

Co-constructing simple and complex frames using repetition and evaluation in Taiwanese family dinner talk

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Building on past research that uses Goffman's (1974) framing theory to analyze family interaction, I use discourse analysis to demonstrate how a frame, or "definition of the situation," can be co-constructed by using repetition as a linguistic strategy and evaluation in stancetaking per Du Bois' concept of the "stance triangle" (2007). I also adopt Gordon's (2009) theorization that frames can be "laminated" when participants interpret the current event as having more than one definition. This suggests that frame is an interactive achievement that requires collaboration of both speakers and listeners. I examine four excerpts of dinner talk in Mandarin Chinese among members of a Taiwanese family to illustrate how "topic structure" and "participant orientation," as outlined by Schiffrin (1993) in the delineation of multiple frames, play a key role in the co-construction of both relatively simple and more complex frames. Findings show that family members may attend to different words or other linguistic units and position themselves to different stance objects. As they evaluate the topics differently in the stance triangle, their evaluations influence how the frames in the interaction are co-constructed. Whether a frame is created as intended depends not only on the speaker's production but also on the listener's corresponding response. Also, by establishing different alignments and assuming relational roles, family members can evoke several frames that are layered in complex configurations, such as a parenting frame laminated on top of a reporting frame when the father reports medical test results as a topic while orienting to the son in a parent-child alignment by evaluating the son's behaviors. The study contributes to the extant research on framing theory by considering repetition and evaluation as resources to flesh out participant alignments and adds to the literature on family discourse a case study of a Taiwanese family.

Keywords: frame lamination; repetition; evaluation; stancetaking; family dinner talk

1 Introduction

Taking the perspective of interactional sociolinguistics that conversation is built on collaboration between speaker and listener (e.g., Tannen, 2005), I ground this study in the notion that conversation is a practice in which participants "use talk to

achieve their communicative goals” (Gumperz, 2015, p. 313). In this paper, I investigate the co-construction of “frames” as proposed by Goffman (1974, 1981), or what Tannen and Wallat (1993) call “interactive frames,” to see how both speakers and listeners collaboratively define the situation in family dinner talk. This study adds to the discussion of how frames are laminated, or layered, in discourse, as theorized by Gordon (2009), by examining how family members invoke and manage multiple definitions in one situation at once. To illustrate how the participants in the study create alignments, I incorporate Du Bois’ concept of the “stance triangle” (2007) to highlight their evaluations of topics in the conversation and in so doing, reconfigure the frames to create cohesion in interaction. More specifically, I analyze the use of repetition, described by Tannen (2005) as an involvement strategy, to show how frame lamination is achieved through mutual ratification on the parts of both speakers and listeners. This analysis extends existing research by showing how frame co-creation occurs in the context of family dinner talk in Mandarin Chinese, especially through the discourse strategy of repetition and the mutual orientation to a shared stance object. Also, it shows how listener and speaker sometimes achieve joint framing, while other times failing to do so, in relatively simple versus more complex interactions (i.e., when frames are laminated). Further, this study contributes to the research on framing theory by considering the stance triangle to locate and identify participant alignment in the co-construction of frame.

Past research suggests that although the formation of a frame often coincides with the introduction of a new topic, whether a frame is maintained and how it is developed depend not only on the speaker’s production but also on the listener’s reception, namely, on the interaction between all participants (e.g., Gordon, 2008; Hoyle, 1993; Kendall, 2006). Frames, as a communicative achievement, are how participants guide each other in understanding the conversation, and therefore, framing is not a static result but a dynamic process of constant negotiation in interaction. In this analysis, I present four excerpts as examples to emphasize the importance of responses in the creation and negotiation of frames. The first part (§4.1) is the comparison between two interchanges: in one, the frame does not take form as the speaker intends because the listener fails to pick up on relevant “contextualization cues” (Gumperz, 1982), while in the other, the frame is established from mutual recognition of the cues, as is evidenced by the participants’ use of repetition. The second part (§4.2), building on the configurations of laminated frames identified by Gordon (2009), gives a comparison between two complex frames: in one, the speaker initiates the discussion and the listener reacts in a way that corresponds, contributing to the formation of “blended frames.” In the other, the speaker initiates a similar discussion but the listener responds in a mismatched way, giving rise to another frame that is layered differently.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Frame, repetition, and evaluation

A frame, as Goffman (1974) puts it, is “a definition of the situation” that “allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label” current events (p. 21). A frame can be evoked by what Gumperz (1982) terms “contextualization cues,” which he defines as “any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signalling of contextual presuppositions” (p. 131). When situated in a “joking frame,” for example, an utterance is to be interpreted as a joke (i.e., as non-serious) by the participants. A mismatch of framing can occur when one fails to pick up relevant cues and does not perceive the utterance as intended, thereby defining the current event otherwise. As participants create frames they also take up footings (Goffman, 1981), or alignments, within those frames; thus, a joking frame entails participants taking up non-serious footings vis-à-vis what is said.

