

1-17-2020

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Recommended Citation

Djuraeva, M. & Catedral, L. (2020, January 17). Habitus and imagined ideals: Attending to (un)consciousness in discourses of (non)nativeness. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 14(3), 270-285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2020.1714159>

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Habitus and imagined ideals: Attending to (un)consciousness in discourses of (non)nativeness

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ABSTRACT

This study responds to scholarship that has examined “folk concepts” of (non)nativeness through the lens of imagined ideals of the native speaker, by proposing a framework that integrates both ideals and habits. We operationalize these concepts by drawing from the theoretical notions of chronotope, scale, and habitus. Using data from interviews with Central Asian transnational migrants, we demonstrate how attending to both the habitual and idealized aspects of speakers’ metalinguistic commentary offers a more holistic approach to the study of multilingual repertoires and speakers’ social positionings in relationship to (non)nativeness. Our findings demonstrate how identification as a “(non)native” speaker may become more or less important to participants depending on whether they orient to habits or ideals. We also show that speakers’ use of “discourses of habit”, which emphasize their less conscious linguistic behaviors, may lead to a blurring of the lines between nativeness and non-nativeness. This in turn has implications for theories of agency as resistance to linguistic marginalization, and contributes to applied issues related to language education.

KEYWORDS

(Non)nativeness, language and migration, habitus, language ideologies, multilingual repertoires

Introduction

Post-structuralist approaches to language competence have problematized the notion of (non)nativeness both by showing how this dichotomy privileges one group of speakers over another (e.g. Kramsch, 1997) and how it disregards the sociolinguistic practices of multilingual people worldwide (e.g. Heller, 2007). While many of these criticisms have been directed toward established ideologies in the fields of second language acquisition (Firth & Wagner, 1997), TESOL (Phillipson, 1992), and linguistics more generally (Bhatt, 2002), other scholars have turned their attention toward an empirical investigation of how language ideologies related to (non)nativeness play out in the everyday lives and narratives of speakers (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999). In this study,

we add to the scholarship that has examined these ‘folk concepts’ (Doerr, 2009) of (non)nativeness by drawing from discourses of multilingual Central Asian migrants as they reflect on their linguistic repertoires. While much of the previous scholarship examines how speakers interact with linguistic marginalization by orienting to or rejecting imagined ideals of (non)nativeness in constructing their subjectivities (Amin, 1999; Park, 2009; Choi, 2016), less attention has been paid to habitual aspects of speakers’ relationships to their linguistic competence. Through this study, we demonstrate how attending to both discourses of ideals and discourses of habit in speakers’ metalinguistic commentary offers a more holistic approach to the study of multilingual repertoires and to speakers’ social positionings in relationship to (non)nativeness.

We draw data from semi-structured interviews with Central Asian transnational migrants, where they discuss their linguistic practices and language attitudes. These speakers operate within a densely multilingual context given their experiences of post-soviet multilingualism in Central Asia, as well as their acquisition of additional languages as they have moved to North America. In order to examine how these participants relate to “(non)nativeness”, we propose a framework that differentiates between discourses of ideals and discourses of habit. We operationalize “ideal” and “habit” and situate them within participants’ relationships to particular times, spaces, and hierarchies, by utilizing the notions of habitus (Bourdieu, 1991), chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981), and scale (Blommaert, 2007). We demonstrate how explicit identifications as (non)native become (un)important depending on the scales to which participants orient, and we show how discourses of habit may blur the lines between nativeness and non-nativeness. For example, in representing their everyday, habitual experiences of multilingualism, our participants note the ways in which all of the languages they speak can become “natural” regardless of whether they explicitly categorize them as “native” or “non-native” in their discourses of ideals.

Theoretically, our discussion of discourses of habit demonstrates how speakers’ relationships to linguistic competence are often more complex than either resistance or acquiescence to the notions of an idealized native speaker. That is, while discourses of ideals do play an important role in our participants’ metalinguistic commentary, so do discussions of everyday, habitual, and relatively unconscious action. Accordingly, metacommentary which challenges the native/non-native dichotomy may not always be an instance of agentive opposition, but rather a case, in which the habitual overrides the ideal. Empirically, this study contributes to an understanding of transnational migration, by highlighting how durable dispositions and corresponding discourses of habit play an important role in these contexts of instability, mobility and change (Heller, 2010; Hall, 2014). By nuancing previous conceptualizations of multilingual people’s ideologies of (non)nativeness, this work also provides insights for teachers engaging with notions of competence in the classroom.

In what follows, we give an overview of the literature on ideologies of (non)nativeness. We also describe in greater detail the notions of habitus, chronotope, and scale and how we see these concepts as related to one another. We then turn to a discussion of the ethnographic context of our data collection, providing some information about our participants' sociolinguistic backgrounds. In the next section, we engage in an in-depth analysis of three metacommentaries, demonstrating how they draw on discourses of ideals and habits. We highlight the consequences of these discourses for the representation of linguistic competence in relation to (non)nativeness, and in the final section, we discuss these issues in terms of their theoretical, empirical, and applied implications.

Ideologies of (non)nativeness

The “native speaker” concept gained a strong presence in linguistics scholarship following Bloomfield and Newmark (1963), and Chomsky (1965) who popularized the term by claiming the innate nature of the first language for its speakers. This was first challenged by Hymes' (1972) notion of communicative competence as performed by speakers of any type in the real world, and then by Paikeday (1985) who called the native speaker “a myth”, as well as Firth and Wagner (1997) who brought attention to the biased view of non-native speakers as deficient. Others have put forth situated critiques of the “native speaker” in relation to language pedagogy (Davies, 1991; Aneja, 2016), multilingualism (Grosjean, 1982; Kramsch, 1997), and World Englishes (Kachru, 1988; Pennycook, 1994). As an alternative to the “native speaker” some scholars have advocated for a more flexible view of competency that takes into account the specific registers and genres that speakers use and/or cannot use regardless of their status as non-native speakers (Blommaert & Backus, 2013).

