

Appendix C

Illustration of Access to Insider Discourse

As you read through these excerpts from a thread in the bios discussion, note how the technology brings insider discourse into the course. In this case, it is a discussion by two Turks on prejudice against a minority group in Turkey. Note Yasemin is a cultural consultant for the Middle East. Mohammed is teacher taking the course.

Message no. 142

Posted by **MOHAMMED** on Monday, June 24, 2002 1:06am

Subject Mohammed's Bio

Muslim Turkish man, History and Social Studies teacher.

MY CULTURE AND ITS NORMS:

I was born and grew up in Antakya-Turkey in 70' and 80'. Antakya can be considered a middle size city. The economy is mostly based on agriculture especially on production of cotton. In my childhood, there were plenty of children who work on cotton garden bed. Since my parents especially my father wants to raise educated children, they did not make me to work at this job. Therefore, I did not have any job until graduated from the University. Antakya has a very heterogeneous population especially in terms of religion and denominations. The majority of the population is Arabic Alevis. However there are plenty of Turkish Sunnis (the dominant denomination in Turkey), Turkish Alevis, Arabic Sunnis and few Christians (especially Arabic) and Jewish. Even though the population is very heterogeneous, those people prefer to live at different neighborhoods of the city.

Since my family comes from Arabic origin, I was living in neighborhood that there were not any non-Arabic people except some public officers. My parents know Turkish however; like other members of the community, they prefer to talk in Arabic at home. So, I did not know any Turkish word until I began to the Elementary school. I did not have much contact with Turkish people until my university years. When I began to the University, my family and other relatives suggested to me to hide my identity. They were probably afraid of prejudice against me.

My family was a lower - middle class family. My parents are very liberal and democratic people. Even though they are not educated people, they always support my education. In fact, the majority of our community is very eager to raise educated children without making any

gender discrimination.

Like other cultures in Turkey, we were taught to respect elder people. We kiss their hands of elder people like grandmas and grandpas to show our respect. Generally, a person is not suppose to smoke in front of his/her parent even she/he is an adult. The relatives has very important role in our community. We visit our relatives on regular basis, so do they. Visiting relatives becomes more important at religious holidays (like Ramadan and Sacrificed Holiday). Visiting sick relatives, friends and neighbors and giving them some gifts are parts of our cultures too.

MY EDUCATIONAL AND WORK BACKGROUND

I went to the elementary, middle and high school in our neighborhood. After I had passed the National University Entrance Exam, I enrolled to Istanbul University in the field of History. This is the first time I left my hometown. In 1995, I have been accepted to Istanbul University Ancient History MA program. While I was studying on my master degree, I began to work as a "History" and "Social Science" teacher for the Ministry of National Education. I have taught for three years at several schools in Istanbul, Turkey. While I was working as a teacher, I got scholarship from the Ministry to pursue my master and also PhD degrees in field of "Social Studies Education" in the United States. For this opportunity I had to leave my master study and resign my job. I took an intensive English preparation course at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara- Turkey for nine months before coming to the U.S. I have got my master (M.Ed) degree at University of XXX. I have just begun to my PhD. Study at XXX.

3. MY LEARNING ABOUT CULTURES, PREJUDICE & EQUITY:

When I was a university student, I had many chances to meet and to be friend with other people who come from different origins. I had many Turks and Kurds friends and I did not receive any discrimination against myself from them. However, still I hid my identity when I talked to somebody who I have not known him/her very well because I knew that some people might have bias against us. However, after those years, I think that the hiding identity was not an efficient way to save me from bias. Since I am a full citizen of Republic of Turkey, I have the same rights, which the other people have. Therefore, I do not worry about revealing my identity anymore.

Before I came to the United States, I had supposed that there was no discrimination in the United States. However, when I came here, I saw that still plenty of people have prejudice against Blacks and aliens. Some of them completely forget what they have done to the Indians; even they claim that they saved Indians from diseases, which they brought from Europe. I mean most

Americans do not accept what their ancestors have done before to the Indians, Blacks and others. Now, under the 14th amendment any discrimination has been prohibited. However, still I believe there is discrimination against non-Christian Whites.

