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# 5 “Are you Hindu?”: Resisting Membership Categorization Through Language Alternation

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## Introduction

Membership categorization analysis (MCA) research has largely focused on conversational data involving the use of a single language. Only recently have studies that use MCA as their primary methodology examined how multilingual speakers use their various linguistic codes as a resource for organizing their social actions in face-to-face interaction. Among these recently published studies on multilingual conversation and MCA, the research is quite similar in that, of the various *identities-in-practice* (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) that might be investigated, the researchers have focused on describing the enactment of speakers' *linguistic identities*. For example, Gafaranga (2000, 2001, 2005) and Torras & Gafaranga (2002) used MCA to investigate how language preference operates as a categorization device in the social activity of 'doing being bilingual.' Gafaranga takes the view that language alternation is a social activity in its own right, so his research focused on the locally relevant linguistic identities that Kinyarwanda-French-Swahili speakers used to define themselves and others. In a similar vein, Egbert (2004) examined how speakers' turntaking practices produced regional or linguistic memberships in speaking German and in particular varieties of German. Her work shows how speakers orient to 'nativeness' and 'nonnativeness' through repair practices that assign these

01 linguistic memberships to themselves and their coparticipants. Similarly, Cashman  
02 (2005) showed how Spanish-English bilinguals with varying degrees of language  
03 dominance established and policed the category boundaries for their linguistic  
04 identities, which include 'competent speaker of Spanish,' 'incompetent speaker of  
05 Spanish,' and 'arbiter of Spanish usage.'

06 In this chapter, I use MCA to examine how multilingual speakers use language  
07 alternation to manage other identities-in-practice beyond their linguistic identities.  
08 In doing so, I seek to contribute to understanding the "procedures that members  
09 have for selecting categories" (Sacks, 1995, p. 42) and to illuminate the procedures  
10 that speakers have for contesting and disavowing category selections made on  
11 their behalf. By focusing on a naturally occurring Swahili-English conversation  
12 recorded between two journalists in a newspaper office in Dar es Salaam,  
13 Tanzania, I examine how the speakers use language alternation to propose, resist,  
14 and alter categories. Furthermore, the bilingual data provides an opportunity to  
15 examine the construction of intercultural difference through the social categories  
16 'Hindu' and 'Christian,' categories that emerge through the participants' talk.  
17 I show how this intercultural membership categorization becomes a resource  
18 for conversational activities and how it is used to manage additional categories  
19 that emerge in the ensuing talk. The identity-in-practice of 'religious affiliation'  
20 was not chosen as an interest prior to examining the talk; instead, in the spirit  
21 of ethnomethodology, it became a topic to explore because it emerged from the  
22 participants' conversation as a significant category that organized their social  
23 actions and their language choices.

24 In the Swahili-English conversation below, the participants demarcate specific  
25 religious memberships for themselves and for one another through their discussion  
26 of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. The negotiation of their memberships involves  
27 proposing, avowing, disavowing, displaying, accepting, and rejecting particular  
28 memberships. The actions involving language alternation are those in which one  
29 of the participants, Braj (a pseudonym), contests and tries to repair the religious  
30 memberships being offered to him. This tension in negotiating memberships points  
31 to a lack of culturally shared knowledge, despite the participants' shared nationality,  
32 and hence, can be considered data in which *interculturality* (Day, 1994; Mori, 2003;  
33 Nishizaka, 1995, 1999; Sarangi, 1994) is constructed through talk. Interculturality  
34 is not a static category in interaction, however, and in the ensuing talk, the other  
35 participant, Irene (also a pseudonym), tries to establish a mutual identity with Braj.  
36 In a series of sequences, she categorizes herself as 'someone who helps children  
37 not of one's own kind,' and she offers Braj comembership in this category through  
38 a request for financial assistance regarding a child she is taking care of. Braj  
39 rejects this membership, however, and he contests Irene's categorizations through  
40 a variety of conversational structures, including language alternation.

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**01 Interculturality due to religious affiliation**

02

03 Like the social constructs of gender, ethnicity, and social class, religious affiliation  
04 can be seen as a *transportable identity* (Zimmerman, 1998) that "travel[s] with  
05 individuals across situations and [is] potentially relevant in and for any situation  
06 and in and for any spate of interaction" (pp. 90–91). While religious affiliation may  
07 be a cultural or even physical indicator of identity (e.g., through clothing, hairstyles,  
08 and gestures), this categorization should be examined as an identity-in-practice  
09 (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998) that may emerge in microlevel discourses rather  
10 than one that is relevant for people at all times. The examination of categories  
11 such as 'religious affiliation' as identities-in-practice allows for the possibility that  
12 "a participant may be aware of the fact that a co-interactant is classifiable as a  
13 young person or male without orienting to those identities as being relevant to the  
14 instant interaction" (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 91).

15 As the data demonstrate, one possible outcome of talk involving religious  
16 affiliations is the production of cultural difference among speakers, or the enactment  
17 of interculturality along religious lines. Sarangi (1994), Nishizaka (1995, 1999), and  
18 Mori (2003) used interculturality to mean cultural affiliations that produce cultural  
19 differences that are made relevant through conversation. As Nishizaka proposed,  
20 we should not take different cultures for granted when analyzing talk, but rather,  
21 explicate "how it is that the fact of being intercultural is organized as a social  
22 phenomenon" (p. 302). Nishizaka's (1995) research examined the ways that 'being  
23 a Japanese' is achieved interactively in the same way that 'being a foreigner' is  
24 achieved through talk. Nishizaka explained, "For instance, that I am a Japanese  
25 is correct, but the category 'Japanese' is not always relevantly applicable to me;  
26 whether I am Japanese or not might be irrelevant when I talk to students about  
27 Structural-Functionalism in a sociology class" (p. 305). Mori continued this line of  
28 research, examining question-answer sequences for the ways that interculturality  
29 organizes participation frameworks. She focused on the description of  
30 interculturality by examining moment-by-moment shifts of participation structures  
31 for the next-speaker selection, and she showed that interculturality was treated  
32 as altogether irrelevant for some interactions. The present study contributes to  
33 this line of research by investigating the membership categories displayed and  
34 made relevant by participants regarding cultural difference and cultural similarity.  
35 Moreover, the data presented demonstrate how (inter)cultural identities are  
36 contingent on the categories constituted in talk, and hence, can easily shift from  
37 one moment to the next.