Alongside this growing recognition of the problems with nativeness as a theoretical concept, there has been an empirical turn toward investigating the nature of ideologies of (non)nativeness. This research has described the characteristics that are attributed to competence and consequently, how speakers are positioned and position themselves. Two characteristics, that of effort and naturalness, have emerged as particularly salient. One's native language may be considered natural because of its assumed primordial essence as the mother tongue, which is ingrained in the body (Bonfiglio, 2010; Woolard, 2019), or because of its Herderian association with the territoriality of the nation-state, or the ethnicity of its speakers (Errington, 1998). This dimension of ‘naturalness’ is associated with a type of communal inherency. However, there is another dimension of naturalness, related to individual ability and automaticity as illustrated by the ideological conflation of native speech with “fluency” (Davies, 2004; Rossiter, 2009). The idea that “native” speech should be fluent and therefore easy, introduces the notion of “effort” which is a characteristic typically associated with non-nativeness. This effort can be seen, for instance, in language learners' ideologies of investment in language learning with the goal of achieving idealized, native-like competence (Norton, 2000; Park, 2009). Given the ways in which ideologies of

nativeness are wrapped up with ideas of naturalness and effort, we have not only taken into account speakers' explicit reference to "native" and "non-native" languages in our analysis, but also those aspects of their narrative which refer to "naturalness" and "effort" as related to their linguistic competency.

In addition to describing these characteristics of (non)nativeness, scholars have also examined their consequences, showing how these characteristics can position multilingual speakers as deficient (Amin, 1999; Matsuda & Cox, 2011; Aneja, 2016;). These studies have shown that the native speaker ideal can be intertwined with, or act as a stand-in for other types of national, political, and racial "ideals" (Makihara, 2009; Flores, 2013) through which multilingual speakers and marginalized communities more broadly are negatively evaluated. A number of other scholars, in an attempt to account for speaker agency, have highlighted the ways in which "non-native" speakers respond to these negative evaluations. Some demonstrate the internalization of these ideals by multilingual people, and their resulting anxieties (Doerr, 2009; Park, 2010; Sliwa & Johanson, 2015), while others have shown that multilingual speakers may reject these ideals and opt for alternative learning goals, such as ideal bilingualism (Choi, 2016) or "glocalized" English (Chew, 2009; Song, 2010). Thus, ideals are relevant to how multilingual speakers are positioned, and to how they position themselves, whether they internalize the notion that they cannot achieve the ideal associated with the native speaker or reject it. Less attention, however, has been paid to issues of habit as embodied experience in this literature, although there have been calls to engage with these dimensions of speakers' relationships to their linguistic repertoires (e.g. Block, 2013; Busch, 2017). Davies (2004) in particular has noted that a focus on embodied experience may be able to counter strong ideologies of (non)nativeness. While there has been some use of the notions of embodied experience within sociolinguistics and a growing interest in this area (see Bucholtz & Hall, 2016 for an overview), we are not aware of empirical studies which have examined habit as embodied experience relative to issues of (non)nativeness. Thus, one of the goals of this paper is to engage with habit as a type of less conscious, embodied experience, that in addition to ideals, can account for ideologies of (non)nativeness.

Habitus, chronotope and scales

Our understanding of habit, derives from Bourdieu's notion of habitus in that it is meant to capture the durable, ingrained, habitual, and less conscious aspects of sociolinguistic behavior. Bourdieu (1984) defines habitus as a set of individual dispositions that have been developed through an interaction with existing social structures. Through experience people acquire socially constructed dispositions related to eating, walking and speaking, which are largely determined by the cultural and social systems in which they are born. These dispositions are durable, and thus, they are difficult or impossible to change. The static view of habitus has led some scholars to propose alternative terms which incorporate agency into one's experience of habit (e.g. Agha, 2007a). However, others have argued that Bourdieu's habitus can be interpreted

in such a way as to make space for the possibility of both awareness and agency (e.g. Bucholtz & Hall, 2016). Empirically, scholars have shown how habitus may become conscious, and as a result may transform in unexpected situations, or over a long historical period – for instance, in contexts of migration (Kelly & Lasis, 2006; Navarro, 2006). Thus, it is possible to conceptualize habitus as a durable, but ultimately changeable set of dispositions.

We follow other scholars who have found a distinction between different types of discourses to be a useful way of tracing the metapragmatics of habitus, such as Kang and Lo (2004) who separate the “discourse of dispositions” from the “discourse of agency.” For them, the discourse of dispositions is used to refer to participant metacommentary on aspects of identity viewed as relatively permanent. In this paper, we differentiate between “discourses of habit” – those participant comments that emphasize, habitual, embodied, unconscious and durable, but ultimately changeable experience – and “discourses of ideals”, which emphasize idealized sociolinguistic images. We opt for the use of “habit” rather than “habitus” in order to acknowledge that habitus is a broader and more comprehensive theory, which has been taken up in a number of different ways, as shown above. Thus, while the literature on habitus and dispositions provides us with helpful theoretical framings, our use of the phrase “discourses of habit” more narrowly defines what we observe empirically in metalinguistic commentary of our participants in this study.

