

Being Uzbek in the United States: Knowledge constraints on the linguistic articulation of identity

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1. Introduction

Sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropologic approaches to identity operate under the base theoretical assumption that identity is constructed and that it is in part constructed through language (Goffman, 1959). The construction of identity is understood as being achieved through the “social positioning of self and other” and is described as an interactional process between interlocutors (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Because it is interactional process, the identities we construct for ourselves must be recognized by others in order to have social validity (Blommaert, 2005). This paper is concerned with those cases in which others do not recognize the identity put forth by an individual, and explores how this individual uses linguistic strategies to respond to these constraints. I focus in particular on stories told by Uzbek women living in the United States about the ways in which they respond to a lack of recognition of their “Uzbekness” in their interactions with non-Uzbeks in the U.S. Studies have shown that contemporary globalization and greater interconnectedness between nations has led to greater personal salience of ethno-national identity for migrants (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998), but also that in migrating, immigrants have a greater potential for encountering a lack of understanding about their cultural heritage (Sorenson, 1998). The following analysis is guided by the question: **How is the self discursively constructed in relation to events of misrecognition?**

I find two theoretical frameworks particularly useful in answering this question. The first uses Althusser’s (1971) term *interpellation*, which is a type of recognition through which the individual is hailed as a subject or particular social type because of pre-existing ideologies. Carr (2009) builds on this notion and argues that individuals can engage in *anticipatory interpellation* by inhabiting the subject identities they have been hailed as for their own strategic purposes. I use a slightly broader notion of anticipatory interpellation in this paper, as I find that in my data while all individuals recognized and anticipated the categories they were being interpellated into, they respond in various ways – with some inhabiting these subject positions and others attempting to create alternative subject positions they hoped would be recognized by their interlocutors. My concern in the

following analysis is how individuals anticipate the subject categories they will be interpellated into and how they respond discursively and linguistically to this anticipated interpellation. While interpellation is useful for understanding how the self is discursively constructed in the moment of misrecognition, further theoretical tools are needed to understand how the self continues to be reconstructed in relation to this event of misrecognition, after it has passed. Wortham (2000) notes that “telling a story about oneself can sometimes transform that self” (3) and his distinction between the narrated and narrating events allows the analyst to capture both the self within the story and the self as a teller of the story – resulting in a more holistic perspective on the ways in which the self is discursively constructed in relation to misrecognition.

The basic finding of this study is that participants authenticate their own identities in the face of misrecognition by positioning themselves as more knowledgeable and positioning their interlocutors as less knowledgeable. They achieve this positioning discursively by making explicit their processes of anticipatory interpellation and by discursively representing their interlocutors as ignorant within the narrating event. In the analysis I also consider the special topic of SALSA 2016, that is, in what ways this positioning counts as a raising or silencing of a cultural voice.

2.0 Background information

All of my data was collected from Uzbek women currently living in the Midwestern United States. Participants had been in the US anywhere from eleven months to eight years and were between the ages of 26 and 58. Data was collected through recordings of casual conversations between these women and myself in the summer of 2015. All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants. The topic of ethnic misrecognition came to my attention because in four of the five conversations I recorded, the women I was speaking with brought this up as a topic of conversation.¹ These women noted that others often mistook them for being Hispanic (i.e. for being able to speak Spanish), South Asian or East Asian on the basis of their appearance. They also noted that when they told people in the U.S. that they were from “Uzbekistan” this was frequently misheard as “Pakistan”. One woman noted in particular that in the U.S. people confused all the “-stan” countries. The people in the U.S. who these women describe as misrecognizing them include members of other immigrant groups (Spanish speaking classmates in their ESL classes and Indian families in the grocery store for instance) as well as employees of various social institutions (e.g., hospitals or schools).

In order to understand not only the inconvenience brought about by these encounters, but also their social implications for identity, it is helpful to reference some background information about the history of Uzbek ethno-national identity as well as Western understandings of global geography. The Republic of Uzbekistan is a Central Asian country that was formerly a part of the Soviet Union and gained independence in 1991. The soviet project of creating distinct but equal nationalities that were bound together by socialism (Hirsch, 2005) greatly informs the contemporary national project of portraying Uzbekistan as a recognizably distinct, but equal participant in global affairs (Adams,

¹ I have since interviewed from women in other regions of the U.S. about these issues and have noticed some differences from the patterns discussed here. Notably, women in Washington D.C. noted that because of the international nature of the work their acquaintances engage in – they rarely encounter problems of misrecognition of this type.