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01 **Being ascribed and resisting interculturality**

02

03 Studies of talk-in-interaction have shown that categories such as gender and  
04 ethnicity are made relevant among speakers by way of explicit category naming  
05 and through *category bound activities* (CBAs; Sacks, 1966, 1979). However,  
06 the naming of these categories alone does not make them 'real' or identifiable  
07 as the cause of how someone is acting or speaking. For example, a person  
08 may be categorized as 'White' or 'African-American' by another speaker, but the  
09 person categorized that way may react against such membership as irrelevant  
10 for the context of the conversation. Moreover, the person may react against  
11 the categorization altogether because these categories and who they apply to  
12 are contestable as well. For example, in his study of talk-in-interaction among  
13 ethnic minorities in Swedish factories, Day (1994, 1998) showed how 'ethnic  
14 group' categorizations were sometimes contested by the participants. He  
15 sought to determine ethnicity not as a category pre-existing the conversational  
16 interactions he encountered, but rather, to look for "ethnification processes...  
17 through which people distinguish an individual or collection of individuals as  
18 a member of members respectively of an ethnic group" (p. 154). He gave the  
19 example in Excerpt 1 as an illustration, which is translated from Swedish. In the  
20 excerpt, three speakers who work together at a factory in Sweden are planning  
21 a party to which they will invite all of their coworkers, and they are discussing  
22 what kind of food to prepare.

23

24 **Excerpt 1 (Day 1998, p.162)**

25 51 Lars: don't we have something that, one can eat

26 52 that, China or

27 53 Rita: Chinese food is really pretty good

28 54 Xi: ha ha ( ) it doesn't matter, I'll eat anything

29 55 Rita: ah (that's (what I that)

30

31 Lars has suggested Chinese food for the party in line 51, and Rita upgrades  
32 the suggestion, stating her positive opinion of Chinese cuisine. Xi takes the next  
33 turn by laughing, and then offers an ambivalent attitude toward the choice of  
34 Chinese food for the party. In his analysis of the talk, Day explained that Lars'  
35 suggestion and Rita's confirmation project the next turn as belonging to Xi.  
36 The turn is projected to take the shape of either an acceptance or refusal. Day  
37 explained that their talk thus far makes relevant Xi's ethnicity as Chinese, and  
38 he argued that Xi's response as the next speaker confirms this idea. According  
39 to Day, Xi's response in line 54 indicates that she heard the suggestion as  
40 particularly relevant for her, as someone who would be knowledgeable about  
41 Chinese food, thereby producing her identity as 'Chinese' by virtue of the CBA  
42 associated with the ethnic category 'Chinese,' namely, 'eating Chinese food.'  
43 Day explained that her response would not make sense without this inference,

01 and he suggested that Xi's denial of the relevance of the ethnic category via the  
02 CBA of eating Chinese food resists the relevance of the ethnic categorization  
03 produced by the coparticipants. Xi's response in line 54 can be seen as her intent  
04 to be viewed as a member of the social group jointly pursuing the social activity at  
05 hand, rather than to suffer the fate of 'exteriorization.' The marking of her ethnicity  
06 would prevent her from fully participating as an equal member in the group, so her  
07 aversion to being marked as culturally specific here shows her resistance to the  
08 implication that she is "not due the trust one needs to be a member of the social  
09 group constituted in the social activity" (Day, 1998, p. 168).

10 The actions among the Swedish factory workers provide a basis for  
11 comparison with the bilingual data I present in the ways that speakers go about  
12 displaying their acceptance or rejection of categories that mark them as culturally  
13 similar to or different from one another. This excerpt also offers an indication  
14 of where language alternation might emerge in disaffiliative actions, including  
15 rejections or downgradings of categorizations. In Excerpt 1, the rejection of the  
16 relevance of Xi's ethnicity is preceded by a laughter token, a means by which  
17 *dispreference* (Pomerantz, 1984) can be marked in the way that it delays her  
18 rejection. The laughter is similar to the use of pauses and token words such as  
19 *well* in monolingual talk before other dispreferred actions such as disagreement,  
20 as in line 02 of Excerpt 2:

21

22 **Excerpt 2** (Sacks 1987, p.58)

23 1 A: You coming down early?

24 2 B: Well, I got a lot of things to do before  
25 3 getting cleared up tomorrow I w- probably  
26 4 won't be too early.

27

28 Whereas laughter or delay tactics can mark dispreference in monolingual talk,  
29 multiple studies have demonstrated that code contrasts often mark dispreferred  
30 turns in bilingual talk (Auer, 1984, 1998, 1999; Cashman, 2001; Li Wei, 1994, 1995;  
31 Shin & Milroy, 2000). Actions that have been found to co-occur with codeswitching  
32 and that mark dispreference include refusals, disagreements with assessments,  
33 and disaffiliations with questions structured for yes-answers. In monolingual data,  
34 these actions are normally accompanied by hedges, pauses, delays, and other  
35 markers of dispreference. In bilingual talk, codeswitching may be the only marker,  
36 though it may also co-occur with the same features found in monolingual talk. In  
37 Excerpt 3, we see how refusals may co-occur with language alternation when a  
38 mother (A) offers her child (B) some fried rice.

39

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01 **Excerpt 3, codeswitching in refusals (Li Wei, 1995, p.204–205)**

02 1 A: oy-m-oy faan Ah Ying a?  
03       *Want some rice?*

04 2 B: ((no response))  
05

06 3 A: chaaufaan a. Oy-m-oy?  
07       *Fried rice. Want or not?*

08 4 B: (2.0) I'll have some shrimps.  
09

10 5 A: mut-ye? (.) Chaaufaan a.  
11       *What? Fried rice.*

12

13       The child's refusal coincides with a 2-s pause and a codeswitch, thus  
14 contextualizing it as dispreferred. Li Wei (1995) explained that the child's use of  
15 language alternation combined with a lengthy pause helps to produce an extra  
16 degree of mitigation in the refusal of food and hence can be seen as a case of  
17 dispreference through codeswitching.

18       In a similar fashion, the Swahili-English data below provide illustrations of  
19 how two participants manage dispreferred turns involving disagreement and  
20 downgradings of proposed membership categorizations. Whereas laughter and  
21 lexical markers of dispreference are used in monolingual conversation, the Swahili-  
22 English data show that language alternation may be viewed as another resource by  
23 which speakers display dispreferred actions, including challenges to membership  
24 categorizations. In addition to the conversational structure of language alternation,  
25 the participants in the data below also use categorial pronouns and categorial  
26 vocabulary to establish disaffiliation with each other.

27

28

29 **Pretopical talk and topical talk**

30

31 When conversational participants who do not share a great deal of familiarity with  
32 one another, such as Irene and Braj, begin an interaction, they often engage in talk  
33 that contains many occasions for membership categorization devices (MCDs) to  
34 be offered, taken up, or rejected. Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) described such  
35 talk as *pretopical talk*, that is, sequences that involve categorization and category-  
36 activity question-answer pairs that may generate more elaborated talk. Their  
37 study of university students found that unacquainted pairs began conversations  
38 by asking about one another's year in school, academic major, home residence,  
39 and local residence. Once such knowledge was established, more elaborated talk  
40 sometimes followed. Excerpts 4 and 5 illustrate pretopical talk wherein Maynard  
41 and Zimmerman's participants are discovering and displaying their category  
42 memberships to one another. By asking questions, the participants categorize

01 their coparticipants according to those social categories explicitly mentioned and  
02 at the same time, display the relevance of the more general category 'student'  
03 within which the other categories mentioned are subsumed.

