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

In this chapter, I use MCA to examine how multilingual speakers use language alternation to manage other identities-in-practice beyond their linguistic identities. In doing so, I seek to contribute to understanding the "procedures that members have for selecting categories" (Sacks, 1995, p. 42) and to illuminate the procedures that speakers have for contesting and disavowing category selections made on their behalf. By focusing on a naturally occurring Swahili-English conversation recorded between two journalists in a newspaper office in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, I examine how the speakers use language alternation to propose, resist, and alter categories. Furthermore, the bilingual data provides an opportunity to examine the construction of intercultural difference through the social categories 'Hindu' and 'Christian,' categories that emerge through the participants' talk.

I show how this intercultural membership categorization becomes a resource for conversational activities and how it is used to manage additional categories that emerge in the ensuing talk. The identity-in-practice of 'religious affiliation' was not chosen as an interest prior to examining the talk; instead, in the spirit of ethnomethodology, it became a topic to explore because it emerged from the participants' conversation as a significant category that organized their social actions and their language choices.

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

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

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

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

Excerpt 1 (Day 1998: p.162)

Lars: don’t we have something that, one can eat that, China or
Rita: Chinese food is really pretty good
Xi: ha ha ( ) it doesn’t matter, I’ll eat anythings
Rita: ah that’s (what I that)

Lars has suggested Chinese food for the party in line 51, and Rita upgrades the suggestion, stating her positive opinion of Chinese cuisine. Xi takes the next turn by laughing, and then offers an ambivalent attitude toward the choice of Chinese food for the party. In his analysis of the talk, Day explained that Lars’ suggestion and Rita’s confirmation project the next turn as belonging to Xi. The turn is projected to take the shape of either an acceptance or refusal. Day explained that their talk thus far makes relevant Xi’s ethnicity as Chinese, and he argued that Xi’s response as the next speaker confirms this idea. According to Day, Xi’s response in line 54 indicates that she heard the suggestion as particularly relevant for her, as someone who would be knowledgeable about Chinese food, thereby producing her identity as ‘Chinese’ by virtue of the CBA associated with the ethnic category ‘Chinese,’ namely, ‘eating Chinese food.’ Day explained that her response would not make sense without this inference,
and he suggested that Xi's denial of the relevance of the ethnic category via the
CEA of eating Chinese food resists the relevance of the ethnic categorization
produced by the coparticipants. Xi's response in line 54 can be seen as her intent
to be viewed as a member of the social group jointly pursuing the social activity at
hand, rather than to suffer the fate of 'exteriorization.' The marking of her ethnicity
would prevent her from fully participating as an equal member in the group, so her
aversion to being marked as culturally specific here shows her resistance to the
implication that she is "not due the trust one needs to be a member of the social

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

Excerpt 2 (Sacks 1987, p.58)

1 A: You coming down early?
2 B: Well, I got a lot of things to do before
3 getting cleared up tomorrow I won't be too early.

Whereas laughter or delay tactics can mark dispreference in monolingual talk,
multiple studies have demonstrated that code contrasts often mark dispreferred
turns in bilingual talk (Auer, 1984, 1998, 1999; Cashman, 2001; Li Wei, 1994, 1995;
Shin & Miroy, 2000). Actions that have been found to co-occur with codeswitching
and that mark dispreference include refusals, disagreements with assessments,
and disaffiliations with questions structured for yes-answers. In monolingual data,
these actions are normally accompanied by hedges, pauses, delays, and other
markers of dispreference. In bilingual talk, codeswitching may be the only marker,
though it may also co-occur with the same features found in monolingual talk. In
Excerpt 3, we see how refusals may co-occur with language alternation when a
mother (A) offers her child (B) some fried rice.
Excerpt 3, codeswitching in refusals (Li Wei, 1995, p. 204–205)

A: oy-m-oy faan Ah Ying a?

Want some rice?

B: (no response)

A: chaafaan a. Oy-m-oy?

Fried rice. Want or not?

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

A: mut-yey (.). Chaafaan a.

What? Fried rice.

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

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

Pretopical talk and topical talk

When conversational participants who do not share a great deal of familiarity with one another, such as Irene and Braj, begin an interaction, they often engage in talk that contains many occasions for membership categorization devices (MCDs) to be offered, taken up, or rejected. Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) described such talk as pretopical talk, that is, sequences that involve categorization and category-activity question-answer pairs that may generate more elaborated talk. Their study of university students found that unacquainted pairs began conversations by asking about one another's year in school, academic major, home residence, and local residence. Once such knowledge was established, more elaborated talk sometimes followed. Excerpts 4 and 5 illustrate pretopical talk wherein Maynard and Zimmerman's participants are discovering and displaying their category memberships to one another. By asking questions, the participants categorize
their co-participants according to those social categories explicitly mentioned and at the same time, display the relevance of the more general category 'student' within which the other categories mentioned are subsumed.