2010). At a more local level, the state's version of Uzbek ethno-nationalism is informed by both its Soviet legacy and Muslim tradition, but is presented as embracing a morality that is neither Soviet nor Islamic (Kendzior, 2014). This in turn leads to attempts on the part of the Uzbek government to sanction any type of Islam that is not deemed nationally appropriate (oftentimes any devout practitioners of Islam are deemed fundamentalists) and to distinguish Uzbekness from Russianness. This is often accomplished through the use of women as symbolic figures of nationhood. Women's dress is often as a site of debate about appropriate Islam,² marriage and childbearing practices have been seen as a way to create distinction between Uzbeks and other Soviet ethnic groups (Agadjanian & Makarova, 2003), and global performances of nationhood often take the form of traditional dances performed by Uzbek women (Doi, 2002). My concern in this paper is to complicate the national vision of globally recognized Uzbekness and Uzbek womanhood by adding an analysis of the on-the-ground experiences of Uzbek women in transnational spaces.

While these women may be interpellated as national symbols in Uzbek contexts because of Uzbek national ideologies, in the U.S. they are interpellated in a very different way because of the alternative set of ideologies that are operating. What the women in my study describe is a lack of understanding about Central Asia in the United States. More specifically, global and western imaginations of Central Asia are rather limited in scope and are typically overshadowed by imaginations of Russia and/or the Greater Middle East. The United States' concern with terrorism in the Middle East, and with cold-war and post-cold war relations with Russia overwhelm the everyday perceptions of citizens and residents of the U.S. This results in an interpellation of Uzbek women as not-Uzbek, but either as Russian or as being from the Middle East. While, these women are also interpellated as East Asian, South Asian and Hispanic – I focus here on interpellations of these women as Russian and Middle Eastern because of the ways in which these interpellations directly conflict with Uzbek national rhetoric about Uzbekness, inasmuch as Uzbek Islam is contrasted with the Islam of the Middle East, and Uzbekness is differentiated from Russianness.

3.0 Analysis

The first story of misrecognition comes from a conversation between Bahora, her sister Amira and myself. While Amira had been in the United States for six years and spoke English very well, Bahora only arrived two years earlier and was enrolled in ESL classes at the time of this recording. The topic of misrecognition came up near the end of my visit to the sisters' house while I was reading Bahora a list of questions from my background survey. I read a question about her husband's ethnicity, which she answered by saying "Uzbek" and then by changing her answer to "Yuzbek". I looked up confused, and by way of explanation she shared the following story.

- (1) Excerpt 1: "Yuzbekistan"³
 1. Bahora: O'zbekiston desa

² One of my participants who wore a hijab (not common practice in Uzbekistan) noted that her family was very concerned with the political trouble her dress might bring to them.

³ Note that all transcriptions of excerpts follow Atkinson and Heritage (1984). Unless marked otherwise, the original language was Uzbek (with occasional switches into Russian). Bolded words were originally spoken in English.

- Uzbekistan say-COND
 “If (someone) says Uzbekistan”
2. ↑**Pakist**↑**a::n** (.)
 “Pakistan?”
3. ↓ O'zbekiston
 “Uzbekistan”
4. ↑**Af**↑**ghani**↑**stan**
 “Afghanistan?”
5. Lydia: ((chuckle))
6. Bahora: <**yuz-bekistan**>
 “Yuzbekistan”
7. ...
7. Amira: ↑**Upa**↓**ki**↑**stan**
 “Upakistan?”
8. Lydia: ((laughter))
9. Amira: ((laughter))**Upakistan. [okay. upa-]**
 “Upakistan. Okay upa-”
10. Bahora: [oppa gangnam]
 “oppa gangnam”
11. Amira: **NO:: NO upa:kistan**
 “No, no Upakistan”
12. Bahora: **No. uje b- aytasan <Yuz-bekistan>**
 No. just- say-2.FUT Yuzbekistan
 “No. You will just say Yuzbekistan”

In the story, Bahora and Amira enact an imagined encounter between an Uzbek person (a stand in for Bahora herself) and a non-Uzbek person in the U.S. Over the course of this encounter, the Uzbek person continually attempts to explain that they are from Uzbekistan and the non-Uzbek continually misunderstands and interpellates them variously as being from Pakistan, Afghanistan and the made-up country of “Upakistan”. At the end of the excerpt Bahora comes to the conclusion that “You’ll just say Yuzbekistan” (palatalizing and emphasizing the first vowel) as a way to avoid these interpellations (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Upakistan), and offers this as her explanation of why she responded jokingly to my question by saying that her husband was “Yuzbek”.