This aspect of frame is further elaborated by Tannen and Wallat (1993) in their study of a medical encounter involving a pediatrician, a child, and the child’s mother that was videotaped for demonstration to students. In their definition, “interactive frame” refers to “what is going on in interaction” (p. 59) and is co-constructed along with participants’ alignments. Tannen and Wallat identify three distinct frames that the pediatrician juggles simultaneously: social encounter frame (where the pediatrician uses a teasing register to address the child), the pediatric examination frame (where the pediatrician uses a flat tone to report the findings for videotaping), and the consultation frame (where the pediatrician uses a conversational register to address the mother). Each of the frames is characterized by markedly contrasting linguistic and paralinguistic cues. The pediatrician aligns with different audiences within different frames. For example, within the examination frame, she uses a reporting register and addresses future pediatric residents who will watch the video (e.g., Her tympanic membrane was thin, and light) while in the consultation frame, she talks to the mother in a question/answer structure (e.g., answering the mother’s question with As you know, the important thing is that she does have difficulty with the use of her muscles). While focusing on the pediatrician, Tannen and Wallat also demonstrate how the mother and child’s responses contribute to the framing of the activity.

In investigating frames in my data, I propose highlighting participants’ responses, as the listeners repeat and circulate certain words, phrases, or other syntactical units. Responses are a constructive way to look at frames as well as their shifts, maintenance, and lamination. As Goffman (1981) explains regarding responses, “they tell us something about the individual’s position or alignment in what is occurring” (p. 35). In other words, responses lend us insights into participants’ alignment as they tell us “what is occurring,” that is, a frame. This idea underlies Goodwin’s (1996) analysis of four examples of frame shifts. Goodwin (1996) argues that the understanding of an activity “emerges through the mutual and collaborative framing of the activity in progress by the recipient as well as speaker” (p. 81). Her analysis emphasizes how the ways participants respond to

ongoing talk trigger those shifts. An example shows how the addressed recipients in a storytelling event initiate joking talk instead of attending to the storyteller, thus “opening up a complex conversational floor” that is subordinate to the main floor (p. 73). This corresponds to Schiffrin’s study (1993), in which she observes that different sections of her sociolinguistic interview data are “characterized by radically different topic structures and participant orientations” (p. 251). In her data, she differentiates in-frame, between-frame, and out-of-frame sections as the participants maintain the interview structure (in-frame) at one time and put it on hold at another (out-of-frame). Following her approach, I look specifically at “topic structures” and “participant orientations,” that is, alignments, in the excerpts of my data to elucidate the transformations of frames.

In order to supply an account for that, I focus on the linguistic strategy of repetition as a way of examining participants’ uptake and their responses to previous utterances. Repetition is predominantly useful in that “it bonds participants to the discourse and to each other” (Tannen, 2007, p. 61). When a word is repeated by the listener, there is a strong implication that it is taken up, and that to both parties, it stands out as a thematically salient part of that specific interchange. Repetition, according to Tannen, is not simply the reiteration of words; rather, it creates what she calls “involvement” in terms of mutual participation in sense making (p. 62).

While alignment is fundamental in framing, as Goffman (1981) points out, there is still much to learn about how alignment is built and how it can be gauged. Therefore, to delineate participants’ alignment in conversations, I borrow Du Bois’ (2007) model of the “stance triangle” to show how speakers simultaneously evaluate objects, position themselves, and align with others (p. 163) in the process of stancetaking, as illustrated in Figure 2. In taking a stance, a stancetaker evaluates the stance object by attributing certain qualities or values to the object (p. 143). Positioning refers to how the stancetaker situates self in relation to the stance. Alignment is defined as “the act of calibrating the relationship between two stances, and by implication between two stancetakers” (p. 144). Identifying the stance objects, pinpointing the stance participants take, and outlining their evaluation of the stance objects make transparent the organization of the relations between them. This makes clear the participant alignments in interaction, and thus helps illuminate the construction and transformation of frames.

In the second part of my analysis (§4.2), I extend the concept and build on Gordon’s (2009) model of frame lamination when I analyze frames in more complex configurations. I identify two types of multilayered frames in the data previously identified by Gordon: “embedded frames” and “blended frames.” “Embedded frames,” in Gordon’s terms, “refers to a situation in which a frame with a more specific metamessage is completely embedded in a frame with a more general metamessage,” such as when pretend play between a mother and child becomes a reenactment of a specific prior experience (p. 141).

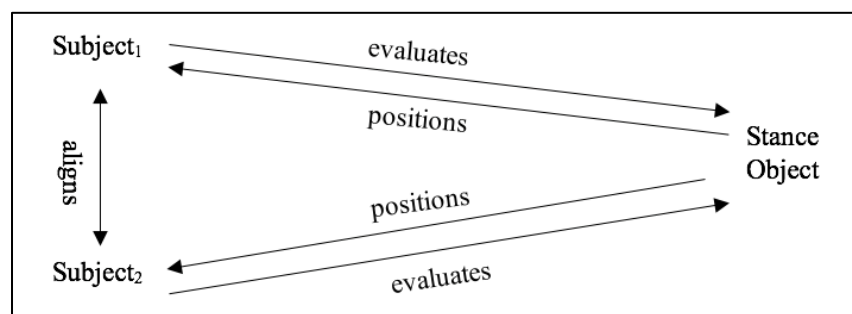


Figure 1. The stance triangle (Du Bois, 2007, p. 163)

A metmessage, (following Bateson, 1972 and Tannen, 2005) indicates how participants mean what they do and say. As for “blended frames,” Gordon (2009) defines “blending” as a more intentional discourse strategy (p. 161). This is contrary to the “leaky frame” that Tannen and Wallat (1993) notice in the medical setting where the pediatrician accidentally utters, to the child and in the social encounter frame, a technical term with a playful tone. An example of a blended frame Gordon identifies is that a mother uses role-play in a play frame to teach her daughter manners, thus simultaneously invoking a parenting frame (p. 164).