04

05 **Excerpt 4**, pre-topical talk: Year in school (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984, p.305)

06 B1: Are you a freshman

07 B2: No, second year.

08 B1: Oh.

09

10 Maynard and Zimmerman reported that unacquainted pairs also asked each  
11 other about matters such as courses they were currently taking, as in Excerpt 5.  
12 Such actions indirectly group participants with MCDs by virtue of association with  
13 the categories; for students, CBAs might include going to classes regularly, taking  
14 tests, and having a major, as in Excerpt 6.

15

16 **Excerpt 5**, taking classes (1984, p.306)

17 A: What are you taking anyway?

18 B: Well, sociology, anthropology, and art history.

19

20

21 **Excerpt 6**, taking classes (1984, p.306)

22 A: Are you a soc major?

23 B: Um, I'm thinking of it. What're you?

24 A: Uh, marine geology is my major.

25

26 Through these question-answer sequences, Maynard and Zimmerman  
27 demonstrated how unacquainted parties establish knowledge of each other's  
28 biography and "test each other for just how close or distant their particular  
29 relationship will be" (p. 314). These categorization sequences often lead  
30 unacquainted dyads into more "personal" autobiographical talk, or what Maynard  
31 and Zimmerman term *topical talk*: talk that is generated from the biographical  
32 information and knowledge that was achieved in the pretopical sequences, as  
33 shown in Excerpt 7.

34

35 **Excerpt 7**, topical talk ensuing from pre-topical talk (1984, p.308)

36 B2: Where'd you come from.

37 B1: Sacramento.

38 B2: Oh Yeah? I'm from Concord. It's up north too.

39 B1: Yeah it's a little bit close.

39 B2: Yeah and I went home this weekend . . . ((story))

40

41 Maynard and Zimmerman found that unacquainted participants searched  
42 for opportunities to establish "common territories of self" that would enable them

01 to develop more 'personal' autobiographical talk (p. 314). In the Swahili-English  
02 data below, I show how the participants make relevant the category 'religion,' a  
03 category that is also interdependent with ethnicity for some religions in Tanzania,  
04 namely, Hinduism. I show how Braj and Irene use this category to engage in  
05 pretopical and topical talk, thereby demarcating categories that produce their  
06 different memberships in the category 'religious affiliation.' Their interaction  
07 involves many instances of membership categorization, and both participants use  
08 language alternation as a resource for downgrading, challenging, and rejecting  
09 certain categorizations.

10 One important difference between my study and Maynard and Zimmerman's  
11 study is that all of their participants were Anglo speakers of American English who  
12 did not know each other prior to the conversation. In contrast, in the present data  
13 set, the participants are multilingual coworkers who are marginally acquainted,  
14 and who, on the face of it, can be said to represent different races and genders,  
15 that is, a Black woman and an Indian man. Both are Tanzanian nationals who were  
16 born and raised in Tanzania. Both speak English and Swahili, and both speak  
17 at least one other language. Irene speaks Chagga, a Bantu language spoken  
18 in Northern Tanzania, and Braj speaks Gujarati, an Indic language with a wide  
19 diaspora of speakers all over the globe. While it is tempting to draw connections to  
20 social identities and a *priori* knowledge of the participants (such as the categories  
21 'Indian' or 'Black,' 'Hindu' or 'Christian,' 'male' or 'female'), I reiterate that these  
22 categories are not necessarily relevant to the participants because of their apparent  
23 or historic qualities; instead, I am concerned with how the participants make the  
24 relevance of these social identities visible through talk. I am also concerned with  
25 how these identities further impact the development of talk or how they might be  
26 procedurally consequential to ensuing turns of talk, particularly in reference to  
27 language alternation. As the data show, these categories are treated as the basis  
28 for cultural difference among the speakers at one point in the conversation, and at  
29 a later point, one of the participants treats cultural difference as the basis for mutual  
30 understanding. The data therefore show how cultural sameness and difference  
31 are highly dynamic because they are contingent on the categories that emerge  
32 in and through face-to-face talk; moreover, the interactional data show how the  
33 categorization of cultural sameness and difference depends on the participants'  
34 responses to the categorizations.

35

36

### 37 **Data analysis**

38

39 At the beginning of the conversation, the two participants are discussing Braj's  
40 religion. It becomes clear that Braj and Irene claim different memberships in  
41 this category, and Irene's efforts to display her understanding of Braj's religion  
42 are largely contested and eventually repaired by Braj. This talk results in the



01 participants' *interculturality* despite their shared nationality. In spite of their cultural  
 02 differences, Irene makes relevant specific identities-in-practice in talk to organize  
 03 her interaction with Braj in ways that will allow her to follow the ritual of generating  
 04 *topical talk*, that is, talk that allows her to affiliate with him. Braj resists engaging  
 05 in topical talk with Irene,<sup>1</sup> so the talk has the feel of an interview in Excerpts 8–10.  
 06 At the beginning of Excerpt 11, Irene asks Braj about his activities with charitable  
 07 organizations, and this new topic leads to topical talk in which Irene makes a  
 08 request of Braj. In this topical talk, she claims a shared identity-in-practice for  
 09 Braj and herself, an identity that involves helping others outside of one's ethnic  
 10 group. Braj resists this categorization, however, and he displays his disalignment  
 11 through contrasting language, pronominal, and vocabulary choices. By producing  
 12 conversational structures that contrast with Irene's talk, Braj resists the shared  
 13 identity proposed for him, and in his responses, he produces an identity that  
 14 indexes activities associated with a business exchange, rather than charitable or  
 15 philanthropic activity.

16

#### 17 **Establishing common ground through pretopical talk**

18 In Excerpts 8–10, the nominations of topics explicitly naming 'Indian things' make  
 19 visible the participants' orientation to the interculturality of the interaction in a  
 20 very direct manner through *labeling* (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998), the practice  
 21 of producing explicit membership categorizations that are locally occasioned  
 22 in talk. These turns appear to be treated as part of the ritual of unacquainted  
 23 participants getting to know one another. By asking questions concerning Braj's  
 24 experience with, knowledge of, or perspective towards his own culture, we see that  
 25 Irene is attempting to discover shared experience, or knowledge, across cultural  
 26 boundaries to prompt her coparticipant to extend topical talk.

27 In Excerpt 8, the participants are displaying their relatively unacquainted  
 28 status to one another through their short question-answer sequences, routines  
 29 that provide further support for Maynard and Zimmerman's (1984) conclusions that  
 30 unacquainted pairs tend to rely on categorization sequences and categorization  
 31 activity sequences to establish pretopical talk before any topical talk can develop  
 32 (see the Appendix for abbreviations used in the transcript).

33

#### 34 **Excerpt 8**

35 01 I: nanii (.) wewe ni: ni Hind:u.

36 uh you are are Hindu

37 uh are you Hindu

38 02 B: m-mh (.) Baniani.