Note that rather than telling a story of one instance of misrecognition she personally experienced, Bahora tells a story of a general, imagined experience between two unnamed interlocutors. This general applicability indicates that the experience is not tied to one time, place and person, but rather is a repeated experience in which Uzbeks are continuously interpellated as being from other –stan countries. The phrase “You’ll just say Yuzbekistan” is also telling because it is in the present-future tense indicating that it is an engagement with both the imagined “present” situation and an ongoing engagement with future situations of a similar nature. Because the decision to “just say Yuzbekistan” is a response to future interpellations, I consider it an instance of anticipatory interpellation. That is, Bahora engages in anticipatory interpellation by changing the pronunciation of the “Uzbekistan”.

In Uzbek, “Uzbekistan” is pronounced with a front, rounded vowel as the first phoneme. In American English the country name is pronounced with a back, rounded vowel as the first phoneme. After multiple failed attempts at getting the imagined

interlocutor to recognize the Uzbek pronunciation of “Uzbekistan” the Uzbek interlocutor changes the first vowel to a back vowel and palatalizes it. It is likely that Bahora voices this change, making the vowel a back vowel in order to accommodate to the interlocutor’s lack of knowledge by attempting to more closely approximate the American English pronunciation of “Uzbekistan”. There are multiple possible explanations for why Bahora palatalizes this vowel as well. It may simply be a matter of emphasizing the first vowel, since the American English and Uzbek pronunciations differ most significantly and most obviously in the first vowel. However, there is also the issue of the interlocutor interpellating the Uzbek as being from Pakistan and Afghanistan. As noted above, Uzbek ethno-nationalism is wrapped up in notions of nationally appropriate, depoliticized Islam; whereas western understandings of Pakistan and Afghanistan are wrapped up in notions of political fundamentalist Islam. For this reason, there is a lot at stake in Bahora being interpellated as either Pakistani or Afghan and the emphasis on the first syllable may serve to resist these interpellations in particular. That is, by palatalizing the word initial vowel Bahora may be attempting to divert focus away from the end of the word (i.e. the “-stan” portion) towards the beginning of the word where there is a more observable difference between the country names (Uz- Pak- Afghan-).

Regardless of the exact rationale underlying Bahora’s change in pronunciation, the shift is her voicing the Uzbek interlocutor’s accommodation to a lack of knowledge on the part of the non-Uzbek interlocutor. Bahora uses additional linguistic resources to position the Uzbek interlocutor as more knowledgeable than the non-Uzbek interlocutor. For instance, there is a distinct contrast between the Uzbek’s intonation (lines 3, 6, and 12) and the non-Uzbek’s intonation (lines 2 and 4) when pronouncing country names. More specifically, Bahora voices the Uzbek with slow, low pitch, articulate speech, but voices the non-Uzbek using a high rising intonation, with a rising terminal pitch on the “-stan” for each country (i.e., ↑Pakist↑a:n, ↑Af↑ghani↑stan). Notably, Amira uses this same intonational pattern for her voicing of the non-Uzbek interlocutor. This high rising pitch seems to indicate surprise, confusion and a general lack of intelligence on the part of the non-Uzbek interlocutor. By contrast, the slow, low pitch, articulate pronunciation of the Uzbek interlocutor positions them as relatively more knowledgeable, calm and collected.

Bahora and Amira also highlight the non-Uzbek’s ignorance in lines 9-10 by engaging in some wordplay. In this exchange Amira enacts the non-Uzbek thinking that they have finally understood that the Uzbek interlocutor is from the country of “Upakistan”. The invention of this country is in and of itself a way in which the sisters highlight the non-Uzbek’s lack of knowledge of geography. However, Bahora draws further attention to the ridiculousness of this claim by responding with the phrase “oppa gangnam”. This reference is part of a larger phrase “oppa gangnam style” which is taken from a very popular song and YouTube video by Korean pop-singer Psy.⁴ The song was popular in large part because of how ludicrous, nonsensical and humorous it was. Bahora’s reference to this phrase is effective here because of the phonetic and social parallels between “oppa gangnam” and “Upakistan”. Phonetically, The first three syllables share a sequence of: back vowel – bilabial stop – back vowel – velar stop. These phonetic similarities parallel the social similarity Bahora is drawing between these two phrases, notably that just as