2.2 Methodology

In the analysis, I focus on repetition to map out the topic structures and evaluation to identify participant alignments. As noted in section 2.1, a participant may invoke a frame by raising a new topic as a contextualization cue. Nonetheless, it also depends on the subsequent interaction whether the frame is maintained, reconfigured, or dismissed. A topic structure can emerge as an interchange revolves around a certain topic that is marked by the reoccurrence of particular lexical items or syntactic structures. Repetition becomes important for this purpose. To show that certain lexical items are picked up and repeated, I boldfaced them in the excerpts. This goes to substantiate that both the speaker and the listener are participating collaboratively in the process of making sense of what is going on, namely, the co-construction of a frame.

I then analyze how each family member, through their participation, displays what they think stands out as important in the interaction and how they evaluate these topics. Tracing the relations between evaluation, positioning, and alignment in the stance triangle, I am able to tease out alignment or misalignment between family members, thereby illustrating whether a frame is constructed as agreed upon by the participants or a mismatch occurs because of their varying evaluations of topics. Similarly, evaluation serves to show how multiple frames can be laminated at once as the participants give the current event more than one definition.

3 Data

The data under analysis is a segment of family dinner talk among my family. The entire audio recording, 34 minutes in length, was collected on January 13, 2016, at a food court during my stay in Taipei, Taiwan in the winter break. The participants of the conversation include my parents, Tom and Jane, both in their fifties, my younger brother, Jacky (age 18), and me (age 25). I explained to them the purpose of the study, which is to better understand interactions between Taiwanese family members when they eat out, and obtained their consent to have the conversation recorded. They were each assigned a pseudonym. The recorder, which is my phone, was placed in the center of the table, amidst our dishes. The conversation was then transcribed for analysis (see Appendix A for transcription conventions).

The conversation is the first one being recorded in a corpus of my family eating out, consisting of 23 hours of audio recording in total. This segment is selected for the comparison it offers: an interchange between my brother Jacky and me, as compared with one between my father Tom and me, show how frames can shift in a stretch of interaction as the topic structure and participant alignment change. The conversation is in Mandarin Chinese, the first language of all four family members. The transcript was glossed and translated into English (see Appendix B for Pinyin and Appendix C for gloss).

A relevant piece of background knowledge about this part of the conversation is that a few days earlier I had a physical examination arranged by my dad, Tom, who had been concerned about my health conditions, as I had been living abroad. Prior to our dinner that day, he went to the hospital to retrieve the report and consulted with the doctor. At the point where the transcript begins, Tom is absent from the table to pick up his food, while Jane is just about to leave the table. Around the same time, my brother, Jacky, is scrolling newsfeeds on his phone, probably seeing something that prompts him to bring up the first topic of the recorded conversation. The transcript ends with the topic back to food, especially Korean food because Tom, Jane, and Jacky are taking a trip to Korea the next month.

4 Analysis

In this section, I analyze four excerpts from the transcribed data by comparing them and highlighting the linguistic and interactional differences to demonstrate how frames are created through moment-by-moment interaction between participants. In section 4.1, the comparison of the first two excerpts showcases how the listener's reactions influence the construction of a relatively simple frame. I demonstrate how, through repetition and by evaluating a stance object, a frame is created not by a single utterance of the speaker but by the mutual collaboration of both the speaker and the listener. In section 4.2, the final two examples highlight how listener and speaker co-create laminated and more complex frames.

4.1 Repetition and evaluation in simple frames

I begin with the simple frames to isolate the determining factor in the formation of a frame for the purpose of making a comparison: shared stance object. Both excerpts presented share two things in common: (a) Jacky and I are the only two participants, and (b) Jacky raises the topics. While the creation of frames sometimes coincides with the introduction of new topics, frames should by no means be equated with discussions of various topics. The two examples show a discernible difference in regard to topic structures and participant alignments, and therefore, the formation of a frame; the difference is revealed through repetition and participants' evaluation of the subject matters.

4.1.1 A mismatch in frame caused by mismatched repetition and evaluation

First, I show how a frame mismatch can grow out the participants' focus on two different stance objects. In (1a), Jacky brings up the topic of the Liberation Army, the armed forces of the People's Republic of China (*So the Liberation Army is going to attack us.* line 3), and provides his evaluation in the next line (*It's so unbelievable.* line 4). My response, however, immediately shows a mismatch. As Schiffrin (1993) points out, "language evokes a number of potential frames within which a next utterance can be interpreted" (p. 255). I do not interpret Jacky's words in a way that ratifies his evaluation.

- (1a) 3. Jacky: Suǒyǐ **jiěfàngjūn** yào dǎ wǒmen le. <laughter>
so liberation.army will attack 1PL-ASP
 'So **the Liberation Army** is going to attack us.'
 <laughter>
4. Chāo kuāzhāng de.=
super unbelievable DE
 'It's so unbelievable. ='
-
5. Ping: =Nǎlǐ de rén shuō de a.
Where-GEN person say DE PT
 '=Who said that.'
-
6. Jacky: **Jiěfàngjūn** zìjǐ fāwén jiǎng de.
liberation.army self post speak DE
 '**The Liberation Army** post online themselves.'
-
7. Ping: Wǒ zhīdào a. Nà nǐ zài nǎlǐ kàn dào de lǐ.
1SG know PT Then 2SG LOC where see-RES DE PT
 'I know that. I mean, where did you see that.'
-
8. Jacky: Liǎn shū xīnwén ba hǎoxiàng shì.
Facebook news ASS seem BE
 'Facebook news, I guess.'
-
9. Ping: N hēng.
uh huh
 'Uh huh.'

