

Bonding Through Contexts: Herstories Retold on YiXi Talks

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Abstract

No man is an island, which explains the necessity of zooming into the processes of social bonding and interactive alignment taking place between the speaker and the addressee. Therefore, this study incorporates the emerging notion of “bonding” (Ide and Hata 2020) into the extensively explored concept of “context”, in the hope of shedding light on social relationships that arise from public speakers and the audience in Chinese public speeches. Specifically, through the lens of the stories of marginal women stories narrated in YiXi Talks (the Chinese counterpart of TED), this study not only aims at the investigation of bonding effect achieved in public speeches. But more importantly, it attempts to bravely voice for women’s hardships and predicament, demonstrate their constant struggles and resistance against social inequalities and call for due attention and support to marginal women in China and beyond.

Keywords: Bonding, Context, Herstory, Marginal women, Public speeches

1. Introduction

Herstories, more often than not, are told in first-person narratives or interviews, and it is usually the aforementioned type of herstories that enjoy a plethora of academic attention. Few herstories from the third-person perspective have been retold and passed on by scholars to the ears and cognition of the public. Despite the fact that some rhetoricians have probed into how contemporary and nineteenth-century female politicians arouse resonance by retelling others’ stories (see Enoch and Jack 2019), they mainly pay attention to those extraordinary female politicians and influential social activists. Salient and conspicuous is the paucity of research that demonstrates the strength of marginal women’s words and the thickness of their stories.

Given the unique attribute of storytelling, which is that the tellers provide the recipient with “access” to an event (Stivers 2008), there is negotiable room for the audience to decide

whether and to what extent they see eye-to-eye on the events the teller is describing. That is to say, both the speakers and the audience alike play equally active roles in the interactional process of (un)bonding, (dis)alignment and (dis)affiliation.

Another thing that merits attention is storytelling, be it from the first-person or the third-person perspective, consists of the process by which language is continuously being (re)adapted or (re)contextualized to fit the new discursive and socio-cultural contexts (Romano 2021). Before jumping into the notion of recontextualization, it is worthy of clarification about the ever-evolving concept of context, whose indispensable importance to academic research has long been emphasized by plenty of linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists (see Fairclough 1989; Brown et al. 1967; Malinowski 1923). This current study will adopt what Ide and Hata proposed about contexts in their book (Ide and Hata 2020)—there are three layers of contexts that deserve consideration when dealing with human interaction, namely, the interactional context, the corporeal context, and the socio-cultural context.

Based on the understanding of bonding and context, this study endeavors to address the research question of how exactly the speakers and the audience, even the narrated marginal women, bond/align with each other. In other words, both the linguistic and the paralinguistic sources that contribute to enhancing interaction and intensifying interactors' emotional affiliation in the speech will be the main analytical objects of this current study. More specifically, contextualized in Chinese public speaking, this study selects and delves into nine women-centric, third-person narrated herstories retold on YiXi Talks platform. By examining how bonding takes place among speakers, the audience and even those narrated characters, this study seizes the chance to retell and re-narrate herstories of marginal women to more potential readers.

2. Literature Review

Bonding, the English version of *Kizuna* (きずな), has taken root in and arose from the devastating and lamentable Great East Japan Earthquake. Initially originated from Japan, bonding has primarily been discussed by Japanese researchers in a collected academic book, where bonding carries different meanings in each paper of that edited book, only resembling in the notion that every type of bonding is neutral and non-volitional and they are all contextualized in Japanese or Japanese culture. Kataoka (2020) demonstrates the shifting bonding constructed between the suspects and the detectives/policemen during the interrogation by examining the status-nuanced address terms (e.g., *jibun*, *washi*, *watashi*, *boku*, *ore*, *omae*) and three power-laden distal particles and interjections (e.g., *na*, *ne*, *yo*). Next, Dunn (2020) illuminates how speech contest participants utilize reported speech and reported thought (Haakana 2007) to bond with the audience. Also, other scholars have scrutinized the use of the benefactive *-te kureru* (Takekuro 2020), the discordance (Takekuro 2018) to show the constant wax and wane of bonding and unbonding (Yamaguchi 2020).