39 m-mh Baniani

40 no I'm Baniani

41

42

draft: 26/09/08 1:37PM

120 Christina Higgins

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01 03 I: eeh?  
02        *what*  
03        *what*  
04 04 B: Baniani.  
05 05 I: Baniani.  
06 06 B: eeh Hindu yes.  
07        *right Hindu yes*  
08        *right Hindu yes*  
09  
10 07 I: Baniani (.) is it different from Hindu.  
11 08 B: Yeah tu-na-tofautia-na kwa (kabila) mbalimbali  
12        *yes we-prs-differ-rcp by tribe various*  
13        *yes we differ from one another by various tribes*  
14 09        kwa mfano        Wa-sukuma,  
15        *for example pl-Sukuma*  
16        *for example the Sukuma people ((a Bantu ethnic*  
17        *group of Tanzania))*  
18 10 I: eeh.  
19        *yes/oh*  
20        *yes/oh*  
21 11 B: wa-hehe,  
22        *pl-Hehe*  
23        *((or)) the Hehe people ((a Bantu ethnic group*  
24        *of Tanzania))*  
25 12 I: °Baniani.° Eeh u-na- you worship kwenye  
26        *Baniani um you-prs you worship at*  
27        *Baniani um do you you worship at this um*  
28 13        hii nanii (.) >Jamatini        pale<  
29        *this um        Ismailia-mosque here*  
30        *Ismailia mosque over here*  
31 14 B: Jamatini        ipi?  
32        *Ismailia-mosque which*  
33        *which Ismailia mosque*  
34 15 I: Jamatini        ya hapo Upanga.  
35        *Ismailia-mosque of there Upanga*  
36        *the Ismailia mosque in Upanga*  
37 16 B: uh: Upanga road pale?  
38        *uh Upanga road here*  
39        *uh, on Upanga Road over here*  
40  
41  
42

- 01 17 I: hii hii ya hapa karibu na nanii,  
 02       *this this of here near by um*  
 03       *this one nearby near the um*
- 04 18 B: na,  
 05       *by*  
 06       *by*
- 07 19 I: na Aga Khani xx hospital.  
 08       *by Aga Khan hospital*  
 09       *by the Aga Khan Hospital*
- 10 20 (0.5)
- 11 21 [au:,  
 12       *or*  
 13       *or*  
 14

15 In line 01, Irene proposes the categorization of Hindu for Braj, and her question  
 16 (marked through its rising then falling intonation) is built for a positive response.  
 17 The choice of her question can be viewed as 'setting talk' (like talk about the  
 18 weather), wherein participants who are engaged in getting a conversation going  
 19 talk about obvious or visible topics to get to more topical and personal talk. In this  
 20 case, talk about one's religious/ethnic identity is treated as an appropriate initiating  
 21 move by Irene, and this may point to the salience of these categories as highly  
 22 visible ones in multiethnic, multicultural Dar es Salaam. In line 02, Braj rejects her  
 23 categorization and repairs it, narrowing the category to Baniani, which historically  
 24 in Hindi means 'trader/merchant' and is a word that has normally been associated  
 25 with people from the Gujarat region in India. In the Tanzanian context, however,  
 26 the word has come to refer to a Hindu sect local to the Dar es Salaam area.

27 After a confirmation request initiated by Irene, Braj unexpectedly accepts the  
 28 category 'Hindu' that Irene has proposed in line 06, which can be seen as an  
 29 effective way of avoiding elaboration on the repair he offered in line 02. Maynard  
 30 and Zimmerman (1984) reported that during pretopical talk, speakers may produce  
 31 minimal responses to avoid participating in more topical talk, and Braj's affirmative  
 32 answer here may be a strategy to avoid any continued talk on the subject of his  
 33 religion. However, because Braj has produced an *identity-rich puzzle* (Maynard  
 34 & Zimmerman, 1984) for Irene at this point (by answering first "no" then "yes"),  
 35 she inquires more about it in line 07, prompting Braj to elaborate about the  
 36 difference between Baniani and Hindu in lines 08–09. His ensuing clarification  
 37 uses references to categories that are non-Indian, as the Sukuma and Hehe are  
 38 Black ethnic groups in Tanzania belonging to the wider category of Bantu, which  
 39 Irene is sure to know. Through drawing on categories and sets of knowledge  
 40 that are Bantu in nature, rather than Indian, Braj effectively maintains a cultural  
 41 boundary between himself and Irene. Moreover, instead of responding directly to  
 42 Irene's English-medium question by explaining about the sects of Hinduism in the

01 same code, he offers a brief affirmative answer in English [yeah] in line 08 and  
02 then returns to Swahili as he refocuses the topic to Bantu cultures rather than  
03 Indian religions.

04 Braj's clarification in line 08 allows him to evade biographical information that  
05 might yield a more intimate conversation, and hence, the pretopical talk continues.  
06 Irene asks about the CBAs she associates with being Baniani or Hindu, such as  
07 where the members of these groups worship, in lines 12–13. Irene's language  
08 alternation in line 12 from *eeh una-* ["and you-prs-"] to *you worship kwenye hii*  
09 *nanii Jamatani* ["you worship at this um Ismailia mosque"] can be understood as a  
10 self-initiated self-repair. Here, Irene alters the Swahili utterance underway, having  
11 at least the choices of *unasali* ["you pray/you recite prayers"], *unaabudu* ["you  
12 worship God"], or possibly even *unahusudu* ["you revere/adore"]. She chooses  
13 the English *you worship* instead. Irene's use of *you worship* is placed within the  
14 context of pretopical talk, and it is arguable that the use of English here marks her  
15 assumption as more neutral than using the expression *unaabudu* (often used for  
16 Christian and Muslim practices), or *unasali* (often, though not exclusively, used  
17 with Muslim practices of reciting prayers). Based on the talk that follows, she  
18 clearly has little understanding of what it means to be Baniani, and therefore,  
19 the choice of the English word here can be seen as a strategy to avoid making  
20 a mistake within her pretopical moves that appear to be designed to get Braj to  
21 elaborate more fully.

22 The effect of Irene's clarification request regarding the Hindu/Baniani  
23 distinction, together with her knowledge of the religious practices of Baniani,  
24 based on physical buildings such as the *jamatini* ["temple"], categorize her as  
25 someone who is a nonknower, a novice, a nonmember. In other words, she is an  
26 'outsider' because she only has knowledge of the features of the Baniani people  
27 that outsiders have access to, such as the buildings they use for worship. Moreover,  
28 Braj's treatment of her questions reinforces these categories, as his initial attempt  
29 to accept her misunderstanding of his religion, together with his framing of the  
30 variation in India within the indigenous Bantu ethnic group system of Tanzania,  
31 positions her as someone who does not understand the Baniani people. In this  
32 excerpt, clear boundaries are drawn between the two participants, and they are  
33 associated with the interdependent categories of religion and ethnicity.