In order to situate these discourses, we employ the notions of chronotope and scales. The term “chronotope” originates from Bakhtin (1981) and has been used to describe how language is organized according to time, space and personhood. More specifically, Agha defines chronotope as “A semiotic representation of time and place peopled by certain social types” (2007b, p. 321). Scales, on the other hand have been used within sociolinguistics to understand the hierarchically ordered nature of time and space (Lemke, 2000), i.e. the vertical ordering of these various chronotopes (Blommaert, 2015). Scholars have shown how chronotopes can be useful analytical tools in analyzing different types of ideals: ideal pasts associated with the homeland (Eisenlohr, 2006; Dick, 2010); ideal futures in the host country (Karimzad, 2016) and idealized moralities related to family language planning (Catedral & Djuraeva, 2018). Chronotopes have also been applied to the study of everyday experience, in differentiating, for instance, between “front” and “back” regions which govern classroom behavior (Blommaert & De Fina, 2017) or “chronotopes of normalcy” which guide the (often) unnoticed norms that speakers follow with respect to their language use in multilingual contexts (Karimzad, 2019). Both “everyday experience” and “idealized images” are morally and ideologically loaded chronotopes involving particular types of personhood, and specific configurations of space and time.

However, speakers’ ideologies about these two types of chronotopes and their relation to language may differ – such that they frame chronotopes of everyday experience as being related to the times and spaces in which they use more genre-specific, embodied

linguistic registers (c.f. Agha, 2007a; Blommaert & Backus, 2013), in contrast to those idealized chronotopes, which they may relate more to prototypical understandings of named languages and the time and space of the nation-state (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005; Karimzad & Catedral, 2018). Given, that we are attempting to describe speaker ideologies, we find a distinction between these two types of chronotopes helpful. Following the literature, which has variously described chronotopes as “higher vs. lower” (Catedral, 2018) or “macroscopic vs. microscopic” (Blommaert & De Fina, 2017), we have decided to make use of a distinction between higher scaled chronotopes invoked in discourses of ideals and lower scaled chronotopes invoked in discourses of habit. We use the term “scaled” as a past participle in order to acknowledge that these scales do not exist a priori, but have rather been constructed through institutional discourses, and the discourses of our participants (c.f. Carr & Lempert, 2016). Additionally, we do not see the distinction between higher and lower scaled chronotopes as binary, but rather we aim to demonstrate how speakers’ discourses of (non)nativeness operate on a continuum, moving between the higher end at which institutional discourses prevail, and the lower end where discourses of lived experiences prevail in justifying linguistic practices and attitudes. While we acknowledge that habits and ideals are mutually constituting, we also find it useful to distinguish between the two in order to explore the consequences of this scalar movement for ideologies of (non)nativeness.

Data collection and analysis procedure

This work is a part of two larger studies connected to the authors’ ethnographic investigations of Central Asian multilingualism over the past six years. These studies draw from on-site and online ethnographic research and interviews in Central Asia with multilingual students, as well as on site ethnography and semi-structured interviews with cultural organizations and diasporic Central Asians living in the United States. In this paper, we focus specifically on a subset of semi-structured interviews conducted over Skype with Central Asian transnational migrants who had moved to North America, but were born and raised in Uzbekistan. Although we focus on these specific interviews, our analysis is informed by the broader ethnographic observations made over the course of these studies as a whole. The interviews were conducted by the first author, who is from Central Asia herself and was also in North America at the time. She knew all the participants outside of the research context and used Skype as her means of keeping in touch with them more generally, making it a natural medium for interaction. The interviewer asked general questions about language use and language attitudes, to which the interviewees responded at length. The interviewees were given the option of speaking in any of their languages for the interview. Typically, these interviewees interact with the first author in either Tajik or Russian. While Farhod (30 years old, 8 years in the U.S.) spoke in Russian, similarly to how he would typically interact with the first author, Maryam (24 years old, 2 years in Canada) and Zarina (34 years old, 10 years in the U.S.) chose to speak in English. This may be because of the genre of the interview, or because they preferred speaking about these particular topics in English.

In analyzing the discourses that emerged from our interviews, we take a double hermeneutic approach. That is, we try to understand how our participants understand their social world (Smith & Osborn, 2003), as it relates to language and identity. We also recognize, that by focusing on interview data, we are analyzing a particular type of communicative event that may not reflect all of the discourses these participants would employ in their daily lives (c.f. Briggs, 1986). That is, our data comes from a context in which participants were asked to consciously reflect on their linguistic repertoires. While it may appear contradictory to focus on conscious representations of linguistic ideologies in an attempt to uncover those less conscious aspects of people's perceptions of (non)nativeness, we find a focus on metacommentary useful for the following reasons. First of all, because we take the view that ideology is located both in metalinguistic commentary and in linguistic practice (Woolard, 1998), it seems crucial to not leave out metalinguistic commentary in an investigation of ideological issues. Secondly, metacommentary can make us more aware of not only our perceptions of the ideological meaning of languages, but also of participants' perceptions, by foregrounding their emic understandings. Finally, although the metacommentary is conscious, in this metacommentary we see representations of linguistic practice as both conscious and unconscious. This is what we define above as discourses of ideals and discourses of habit, which we see as one part of a more comprehensive view of ideologies of (non)nativeness.

In order to conduct a detailed linguistic analysis of participants' metacommentary, we use a simplified conversation analytic transcription method (c.f. Atkinson & Heritage, 1984), and draw from discourse analysis and narrative inquiry approaches, paying particular attention to linguistic details including, but not limited to pronouns, metalinguistic commentary, affective language, and the discursive invocation of chronotopes through temporal and spatial deictics. Notably, when we first began our analysis, we focused primarily on those sections of the interview in which participants used the terms "native" or "non-native" in their accounts without prompting. While this still made up a significant portion of the analysis below, we also realized the need to pay attention to other ways participants discussed their linguistic competence, and we became more acutely aware of their invocation of the notions of "effort" and "naturalness" in discussing language use and language attitudes. Accordingly, our analysis also includes attention to these and similar terms.