However, its innovation is where its limits lie. The whole background of that collection is merely confined to Japanese background, and cannot be extended to other countries due to its

specialty in specific situations, leaving room for scholars to expand this paradigm into other foreign, country-specific situations.

Having shed light on some basic information on bonding, the focus will be shifted to the notion of context.

Reportedly, the notion of context was first brought up by German linguist Wegener, who believed that the meaning depends on the context it occurs. At that time, his contention about context didn't stir many responses. It was not until 1923 that the notion of context came to the spotlight, which could largely be attributed to the Poland anthropologist Malinowski. He argued that language was essentially rooted in cultural reality, tribal life, and folk customs. Without frequent reference to these broad contexts, language cannot be explained. At that year, he first proposed the context of situation. In 1935, he further came up with context of culture, contending that the definition of a word depends, to some extent, on its cultural context. So far, the system of context had taken shape.

Firth (1957) agreed with Malinowski's idea and continued to perfect this system. He further clarifies the context of situation into three minor constituents: features of participants (e.g., the linguistic and non-linguistic activities of participants), relevant entities, the consequences of the speech event. Firth's interpretation of context, compared with that of Malinowski, is much more systemic and comprehensive.

A similar cognition came down to Halliday. In 1964, Halliday put forward the well-known "Registry Theory", arguing that language varies according to the situation in which it is used, and these varieties of language can be referred to as registers. With the deepening of his study, he clarified the three significant factors that define registers in 1978, namely, field, tenor, and mode. In Halliday's "Registry Theory", field means the environment in which language takes place, including the theme, participants, and actions. Tenor refers to the roles and social relationships between speakers, and mode denotes ways of communication. The three factors jointly determine registry.

In addition to the academic explorations on context at abroad, relevant researches have taken place in China as well.

In 1932, Wangdao Chen summarized the issues pertinent to context into "six *he*" (six interrogatives), namely, why, what, who, where, when, and how. In 1989, Zhaoxiong He discussed context in terms of the inner-linguistic knowledge and extra-linguistic knowledge. Based on all these discussions and explorations on context, Zhuanglin Hu proposed his contextual view from an overall perspective in 1994 and divided context into three levels, namely, the linguistic context, the situational context, and the cultural context. By "linguistic context", Hu stresses the internal environment of a text, that is, the co-text. The situational context, as indicated by their names, refers to the physical environment where discourses occur, including the time, space, place, and the relationship of the interlocutors. The cultural context encodes the history, culture, and customs of a certain speech society to which the speaker belongs. By far, the developmental progress of context in China has roughly been reviewed, but it should be kept in mind that more detailed yet constructive studies about

context still count in pushing the limits of context and clarifying its nature.

This current study agrees with what Japanese scholars, Ide and Hata (2020), have proposed on tri-layered contexts—the interactional, corporeal, and socio-cultural level of contexts, in the hope of deciphering the (un)bonding, (dis)alignment, and (dis)affiliation realized in Chinese public speeches launched on YiXi Talks.

3. Methodology

Interactional dynamics and linguistic micro-shifts have long been scrutinized by researchers across time and space, and bonding is among one of them. According to Ide and Hata (2020), the word “bonding” refers to the sense of co-presence, belonging, and the feeling of being connected with others as well as the place of interaction.

Based on detailed representation of how bonds can be discerned and captured in the literature review part, it can be discerned that the processes of interaction are, actually, processes of bond building and bonds emerge not only from the denotational use of language, but also from the socio-indexical levels where physical surroundings, multimodal communication tools and socio-cultural contexts all exert impacts on interactions.

Having introduced the core concept of bonding, previous similar thoughts and notion should also be attached with great attention so as to have a holistic understanding of multilayered interactions. When it comes to discursive interaction, concepts such as “footing” (Goffman 1981), “alignment” (Stivers et al. 2006; Stivers 2008; Steensig 2012), “positive face” (Brown and Levinson 1987), “involvement” (Tannen 1984, 1989; Scollon et al. 2012), and “rapport management” (Spencer-Oatey 2000) are considered to be key elements to decipher and establish discursive intimacy and solidarity.