⁴ In 2014 the YouTube video for Gangnam style became the most viewed video ever and forced YouTube to change its maximum view limit: Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30288542?source=pepperjam&publisherId=41543&clickId=1648177710>

“oppa gangnam” is a phrase that conjures up images of ridiculousness, so the substitution of “Upakistan” for “Uzbekistan” is ridiculous. By engaging in this wordplay Bahora reemphasizes the lack of knowledge and seriousness on the part of the non-Uzbek interlocutor.

Within the narrated event the Uzbek interlocutor is never correctly recognized by the non-Uzbek interlocutor. However, in the narrating event Bahora positions the Uzbek interlocutor as relatively more knowledgeable and the non-Uzbek interlocutor as ignorant, thereby authenticating Uzbekness and de-authenticating the interpellations of Uzbeks as being from Afghanistan or Pakistan. Furthermore, by making her process of anticipatory interpellation visible, she frames her use of “Yuzbekistan” as a case of “dumbing it down” for the non-Uzbek. In so doing she further emphasizes the knowledge asymmetries between the Uzbek (who functions as a stand in for herself) and the non-Uzbek interlocutor. However, immediately following the enactment, Amira draws attention to Bahora’s use of “Yuzbekistan” in a way that complicates the knowledge asymmetries Bahora has set up in her narrative.

- (2) Excerpt 2: “What’s the correct way in English?”
13. Amira: =Lekin man **Uzbekistan** deymen.
But I Uzbekistan say-1.SG.PRES
“But I say Uzbekistan”
14. °**Yuzbekistan** deymayman° (0.1)
Yuzbekistan say-NEG-1.SG.PRES
“I don’t say Yuzbekistan”
15. *Qanday to’g’ri bo’ladi. inglis tilida.*
How correct be-3.PRES English language-LOC
“What is the correct way in English?”
16. **Uzbekistan** deyish↑mi yoki=
Uzbekistan say-NMZ-Q or
“To say Uzbekistan or?”
17. Lydia: =**Uzbek Uzbekistan**, *yuz* qo’yish kerak emas
Uzbek Uzbekistan yuz put-NMZ necessary NEG
“Uzbek-Uzbekistan. You don’t have to add the ‘yuz’”

In this excerpt Amira points out that she does not palatalize the word initial vowel in her English pronunciation of “Uzbekistan”. She then turns to me and asks what the correct pronunciation is in English (*Qanday to’g’ri bo’ladi, inglis tilida* ‘What is the correct way in English’). I respond by saying that the palatalization is not necessary (*yuz qo’yish kerak emas* ‘you don’t need to add yuz’). Although Bahora may have been successful in using the narrating event to position the Uzbek interlocutor (and thereby herself) as more knowledgeable, Amira subtly challenges this positioning in this second excerpt by refocusing the area of knowledge that is at stake. By bringing attention to English pronunciation, Amira has moved away from questions of knowledge about Uzbekistan towards questions of knowledge of English. Within the scope of knowledge of English the epistemic asymmetries shift and these shifts can be observed in the conversational turns. For instance, in questioning her sister’s pronunciation and directing her question about “correct pronunciation” to me Amira positions me as the most knowledgeable, and Bahora as the least knowledgeable on issues related to English. Similarly, my answer, that it isn’t necessary to palatalize the first vowel confirms that Bahora’s knowledge of English is lower than ours. I give this second excerpt in addition to the first in order to show the

multiple ways in which the discursive representation of knowledge asymmetries can serve to de-authenticate identity claims. Bahora's portrayal of the non-Uzbek interlocutor as ignorant of geography serves to de-authenticate his/her interpellations. However, Amira's line of questioning about Bahora's proposed anticipatory interpellation through the use of the term "Yuzbekistan" in some ways de-authenticates the knowledge asymmetries that Bahora has set up and thus subsequently lessens the force of the identity claims she is making.