The sociolinguistic context of Uzbekistan

We find the case of Central Asia to be informative in investigating ideologies of (non)nativeness precisely because it is a densely multilingual context, where it is common to speak three or four typologically distinct languages. All of the participants under analysis in this paper spoke Russian, Uzbek, Tajik and English and were multilingual from early childhood. To give some background on the sociolinguistic situation in which they were raised, it is helpful to understand the historical and contemporary situation of these languages in Uzbekistan. Uzbek is currently the only

official and state language of Uzbekistan (Pavlenko, 2008). Because of Russian's association with Soviet rule in Uzbekistan, it is often disassociated from national identity in contemporary state discourses (Fierman, 2009). At the same time, Russian is still considered a language of education and prestige, a language of interethnic communication, and for some speakers, a language with which to communicate in the home with family. Tajik is a minority language in Uzbekistan, although it is the titular and official language of neighboring Tajikistan. Certain cities and regions of Uzbekistan have both a long history of Tajik language use, and a much higher number of Tajik speaking people. In these contexts, the distinction between being Uzbek and being Tajik may not always be clear and many people in these regions speak both languages, in addition to Russian. It is common to grow up speaking and mixing all three languages at home and in public. English is the main compulsory foreign language, and is taught in all schools (Hasanova, 2007). In our analysis, we take into account this linguistic environment in which our participants were raised as well as the fact that they have experienced transnational migration, and have therefore, encountered new contexts and new linguistic requirements (Kelly & Lusic, 2006; Hall, 2014).

Discursive representations of non-nativeness

'When one doesn't practice the language, it becomes forgotten'

In what follows we will show how participants orient to discourses of habit and also discourses of ideals in order to explain their relation to and experience of the languages that they use in their transnational lives. There were some participants who relied more strongly on discourses of ideals, claiming for instance that "Native is first, it's in my blood" or that they had continued difficulty in English because they were not "native speakers". In our analysis, however, we have chosen to focus on those cases where discourses of habit were more highlighted, given that discourses of ideals have already been discussed extensively in the literature. Accordingly, the first metacommentary we discuss comes from Farhod, who rarely invokes the notions of "(non)nativeness" and relies instead on discourses of habit. Farhod moved to the U.S. for school, but had since become involved in business. He comes from the Surkhandaryo region of Uzbekistan, which is primarily an Uzbek speaking region, but where a number of Tajik speakers, similar to himself, live in rural areas. This excerpt begins with Farhod's response to the first author's question about how he felt when using his different languages. The text presented below has been translated from the original Russian.

Excerpt 11

1. Farhod: When speaking Uzbek I don't feel comfortable, because whenever I speak with Uzbek businessmen, I don't know many work terms, so I don't feel confident as I can't express myself. I start feeling nervous. And that's not good in business. In fact, I use English a lot in business, and Uzbek at home and with friends.

2. Interviewer: What about your attitude toward the languages you speak? Has it changed since you moved to North America?

3. Farhod: Before when I watched TV here I never understood English. Now when I turn it on, I think, it seems to me it is in Russian, because I understand everything and only then I realize that it is in ENGLISH! In America, when I go to the store, I just speak English automatically.

4. Interviewer: Do you think you might face any challenges in terms of language when you visit your home country?

5. Farhod: Everywhere there are pluses and minuses. For example, in Surkhandaryo, there is no Tajik vs. Uzbek problem. So in some regions in Surkhandaryo, there are Tajiks who know no words in Uzbek. I went to a gas station once, and asked how much the oil was. And he told me to speak Uzbek since we lived in Uzbekistan. And I told him if I wanted I could speak to him in 10 different languages, right?! So, I just went to another gas station. That happens too. Yes, certainly, I will face challenges back home. When you live in the US, terms are different. There you need to bargain. When I go here to the gas station, I know the set phrases: Change tire. My tire is flat. Can you get me help? But there, I would start pondering what the terms would be. You see, when one doesn't practice the language, it becomes forgotten. For example, when I finished Turkish, 4 years I studied at University, then at work I used mainly English, Russian or Uzbek, in the European Union. Then, I came to the US, met a Turkish person and had hard times using it. But in 6 months I got it back. And my Turkish friend even told me if I now went to Turkey, no one would notice that I wasn't a native Turk. But what I wanted to say is that I didn't use 5–7 years the language, so I forgot it.

6. Interviewer: Aha

7. Farhod: So not necessarily forgot, just it got rusty. Like I understand what the person is saying, even the jokes, but can't speak. Same goes for Uzbek or Tajik, when I go home, I think it would be the same as with Turkish. Here, in the US, after using English, I started forgetting Russian, therefore now, I try to read the newspaper, etc. in order to keep it fresh.

Farhod's discourses of habit focus on describing a variety of lower-scaled chronotopic contexts in which he uses or has stopped using various languages. He describes how his (lack of) use of these languages in everyday contexts is ultimately what determines whether or not they require effort, or whether or not they feel natural. Thus, Farhod attributes naturalness to his various linguistic resources across the board. For instance, he notes that the ubiquity of English in his experiences of daily life in America (e.g. going to the store, or watching TV) makes it come "automatically" in his speech. Furthermore, as a passive listener, he notes that English has become natural to such an extent that he says, "it seems to me it is in Russian" (line 3) in the particular chronotope of watching TV in America. Thus, by consciously narrating his experiences of his repeated and less conscious behavior of watching TV in English, he claims automaticity as a type of naturalness for both English and Russian. In contrast, a lack of naturalness

along the affective dimensions of self-expression is attributed to his use of Uzbek in particular lower-scaled chronotopes. He notes that using Uzbek in business contexts makes him “uncomfortable”, “not confident”, and hinders self-expression (line 1) since he is used to using English in these contexts; in Farhod’s words “In fact, I use English a lot in business, and Uzbek at home and with friends” (line 1). In all of these cases, Farhod highlights the importance of lower-scaled chronotopic contexts in determining what is natural vs. unnatural, emphasizing habit as opposed to ideals in categorizing his linguistic repertoire.