10. Jacky: Ránhòu tā shuō qián- qián **jiěfàngjūn**
 jūnguān
and.then 3SG say former former liberation.army
commander
 ‘And then it said, former- former **Liberation Army**
 commander’
11. zài fā wénzhāng zhè yàngzi.
PROG post article this.manner
 ‘posted an article.’

In lines 1-11, Jacky introduces the Liberation Army as a topic, whereas I focus on where he got the information. Then in line 12, as shown in (1b), I pick up the element “Facebook” that Jacky does not intend to elaborate. From there, our focuses diverge: he moves on talking about what he read before while I remain focused on Facebook. Twice Jacky uses the discourse marker “ran hou,” which means “and then” in English, to persist with the topic (*And then, it said- said a lot. So annoying.*, line 19). The persistence technique (Tannen, 2005) can be seen as his efforts to maintain the current frame. However, I do not participate in the same construction and my repetition of the word is not central to the discussion he initiates. An incongruity of the topic structure appears and causes the frame to shift.

- (1b) 12. Ping: Zài **liǎnshū** shàng ō
LOC Facebook up PT
 ‘On **Facebook.**’
13. Jacky: Dāngrán bù kěnéng yòng **liǎnshū** a tāmen
of.course NEG possible use Facebook PT 3PL
 ‘Of course not. They can’t use **Facebook.**’
14. Tāmen- tāmen shì yòng tāmen de wǎngzhàn
3PL 3PL BE use 3PL-GEN website
 ‘They- they used their own website.’
15. Ping: Nǐ hēng.
uh huh
 ‘Uh huh.’
16. Jacky: Sōuhú.
Sohu
 ‘Sohu website.’
17. Ping: Ō duì hòu tāmen bù nénggòu yòng **liǎnshū**.
PT yes PT 3PL NEG can use Facebook
 ‘Oh right. They can’t use **Facebook.**’
18. Bù huì yòng **liǎnshū**.
NEG will use Facebook
 ‘Won’t use **Facebook.**’
19. Jacky: Ránhòu jiù: Jiǎng shuō, jiǎng yīdà duī hǎo chǎo ō.
and.then just say say say huge CLF so noisy PT
 ‘And then, it said- said a lot. So annoying.’

20. Kànle zhēnde hěn bú shūfú.
See-ASP really very NEG comfortable
 ‘Seeing that made me very uncomfortable.’
-
21. Ping: <laughter>
22. Jacky: Zài pèi shàng- xiǎngxiàng tāmen de kǒuqì- jiùshì kǒuyīn.
again pair up imagine 3PL-POSS tone just accent
 ‘And together with- imagine their tone- accent, I mean,’
23. Jiù zhè yàng- ē. ((acts annoyed))
Just this.manner ugh
 ‘Just like that- ugh.’ ((acts annoyed))
24. Bù yào zhè yàng jiǎnghuà
NEG must this.manner talk
 ‘Don’t talk like that.’

Based on Du Bois’ (2007) model of the stance triangle, Jacky’s utterances, including “so annoying” (line 19), “making me very uncomfortable” (line 20), and the response cry “ugh” coupled with a nonverbal act of his facial expression (line 23), display explicit evaluations of the stance object, the Liberation Army and their announcement, thereby positioning himself as taking a disfavoring stance toward the object. In contrast, I do not take up a stance toward the same object, instead putting my attention on the topic of “Facebook.” The discrepancy in the ways Jacky and I take our stances in terms of making evaluations of the stance objects points to a divergent alignment (Du Bois, 2007: 164). In other words, Jacky seems to be inviting me to also evaluate the Liberation Army, and thereby position myself to align with him, and I fail to do so.

4.1.2 Co-constructing a frame through repetition and matching evaluation

While (1) illustrates that Jacky and I are hardly communicating within the same frame as a result of the mismatched topical focus and our misalignment regarding the stance object, (2) serves as a contrasting example in which the repeated word or phrase is recognized by both of us and leads to a more cohesive discussion. Toward the end, we make matching evaluations of the same stance object, thus putting us in alignment.

Prior to (2), after Jacky fetches my meal at the counter, he relays to me what the clerk has told him (She said you can have the soup refilled., line 34) and makes a comment on the soup (*It’s such a good deal.*, line 36). The word “soup” triggers his recent memories of having hotpot with his friends in the dormitory, and prompts him to recount the past event. As soon as he finishes, I make a remark (*How could you not add salt.*, line 47) on his explanation of not adding salt to the hotpot (*Be- because not adding salt- if not adding salt*, line 46). And from this point on, there is a cluster of repetition in our conversation. The word “salt,” or more precisely, the syntactic structure of negative phrase “not add salt,” is repeated by both of us in this section.