4. WHAT I WANT TO LEARN FROM THIS COURSE?

Since I do not know much about Asian, European, African cultures, I would like to learn more about them. I would like to share my cultural norms with my peers. I would like to learn about global education and how it can be implemented via using technology.

Message no. 144[Branch from no. 142]

Posted by Anne on Monday, June 24, 2002 4:35am

Subject Re: Mohammed's Bio

Hello Mohammed and welcome to the World Cultures online course. My name is Binta and I am the Resource Consultant for Africa. I noticed that at the end of your biography you mentioned that your were interested in learning more about Africa. Since I am the perosn working with the African modules, I would be delighted to help you locate resources and materials relevant to teaching and learning about Africa.

In addition, I found your bio to make for very intersting reading and I thank you for sharing your experiences. I was particularly intrigued about your statements pertaining to your identity. You mentioned that when you began attending the university that your parents encouraged you to hide your identity. As I am not very familiar Turkey, could you please help me understand why your family thought in would benefit you to hide your identity?

Once again I thank you for sharing your interesting bio and I look forward to reading from you soon.

Anne- Resource Consultant - Africa

Message no. 440[Branch from no. 144]

Posted by **MOHAMMED** on Thursday, June 27, 2002 2:46pm

Subject Re: Mohammed's Bio

Hi Anne,

Turkish community contains very divergent ethnic and religious elements. As I mentioned, I am Arabic Alevis (a Muslim denomination). Therefore, some very conservative people have some prejudice against us. In fact, I have not received any harassment or an attack due to my identity. However, in the past at 70' and 80' there were some attacks against Alevi nation. As a result of this, my family suggested to hide my identity. However, nowadays especially after the 90' many things have been changing in Turkey. So, many alevis do not

see a necessity to hide their identities any more.

Thank you

Mohammed

Message no. 185[Branch from no. 142]

Posted by **YASEMIN** on Monday, June 24, 2002 7:19pm

Subject Re: Mohammed's Bio

Hi Mohammed,

First of all, I'd like to say that I had a touristic trip to Antakya once and I fell in love with the city. It must have been quite influential to grow up in a very historical and culturally diverse environment.

I found your bio very interesting. Even though we are coming from ethnically different backgrounds, as being also a Turkish citizen, I found many similarities between our ideas, especially about the identity issue. I have to admit that I could not decide on your religious background although I got that you and your family are racially Arabs. Yet, since your family advised you to hide your identity when you went to Istanbul to pursue higher education, I guess you are an Arab Alevi, not an Arab Sunni. At least to my best knowledge, I did not hear any prejudices against the Arabs but I heard and witnessed discrimination against Alevis. So, I can definitely understand why your parents wanted you not to reveal your identity. If you had read my bio, I had mentioned about the prejudices my own parents had while I was growing up. I had never seen them physically or verbally abuse or harass Alevis but at the same time I had never seen them having close relationships with the Alevis.

I know that they would never approve me making friendships with them or marry an Alevi guy. However, I had many Alevi friends back in high school and in the college. I wish one day my parents can also overcome their biases and make friends with their Alevi neighbors. Maybe by this way, they can see that there are not significant differences between us but many similarities. I believe that with the changing Turkey, especially the new generations are overcoming their prejudices or at least not listening to what their parents impose on them. So, I vision a Turkey living in harmony in a multicultural global world. Do you think that you would be comfortable to reveal your identity in the near future? I know that you can talk about your identity right now but I think it is because you are proud and do not care about the prejudices since you came to a place in your life. So, do you vision a Turkey where you feel comfortable about your heritage just because the society is changing?