His metacommentary also portrays naturalness as a type of habit, which though durable, can be lost over time if the language is not practiced within lower-scaled chronotopes. He notes that “When one doesn’t practice the language, it becomes forgotten” (line 5). When reflecting on his Turkish language competence, he says: “I didn’t use the language for five seven years ... so it got rusty” (line 5–7). He defines getting “rusty” as understanding everything, but not being able to speak the language. He then makes similar claims about Uzbek, Tajik and Russian, noting, for instance, that he “started forgetting Russian now” (line 7). Using discourses of habit, he narrates how his transnational migration away from certain lower-scaled contexts in which he would use each of these languages, results in a “rusting” of his earlier dispositions. This is also related to the issue of effort, as this “rusting” leads to an effort to maintain previously “stable” languages in his linguistic repertoire. For instance, he discusses how he makes an effort to read newspapers in Russian – i.e. to use Russian in a chronotopic context that would not be typical of his life in the U.S. Interestingly, he does not describe the effort that he is putting forward to sustain Uzbek and Tajik naturalness, which may be in part because the contexts in which he worries about not being able to use these languages are not recreatable in his life in the United States. For example, he notes that he may struggle to engage in Uzbek or Tajik in the contexts of a gas station when asking for a tire to be changed, or at a market where he has to bargain (line 5). These contexts are not so easily accessible as those of reading a newspaper in Russian. Farhod’s reliance on lower-scaled, chronotopic contexts of daily life in attributing naturalness or effort to the various languages in his repertoire constitute his discourses of habit or his conscious representation of his linguistic behavior as less conscious and more habitual. This stands in contrast to those earlier mentioned cases in which participants attributed naturalness to their languages on the basis of ideals, through claiming for instance “It’s native, it’s in my blood”. Farhod’s reliance on discourses of habit, thus also allows him to disregard labels of nativeness in describing his competence, as is evidenced by his infrequent use of the terms “native” and “non-native”.

The one exception is in his discussion of how his Turkish improved to the extent that a Turkish friend noted he would pass for a native Turk if in Turkey. This demonstrates that Farhod is aware of discourses of ideals and that he may invoke them when it is useful for his self-presentation. Another case where Farhod refers to discourses of ideals is in his response to the gas station employee in Uzbekistan who demanded he speak

Uzbek. Farhod notes “And I told him if I wanted I could speak to him in 10 different languages, right?!” (line 5). With this response, he rejects the ideal notion that territoriality or the nation-state should determine the language spoken, while also invoking a different ideal, i.e. that having proficiency in a larger number of languages grants one greater linguistic capital. This ideal may be associated with the idea that one has acquired multiple languages in order to move flexibly in a globalized world, or with the higher levels of education, through which one has acquired these languages. All in all, although Farhod primarily relies on discourses of habit in representing his experiences, he is still aware of, and can engage with discourses of ideals as necessary. What is interesting for us is how discourses of habit allow for a more fluid attribution of naturalness and effort across the native/non-native distinction, while discourses of ideals reify or react to national images of native-speakerism.

‘I try, I am, I’ve really become’

In the next excerpt from Maryam we examine how discourses of habit and ideals interact in relation to experiences of transnational migration. After receiving her bachelor’s degree, Maryam migrated to Canada for further education. After migrating, she faced some financial hardships which led her to quit school and engage in manual labor. However, she said that because she wanted to move into more skilled work, she took note of the professions and skills that are valued in Canada, ultimately deciding to study medical administration and French. She is originally from Bukhara, a city in Uzbekistan with a large population of Tajik speakers. Maryam spoke in English throughout the interview, and the original text is reproduced below.

Excerpt 2

1. Interviewer: Has your attitude toward the languages you speak changed since you moved to North America?
2. Maryam: After I moved to Canada, I want to learn more languages. I respect people who know more languages, especially people who know French. I want to learn French and Arabic. I also want to learn more about my native language. We speak Tajik you know, but we don’t know much about the language, Persians here don’t understand Tajik. I want to be able to tell them about it. I started watching Tajik movies. I also try speak English more fluently, to sound more American, because people have some difficulty in understanding me.
3. Interviewer: Do you observe any changes when using different languages? For example, changes in behavior or personality or any other changes.
4. Maryam: Hmmm, for me, Uzbek and Tajik sound so natural, more soft, kind. I don’t speak loud in my native language. English is not my native language, so I try to be confident in expressing my thoughts, speak a little bit louder, be assertive. ((long pause)) When I speak English, I am too much confident and assertive, and very independent, maybe I’ve really become assertive and confident.

5. Interviewer: Do you think you might face any challenges when visiting your home country when it comes to language?

6. Maryam: I started mixing English with the other three languages, and when I talk to my mom, some English words come naturally. Hopefully, I don't sound too loud when I go back home.