- (2) 46. Jacky: [Yīn-yīnwèi] **méi jiā yánbā**, méi jiā yánbā dehuà
because NEG add salt NEG add salt COND
 ‘[Be- because] **not adding salt-** if not adding salt’
-
47. Ping: Zěnme kěyǐ **bù jiā yánbā** =
how can NEG add salt
 ‘How could you **not add salt.**’
-
48. Jacky: =Wǒmen **méi yǒu yánbā**
IPL NEG have salt
 ‘=We **didn’t have salt.**’
49. Méi yǒu rén huì tèdì mǎi yánbā zài sùshè fang zhe
NEG have person will specially buy salt LOC dorm put-DUR
 ‘No one would bother to buy salt and have it in the dorm room.’
-
50. Ping: Nà cóng jiā lǐ dài jiù hǎo la
then from home inside bring just good PT
 ‘Just bring it from home.’
-
51. Jacky: A: Méi yǒu rén xiǎngdào
PT NEG have person think-RES
 ‘Ah: no one thought of that.’
52. Wǒmen zhǐ yǒu shā chá jiàng
IPL only have barbecue.sause
 ‘We **only** had barbeque sauce.’
-
53. Ping: <laughter>
-
54. Jacky: Shā chá huǒguō a
Barbeque.sauce hotpot PT
 ‘Barbeque hotpot.’
55. Tāmen chī hǎo jiànkāng ō, dōu shishūcài, ránhòu ròu sī
3PL eat so health PT all vegetable and.then meat slice
 ‘Their diet was so healthy; all vegetables, sliced meat.’
56. Bǐjiào shǎo zhīfáng de zhūròu
COMP little fat GEN pork
 ‘Pork with less fat.’
-
57. Ping: Shūcài, jiùsuàn shūcài **bù jiā yánbā** yě huì hěn kěpà
vegetable even vegetable NEG add salt also can very terrible
 ‘Vegetables- even vegetables taste terrible **without adding salt.**’
-
58. Jacky: <laughter> Chāo nán chī de
super difficult eat DE
 <laughter> ‘It tasted so bad.’

The fact that the word “salt” and the phrase “not add salt” are repeated several times evidences that both Jacky and I find it significant in the conversation. Eventually we come to make a like-minded evaluation toward the topic, soup

without salt (*taste terrible*, line 57 and *It tasted so bad.*, line 58). In the stance triangle, both Jacky and I are the stance subjects, evaluating the same stance object, that is, “soup without salt.” And by doing so, we are in a convergent alignment. Because of this alignment, we collaboratively build on each other’s words with repetition and thus, co-construct the “discussion of soup without salt” frame.

4.2 Evaluation in complex frames

In the second part of the analysis, I move on to discuss how the listener’s responses shape complex frames, that is, frames that are laminated. Goffman (1981) notes that frames can be laminated. Extrapolating on this idea, Gordon (2008, 2009) explores different configurations of multi-layered frames in family discourse, which include overlapping frames, embedded frames, and blended frames. In the excerpts below, I identify two types of laminated frames in the recorded transcript: blended frames and embedded frames. “Blended frames,” as Gordon discerns, is an intentional discourse strategy where “two definitions of interaction are being signaled at once” (2008, p. 323). “Embedded frames,” on the other hand, is when a more specific metamessage is completely embedded in a more general one, rather than distinct from each other (2009, p. 141)

Again, I compare two excerpts which have two things in common to draw attention to the deciding factor that causes the different formations of frames. In both excerpts, Tom and I are the primary participants who are engaged in those discussions, and secondly, Tom is the one who initiates the discussions by bringing up the topics while I am the one being directly addressed. The two excerpts below exemplify how frames are negotiated and transformed during interaction because of the different linguistic strategies I use such as telling narrative in response to Tom’s utterances.

4.2.1 *Blending reporting frame and parenting frame through father-son alignment*

In line 154 (*The results of your physical exam came out.*) in the extract below, Tom introduces the topic of my physical examination because he had picked up my report from the hospital earlier that day. From line 154 to 178, he briefs me on some items about which the doctor informed him. The way he initiates the discussion can be said to “invoke” a reporting frame, but as demonstrated in earlier sections, another participant’s responses can fundamentally contribute to the formation of this frame. In other words, if I did not pick up Tom’s cues, acknowledge his intention to make the report, and hence, respond in a corresponding manner, this frame would not take form as the speaker, Tom, intends. Also, along with the results, Tom also makes comments that are pertinent to those items he mentions, thereby simultaneously evoking a parenting frame that is characterized by relational footings between Tom and me. Below I boldfaced my responses to his words and code how Tom reports and evaluates the information

the doctor gave him and gives directives to me (the child) as a parent at the same time. “He” in line 155 refers to the doctor.

- (3) 154. Tom: Nǐ nà gè hōu, nǐ nà gè tǐjiǎn chūlái
2SG that CLF PT 2SG that CL physical.exam come.out
 ‘So, about you. The results of your physical exam came out.’
155. Jiù shì tā shàng cì jiǎng nà gè
just BE 3SG up time say that CLF
 ‘It’s that thing he mentioned last time.’
156. Gān de zhǐshù yǒu yī gè bǐjiào gāole yīdiǎndiǎn
Liver-GEN score have one CLF COMP high-ASP a.little.bit
yes NEG yes
Report ‘One of your liver function scores is a little bit high, right.’
-
157. Ping: **N hēng?**
uh huh
‘Uh huh?’
-
158. Tom: Nà gè zài shāowéi zhùyì yīxià jiù hǎo le
that CLF again slightly pay.attention a.little just good
ASP
Directive ‘Just pay a little extra attention to that, and it should be fine.’
159. Bù yào áoyè
NEG must stay.up
Directive ‘Don’t stay up late.’
-
160. Ping: **Ō.**
oh
‘Oh.’
-
161. Tom: Fǎnzhèng nǐ de gān mùqián shénme dōu
anyway 2SG-POSS liver currently what all ultrasound
what all ok
Report ‘Anyway, for now your liver looks fine, ultrasound and everything.’
162. Yě méi yǒu B gān, yě méi yǒu C gān, shénme
dōu méi yǒu.
also NEG have B liver also NEG have C liver what all
NEG have
Report ‘No HBV, no HCV. Nothing.’
-
163. Ping: **N hēng.**
uh huh
‘Uh huh.’
-