The second story comes from a conversation between two other women: Sanobar and Feruza, and myself. Feruza has been in the United States for 11 months, but she is fluent in English and came to the U.S. in order to advance her education. Sanobar has been in the United States for about 5 years, but she knows very little English and is not currently enrolled in any English classes. She primarily stays at home to care for her daughters. The following excerpt is taken from a conversation that Feruza initiates by asking me what ethnicity I would think she was by looking at her if I did not know that she was Uzbek. This question launches a longer conversation about the ways in which the three of us have been ethnically misrecognized and leads to Sanobar telling the following story about an Indian family she ran into at the grocery store who thought she was Indian. Note that words originally spoken in English are bolded.

(3) Excerpt 3: "If I say Russia"

1. Sanobar: Hindistonlikmisan deb aytganlar,
India-POSS-Q-2.SG QUOT say-PST-3.PL
"Are you Indian?" they said"
2. YO':Q deganman Keyin ispansmi
No say-PST-1.SG then Spanish-Q
"No" I said. Then "Spanish?"
3. Yo':q(.) **Russia** deysam (.) ((laughter)) **Russia** deys
No Russia say-1.SG.COND Russia say-COND
"No" If I say "Russia" ((laughter)) If (one) says Russia"
4. >Endi O'zbekistonni ko'plar bilmaydi
Now Uzbekistan-ACC many-PL know-NEG-3.PRS
"Now many people don't know Uzbekistan"
7. **Russia** deysaiz osonroq tushunadi-da?<
Russia say-2.SG.COND easy-COMP understand-3.PRS-EMP
"If you say Russia they will understand more easily, y'know"
5. Lydia: Ah [to'g'ri.] to'g'ri.
"Oh right, right"
6. Feruza: [ha:]
"yes"
7. Sanobar: Keyin boshqa joylarga borsam?
After different place-PLUR-DAT go-1.SG.COND
"Then if I go to different places"
8. xay siz **languagega** s-**speak** qilasan,
okay you language-DAT speak do-2.SG.PRS
"Okay what language do you speak"
9. ((unclear)) senga yordam beraylik deysa?
((unclear)) you-DAT help give-IMP-3.PL say-3.COND
"((unclear)) If they say 'Let us help you'"
10. Lydia: =uh huh=

- “uh huh”
11. Sanobar: O'zbek deysaiz kam-da=
 Uzbek say-2.SG.COND few-EMP
 “If you say Uzbek there are few-right?”
12. Lydia: =↑Hech kim bilmaydi
 NEG one know-NEG-3.PRS
 “No one knows”
13. Sanobar: **Russian** deysaiz ko'p
 Russian say-2.COND many
 “If you say Russian there are many”
14. Feruza: Man ham **Russia** deyman
 I also Russia say-1.SG.PRS
 “I also say ‘Russia’”

Sanobar begins her story by relating how the Indian family first thought she was Indian (line 1) and then thought she was Spanish (line 2). She starts to tell us how she told them she was Russian (line 3), but then shifts into a longer explanation of why she tells people she is Russian. In so doing she makes reference to lack of knowledge about Uzbekistan (line 4), and how in visiting different institutions (line 7) saying “Russian” can get her greater access to interpreters than saying “Uzbek” can (lines 11 and 13).⁵

Like Bahora’s use of “Yuzbekistan”, Sanobar’s use of “Russia” is a linguistic realization of anticipatory interpellation. The evidence that this is a case of ongoing anticipatory interpellation - rather than a reaction to one event of misrecognition - is found in two grammatical shifts. In lines 2-3 Bahora shifts from the use of the past tense to the use of the conditional, and between lines 3 and 7 there is a shift from the use of the first person to the use of the generalized second person. Both of these grammatical shifts indicate a shift in Bahora’s narrative away from one particular instance of misrecognition, towards a larger pattern of misrecognition and Bahora’s larger argument for her (and other Uzbeks’) ongoing responses to this misrecognition. Additionally, Feruza’s comment in line 14 that she also says “Russia” is in the present future tense, indicating that this is an ongoing practice. In this way the use of “Russia” to respond to questions of origin can be understood as a linguistic act in anticipation of avoiding other interpellations. Also similar to Bahora, Sanobar’s narrating event highlights that the reason for her use of “Russia” is the lack of knowledge on the part of non-Uzbek interlocutors. Sanobar states this overtly saying, *O'zbekistonni ko'plar bilmaydi. Russia deysaiz osonroq tushunadi-da* ‘Many people don’t know Uzbekistan If you say Russia, they understand more easily – y’know’. The referent for *ko'plar* ‘many people’ is not specified, but based on the context of the story it seems she is referring to non-Uzbeks in the United States. By making her use of “Russia” a case of “making it it easier” on those in the U.S., Sanobar positions herself as more knowledgeable and positions the non-Uzbek interlocutors as less knowledgeable.