We begin examining Maryam's discourses through the lens of ideals, attending in particular to the new ideals associated with the higher-scaled chronotopes of the nation-state that she encounters as a result of her transnational migration. In line 2, she indirectly invokes ideals of Canadianness through her discussion of valuing multilingualism, upholding proficiency in English and French, and wanting to be an active participant in Canadian multiculturalism (c.f. Kallen, 1982). Maryam describes her desire to respond to this image of Canadianness by changing her linguistic repertoire, by learning French and Arabic, by trying to "sound more American", and by learning more about Tajik to better represent her culture (line 2). In her discussion of these ambitions, she draws a clear distinction between her "native" language, i.e. Tajik (line 2) and her "non-native" language, i.e. English (line 4), demonstrating how discourses of Canadian nationalism come to be in dialogue with other higher-scaled chronotopes of ethnolinguistic identity.

While Maryam's commentary begins with these discourses of ideals, as she describes both the process through which she came to have these goals, and the effort she puts forward in achieving them, discourses of habit become more prominent. For instance, her desire to know more about Tajik can be traced to her habitual encounters with other immigrants where she is unable to represent her ethnolinguistic identity (line 2). More specifically, she narrates how her encounters with Persians in Canada led her to "want to learn more about my native language" (line 2). She goes on to note that "we speak Tajik you know, but we don't know much about the language, Persians here don't understand Tajik. I want to be able to tell them about it" (line 2). While Persian and Tajik are closely related languages, Tajik is much less visible globally, and for Tajik speakers from Uzbekistan, it is also less visible at a national scale as a minority language. Thus, these higher-scaled issues shape Maryam's on-the-ground experiences of knowledge about Tajik. These experiences, combined with the higher-scaled ideals of Canadianness, lead her to put forth effort which she describes in terms of lower-scaled chronotopic contexts, for instance by "watching Tajik movies" (line 2) in order to gain a greater metalinguistic awareness of the language.

With respect to English, Maryam notes that as a result of her effort to comply with ideals of Canadianness, she has brought about a change in her durable disposition that now comes into conflict with her perception of Central Asian ideals for sociolinguistic norms of behavior. She notes that a desire to sound more American and to be better understood by "native speakers" in English leads her to "try to be confident" in expressing her thoughts and to "speak a little bit louder" and "be assertive" (line 4). She discursively represents the process through which not only her language, but also she

herself becomes “assertive and confident” as she moves from “I try” to “I am” to “I’ve really become” (line 4), narratively demonstrating how this linguistic practice becomes a durable disposition. The durability of this disposition becomes relevant when she contrasts it with ideals for Central Asian speech. She sets up a dichotomy between these two sets of ideals describing Uzbek and Tajik as natural, soft, and kind, in contrast to English as confident, loud, and assertive. Thus, in response to the interviewer’s question about whether or not she will have difficulties communicating when she goes home, Maryam notes that “Hopefully, I don’t sound too loud when I go back home” (line 6). This indicates her anxieties about how her durable disposition as a “confident” speaker might impact her speech in Uzbek and Tajik. That is, what has become durable in Canada may not fit well in relation to another set of ideals. In addition to expressing her concern that she might speak too confidently in Uzbek and Tajik, Maryam also uses discourses of habit to note that when she speaks to her mother, English “words come naturally” and mix with her Uzbek speech (line 6). This shows how Maryam represents English as an established part of her habitus, and how she attributes “naturalness” to both her use of English words, and to her use of a confident way of speaking associated with English. Furthermore, Maryam represents speaking this way as something that has become so “natural” that she has difficulty controlling it consciously, that is in speaking only in Uzbek or Tajik, or speaking softly and kindly in these languages. Thus she presents effort as something that is required, not only to change one’s habitus in response to national ideals, but also to sustain previously established and durable dispositions related to one’s “native” languages.

While Maryam does not refer to English as one of her native languages, she attributes naturalness to it, and while she refers to Tajik as a native language, she claims that effort is required to speak it monolingually and with the appropriate affect. A note on the different, but related notions of “naturalness” in Maryam’s discourses is also in order. When discussed within the higher-scaled chronotopes of ideal ethnolinguistic personhood, the notion of “natural” as it relates to Uzbek and Tajik can be seen as a type of inherent familiarity that reifies notions of native and non-nativeness. The attribution of naturalness to English within the lower-scaled chronotopes of interacting with her mother, indicates a type of automaticity that is not easily controlled. However, these two types of naturalness are still very much connected as both automaticity and inherency can be seen as pointing to a type of personal familiarity with these ways of speaking. Thus, although naturalness is typically attributed to “native” languages, in this case, we see how naturalness may also be attributed to “non-native” languages, particularly after a prolonged use of this “non-native” language in lower-scaled contexts. Similarly, as noted above, while effort is generally associated with “non-native” languages, it may also be invoked in discourses of habit when discussing attempts to speak one’s native languages without mixing. While Maryam does overtly invoke the categories of native and non-native to divide up her linguistic repertoire, her further metalinguistic commentary ultimately subverts this dichotomy. This is significant because it demonstrates how one speaker over the course of one discussion may change how they position their linguistic resources depending on whether discourses of

habit or discourses of ideals become relevant to them. Rather than a case of agentive resistance, we might categorize Maryam's discourses of habit as an unconscious or unintentional blurring of the lines between nativeness and non-nativeness. That is, Maryam's commentary both maintains the native speaker ideal, while also capturing some of the ways behavior is not always a result of ideals, but also a result of habit born of lower-scaled chronotopic experiences.

"I feel comfortable in Uzbek, I am myself in Tajik, I wanna express myself in English"

Zarina initially traveled to the U.S. through an educational scholarship to obtain her M.A. degree, and at the time of the interview had returned to the U.S. to complete her Ph.D. A former English teacher, she is also from the city of Bukhara. She speaks English at home where she lives with her South Asian husband and their son. The excerpt begins with Zarina responding to a question about her knowledge of different languages. Zarina spoke in English throughout the interview and the original text is reproduced below.

