpacked by temporal entanglements which reemphasize the *atemporal* reshaping of Nubian identity. These entanglements are found to transcend the local boundaries of the here-and-now.

The chronotopes of performance, affect and the road foreground a temporal dimension of diaspora that is associated with a coeval aligned expressions of a displacement in space and proximity in time. Defined through the lens of these chronotopes, borrowing the words of Peeren (2006: 73), Nubian diaspora “is characterized by the way in which dispersed communities connect themselves to each other and to the homeland by forging relationships across space and time

through a shared performative (habitual and mnemonic) construction of time-space: a shared chronotope.” The underlined chronotopes can be argued to be habitual as evident in the motifs of gender, mnemonic as expressed in the tropes of heritage, displacement experience, nostalgia, and indigeneity.

The study has concluded that Nubian digital tellings of diaspora are organized within a continuum of specific chronotopes that offer a constant identity reprocessing vacillating between spatial yearning and temporal nostalgia, statehood and mobility, past indigeneity and present diaspora, delineating an umbrella chronotope of the changing same. That is, the digital Nubian identity is manifested in the participants’ narrative as a “continuous becoming that is predicated on the various constructions of time-space encountered and performatively enacted by the subject” (Peeren 2006: 75). The FB page of the *Al Nuba Café* along with its digital affordances conflate the two chronotopes of story and storytelling of the past displacement events through the employment of tropic forms of alignment.

The online Nubian identity is defined by translocality. The digital mediation of the displacement experience translocalizes the event, emphasizing an atemporal manifestation of the displacement experience which transcends the boundaries of the there-and-then. This, in turn, configures a trans-temporal chronotopic alignment in relation to the underlined chronotopes. This is illustrated in translocal identity management running in the posts and exemplified in the underlined chronotopic motifs and the affordances of multilingualism, hashtags and translanguaging. The *Al Nuba Café* can thus be interpreted as the “third space chronotope” (Peeren 2006) of the diaspora journey between home displacement and host destination, past and present, digital and analogue and roots and routes. The Nubian online identity is thus argued to be enacted by multilayered and coexisting chronotopes rather than with homogeneous and compatible ones.

6. Conclusion

This article situates itself within the literature of post-Labovian work that detaches itself from the conventional narrative of personal, denotational experiences and examines narrative in interactional contexts. The adopted framework allowed us to dig into the complexity of identity in online diaspora contexts. It helped to explore the Nubian community beyond mere demographic parameters investigated in a traditional sociolinguistic sense. More specifically, the synergy established between the notions of “resemiotization” (Iedema 2001, 2003) and “the chronotope” (Agha 2007, Bakhtin 1981, Oostendorp 2007, Perrino 2007, 2015) makes it possible to shift the focus from a localized and fixed Nubian identity to a translocal and mobile identity, in which various spatio-temporal frames are kept interacting with one another.

The current article has examined how the digital diasporization process of the Nubian identity is constituted by narrative oriented in spatio-temporal chronotopes. That is, the focus of the study is on the ways the resemiotized chronotopic orientations informing the Nubian identity work are mediated in the digital

narrative. The analysis has shown that although the Nubian homeland is left behind in space, it is still proximal in time in their digital narrative. Accordingly, the study argues that while space is considered the primary measure of diaspora in the analogue contexts (Senft 2017), the digital context emphasizes a rather temporal dimension which dynamically participates in the reproduction of diaspora experiences. The chronotope helps in decentring the concept of spatial dispersal by situating diaspora within a temporal continuum that cannot be cut down into strictly separate entities. Nubian diasporic identity is then represented as continuous becoming.

The analysis has yielded that resemiotized narrative, with its historical emphasis, proves beneficial in highlighting the chronotopic indexical layers of meanings associated with the diasporic Nubian identity. It has also investigated how digital semiotic indexicalities deploy narrative chronotopes to create links between time and Nubian diaspora. The resemiotized past events along with the aesthetics of historical present indexicalities transform the displacement experience into a chronotope.

The article contributes to the body of identity work that proposes deploying chronotopicity as a new approach to the exploration of context in studies of culture and identity, especially in times of globalization and superdiversity. Furthermore, it makes a contribution to the literature on diaspora identities by developing a view of Nubian diaspora that is predicated upon not only a compulsory displacement from their places but also upon a proximal attachment to their past (temporal).