34 Excerpt 9 continues this theme a few moments later in the same conversation  
35 when Braj offers to escort Irene to the building he worships at, which can be  
36 read as an offer by a member to acquaint a nonmember with a new or unfamiliar  
37 community. Irene then engages him in a set of questions about his religious beliefs,  
38 a move that appears to go beyond pretopical talk.

39  
40  
41  
42

01 **Excerpt 9**

02 37 B: ni-ta-ku- [sindikiza.  
 03 *I-will-you-escort*  
 04 *I will take you there.*

05 38 I: [whom do you believe in (.) Mohammed?  
 06

07 39 B: ni Wa-islamu.  
 08 *is pl-muslim*  
 09 *that's the Muslims*

10 40 I: nyie? Nyie m-na-believe in what.  
 11 *you.pl you.pl you.pl-prs-believe in what*  
 12 *and you all what do you all believe in*

13 41 B: tu-na-believe na mungu wetu.  
 14 *we-prs-believe in god our*  
 15 *we believe in our god.*

16 42 I: mungu wa- wa: Baniani.  
 17 *god of of Baniani*  
 18 *the Baniani god*

19 43 B: Yes.

20

21 44 I: ni nani huyu?  
 22 *is who this one*  
 23 *who is this god*

24 45 B: ku-na wa mbalimbali.  
 25 *there-are of different kinds*  
 26 *there are different kinds*

27 46 I: mi-ungu.  
 28 *pl-god*  
 29 *gods*

30 47 B: yeah. (2.0) ku-na [m-,  
 31 *yes there-are m-*  
 32 *yes there are m-*

33 48 I: [kama sisi Christians tuna  
 34 *like we Christians we-have*  
 35 *like we Christians, we have*

36 49 Jesus Christ ku-na Mohamed for Muslims,=  
 37 *Jesus Christ there-is Mohamed for Muslims*  
 38 *Jesus Christ, there is Mohamed for Muslims*

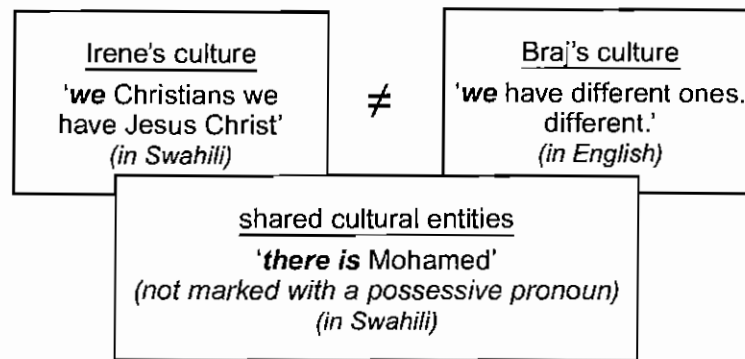
39 50 B: =yeah we have different ones. different  
 40  
 41  
 42

01 *Si I: kwa hiyo you don't have one god you believe in.*  
02 *for that you don't have one god you believe in*  
03 *so you don't have one god you believe in*

04 In line 38, Irene asks Braj whom he believes in, and she offers a candidate  
05 answer, Mohamed. Braj rejects her answer, grouping himself outside the label  
06 'Muslim,' and the rejection aligns with a switch into Swahili. This question-answer  
07 pair displays a lack of cooperation or disalignment in several ways. First, Irene's  
08 question has been built for a positive response because its construction as a yes-  
09 no question seeks confirmation for Mohamed as the entity that the Baniani believe  
10 in. However, Braj's response does not confirm this categorization. Moreover,  
11 her question asks him to speak as "you," and his answer uses the ambiguously  
12 marked copula verb *ni* ["is"], which can take any subject in Swahili. Additionally,  
13 a disjunction with language choice coincides with the rejection of the CBA of  
14 believing in Mohamed. At this point, the conversation is not building toward topical  
15 talk because the turns comprise a sequence of categorizations in which Braj and  
16 Irene continue to "test each other for just how close or distant their particular  
17 relationship will be" (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984, p. 314).

18 In line 40, Irene asks Braj to speak for his group, and she specifies the  
19 second-person plural pronoun, *nyie* ["you all"]; the rest of her question is in hybrid  
20 Swahili-English in the form of *mnabelieve in what*. Braj accepts this membership  
21 categorization, and his code choice is similarly hybrid when he answers *tunabelieve*  
22 *na mungu wetu* ["we believe in our god"]. His response aligns with the language  
23 choice of her question. However, his reference to *mungu wetu* ["our god"] uses  
24 the noninclusive first-person plural possessive pronoun, which has the effect of  
25 maintaining Irene's outsider knowledge about the Baniani because it fails to impart  
26 new information about the religious entity the Baniani believe in. As has been clear  
27 throughout the talk, Irene does not understand the religious beliefs of the Baniani,  
28 so in line 42, she initiates repair, rephrasing Braj's previous utterance as *mungu wa-*  
29 *wa Baniani*. This turn does not indicate that she has learned anything, but instead,  
30 marks her lack of knowledge. Moreover, through her expression, *mungu wa-*  
31 *Baniani*, she replaces Braj's *mungu wetu* ["our god"] with *mungu wa Baniani*, a  
32 move that shows her own alignment as an outsider of this category. Notably, the  
33 language choice is the same throughout these turns. Several questions follow,  
34 all attempts to better understand the Baniani religion, and then in lines 48–49,  
35 Irene asks for further clarification. Her question is structured so that it creates  
36 membership for herself as a Christian and opposition through pronominal usage  
37 between Christians and Muslims. She says, *sisi Christians tuna Jesus Christ*  
38 ["we Christians we have Jesus Christ"], followed by the existential construction  
39 *kuna Mohamed for Muslims* ["there is Mohamed for Muslims"]. Her use of "we  
40 Christians" marks the religious difference between herself and the Muslims as  
41 well as the difference between herself and Braj; the existential usage of "there is  
42 Mohamed for Muslims" also categorizes both herself and Braj as non-Muslims.

01 In the same way that Hinduism and Baniani beliefs do not conform to  
 02 monotheism, Braj's line 50 does not follow the structural pattern that Irene has set  
 03 up for him. In producing "we Christians, we have Jesus Christ, there is Mohamed for  
 04 Muslims," Irene's nonfinal intonation leaves the final slot open with an expectation  
 05 for a statement such as "and we Baniani have X," or "and there is X for the Baniani  
 06 people." Instead, Braj produces *we have different ones. (.) different*, thus marking  
 07 the interculturality in four ways: (a) language alternation, (b) the use of *we* to mark  
 08 off the Baniani as different from the Christians and the Muslims, (c) the use of the  
 09 word *different*, uttered two times, and (d) a different syntactic structure. At this  
 10 point, interculturality via religious categories seems to have become a block to  
 11 shared experience and has therefore precluded topical talk. This interculturality is  
 12 displayed through the conflicting conversational structures portrayed in Figure 1.



26 **Figure 1.** Conversational structures reflecting interculturality.