Despite their similarity in capturing flexible and emergent interactions, the biggest distinction of bonding and the aforementioned notions lies in whether speakers’ intentionality or the interactional process per se is at the center of discussion. In other word, bonding places a premium on the *actual processes of interaction* rather than on the consequences or results of the interaction. The *non-volitional* and subconscious nature of bonding stands in stark contrast with strategic and “calculated” moves advocated in Involvement.

Before unfolding this current study, one crucial clarification should be made here. This study aligns with bonding’s emphasis on actual interactional processes and prioritizes the importance of delving into dynamic and emergent interactions through which multilayered and multifaceted bonds are built. To put it another way round, this study examines how bonding takes place through tri-layered contexts and between the narrated “there-and-then” story world and the narrating “here-and-now” world (see Koven 2002).

Specifically, at the interactional level of context, some linguistic resources and strategies that are frequently employed in each public speech to align and bond with the audience will be attached with great emphasis. In addition, at the corporeal level of context, this study will zoom in on the surrounding situation in which these public speeches take place, as well as the embodied gestures or just physical beings that are involved in this type of social interaction.

Lastly, at the socio-cultural level of context, culturally shared meaning and social common sense will be discussed.

4. Data Collection and Database

This study incorporates nine women-centric public speeches, either delivered by female or male speakers, on YiXi, whose name derives from a well-known proverb in China which can be literally translated into English as “Listening to your words for one moment is much better than reading books for ten years.” As the counterpart of TED Talks, YiXi also upholds the objectives of disseminating knowledge, providing space for daydreamers in all walks of life, as indicated by its slogan—humanity, science, technology, and daydreaming.

The nine selected talks are all women-related, particularly centered on those marginal women. Each talk has its own title, and the titles of the nine talks scrutinized in this current study will be listed as follows: From History to Herstory, Workwomen on the Stage, Sino-African love stories, Poisonous Cats and Scapegoat: the root of human’s fear, suspicion, and violence, Girls Don’t Be Afraid, Protecting Girls, Two Decades’ study on Street Girls, From thirty-two to twenty-two, and the Birth of Underwear for Post-operative Breast Cancer Women. Their names are indicative of the significant roles played by women in these storytellings.

In order to form a database for this current study, all the linguistic texts and videos of these talks have been scraped by GooSeeker. Moreover, all comments below these speeches from online audiences recorded on digital platforms, such as Weibo and YiXi Talks, have also been scraped by GooSeeker and added to the aforementioned database for substantializing and concreting the audience’ choices of (un)bonding and (dis)alignment.

After a rigorous observation, some recursive patterns on how exactly bonding occurs have been figured out. At the interactional level of context, some frequently shown linguistic resources have been detected, mainly including the employment of pragmatic markers (e.g., vocative markers, solidarity markers, focusing markers). At the corporeal level, gaze, mutual gaze, and co-presence are found to be contributive to the establishment of bonding. Then at the socio-cultural level, the shared common ground of all Chinese people (both the speakers and the audience) is the analytical focus.

By far, both the data and the analytical method have been introduced. Next, concrete analytical processes will be unfolded and demonstrated as follows.

5. Bonding Through the Interactional Context

Throughout all the texts of the nine herstories, one prominent semiotic recourse that frequently shows up is the linguistic form of pragmatic markers. According to Fraser’s classification of pragmatic markers (1996), broadly speaking, there are four types of pragmatic markers, namely, the basic markers, the commentary markers, the parallel markers, and the discourse markers. To be specific, a basic marker signals the force of the basic message, a commentary marker indicates a message that comments on the basic message, a parallel marker signals a message in addition to the basic message, and a discourse marker signals the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse.

Before going into detail about the subclassifications of the four types of pragmatic markers, it's significant to verify the necessity of looking into pragmatic markers. As illustrated by Fraser (1996), pragmatic markers are the linguistically encoded clues that signal the speaker's potential communicative intentions. By zooming in on those seemingly trivial linguistic recourses, analysts enable to decipher the implied meanings and unsaid intentions of a specific sentence.