164. Tom: Nà gè zìjǐ yào zhùyì, bù yào áoyè.
that CLF self must pay.attention NEG must stay.up
Directive ‘Pay attention to that yourself. Don’t stay up late.’
165. Ping: **Hǎo.:**
yes
‘Ok.:’
166. Tom: Ránhòu hái yǒu yī gè hǒu.
and.then still have one CLF PT
 ‘And then, there’s one more thing.’
167. Dǎnnáng yǒu yī gè xiǎo xíròu la, dǎnnáng
Gallbladder have one CLF small polyp PT gallbladder
 ‘There’s a polyp in the gallbladder. Gallbladder.’
168. Ping: **N̄ hēng**
uh huh
‘Uh huh.’
169. Tom: Hēi, tā shuō nà gè yě méi yǒu guānxi
PT 3SG say that CLF also NEG have relation
Report ‘He said that’s fine too.’

The participants’ alignment can first be examined with Du Bois’ stance triangle. In this part of the conversation, Tom and I are both stance subjects in the talk. Tom reports on my health information that the doctor provided, including the doctor’s evaluations of test results. He evaluates the information as truthful by reporting it, and as actionable my making suggestions how I might improve my health. In this way, Tom also evaluates my physical conditions. The pattern of our interaction shows the stance we take. I reply with “continuers,” in Schegloff’s (1981) terms, like uh huh, to show my understanding of the stance I take toward this talk, while “passing an opportunity to produce a full turn of talk” (p. 81). That is to say, I recognize the form and nature of this interchange between him and me: Tom is the dominant speaker who possesses the knowledge or information that I do not have, and thus, I reduce my speech to entirely continuers. In this way, my minimal responses as a listener’s reception facilitate Tom’s reporting act as a speaker’s production; together, our interactions co-construct the “reporting of my physical examination” frame.

It should be noted that Tom’s reporting of my physical conditions is more than simply repeating what the doctor said; it is a way for him, as a parent, to monitor and evaluate my health. Furthermore, his use of directives in line 159 and 164 (*Don’t stay up late*) and line 158 and 164 (*pay attention to that*) also accomplishes the blending of the reporting frame with a parenting frame. He expresses his concern about my health on one hand, and on the other, “problematizes” my lifestyle while evaluating my physical conditions. Similar to what Ochs and Taylor (1992) point out in their analysis of dinnertime data – that family members often assume particular roles (p. 303), as in Goffman’s (1981) idea of “footings” – Tom takes up the role as a “problematizer,” who “renders an action, condition, thought or feeling... problematic” (p. 311). Tom’s and my

utterances in (3) reflect our footings; as Tom brings in the issue of my lifestyle, he takes up the stance of a concerned father and blends the initial reporting frame with the parenting frame. My responses, or continuers, contribute to the formation of the blended frames; I take up the complementary footing, the role as a “problematizee,” by allowing Tom to evaluate my conditions and my behaviors and thus, aligning in a father-son relationship that underlies the parenting frame. Thus, in this extract, we see that while a reporting frame is evoked by the topic structure that Tom creates and is supported by participant orientations indicated by my ratifying responses, a parenting frame is laminated on top of it when the Tom and I respectively assume different roles that are typical of parent-child interaction.

4.2.2 Story frame embedded in “discussion of weight” frame as a response

Following the previous interchange, Tom later adds one more piece of the results and mentions my body weight in line 198 (*Also, your body weight is slightly too low*). (4) begins almost in an identical way as (3): Tom directly addresses me while bringing an item to my attention and calling it into question. However, the interaction exhibits drastic differences in that I do not respond with continuers.

- (4a) 198. Tom: Ránhòu, nǐ tǐzhòng shāowéi qīng le yī diǎn,
Then 2SG body.weight slightly light ASP a.little
 ‘Also, your body weight is slightly too low.’
199. yào liùshísān gōngjīn cái kě.
Have.to 63 kilogram only okay
 ‘It has to be at least sixty-three.’
-
200. Ping: Wǒ yǒu zài nǚlì le.=
1SG HAB PROG work-ASP
 ‘I AM trying.=’
-
201. Tom: =Nǐ cái liùshíyī. <laughs>
2SG only 61
 ‘=You are only sixty-one.’ <laughs>
-
202. Jane: Nǐ xiànzài chàbùduō yīnggāi yě yǒu liùshísān le ba
2SG now around should also have 63 ASP ASS
 ‘You should be around sixty-three by now.’

In this excerpt, my utterance in line 200 (*I AM trying.*) shifts footing among the participants – I am not simply a recipient of information but offer information about my own health practices. As the conversation continues, I again change the way I respond, and also change my footing, which, according to Goffman (1981), “implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and to the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (p. 128), especially in relation to Tom’s previous footing as the problematizer who evaluates. Through realigning, I disrupt the formation of the previous reporting frame when I adopt a different linguistic strategy, narrative, as my response. This

frame, using Gordon's (2009) term, is "embedded" in the discussion frame, as shown in Figure 4a and Figure 4b below.