27  
 28 At this point in the talk, all that has been accomplished is a great deal of  
 29 categorizing one another as different. In Excerpt 10, pretopical talk continues.  
 30 Irene's outsider status is reflected in her questions to Braj about his eating practices  
 31 during fasting periods.

32  
 33 **Excerpt 10**

34 83 B: yaa different kind of fasting (.)  
 35 84 throughout the year.  
 36 85 I: mhm. (.) you eat meat.  
 37 86 B: some of them (.) they eat meat.  
 38 87 I: eeh.  
 38 88 B: >they don't eat meat.< [what they eat is  
 39 chicken fish,  
 40 89 I: [yaani,  
 41 in other words  
 42 in other words

01 90 B: we can eat meat but we eat chi- mostly  
02 91 chicken fish,  
03 92 I: mhm.  
04 93 B: we don't eat the red meat.  
05 94 I: mhm.  
06 95 B: we don't eat the red meat.  
07 96 I: you don't eat red meat.  
08 97 B: yaa.  
09 98 I: mhm.  
10 99 B: yaa.

11

12 Excerpt 10 contains sequences of pretopical talk searching for shared  
13 experience, with a focus on food rituals observed for religious reasons. Of  
14 significance to the investigation of interculturality are lines 85–86, where Braj  
15 reformulates Irene's pronoun choice of "you" in "you eat meat" in line 85 as "some  
16 of them" and "they" in line 86, when he explains that only certain Indian populations  
17 in Dar es Salaam eat meat. Interestingly, although these turns involve Braj's  
18 contestation and repair of Irene's categorial assumptions regarding the Baniani  
19 and Hindu populations, Braj does not alternate languages. A possible explanation  
20 for this is that, compared to his previous responses to Irene's categorizations,  
21 his lines 86, 88, and 90 are a 'softer' rejection and repair of Irene's monolithic  
22 grouping of all Baniani or Hindu as meat eaters. The softening may be seen as an  
23 attempt to downplay the interculturality between Irene and himself. In other words,  
24 through demonstrating the diversity among the Tanzanian Indian population, all  
25 forms of interculturality may become less identifiable and hence, less significant.  
26 Irene's use of *yaani* ["in other words"] in line 89 is an instance of other-initiated  
27 repair, and her use of Swahili to carry out this repair can be understood as a  
28 means by which bilinguals may handle the dispreferred act of other-initiated repair.  
29 In comparison with self-initiated repair sequences, other-initiated repairs typically  
30 co-occur with dispreference markers in monolingual conversations (Schegloff,  
31 2000), so language alternation occurring here is not surprising.

32

### 33 **Claiming and resisting a shared membership**

34 After a lengthy pause following line 99, Irene switches topics and continues to  
35 pursue another line of pretopical talk in Excerpt 11. Irene asks about Braj's work  
36 with UNICEF, a question that might be characterized as an educated guess about  
37 his activities. Braj's status as someone who works with children is well known in the  
38 office because his job at the newspaper is to write the "Children's Corner" for the  
39 Sunday edition. Based on my observations of his activities at the office, he often  
40 engages in conversations about events that aim at helping children with anyone  
41 who is willing to listen. Irene's question about UNICEF may also be influenced  
42 by the fact that many Indian Tanzanians are involved with philanthropic work that  
43 strives to assist needy children in East Africa. As it turns out, Braj does not actually  
44 work or volunteer his time for UNICEF, though he does volunteer for the Lions



01 Club, a similar charitable organization. Braj does not explicitly correct Irene on this  
02 matter, however.

03

04 **Excerpt 11**

05 ((18 second pause))

06 100 I: UNICEF u-na-fanya nanii: (.) u-na-jitolea.  
07 UNICEF you-prs-do um you-prs-volunteer  
08 at UNICEF do you uh do you volunteer

09 101 B: wapi?  
10 where  
11 where

12 102 I: UNICEF do they pay you.

13

14 103 B: no, na-jitolea.  
15 no I-prs-volunteer  
16 no I volunteer

17 104 I: u-na-jitolea? ((with high pitch))  
18 you-prs-volunteer  
19 you volunteer

20 105 B: mhm.

21 ((lines omitted; Braj explains how much time has passed  
22 since he volunteered))

23

24 110 I: kwenye ile project ya: nanii Children  
25 at that project of um Children  
26 you didn't go to that project um Children's

27 111 Movement hu-ku-kwenda.  
28 Movement you-neg.pst-go  
29 Movement project

30 112 B: ipi project.  
31 which project  
32 which project

33 ((lines omitted; Irene and Braj discuss the location  
34 of the event))

35 115 I: i-li-kuwa State House. (.) nanii wasela wa-  
36 it-pst-be state house um streetboys they  
37 it was at the State House um streetboys they

38 116 wa-ka-tengeneza skafu na caps  
39 -they-cns-make scarf and caps  
40 were making scarves and caps

41

42

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01 ((lines omitted; they clarify the date of the event))  
02 120 B: I was not around. (0.5) Ni-li-kuwa Nairobi  
03 I was not around I-pst-be Nairobi  
04 I was not around I was in Nairobi  
05 121 na-hudhuria mkutano  
06 I-attend meeting  
07 attending a meeting  
08 122 I: mkutano wa watu gani?  
09 meeting of people kind  
10 what kind of people were at the meeting  
11 123 B: wa Lions. (.) convention  
12 of Lions convention  
13 people meeting at the Lions convention  
14 124 I: a ah okey kumbe nyie ni lions.  
15 oh okay wow you.pl are lions  
16 oh okay you all are Lions, huh  
17 125 B: eeh.  
18 yes  
19 yes  
20 126 I: nije ku-omba nini msaada kwenu  
21 I-come-sbj to-beg what help from-you.pl  
22 if I should come to ask for your help  
23  
24 127 ni-ta-pewa.  
25 I-fut-give-psv  
26 would I get it  
27 128 B: msaada wa,  
28 help of  
29 what kind of help  
30 129 I: kama mtoto na-m-somesha shule.  
31 like child I-her-help-study school  
32 for example I am sending a child to school  
33 130 B: (0.3) ah okay. (.) you need uh school fees.  
34 131 I: mm.  
35  
36 132 B: bei gani.  
37 price type  
38 how much  
39 133 I: (1.0) si a-na-soma tu.: ni mtoto yaani (.)  
40 neg she-prs-study only is child that is  
41 she's just studying right she's a child, I mean  
42

01 134 ni-li-lete-wa housegirl. U-na-elewa?  
 02 I-pst-brought-psv housegirl you-prs-understand  
 I was brought a housegirl do you follow  
 03  
 04 135 B: eeh.  
 05 yes  
 yes  
 06  
 07 136 I: housegirl mwenyewe a-li-kuwa ni mdogo sana  
 housegirl herself she-pst-be is young very  
 the house girl she herself was very young so I  
 08  
 09  
 10 137 sasa mimi ni-ka-mw-ambia si-wezi ku-mu-ajiri,  
 now I I-cns-her-tell I.neg.-able to-her-hire  
 had to tell her that I couldn't hire her  
 11  
 12

13 Irene asks Braj about his work with UNICEF in an effort to establish topical talk  
 14 through a set of questions. Again, Braj does not use the opportunity to offer more  
 15 personal or intimate talk, such as a story about his experiences with volunteering,  
 16 or a clarification that he actually volunteers for the Lions Club; instead, he offers  
 17 minimal responses with no expansions. Braj's line 103 shares much with his line  
 18 06 in Excerpt 8, where he concedes to being Hindu rather than explaining about  
 19 the Baniani sect of Hinduism. Both responses maintain the pretopical talk by  
 20 evading elaboration.