After rigorous examination, eleven subcategories of pragmatic markers are found as practices of the occurrence of pragmatic markers in the nine herstories so as to enhance bonds from different aspects. Each of the subcategories will be illustrated with an example as follows.

[**Extract 1**] A woman plays many important roles in every single family. Therefore, her happiness is closely related to the happiness of more than one family and three generations of people. In this sense, any of her needs shouldn't be neglected. (Structural basic markers, declarative)

[**Extract 2**] Structural basic markers, interrogative What are the roles played by the African's Gold Rush in those Sino-African love stories? Are women the ones being utilized and deceived? The more I talk to them, the more I realize that isn't the right answer. (Structural basic markers, interrogative)

[**Extract 3**] They always play **whole-heartedly** on the stage, **totally** immersed in the characters' pains and sorrows. Sometimes I think it's **cruel** to have them play out such stories because these plots are what they went through and suffered from. (Assessment markers)

[**Extract 4**] After seeing this picture, you may say that many sexual abusers are teachers. **Indeed**, but that's sexual abuses are more likely to be exposed when they take place at school. (Evidential markers)

[**Extract 5**] **Frankly speaking**, these words are not decent expressions. It's **pretty** normal if you don't understand. Half of my friends don't understand either. (Mitigation markers)

[**Extract 6**] **By no means** will all the underwear designers be as "lucky" as I. And this luck was given by Mi, at the cost of losing her breasts. (Emphasis markers)

[**Extract 7**] **You** can look at the brochure in my hand. It's about protecting girls from sexual abuse. (Vocative markers)

[**Extract 8**] The more I interact with and know about them, the more convinced I become about my original thoughts, that is, treating them like my **family members**, as reads on the poster—gazing with **infinite tenderness**. (Solidarity markers)

[**Extract 9**] **Now**, I'm going to play a video, which was shot when I traveled across different continents. And **right now**, I want to go back to the first question I mentioned before, **the one** that plagues all the women around the world, that is, the question of marriage. (Focusing markers)

[**Extract 10**] Perhaps the **most surprisingly** unexpected sentence is the last one. "I never dare say, but sometimes I actually enjoy it." This is not what we often hear in everyday life.

(Contrastive markers)

[Extract 11] From another perspective, if we embrace diversity, tolerate difference, and avoid unnecessary fear and suspicion, we can keep away from violence. (Elaborative markers)

In extract 1, the speaker of this speech is actually a female underwear designer for women whose breasts have been removed because of breast cancer. Her use of declarative mood signals that what she expresses in the propositional content is a reality. By doing so, she aligns with the audience by sharing her belief about women's fundamental roles and the significance of satisfying women's needs with the audience. In contrast, extract 2 is expressed in the form of an interrogative mood with the interrogative marker, the speaker, shifting from the narrated there-and-then world to the narrating here-and-now world, bond with the audience by raising questions. From the first glance, these questions are what she's asking, or has once asked, herself. However, these interrogative markers guide the audience to contemplate the roles played by those Chinese women involved in love stories with African boys, especially those Nigerian men who make a living in China, Guangzhou. Undoubtedly, asking questions is the most efficient way to attract the interlocutors' attention and check whether the addressees are listening or not.

Assessment markers, which belong to the commentary pragmatic markers, find the best expression in extract 3. By describing how female workers at the bottom of the social ladder behave in their stage play rehearsals, the speaker, a playwright, makes an effort to align with the audience by commenting with strongly affective assessment markers, such as *whole-heartedly* and *totally immersed*. All is done to build an emotional empathy with the audience and lead them to think it over why those female workers, often in the service industry such as housekeepers, babysitters, and domestic workers, engage so much with the plays. Later, the answer is given by the speaker himself— they, those female workers who do the humblest and most despised jobs, don't even need to "act" in these plays because these plots are the real sufferings that they've been through. Through the employment of the evidential marker *indeed* in extract 4, the speaker of protecting girls from sexual abuses acknowledges the potential thoughts that may take shape in the audience's mind—teachers are most of the sexual abusers to the pupils or any female students they teach. This acknowledgment can further narrow down their psychological gap, which is caused by the public speaking "field," according to Halliday's register theory (Halliday 1985, 1989). Based on this level of closeness, the speaker moderately rectifies the audience's cognition by noting that the reason why the number of teacher perpetrators is on the rise is attributable to more exposure to them. By doing so, the speaker manages to guide the audience to pay attention to the most unexpected acquaintance sexual abusers, such as fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and male neighbors. By now, another bond has been established between the speaker and the audience.