After a long pause, I provide a narrative from line 209 to 216, in which I recount my encounter with my former supervisor at school earlier that day. Not having seen me for almost five months, the head teacher also made a remark on my body, saying that I seemed to have lost weight. Her utterances position me in an unfavorable way because it contradicts how I position myself: the head teacher's description of my body image discounts my efforts to gain weight. In the telling of the story, I make the evaluation (*It's just (.) just frustrating.*, line 216) exactly because of this contradiction.

- (4b) 209. Ping: Wǒ jīntiān qù gāomíng le.
I today go Kao-Ming ASP
 'I went to Kao-Ming today.'
-
210. Tom: Nǎ.
AFF
 'Um-hm.'
-
211. Ping: Ránhòu, nà gè zhǔrèn kàn dào wǒ, tā shuō,
Then that CLF head.teacher see-RES ISG 3SG say
 'And then, the head teacher saw me. She said,'
212. "Nǐ yòu biàn shòu le."
2SG again become thin ASP
 'you've lost weight again.'
-
213. Tom: Ō [*<laughs>*]
oh
 'Oh.' [*<laughs>*]
-
214. Ping: [Wǒ jiù xiǎng shuō,] kào yào ō, [wǒ zài táiwān]
Isg just think say cry.hunger PT ISG LOC Taiwan
keep eat thing PT
 '[I was like,] what the fuck, I've been eating all
 the time in Taiwan!'
-
215. Tom: [*<laughs>*]
-
216. Ping: Jiùshì hěn (.) Hěn cuòzhé.
It is very very frustrating
 'It's just(.) just frustrating.'
 (2.0)
-
217. Jacky: Měi gè rén dōu yǒu yī gè shàngxiàn,
every CLF person all have one CLF up.limit
 'Everyone has a maximum weight limit.'
218. xiàng wǒ shàngxiàn jiùshì qīshí'èr, ránhòu jiù shàng bù
 qù le.=
like ISG up.limit just 72 then just up NEG
AND ASP
 'Like mine is seventy-two. Can't go over.='

At first sight, I appear to raise a new topic. But when it comes to what Labov and Waletzky (1967) call the “complicating action” in a narrative structure in line 211 and 212 (*And then, the head teacher saw me. She said, and “you’ve lost weight again.”*), it becomes clear that the story is in fact related to the discussion of my body weight. My narrative is intended as a response to Tom’s judgment about my weight, and therefore, remains within the discussion of body weight. However, based on the two criteria of frame shifting, which I identify as topic structure and participant orientation, the story creates new alignments and is, therefore, told within a new frame. First of all, although the theme of the narrative is connected to the prior talk, reactions from the other participants mark the beginning of a story frame. In line 213 and 215, Tom’s laughter, unlike a mere continuer *Um-hm* in line 210, suggests that he grasps the gist of the story, in which my body weight being too low is dramatized in a real-life event that shows a teacher sharing my father’s concerns. In line 217 (*Everyone has a maximum weight limit.*), Jacky’s response regarding body weight can be conceived of as a linguistic strategy that Tannen (2005) calls “mutual revelation.” This move implies how Jacky interprets my narrative, evaluates the stance object “body weight,” and takes up a supportive footing in the storytelling activity, thus realigning himself vis-à-vis me. What’s more, Tom is no longer the dominant speaker but the story recipient, who does not make a comment problematizing my body weight.

The narrative inevitably invokes a second frame, which would be understood by the other participants to be set in a different time and place. With this narrative, I complicate the configuration of frames, combining the current frame in which family members are engaged in the discussion of body weight and the story frame in which my body weight is accentuated and dramatized. By telling the story, I draw a parallelism between the two frames. My evaluation seems like a reaction to the head teacher’s positioning instead of Tom’s; however, my storyline can actually be mapped onto prior interchange. In line 212 (*“you’ve lost weight again.”*), my utterance corresponds to what Tom says earlier in line 198 (*your body weight is slightly too low.*); likewise, in line 214 (*I’ve been eating all the time in Taiwan!*), the voicing of my thought can be linked to my words in line 200 (*I AM trying.*) as an instantiation. That is, I am trying to gain weight by eating all the time during my stay in Taiwan. Interestingly, my words in line 216 (*It’s just(.) just frustrating.*), in this vein, are not only the evaluation of the story but also that of the interchange between Tom and me. The configuration of the two frames are illustrated using the figures below (based on Gordon, 2009). The boxes represent the frames. The bolded parts in the right-hand corner indicate the name of the frame, and the line numbers are listed to indicate the utterances that characterize that frame. These figures capture the way frames are laminated in interaction and show that in conversation, participants’ understanding of “what is going on” can operate on several levels at once as they evaluate different topics in stancetaking and orient themselves to establish different alignments, thus contributing to the co-creation of complex frames.