21 In line 110, Irene pursues more pretopical talk by asking him about an event  
 22 that took place the weekend before that focused on helping needy children in  
 23 Dar es Salaam, and she asks him if he attended it. This question displays an  
 24 assumption that Braj regularly goes to events planned to help needy children. It  
 25 also displays her own practice of going to such events: she reports details about  
 26 the event such as where it was (the state house) and what was going on there  
 27 (people were selling scarves and caps). This assumption of shared experience  
 28 proposes a category for both participants as 'people who attend events meant to  
 29 help others in need.' It can also be seen as a move on Irene's part to pursue topical  
 30 talk by finding something in common to talk about. Interestingly, in responding in  
 31 the negative, Braj switches to English, a means by which the dispreferred act of a  
 32 disaffiliative response can be handled by bilinguals.

33 Braj's response in line 120 leads to a clarification regarding his activity with  
 34 the Lions Club, and this has the effect of categorizing him as a person who  
 35 helps people in need, especially needy children. Irene's change of state token in  
 36 line 124 seems to indicate that for her, a shared experience has been achieved  
 37 that confirms that both participants are involved in charitable organizations and  
 38 activities that help children. In terms of shared memberships, this confirmation  
 39 of shared experience effectively moves the pair from insider-outsider in regard to  
 40 the social category of 'religion' to that of insider-insider in terms of the category  
 41 'people who help those in need.' This mutual category membership is proposed  
 42 by Irene's references to CBAs such as attending meetings about children's rights

01 in Tanzania. The sequencing of the shared categorization followed by a request  
02 for help makes it appear that the mutual category membership has established a  
03 context in which such a request can be made. In line 126, Irene asks Braj for help  
04 to pay for the school fees of an orphaned child by saying, "if I should come to ask  
05 for your help, would I get it?"

06 In line 130, Braj offers his understanding of her request, and he displays  
07 understanding of her previous turn with his change-of-state token and reformulation  
08 in "ah okay. you need school fees." Braj's turn here shows disjunction with Irene's in  
09 several ways, similar to how line 50 displayed disjunction in Excerpt 9. He produces  
10 language alternation in relation to Irene's turn in line 129, and he reformulates  
11 the request for empathy and philanthropy into a more impersonal money-matter  
12 request that rejects the solidarity that Irene has been trying to build. In lines 126–  
13 127, Irene has framed her request as for *msaada* ["help"], which Braj restates as  
14 financial help when he says "you need uh school fees." This disjunction also marks  
15 a rejection of the shared interculturality that Irene had been establishing through  
16 talk. Instead of aligning with the 'people who help those in need' category, Braj  
17 produces CBAs associated with a businessperson involved in a barter. In line 132,  
18 he asks *Bei gani?* ["how much?"], a term used commonly in markets when buying  
19 produce, or when negotiating a taxi fare, and he does not produce any expressions  
20 of empathy or understanding in relation to helping the orphaned child.

21 In response to Braj's direct request for how much money she needs, Irene  
22 responds *si anasoma tu?* ["she's just studying"], a response delivered with a  
23 high pitch throughout, which is a way of speaking in Swahili often taken to mean  
24 something like 'don't you already know that?'<sup>2</sup> Through her response in line 133,  
25 Irene categorizes Braj as someone who knows how much things cost in Tanzania,  
26 as an 'insider' in these matters. In lines 133–134, Irene moves into an account for  
27 the financial request, explaining the history of the young girl whose school fees  
28 she is paying and for whom she is seeking assistance. She tells a hard-luck story  
29 about the girl, and she seeks Braj's shared cultural understanding of such stories  
30 through her question in line 134, *unaelewa* ["do you follow?"]. She also invokes  
31 the CBA for herself of 'not hiring a girl who is very young to do housework' (lines  
32 136–137), an activity that indexes the category of 'someone who helps children  
33 in need.'

34 Irene's story continues for 20 lines of talk (omitted here) in which she  
35 continues making the case for her request. As we see in Excerpt 12, she adds  
36 the CBA of 'helping an orphaned child' (lines 151–154) to her own membership in  
37 the category of 'someone who helps children in need.' Irene then moves into the  
38 arena of interculturality in lines 157–161, where she explains that she is helping a  
39 young orphaned girl in spite of the fact that the girl is 'not of ["her"] ethnic group'  
40 (line 159).

41

42

01 **Excerpt 12**

- 02 151 I: u-na-ona. (.) kama sasa hivi na-hitaji  
 03 you-prs-see like now right I-need  
 04 look like right now I need to pay for
- 05 152 uniform na-hitaji ma-daftari na-hitaji(.)  
 06 uniform I-need pl-notebook I-need  
 07 a uniform notebooks
- 08 153 nini nauli na school fees  
 09 what travel and school fees  
 10 and what else travel and school fees
- 11 154 >ni kama yaani< huyo mtoto ni kama  
 12 it.is like that.is this child is like  
 13 it's like this child I mean this child is like an
- 14 155 orphan sasa hivi  
 15 orphan now right  
 16 orphan right now
- 17 156 B: Aah okay.
- 19 157 I: yaa kwa hiyo a-li-kuwa a-na-kaa na  
 20 yes for this she-pst-be she-prs-live with  
 21 yes, and so she was living with
- 22 158 shangazi yake, both parents wa-me-kufa  
 23 aunt her both parents they-pfc-die  
 24 her aunt (since) both parents had died
- 25 159 na wala siyo kabila langu,  
 26 and though neg. ethnicity my  
 27 and even though she's not of my ethnic group
- 28 160 she is from Tabora kwa hiyo yaani  
 29 she is from Tabora- for that I-mean  
 30 as she is from Tabora, so that's why
- 31 161 a-na-kaa na kijiji-ni mama-ngu.  
 32 she-prs-live with village-loc mother-my  
 33 she is living in the village with my mother
- 34 162 B: now let me talk with my board, board of members.