I, myself, had to hide my identity while I was doing my undergraduate study in the Middle East Technical University, which is known to be the most socialist university in Turkey. I started to pray during my college years. Yet, I never had the courage to say to my classmates that I was going to Mesjit (small Mosque) to pray. I was afraid that my professors would find out and would not give me the grades I deserved. I saw this happening to my female classmates who wore headscarves and received low grades and later in the coming years were forced to take off their scarves. It was not until my senior year when I was sure that I had the highest GPA in the history department, I started to tell my classmates I was praying. On the contrary, I witnessed that all my Alevi friends or socialist friends were comfortable sharing their identities with the professors, most of whom were Alevis or socialists. I guess "living in the closet" depends on which environment we are in.

Lastly, you identified yourself as a Turkish male at the introduction of your bio although in the following sections you wrote about your Arabic heritage. Is the reason behind this your being a full Turkish citizen as you mentioned in your bio?

Since we do not have US categories like the "African-American" or "Asian-American" in Turkey, it is hard to categorize people, which I believe is non-sense in a global world. Most say they are directly Turkish. What would your parents call themselves, "Arabs", "Arab-Turks", or "Turks"?

Sorry for writing too much. I look forward to working with you in this class.

Peace, Yasemin, Cultural Consultant for Middle East.

Message no. 449[Branch from no. 185]

Posted by **MOHAMMED** on Thursday, June 27, 2002 4:55pm

Subject Re: Mohammed's Bio

Hello Yasemin,

I am very glad to hear that you like my home town (Antakya). As you stated, I am Arab Alevi. I completely agree with what you wrote about the level of prejudice about us. As you mentioned, there is no harassment or any attacks against us, but still some people have some prejudice. I must admit that some of Alevis have prejudice against Sunnis, too. For instance, they are not likely to approve a marriage with non-Arabic Alevi guy or girl. However, the bias between the Alevis and Sunnis has been diminishing and lately I have seen some married people who come from two different identities. I believe that still we need more years to all prejudice is ended between two communities.

I identify myself as a Turk if I am not asked my real identity. As you wrote, we don't have U.S categories in Turkey to identify the people. However, I was asked many times my identity, particularly in my college years in Turkey. When people learned my hometown, the following question to me was "Are you Arabic?" In this case I say that I come from Arabic origin. My parents identify themselves Arabic and they prefer talking Arabic. However, most of the new generation children do not know Arabic even their parents do. I hope this information would be helpful.

I look forward to working with you, too.

Best wishes

Mohammed

Message no. 499[Branch from no. 142]

Posted by Chris on Friday, June 28, 2002 6:42am

Subject Re: Mohammed's Bio

Mohammed,

After reading your bio a few times I was still confused as to why your family encouraged you to hide your identity when you went to the University. Could you explain in more detail the social structure in Turkey and maybe describe some of the prejudice against Arabic people that exist. Also you said that you are a full citizen of the Republic of Turkey - are there people in Turkey who do not have full citizenship? If yes, what rights are denied to people without full citizenship? Thanks in advance for answering my questions.

Chris

Message no. 522[Branch from no. 142]

Posted by Gerry on Friday, June 28, 2002 1:33pm

Subject Re: Mohammed's Bio

Dear Mohammed:

I enjoyed reading your biography. I had never heard of Alevi's before. Why was there such prejudice against you? What information do you teach in history classes, primarily Turkish history, or world history, in Istanbul? What ages did you teach? One of my favorite experiences in Turkey was going to the Museum in Ankara, I had never seen cuneiform or Sumerian artifacts before. It was amazing. Thank you for replying to mine as well. In Ankara I interviewed people at the Directorate of Women's Status and Problems Organization at the one of the Ministries that dealt with family affairs. It was very interesting.

The women's directorate had a very different take on women's issues than the family affairs ministry. They were trying to empower women and deal with problems such as rape and abuse, and equal access to education in rural turkey.

The Family Directorate person I spoke to was more interested in hygiene, nutrition, and public health issues. But I also learned a lot about the issues inside Turkey, especially in the more rural areas versus the urban areas as well as the tensions between more strict Muslims and the more secular women. I have read about women in Egypt, but not to officially compare them. The Turkish women I met were college educated and worked for the government or the university. I am glad to meet you.

Gerry