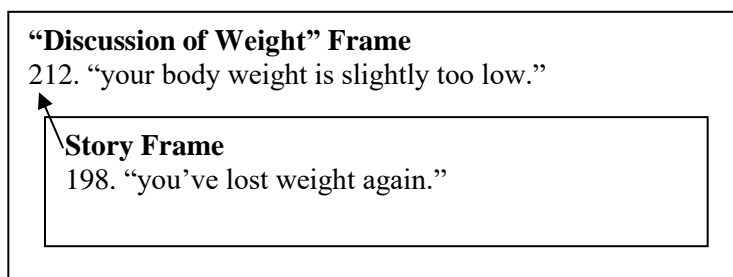


Figure 2a. Embedded frames created by my utterance in the story

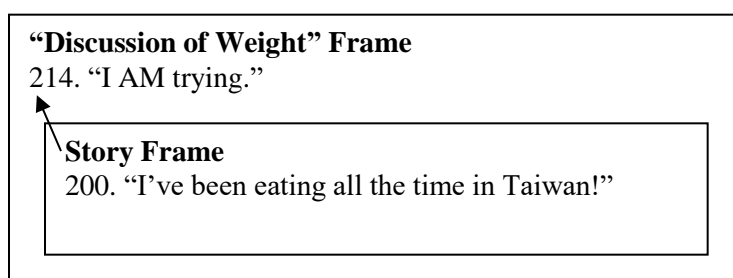


Figure 2b. Embedded frames created by my utterance in the story.

In sum, my responses reconfigure the complex frames by realigning the participants. Though the overarching theme of body weight remains the same, the stance object is altered: while previously it was my body weight being evaluated, from midway through (4) and on, we discuss body weight in a more general sense. In addition, participants’ alignment evolves in the interactions: I do not cooperate in the construction of the reporting frame, and by telling a story, I initiate a story frame. Responding to my story with evaluations, Jacky and Tom take up different footings from those in the reporting frame. The interactions in (4) exemplify the transformations of complex frames and the important role the listener’s responses play.

5 Conclusion

This study extends our understanding of framing by incorporating Du Bois’ theoretical construct of the stance triangle, considering repetition as a specific strategy to display stances, and analyzing family dinner talk in Mandarin Chinese. In this analysis, I have demonstrated how using Du Bois’ stance triangle and highlighting repetition helps us tease apart how framing in discourse happens collaboratively, including how complex frame laminations are accomplished. It is clear that frame is not merely invoked by the speaker; instead, it is negotiated by both the speaker and the listener. Frame should be treated as a part of the collaboration by all participants as they work toward their communicative goals such as commenting on shared opinion and perspective (e.g., discussion of not adding salt) and exchanging information (e.g., reporting physical exam results).

Linguistic strategies such as repetition and the act of evaluation in stancetaking can illuminate framing as a process. When the listener does not pick up a “contextualization cues” (Gumperz, 1982), such as repetition, as intended by the speaker, the frame shifts. Likewise, when the listener responds differently, the change in alignment leads to the reconfiguration of laminated frames. Repetition helps discern how the topic structure is maintained. Evaluation in the stance triangle, on the other hand, helps bring to the foreground participant alignments, which are fundamental to frame formation. Also, the existing research on family discourse on framing has considered primarily White American, middle-class families. This study adds to the work a case study of how frames, both simple and complex ones, are co-constructed during dinner talk by members of a Taiwanese family.

The first part of my analysis (§4.1) focuses on simple frames, illustrating how a frame might not take form when the listener fails to pick up the cues, that is, a specific phrase that one intends to name the stance object, as in (1). The mutual recognition of the topic by the participants can lead to the formation of a frame; this failed to happen in this example where my brother focused on the Liberation Army and its actions and I focused on Facebook. Participants’ agreement on the topic or what is significant in the conversation can be revealed through the use of repetition as shown in (2), where my brother and I talked about salt and soup. The second part (§4.2) focuses on complex frames, including what Gordon (2009) calls embedded frames and blended frames. The two excerpts help illuminate the same idea that the listener’s responses have considerable influences on shaping the frames. Even when the topic remains the same, the frames are still susceptible to the realignment among participants as shown in (3), where my father reports results of my medical exam to me while also parenting me, and (4), where the discussion of my body weight continues, but I tell a narrative within that frame.

A limitation of this analysis is that, as a case study, it considered only one part of the dinner conversation of one Taiwanese family. Future research can build on this idea to examine more examples of dinner talk, and extend this analysis which serves to highlight the co-constructed nature of frames. By analyzing dinner talk among members of one family from the theoretical perspective of framing, I hope to have contributed to the discussion of framing theory and frame lamination in family discourse. By examining repetition and evaluation to identify the frames at work, we get a better picture of the co-construction and lamination of frames in conversation and of how family members come to understand each other’s words in the setting of dinner talk.

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Appendix A

Transcription Conventions

,	Punctuation reflects intonation, not grammar.
?	Question mark indicates rising intonation at the end of a unit
.	Period indicates falling intonation.
=	Equal sign shows latching (second voice begins without perceptible pause)
[Brackets show overlap (two voices heard at the same time)
→	Arrow to the right indicates the speaker continues
<i>Word</i>	Italics indicate emphatic stress
:	Colon following a vowel indicates elongated vowel sound
-	Dash indicates an abrupt stop in speech; a truncated word or syllable

Appendix B

Pinyin (Romanization)

ā	First tone (high); otherwise marked as “a1”	ǎ	Third tone (low); otherwise marked as “a3”
á	Second tone (rising); otherwise marked as “a2”	à	Fourth tone (falling); otherwise marked as “a4”

Appendix C

Gloss			
1	First person	DUR	Durative aspect
2	Second person	GEN	Genitive
3	Third person	HAB	Habitual aspect
AFF	Affirmative	LOC	Locative
AND	Andative	NEG	Negation
ASP	Aspect	PL	Plural
ASS	Assumptive mood	POSS	Possessive
BE	'Be' verb	PROG	Progressive aspect
C	Complement	PT	Particle
CLF	Classifier	Q	Question marker
COND	Conditional	RES	Resultative
COMP	Comparative	SG	Singular