37 Here, the reference to helping someone who is outside of one's own ethnic  
 38 group in line 159 intertextually relates to the category memberships that have  
 39 been built so far in the conversation. Through her CBAs that affiliate her with the  
 40 categorization 'someone who helps those in need,' she associates the practice of  
 41 helping those outside one's ethnic group as something charitable people do. This  
 42 identity work neatly ties back to the interculturality that was based on religious

01 difference that had been so clearly established earlier in the talk. In other words,  
02 through her categorization moves involving herself and Braj in lines 100–124 and  
03 159, she implicates Braj as 'someone who helps those in need who are not of  
04 one's own kind' and as someone who can offer an act of charity in spite of ethnic  
05 and/or cultural difference. In contrast to the previous talk (Excerpts 8–11), Irene  
06 uses interculturality in Excerpt 12 as a device to achieve mutual understanding.  
07 The use of interculturality here allows her to achieve a shared personal biography  
08 with Braj because her own relationship with the orphaned girl of a different ethnic  
09 background groups her with people like Braj, that is, people who help those in  
10 need, no matter what their background may be. By virtue of asking Braj to help  
11 those not of his ethnic group, Irene offers Braj membership in the category of  
12 people who help others, not because of a sense of duty based on kinship or ethnic  
13 ties, but based purely on humanitarianism and philanthropic, and even religious,  
14 ideals.

15 However, Braj resists this categorization. His response to the request comes  
16 in line 162, where he adheres to his pattern of using language alternation to mark a  
17 disjunction with the previous talk, and hence, he marks a disjunction with the CBAs  
18 and MCD that Irene has been attributing to him. His response is noncommittal,  
19 and it does not immediately fit into the CBAs that fit the category of helping those  
20 in need, being charitable to orphans, helping destitute children, placing an orphan  
21 with one's mother, and so on. Instead, his response orients to the practical aspect  
22 of the activity he can offer her, and he reframes the conversation into a more  
23 impersonal and business-like exchange, rather than one that shows that the  
24 two participants share the same worldview in regard to helping children. In line  
25 162, Braj delicately avoids becoming obligated by Irene's categorization of him  
26 as someone who should help the girl she is sending to school by indicating that  
27 the board will make the decision, by avoiding expressions of alignment with the  
28 category Irene has constructed, and through his language switch, which co-occurs  
29 with the disjunction in MCDs. While his offer to talk to the board of members is a  
30 sign of possible assistance to Irene, it is neither a rejection nor a personal financial  
31 commitment from Braj himself.

32

33

### 34 **Conclusion**

35

36 This paper has examined the ways that participants use bilingual conversation  
37 to produce and resist membership categorizations. I have argued that among  
38 bilinguals, resisting, downgrading, and rejecting categorizations are disaffiliative  
39 actions that may be understood as dispreferred acts. In a manner similar to the  
40 ways that bilinguals use codeswitching to manage dispreference in refusals and  
41 disagreements (Cashman, 2001; Li Wei, 1995; Shin & Milroy, 2000), the data in  
42 this chapter have shown that codeswitching appears to be a resource available

01 to bilinguals for managing the dispreferred action of challenging a membership  
02 categorization that has been proposed by others. Throughout the data, language  
03 alternation is used as a resource by both Braj and Irene to disaffiliate with proposed  
04 memberships and to manage other dispreferred actions, such as providing  
05 disaffiliative answers to questions structured for positive responses, initiating  
06 other-repairs, and responding in noncommittal ways to requests for assistance.

07 The data also reveal how interculturality can be both an obstacle and a  
08 resource for participants in their efforts to develop topical talk. In the first set  
09 of excerpts (8–10), intercultural difference based on religious categories was  
10 an obstacle because it created 'outsider' status for both participants and made  
11 topical talk difficult to achieve, given the lack of shared experience with religious  
12 practices. However, interculturality became a resource when Irene proposed the  
13 MCD of 'those who help others in need,' using the CBA of 'helping others not of  
14 one's own ethnicity,' which allowed her to pursue topical talk and make a request  
15 of Braj that involved financial assistance for a young girl she was taking care of. In  
16 spite of Irene's efforts to bridge the intercultural boundaries, however, Braj skillfully  
17 downgraded, resisted, and even rejected these categorizations through a variety  
18 of methods, including language alternation. Braj's responses to Irene's proposed  
19 categorizations show how language alternation was a highly effective means for  
20 resisting categorizations and redirecting potentially 'unwelcome' topical talk while  
21 skillfully managing preference organization at the same time.

22 While past studies of Swahili-English alternation in East Africa have argued  
23 that switches to English systematically index social distancing (e.g., Myers-Scotton,  
24 1993), the data in this chapter do not support this claim. In fact, the data show that  
25 language switches for Irene and Braj are bidirectional. As we saw in Excerpts  
26 8–10, Braj used language alternation to disaffiliate with Irene in both directions,  
27 that is, moving from Swahili to English and from English to Swahili. In Excerpts 11–  
28 12, Braj used English in response to Irene's Swahili-medium talk. Though it might  
29 be tempting to interpret Braj's use of English here as indexical of a 'business-like  
30 exchange,' through use of the 'they code' (Gumperz, 1982), this conclusion cannot  
31 be drawn because Irene's turns in Excerpts 11–12 were all in Swahili. Instead, Braj's  
32 use of English can be seen as a marker of disaffiliation and dispreference. Of  
33 course, additional data of conversations between Braj and Irene containing similar  
34 requests carried out in English would be needed to determine whether rejections  
35 were more or less likely to be done through language alternation. Finally, note that  
36 these data cannot predict how other Tanzanian bilinguals use language alternation  
37 to affiliate or disaffiliate with one another's membership categorizations. Further  
38 comparative work on additional speakers in Dar es Salaam and among other  
39 bilingual populations is needed to illuminate our understanding of how they use  
40 their 'extra' conversational structure of language alternation to propose, accept,  
41 and contest identities-in-practice.

42

01 **Notes**

- 02 1 The history of political, economic, and social tension between the Indian population  
03 and the Black Tanzanian population may be affecting the conversational dynamics,  
04 but such information is not normally considered relevant in analyses of membership  
05 categorizations. Interviews that I carried out with Irene and other Black Tanzanians  
06 show a common belief that Indian Tanzanians will not freely share information about  
07 themselves. From another view, however, Braj's reluctance to elaborate can be  
08 understood as the result of his minority culture being repeatedly poorly understood  
09 by many Black Tanzanians over time, leading him to be less-than-enthusiastic  
10 about clarifying it, especially when it involves the uncomfortable issue of explaining  
11 polytheistic beliefs in a society where monotheism is highly valued by the majority.  
12 In this data, the interview-style interaction may very well be due also to age and status  
13 differences because Braj is a freelance journalist in his 20s, while Irene is a senior  
14 editor in her 40s.
- 15 2 This way of speaking is known by many Tanzanians, and this interpretation was  
16 confirmed by Braj and Irene themselves as well as a group of scholars who participated  
17 in a data session at the University of Dar es Salaam.

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01 **Appendix: Abbreviations in gloss translations**

02

03       adv    adverbial

04       cns    consecutive marker

05       fut    future tense

06       loc    locative

07       neg    negative

08       pl     plural

09       pfc    perfective

10       prs    present tense

11       pst    past tense

12       psv    passive

13       rcp    reciprocal

14       sbj    subjunctive

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