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

B1: Are you a freshman
B2: No, second year.
B1: Oh.

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

Excerpt 5, taking classes (1984, p.306)
A: What are you taking anyway?
B: Well, sociology, anthropology, and art history.

Excerpt 6, taking classes (1984, p.306)
A: Are you a soc major?
B: Um, I’m thinking of it. What’re you?
A: Uh, marine geology is my major.

Through these question-answer sequences, Maynard and Zimmerman demonstrated how unacquainted parties establish knowledge of each other’s biography and “test” each other for how close or distant their particular relationship will be (p. 314). These categorization sequences often lead unacquainted dyads into more “personal” autobiographical talk, or what Maynard and Zimmerman term topical talk: talk that is generated from the biographical information and knowledge that was achieved in the pre-topical sequences, as shown in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7, topical talk ensuing from pre-topical talk (1984, p.308)
B2: Where’d you come from.
B1: Sacramento.
B2: Oh Yeah? I’m from Concord. It’s up north too.
B1: Yeah it’s a little bit close.
B2: Yeah and I went home this weekend . . . (story)

Maynard and Zimmerman found that unacquainted participants searched for opportunities to establish “common territories of self” that would enable them
to develop more ‘personal’ autobiographical talk (p. 314). In the Swahili-English data below, I show how the participants make relevant the category ‘religion,’ a category that is also interdependent with ethnicity for some religions in Tanzania, namely, Hinduism. I show how Braj and Irene use this category to engage in pretopical and topical talk, thereby demarcating categories that produce their different memberships in the category ‘religious affiliation.’ Their interaction involves many instances of membership categorization, and both participants use language alternation as a resource for downgrading, challenging, and rejecting certain categorizations.

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

Data analysis

At the beginning of the conversation, the two participants are discussing Braj’s religion. It becomes clear that Braj and Irene claim different memberships in this category, and Irene’s efforts to display her understanding of Braj’s religion are largely contested and eventually repaired by Braj. This talk results in the
participants' *interculturality* despite their shared nationality. In spite of their cultural
differences, Irene makes relevant specific identities-in-practice in talk to organize
her interaction with Braj in ways that will allow her to follow the ritual of generating
topical talk, that is, talk that allows her to affiliate with him. Braj resists engaging
in topical talk with Irene, so the talk has the feel of an interview in Excerpts 8–10.
At the beginning of Excerpt 11, Irene asks Braj about his activities with charitable
organizations, and this new topic leads to topical talk in which Irene makes a
request of Braj. In this topical talk, she claims a shared identity-in-practice for
Braj and herself, an identity that involves helping others outside of one's ethnic
group. Braj resists this categorization, however, and he displays his disalignment
through contrasting language, pronominal, and vocabulary choices. By producing
conversational structures that contrast with Irene's talk, Braj resists the shared
identity proposed for him, and in his responses, he produces an identity that
indexes activities associated with a business exchange, rather than charitable or
philanthropic activity.

**Establishing common ground through pretopical talk**
Excerpts 8–10, the nominations of topics explicitly naming 'Indian things' make
visible the participants' orientation to the interculturality of the interaction in a
very direct manner through labeling (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1996), the practice
of producing explicit membership categorizations that are locally occasioned
in talk. These turns appear to be treated as part of the ritual of unacquainted
participants getting to know one another. By asking questions concerning Braj's
experience with, knowledge of, or perspective towards his own culture, we see that
Irene is attempting to discover shared experience, or knowledge, across cultural
boundaries to prompt her coparticipant to extend topical talk. In Excerpt 8, the participants are displaying their relatively unacquainted
status to one another through their short question-answer sequences, routines
that provide further support for Maynard and Zimmerman's (1984) conclusions that
unacquainted pairs tend to rely on categorization sequences and categorization
activity sequences to establish pretopical talk before any topical talk can develop
(see the Appendix for abbreviations used in the transcript).

**Excerpt 8**

01 I: nanii (.) we're ni: ni hind:u.
02 uh you are are Hindu
03 uh are you Hindu
04 02: m-mh (.) Baniani.
05 m-mh Baniani
06 no I'm Baniani
I: ooh?

What

B: Baniani.

I: Baniani.

B: eeh Hindu yes.
	right Hindu yes
terit variens

I: Baniani (...) is it different from Hindu.