However, Sanobar’s story differs from Bahora’s in that she does not attempt to get her interlocutors to recognize her Uzbekness, but instead opts for “Russian” as an alternative identity. In order to understand the identity consequences of saying “Russia” it is useful to look at the narrated event for clues about *how* Sanobar is claiming this identity. Most notably, Sanobar always says “Russia” in English. The only other place where Sanobar

⁵ Note that the fact that she is speaking about interpreters in line 13 becomes clear in the conversation following this excerpt

uses English in this excerpt is in line 8 where she voices people in the different places she goes asking her what language she speaks (*xay siz languagega s-speak qilasa?n* ‘okay what language do you speak?’). The remainder of the excerpt is in Uzbek, and switches to English are generally infrequent for Sanobar because of her low level proficiency in English (indicated also by her use of Uzbek morphology in line 8). I argue that Sanobar uses English in the narrated event in order to mark voices in English dominant spaces. The use of English in line 8 marks the institutions she is visiting as English dominant institutions, and similarly the use of English for “Russia” (lines 3, 7, 13) marks her own speech in English dominant environments. This restrictive use of “Russia” only in English suggests that Sanobar is not making a broad identity claim about being Russian, but rather a more specific claim about the validity of claiming Russianness in English dominant spaces as a way of anticipating and avoiding other, more problematic interpellations. As noted above, Uzbekness is generally distinguished from Russianness at a national level; and accordingly Sanobar would not be likely to tell other Uzbeks that she was *o’ris* ‘Russian’ or *Rossiyalik* ‘from Russia’. However, in English dominant spaces she is able to say that she is Russian in order to accomplish particular instrumental goals (i.e. to get an appropriate interpreter), and in order to accommodate to a lack of knowledge on the part of her non-Uzbek interlocutors. The fact that Feruza aligns with Sanobar in line 14, saying that she too says “Russia” is further indication that the use of “Russia” in English is not seen as a problematic or inauthentic identity claim because it is linked to a lack of knowledge in English dominant spaces on the part of non-Uzbeks.

In some respects, within the narrated event the use of “Russia” constitutes a silencing of a cultural voice as it obscures the fact that Sanobar is Uzbek and is from Uzbekistan. However, this cultural silencing has instrumental value in that it allows Sanobar to be more easily understood and to gain access to interpreters. In this way, it is possible to understand Sanobar and Feruza’s silencing of their cultural voices as a strategic silencing. But the cultural voice is not entirely silent, because in the narrating event Sanobar has the chance to discursively illustrate why, under what conditions, and in what languages she claims to be Russian. More specifically, she links the use of “Russian” as an identity claim to English dominant spaces and links these spaces to inadequate knowledge – thereby de-authenticating the ways in which she is interpellated in these spaces (even if the interpellation was brought about through her own identity claims).

4.0 Conclusion

In answer to the question of how the self is discursively constructed in relation to misrecognition, these analyses demonstrate how making anticipatory interpellation visible and discursively presenting knowledge asymmetries can serve to de-authenticate those interpellations arising from processes of misrecognition. In this way, the telling of these stories is a raising of a cultural voice. These tellings are an in-group process through which participants validate their own identities by highlighting the ignorance of those who cannot recognize them. However, while their cultural voices may be raised in the narrating event, within the narrated event none of these women were recognized as Uzbek. Instead they used cultural silence to gain access to particular resources in Sanobar’s case, or were culturally silenced because of continued misrecognition in Bahora’s case. Additionally, even in the narrating event the raising of a cultural voice is not uncontested if one does not possess the appropriate linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991) as we see with Amira’s questions about her sister’s English pronunciation. What I hope to have demonstrated in this analysis is that cultural silencing and/or the raising of a cultural voice is not

necessarily maintained across all speech events. Rather, the various selves involved in the narrated and narrating event can transform experiences of cultural silencing into performances of raised cultural voices. And conversely, the different selves involved in the changing interactions within a conversation can transform performances of raised cultural voices into instances of cultural silencing.

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