In extract 5, the speaker who launched the movement of "Girls Don't Be Afraid" uses a mitigation marker, which also falls under the category of commentary pragmatic markers, at the beginning of her speech. As the organizer of this "girls help girls" movement, she got to

know some jargons that ordinary people don't often hear in terms of the tricks to fool and trap girls, such *Hua Chang* (nightclubs disguised by actress audition) and *Ding Zu* (the group of men using their sexual organs to harass women at rush hours on public transportation). She employs this jargon to arouse the audience's curiosity. As expected, nearly none of the audience have ever encountered these terms. At this time, she resorts to the mitigation markers—*frankly speaking* and *pretty normal*, to save the audience's positive face and redeem her face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson 1978). And then, even at the cost of hurting her friends' faces, the speaker bonds with the audience by clearly expressing her desire to reduce the face loss associated with her utterances. In extract 6, the underwear designer mentioned above utilizes the emphasis marker—*by no means* to stress that her “luck” to happen to have a friend who got her breasts removed after being diagnosed with breast cancer is a rare thing for underwear designers. By doing so, the speaker invites all the audience to think about the difficulties of the birth of a type of underwear suitable for post-operative women, as well as the difficulties and sorrows faced by these women who lost their breasts, which are the socially and culturally considered as the so-called hallmark for being a woman. The bonds are gradually established by putting the audience in those marginal women's shoes.

By now, both some of the practices of the basic markers and commentary markers that occurred in the database of the nine herstories have been demonstrated. Next, attention will be shifted to the parallel markers and the discourse markers. And it's important to reiterate that pragmatic markers count in the analysis of bonding construction since they carry meanings (Fraser 1996) and are indicative of the speaker's intentions.

Pragmatic markers in bold in extracts 7, 8, and 9 all belong to the category of the parallel markers. In extract 7, the launcher of girl protection addresses directly to the audience by using the vocative marker, *you*. By doing so, the speaker is explicitly sending the message that the addressee of her speech message is all the audience. In extract 8, the speaker is a director of documentaries about comfort women arrested and raped by the Japanese army during the Second World War. In his speech, he recollects his memories about those comfort women that survive through Japanese soldiers' brutality. When it comes to the way he treats those comfort women, he employs the solidarity marker—family members to first build affective bonds with the narrated comfort women and, more importantly, to lead the audience to align/bond with those female survivors, appealing to the audience to treat comfort women with infinite tenderness just like him, instead of with hatreds or strange looks. In extract 9, the speaker repeatedly employs focusing markers, such as *now* and *right now*, to attract the attention of the audience and to signal focusing or refocusing on the brochure in her hand. After doing so, the audience and the speaker focus on the same object at the same time, thus facilitating the establishment of bonds.

Extracts 10 and 11 are examples of discourse markers, with the former being the contrastive markers and the latter being the elaborative markers. In extract 10, the speaker, who is an anthropologist focusing on the study of street girls in China, employs the contrastive marker—*the most surprisingly* to cause a sense of unexpectedness when hearing a street girl telling the speaker that she actually enjoys what it feels to be a street girl. Generally speaking,

being a street girl is the last thing that women choose to do for this job requires her to sell her body for money. On the contrary, that specific street girl finally speaks out what's buried at the innermost part of her heart—enjoyment. Such a shocking contrast sounds fresher than cliché about prostitutes in the ears of the audience, thus having more interest in what's following.