Excerpt 3

1. Zarina: I think I know Uzbek better than Tajik, because I went to school in Uzbek. I speak mostly Tajik to my son, I want to speak to him in Tajik. English comes automatically. When I speak Russian, I feel important, because I can speak with so many people from 15 countries ... Uzbek is important, because it's an official language in Uzbekistan. I want to keep it important. I already have difficulties expressing myself in Uzbek or Tajik. Sometimes, I just wanna express myself in English. That's why I try to keep Uzbek important, read books, watch movies. Tajik is practiced when I talk to my family, and Uzbek is not as much. I wanna keep it important. We don't have books or movies in Tajik, everything is in Uzbek. I want to keep ability to speak standard language with people at home.

2. Interviewer: Has your attitude toward the languages you speak changed since you moved to North America?

3. Zarina: I have become more flexible since moving abroad. My English language skills improved. My Russian skills actually got a lot better. I interact with people from Russia itself and from Ukraine. They are different from people who speak Russian in Uzbekistan. The words, the phrases they use. I started thinking out of the box. I certainly started appreciating more my native languages. I want to experience my culture, and without language you cannot have culture, and without culture you cannot have language. Read literature in different languages.

4. Interviewer: Do you observe any changes when using different languages? For example, changes in behavior or personality or any other changes?

5. Zarina: I use a lot of hand gestures when speaking English. I feel important in Russian, because I can speak to so many people. I feel from my heart, comfortable in Uzbek, and I am myself in Tajik.

Zarina's metacommentary shows how moving transnationally makes salient discourses of ideals related to being a new immigrant. This is similar to what was observed in Maryam's discourses. In this case, these ideals include valuing and maintaining one's "native" languages (line 3), while also becoming more flexible generally and with respect to improving one's existing linguistic skills (lines 3 and 5). She defines Uzbek and Tajik as her "native languages" (line 3), implying that English and Russian do not fall into this category. Similar to Farhod and Maryam, she describes effort being required in relation to all of these languages. Zarina makes this effort in order to maintain ties with the homeland, noting that "I certainly started appreciating more my native languages. I want to experience my culture, and without language you cannot have culture, and without culture you cannot have language" (line 3). In this, she invokes the higher-scaled chronotope of the Uzbek nation state and its associated ideals as her motivation for putting forth effort to maintain her "native" languages, even while she is outside of the homeland. However, this effort is constrained by the lower-scaled chronotopes of her daily life in the U.S. She says, "I already experience difficulties expressing myself in Uzbek or Tajik. Sometimes I just wanna express myself in English" (line 1). She also mentions that she wants to speak to her son in Tajik, but that "English comes out automatically" (line 1). Because English has become habitual in lower-scaled chronotopes, the use of her "native" languages in these contexts requires effort.

Interestingly, Zarina uses the phrase "native languages" in the plural, referring to both Uzbek and Tajik. However, given the different positions of these languages in her life, they require different types of effort in order to be sustained. For Zarina, Uzbek is framed as important in her discourses of ideals related to nationalism and maintaining proficiency in the "official language in Uzbekistan" (line 4). However, while Tajik is still a normal part of her lower-scaled interactions with her family back in Uzbekistan, Uzbek is not. The higher-scaled chronotopes of nationalism, demand a prioritization of Uzbek. Nevertheless, in Zarina's daily lived experience the use of English and Tajik become more habitual. As a result, she needs to make a more intentional effort to maintain Uzbek.

Zarina's metacommentary on Russian also provides insight into the complex ways in which discourses of ideals interact with speaker's perceptions of their own linguistic competence. She invokes the ideal nation state by noting that her Russian skills improved in the U.S. because she had a chance to "interact with people from Russia itself" (line 3). By using this phrase "Russia itself" she emphasizes that this interaction is different, and somehow more linguistically authentic, than her previous interactions with Russian speakers in Uzbekistan. All of these interactions, which take place at lower-scaled chronotopes are recast through the discourses of ideals. That is, this discourse draws from and reemphasizes the iconized link between titular languages and nation-states. While this is not necessarily surprising, it is interesting that she lumps together her interactions with both Russian speakers from Russia and those from Ukraine. Noting that "they" collectively are "different from people who speak Russian in Uzbekistan" in terms of their words and phrases (line 3). This could be attributed to the

larger number of ethnic Russians in Ukraine, the geographical closeness between Russia and Ukraine, or closer historical, political, and religious ties between the two countries. Regardless, her narrative demonstrates that while higher-scaled nation-state chronotopes may govern what counts as “native” vs. “non-native” competence, there may be some gradient aspects to this idealized system. That is, it appears that determining whether a language counts as “native” for speakers from a particular nation-state is not only a binary choice, but also a scalar one. Thus, in discourses of ideals we may encounter various understandings of where one falls on the native non-native spectrum in relation to the different nation states to which one must relate. For Zarina, even though Russian is not a titular language of her nation-state, she still claims some relation to it, but subjugates her connection to Russian to the connection between Ukrainians and Russian, which is idealized, even though it is not the titular language of Ukraine.

With respect to the issue of naturalness, Zarina notes on the one hand “I feel from my heart, comfortable in Uzbek, and I am myself in Tajik” (line 5), while also stating that she just wants to express herself “in English” (line 5). She attributes this affective “naturalness” to Uzbek, English and Tajik and while her different descriptions of these languages as relating to “comfort”, “herself” or “self-expression” may indicate some desire on her part to distinguish these languages into different categories, ultimately all of this points to a type of embodied inherency that is typically associated with “native” languages. Thus, in Zarina’s case we also observe a variety of discourses, which implicitly challenge the native/non-native dichotomy: (1) in her emphasis of how Uzbek, Tajik, and English are all “natural” for her in different ways (2) in how she draws from discourses of habit to show that effort is required in her attempts to maintain Uzbek and Tajik, and (3) in her comments that reflect how Russian can be “(non)native” to varying degrees. We would argue that both Maryam and Zarina’s discourses are not intended as resistance to the notion of nativeness, but are simply the result of their attempts to narrate and explain their changing positionings in their transnational experiences.