References

- Abdel-Hafiz, Ahmed. 2007. The attitude of Egyptian Nubians towards their vernaculars and Arabic. *Occasional Papers in the Development of English Language Education* (43). 101–126.
- Ahmed, Radwa Ezzat. 2021. *Family language policy within Nubian families in Egypt: Parents' perspectives of their children's prospective bilingualism* [Master's Thesis, the American University in Cairo]. AUC Knowledge Fountain. <https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/1575>
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis. 2006. Multilingualism, diaspora, and the internet: Codes and identities on German-based diaspora websites. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 10 (4). 520–547. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2006.00291.x>
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis & Kristin Vold Lexander. 2021. Digital polycentricity and diasporic connectivity: A Norwegian-Senegalese case study. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 720–736. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12518>
- Agha, Asif. 2007. *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511618284>
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1981. The dialogic imagination. In Michael Holquist (ed.), *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. USA: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bilá, Magdaléna & Svetlana V. Ivanova. 2020. Language, culture and ideology in discursive practices. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 24 (2). 219–252. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-2020-24-2-219-252>
- Brinkerhoff, Jennifer. 2009. *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Blommaert, Jan. 2005. *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2010. *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2019. Are chronotopes helpful? In Sjaak Kroon & Jos Swanenberg (eds.), *Chronotopic identity work: Sociolinguistic analyses of cultural and linguistic phenomena in time and space*, 16–24. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788926621-003>
- De Fina, Anna. 2019. Insights and challenges of Chronotopic Analysis for sociolinguistics. In Sjaak Kroon & Jos Swanenberg (eds.), *Chronotopic identity work: Sociolinguistic analyses of cultural and linguistic phenomena in time and space*, 190–200. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788926621-012>
- Desai, Gaurav. 2011. Between indigeneity and diaspora: Questions from a scholar tourist. *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 13 (1). 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2011.545577>
- Eslami, Zohreh R., Tatiana Larina & Roya Pashmforoosh. 2023. Identity, politeness and discursive practices in a changing world. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 27 (1). 7–38. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-34051>
- Fahim, Hussein. 1983. *Egyptian Nubians: Resettlement and Years of Coping*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Fawzy, Rania. 2022. Temporal agency of social movements: A semio-chronotopic analysis of the Floyd protests. *Journal of Language and Politics* 21 (5). 697–720. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.21049.faw>
- Fawzy, Rania. 2023. VR as a metaleptic possible world of global citizenship embodiment: A cognitive stylistic approach. *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*. 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqad078>.
- Fawzy, Rania & Reham El Shazly. 2023. Avatarian embodiment in Indigenous Futurisms 4D: The intersemiosis of intercultural encounters. *Language and Intercultural Communication* (23). 123–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2022.2159036>
- Giaxoglou, Korina. 2018. #JeSuisCharlie? Hashtags as narrative resources in contexts of ecstatic sharing. *Discourse, Context, and Media* (22). 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.07.006>
- Gopinath, Gayatri. 2018. *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw9dq>
- Halliday, Michael. 1978. *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Arnold.
- Heyd, Theresa. 2016. Narratives of belonging in the digital diaspora: Corpus approaches to a cultural concept. *Open Linguistics* 2 (1). 287–299 <https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2016-0013>
- Heyd, Theresa & Mirka Honkanen. 2015. From Naija to Chitown: The new African diaspora and digital representations of place. *Discourse, Context & Media* 9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2015.06.001>
- Kalra, Virinder, Raminder Kaur & John Hutnyk. 2005. *Diaspora and Hybridity*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Koutsogiannis, Dimitris & Bessie Mitsikopoulou. 2007. Greeklish and greekness: Trends and discourses of glocal-ness. In Brenda Danet & Sausan Herring (eds.), *The multilingual Internet: Language, culture and communication online*, 142–162. Cambridge, MA/New York: Cambridge University Press
- Kroon, Sjaak & Jos Swanenberg 2019. Chronotopic identity work. In Sjaak Kroon & Jos Swanenberg (eds.), *Chronotopic identity work: Sociolinguistic analyses of cultural and*