The elven extracts are just the tip of the iceberg of all the pragmatic markers that are utilized in the database of the nine herstories. Yet, through a glimpse of these examples, we can briefly understand how exactly pragmatic markers help build bonds and alignment among the narrated story world, the narrating field, and the audience.

6. Bonding Through the Corporeal Context

According to Ide and Hata (2020), bonding emerging from the corporeal context is mainly realized through embodied practices, such as physical interactions in theatrical rehearsals (Lefebvre 2020), joint affiliation created by laughter (Bushnell 2020), and the sense of copresence mediated through a webcam (Sunakawa 2020). Greatly informed by those scholars' comprehension towards corporeal context, that is, the non-linguistic, non-referential plane of meaning-making, I will focus more on the aspects of copresence, gaze, and mutual gaze, which are omnipresent in public speaking.

Before going into detail about the practices of these extralinguistic strategies used to narrate herstories, it's necessary to take a glimpse at copresence and gaze at first. First proposed by Goffman (1963), the notion of copresence was defined as a sense of being together in a virtual environment where people become uniquely accessible, available, and subject to one another. What deserves mentioning is that the concept of copresence doesn't only confine to the virtual environment but also the physical surroundings. Moreover, copresence not just carries the meaning of physically “being together” but also “mentally and affectively being together” in this current study.

Gaze and mutual gaze, undoubtedly, are prominent phenomena in the situation of public speaking, actually in all human communication, as illustrated by Jaber et al. (2019) that gaze is an important part of human interaction. And the role played by gaze in communication has long been recognized (see Argyle and Cook 1976; Kendon 1967). What's more, numerous research has shown that mutual gaze plays a critical role in establishing communicative ties between individuals and enabling nonverbal communication of social attention and purpose (see Zhang 2017). Greatly inspired by these previous studies and based on careful observation of the video data of the nine herstories, I place a premium on copresence and gaze, which contributes to the establishment of bonding at the corporeal level of context.



Figure 1. From History to Herstory

From the screenshot (Figure 1) of the speech delivered by a Taiwanese artist, it is clearly shown that the audience (all the silhouettes sitting around the stage) and the speaker are immersed in the same corporeal environment where see the same lights giving off from the neon sign YiXi and enjoy the relative darkness. Such a sense of “being together” has been greatly intensified by the speaker’s invitation to join the narrated world altogether. She addresses the audience; “Now, I’d like to play a video, which was shot when I traveled across different continents.” By doing so, she creates a virtual world for all of them, where they can encounter fleeting images together and experience the flashing thoughts together. Bonds and alignment have been achieved to a larger degree.

Figure 2 (see the next page) is taken from the speech about comfort women. From this picture, it’s clearly shown that the audience at the three sides of the stage is all casting their well-absorbed eyesight on the speaker. Conceivably, the speaker himself also shifts his eyesight from one listener to another. And he did so, as recorded in the video. The mutual gaze contributes to the establishment of mutual trust and rapport, as well as the emotional bonds with those marginal comfort women, whose number has declined from thirty-two in 2012 to twenty-two only two years later in 2014.

At the level of corporeal context, though attention has only been paid to the aspects of co-presence and gaze, it is noteworthy that there are numerous factors, such as facial expressions, gestures, intonation (see Tannen 1984), and multimodal resources (see Batrinca et al. 2013; Chen et al. 2014), that reinforce the formation of bonding and alignment in the situation of public speaking.



Figure 2. From Thirty-Two to Twenty-Two (Comfort women)

7. Bonding Through the Socio-cultural Context

Generally defined as shared background knowledge (ibid), common ground has a great impact on society (see Enfield 2006). At the level of the socio-cultural context, we mainly decipher how common ground (Clark 1996a, 1996b) exerts great influence on the establishment of alliances and the enhancement of solidarity, that is, the bonding process, in Chinese public speaking.

[Extract 12] The public generally has the **illusion** that those who dress in revealing clothes are more likely to be the targets of sexual harassment. **But** through our observation of these group chats, we found that those perpetrators choose their prey more because of their personality than because of their ways of dressing. They target women who lack alertness and those who look cooperative and easy to get controlled.