Discussion and conclusion

We started this paper by noting the importance of attending to both discourses of ideals and discourses of habit in relation to speakers’ positionings of themselves as (non)native. What we have shown in the analysis is how speakers’ evaluations of their own linguistic competence are not static, but shifting – even for one speaker – depending on the types of discourses they use. Notably, explicit identifications of self as “native” or “non-native” are relatively stable, but the attribution of effort, or various dimensions of naturalness do shift in ways that challenge the established dichotomy between idealized nativeness and marginalized non-nativeness. At the same time, while discourses which blur the line between nativeness and non-nativeness could be seen as a means of countering inequalities related to native speakerism, we are cautious in claiming that our participants are consciously or agentively resisting notions of “nativeness”.

That is, while scholars have advocated for a move away from the dichotomy of native vs. non-native, we also find useful a move away from the dichotomy of acquiescence vs. resistance to ideals of nativeness. We find the notion of “discourses of habit” to be helpful in facilitating this move. As demonstrated, participants’ attribution of naturalness or effort to their various languages is expressed through discourses of habit which emphasize those less conscious and more durable aspects of sociolinguistic behavior. If they subvert the native/non-native dichotomy through their discussion of these behaviors as less conscious, then they do so somewhat unintentionally. Notably, in the case of Farhod we do see some explicit resistance to higher-scaled ideals, but this comes in the form of alternative discourses of ideals and not in the form of discourses of habit. This has implications for theoretical discussions of discursive agency in relation to linguistic marginalization more generally. While sociolinguistic scholarship has attended to how multilingual speakers assert their agency and resistance (Canagarajah, 1999; Vitanova, 2005; Rudolph, 2013), we also want to highlight that multilingual speakers discuss their less conscious and habitual engagement with their linguistic repertoire. The fact that participants brought up examples of “unconscious” linguistic practice, even though they were asked to reflect consciously, indicates the potentially widespread nature of unconsciousness in ideologies of (non)nativeness. Thus, while it is beyond the scope of this study, there is potential for future investigations of metacommentary on (non)nativeness in communicative contexts where consciousness is less foregrounded. This type of description of the diversity of discourses with which multilingual speakers engage ideologies of linguistic competence can contribute to the ongoing effort of legitimating multilingualism, without portraying multilingual people as always and only agentive and creative speakers.

In discussing discourses of habit, we have also reconceptualized habitus in relation to transnational migration. As mentioned earlier, Navarro (2006) has argued that habitus should not be thought of as completely unchangeable, but rather that one can, over time, create alternative durable dispositions. Similarly, Karimzad (2019) has demonstrated how a chronotopic understanding of habitus can lead us to account for its construction and reconstruction as individuals move across time and space. Our study adds to these observations yet another example of the ways in which a changeable, but still durable disposition is present in contexts of mobility. What our contribution emphasizes is how previous and reconstructed dispositions are durable in a way that counter native/non-native dichotomy. In our data we see how Maryam and Zarina put forth effort to bring about new dispositions in relation to the ideals of their host countries, and how these reconstructed dispositions are durable to such an extent that they have to exert additional effort to maintain what they define as their “native” languages. Given discussions about the instability and unpredictability of transnational migration (e.g. Hall, 2014), the durability of one’s habitus provides another crucial analytical tool in accounting for not only the constant change that migrants experience, but also their experience of that which endures – i.e. their own linguistic habits – even as they attempt to make and remake themselves.

Criticisms of the notion of (non)nativeness have been primarily aimed at reforming language teaching. As the empirical data here show, there are a variety of ways in which multilingual speakers imagine their linguistic competencies, and we look forward to the development of pedagogical tools which engage with these various ideologies. Further, while teachers may want to exercise caution in their use of terms such as “native” vs. “non-native”, the data here indicate that engagement with the dimensions of naturalness and effort may provide another domain in which to challenge and encourage students’ attitudes toward their own proficiencies. For instance, engaging diverse student populations in metalinguistic talk about their comfort, confidence, automaticity, self-expression, and effort in their language use in lower-scaled chronotopes of daily life could inform language learning goals and motivations. This may allow classroom practices to take into account not only the marginalization that students experience because of explicit labels of (non)nativeness, but also the ways in which less conscious and more habitual aspects of students’ language competence can be engaged.

In conclusion, this study contributes to investigations of (non)nativeness by attending to the metalinguistic discourses of multilingual speakers, and analyzing these discourses through the notions of both habit and ideals. We have shown how the interaction between these two types of discourses gives a more holistic understanding of multilingual speakers’ positionings, and of the shifting and multiple ways in which they evaluate their competence. We have also made note of the implications of this work for theorizing agency, migration and language teaching.

Notes

Transcription conventions

Underline emphasis

CAP louder speech

... text has been omitted

(()) nonlinguistic features.

Acknowledgments

We express our gratitude to our study participants. This paper has benefited from Francois V. Tochon’s and Jane Zuengler’s valuable feedback. We thank all the participants in the IPrA panel on “Mobility, Marginality and Meaning” at which this work was presented, particularly Rakesh Bhatt, Agnes Bolonyai, Adrienne Lo, Brian King, Ben Rampton, and Lavanya Sankaran for their detailed comments on our presentation of these ideas. Finally, we are grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions. All errors remain our own.

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