- linguistic phenomena in time and space*, 1–15. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788926621-002>
- Iedema, Rick. 2001. Resemiotization. *Semiotica* 37 (1/4). 23–40. <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.2001.106>
- Iedema, Rick. 2003. Multimodality, resemitotization: Extending the analysis of discourse as multi-semiotic practice. *Visual Communication* 2 (1). 29–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357203002001751>
- Leppänen, Sirpa, Samu Kytölä, Henna Jousmäki, Saija Peuronen & Elina Westinen. 2013. Entextualization and resemitotization as resources for identification in social media. In Philip Seargeant & Caroline Tagg (eds.), *The language of social media: Communication and community on the internet*, 112–138. Basingstoke: Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137029317_6. 10.1057/9781137029317_6
- Li, Kunming & Jan Blommaert. 2019. The care of the selfie: Ludic chronotopes of Baifumei in Online China. In Sjaak Kroon & Jos Swanenberg (eds.), *Chronotopic identity work: Sociolinguistic analyses of cultural and linguistic phenomena in time and space*, 49–66. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788926621-005>
- Oostendorp, Marcelyn. 2017. Extending resemitotization: Time, space and body in discursive representation. *Social Semiotics* 28 (3). 297–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2017.1295849>
- Peeren, Esther. 2006. Through the lens of the chronotope: Suggestions for a spatio-temporal perspective on diaspora. In Marie-Aude Baronian, Stephan Besser & Yolande Jansen (eds.), *Diaspora and memory: Figures of displacement in contemporary literature, arts and politics*, 67–77. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Perrino, Sabina. 2005. Participant transposition in Senegalese oral narrative. *Narrative Inquiry* 15 (2). 345–75. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.15.2.08per>
- Perrino, Sabina. 2007. Cross-chronotope alignment in Sengalese oral narrative. *Language & Communication* (27). 227–244. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2007.01.007>
- Perrino, Sabina. 2015. Chronotopes: Time and space in oral narrative. In Anna De Fina & Alexandra Georgakopoulou (eds.), *The handbook of narrative analysis*, 140–160. Malden: Wiley Blackwell.
- Reed, Ann. 2015. Of routes and roots: Paths for understanding diasporic heritage. In Emma Waerton & Steve Watson (eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of contemporary heritage research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137293565_24
- Rouchdy, Aleya. 1991. *Nubians and the Nubian Language in Contemporary Egypt: A Case of Cultural and Linguistic Contact*. Leiden: Brill.
- Salama, Amir & Rania Fawzy. 2023. The spatiotemporal constitution of Dubai as a semiotically assembled touristscape. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 27 (3). 570–591. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-31963>
- Senft, Gunter. 2017. Absolute frames of spatial reference in Austronesian languages. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 21 (4). 686–705. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9182-2017-21-4-686-705>
- Silverstein, Michael. 2016. Semiotic vinification and the scaling of taste. In Summerson Carr & Michael Lempert (eds.), *Scale: Discourse and dimensions of social life*, 185–212. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Vanderbilt, Tom. 1993. The nostalgia gap. *The Baffler*. Available at: <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/the-nostalgia-gap>

Article history:

Received: 30 August 2023

Accepted: 18 November 2023

Bionote:

Rania Magdi FAWZY is Associate Professor of applied linguistics at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transportation, Cairo, Egypt. She is also an editorial board member for *Discourse Context & Media*, Elsevier. Her work in linguistics contributes to research and debates within a wide range of interrelated disciplines including sociology, communication, journalism, political science and virtual reality genres. Her areas of research interest include pragmatics, social semiotics and multimodality, with a present focus on understanding communication in a post-digital era and algorithmic governance.

e-mail: raniamagdi@aast.edu

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3638-0514>

Сведения об авторе:

Рания Магди ФАУЗИ – доцент кафедры прикладной лингвистики Арабской академии науки, технологий и морского транспорта (Каир, Египет). Она также является членом редакционного совета журнала *Discourse Context & Media* (Elsevier). Ее работы охватывают широкий спектр смежных дисциплин, включая социологию, коммуникацию, журналистику, политологию и жанры виртуальной реальности. Области ее научных интересов включают прагматику, социальную семиотику и мультимодальность; в настоящее время она также занимается проблемами алгоритмического управления и коммуникации в постцифровую эпоху.

e-mail: raniamagdi@aast.edu

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3638-0514>