[Extract 13] The reason why Achike was so cautious had a lot to do with the **background** of Guangzhou at that time. From 2010, the Guangzhou government started to clamp down on illegal foreigners (especially Africans) who live in China without legal entry, legal residence, and legal work. What happens when those Africans are caught? They will be put in the police station and deported when they have raised enough money for airfare. Once repatriated, they will not be able to return to China for several years.

[Extract 14] To my surprise, John (an African man) told me that he thought that Chinese people's **prejudice** against African people doesn't arise from **racism** but simply from **ignorance**, which can actually be **eliminated** from where he stands. He believes that families like theirs, Chinese and Nigerians, are the best bridge for this cultural barrier and misunderstanding.

[Extract 15] In Taiwan, there's a thing called the stratosphere. In such an environment, ingroups are always ready to respond to attacks from outside, and they are also wary of the invasion of outsiders lurked in their community. And eventually, cyberbullying arises.

[Extract 16] Whether it is in a Qiang village (in **China**), a European village (in **Italy**), or in the **Islamic State**, people all fear external enemies and suspect the existence of internal traitors who collude with external enemies. And that's why violence goes viral in the end.

In extract 12, the speaker bonds with the audience by trying to correct the false, or not so holistic, knowledge shared by the public with the word *illusion*. She indicates that, based on the study of her team, sexual abusers and harassers usually don't pick their female preys by their appearances or whether they dress revealing clothes or not, which seem sensible to the cognition of the public. However, by providing a holistic view of the perpetrators' psychology—they pick the weak females, the speaker endeavors to establish a new common ground of this community. During this process, bonding arises and gets intensified, as testified by Clark (1996a) that “grounding” may function to achieve common ground between participants.

Extracts 13 and 14 are taken from the speaker who depicts Chinese girls/ women involved in love stories/affairs with Nigerian men. In these two extracts, the speakers utilized several words such as *background*, *prejudice*, and *racism* to raise people's awareness of the macro common ground. Through a detailed explanation of the crackdown against illegal migration, residence, and employment, as well as the consequences of the implementation of this ban on illegal Africans, the speaker shows her humanitarian empathy, which is contagious and can be transferred to the audience's understanding to the situation of Chinese females, African men in Guangzhou and their turbulent love. After all, the more common ground we share, the less constrained we are in communication, as advocated by Enfield (2006; also see Hanks 1990; Sapir 1949).

In extracts 15 and 16, the Taiwanese scholar reviews that the symbols of poisonous cats and scapegoats emerge from every corner of the world (China, Italy, and the Islamic State) in the long course of history, be it in the ancient time or the contemporary time. And he summarizes, based on decades of fieldwork and study, that the “internal traitor”, usually regarded as women, shows up in every (cultural and religious) community because of the fear of the in-groups. By “grounding” the phenomenon of the stratosphere in Taiwan, the quarrels and violence take place between villages, countries, and religious groups, the speaker guides the audience travel in time and space. And it is during the processes of “common ground” making that solidarity, alignment, and bonds have been successfully established.

8. Conclusion

With the firm belief that “we will bring change through our voice” (Wan 2021), this study comes out. Contextualized in Chinese public speaking and storytelling, this current study examines the way bonds and alignment are established through tri-layered contexts: the (linguistically) interactional level, the corporeal level, and the socio-cultural level.

In conclusion, at the interactional level, more than ten types of pragmatic markers have been discerned in the database of the nine herstories. In terms of bonding at the corporeal level, I mainly pay attention to the roles played by co-presence, gaze, and mutual gaze, whose contributive effects to the increment of bonding have been analyzed in detail. Agreeing with

the notion that the relationship between discourse and society is “cognitively mediated” (van Dijk 2015), I focus on the speakers’ employment of common ground to build bonding in the socio-cultural context.

Through the lens of public speaking, this study attempts to arouse due attention to the status quo of women, especially marginal women, as well the social inequalities (such as the stories of pregnant women in the village of Miyasenren, Jerusalem) and personal hardships (the removal of breasts, being raped thousands of times by Japanese soldiers, being abandoned and so on) that confront women in China and beyond.

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