B: Yeah tu-na-toafuia-na kwa (kabila) mbalimbali

yes weprs differ rcp by tribe various

kwa miano Wa-sukuma,
for example pl-Sukuma
for example the Sukuma people (a Bantu ethnic

group of Tanzania)

I: eeh.
yes/oh

B: wa-hehe,

pl-hehe

((az)) the Hehe people ((a Bantu ethnic group

of Tanzania))

I: "Baniani." Eeh u-na- you worship kwanye

Baniani um you-prs you worship at

Baniani um do you you worship at this um

B: hii nani (...) >Jamatini pale<

this um Ismailia-mosque here

Ismailia mosque over here

B: Jamatini

Ismailia-mosque which

which Ismailia mosque

I: Jamatini ya hapo Upanga.

Ismailia-mosque of there Upanga

the Ismailia mosque in Upanga

B: uh: Upanga road pale?

uh Upanga road here

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

39 B: ni Wa-islamu.
is pl-muslim
that’s the Muslims

40 I: nyie? Wylie m-na-believe in what.
you.pl you.pl you.pl-prs-believe in what
and you all what do you all believe in

41 B: tu-na-believe na mungu wetu.
we-prs-believe in god our
we believe in our god.

42 I: mungu wa- wa: Baniani.
god of of Baniani
the Baniani god

43 B: Yes.

44 I: ni nani huyu?
is who this one
who is this god

45 B: ku-na wa mbalimbali.
there-are of different kinds
there are different kinds

46 I: ni-ngu.
pl-god
gods

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

48 I: [kama sisi Christians tuna
like we Christians we-have
like we Christians, we have

49 Jesus Christ ku-na Mohamed for Muslims=
Jesus Christ there-is Mohamed for Muslims
Jesus Christ, there is Mohamed for Muslims

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

In line 40, Irene asks Braj to speak for his group, and she specifies the second-person plural pronoun, *nyie* ["you all"]; the rest of her question is in hybrid Swahili-English in the form of *mrubaitwa in what*. Braj accepts this membership categorization, and his code choice is similarly hybrid when he answers *tunubaitwa na mungu wetu* ["we believe in our god"]. His response aligns with the language choice of her question. However, his reference to *mungu wetu* ["our god"] uses the noninclusive first-person plural possessive pronoun, which has the effect of maintaining Irene's outsider knowledge about the Baniani because it fails to impart new information about the religious entity the Baniani believe in. As has been clear throughout the talk, Irene does not understand the religious beliefs of the Baniani, so in line 42, she initiates repair, rephrasing Braj's previous utterance as *mungu wa-wa Baniani*. This turn does not indicate that she has learned anything, but instead, marks her lack of knowledge. Moreover, through her expression, *mungu wa-wa Baniani*, she replaces Braj's *mungu wetu* ["our god"] with *mungu wa Baniani*, a move that shows her own alignment as an outsider of this category. Notably, the language choice is the same throughout these turns. Several questions follow, all attempts to better understand the Baniani religion, and then in lines 48–49, Irene asks for further clarification. Her question is structured so that it creates membership for herself as a Christian and opposition through pronominal usage between Christians and Muslims. She says, *sisi Christians tuna Jesus Christ* ["we Christians we have Jesus Christ"], followed by the existential construction *kuna Mohamed for Muslims* ["there is Mohamed for Muslims"]. Her use of "we Christians" marks the religious difference between herself and the Muslims as well as the difference between herself and Braj; the existential usage of "there is Mohamed for Muslims" also categorizes both herself and Braj as non-Muslims.
In the same way that Hinduism and Baniani beliefs do not conform to monotheism, Braj's line 50 does not follow the structural pattern that Irene has set up for him. In producing "we Christians, we have Jesus Christ, there is Mohamed for Muslims," Irene's nonfinal intonation leaves the final slot open with an expectation for a statement such as "and we Baniani have X," or "and there is X for the Baniani people." Instead, Braj produces we have different ones. (j different, thus marking the interculturality in four ways: (a) language alternation, (b) the use of we to mark off the Baniani as different from the Christians and the Muslims, (c) the use of the word different, uttered two times, and (d) a different syntactic structure. At this point, interculturality via religious categories seems to have become a block to shared experience and has therefore precluded topical talk. This interculturality is displayed through the conflicting conversational structures portrayed in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Conversational structures reflecting interculturality.](image)

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

**Excerpt 10**

83 B: yaa different kind of fasting (!)
84 throughout the year.
85 I: mhm. (?) you eat meat.
86 B: some of them (?) they eat meat.
87 I: eeh.
88 B: >they don't eat meat.< [what they eat is chicken fish,
89 I: ]lyamaani, in other words
90 in other words
Excerpt 10 contains sequences of pretopical talk searching for shared experience, with a focus on food rituals observed for religious reasons. Of significance to the investigation of interculturality are lines 85–86, where Braj reformulates Irene’s pronoun choice of “you” in “you eat meat” in line 85 as “some of them” and “they” in line 86, when he explains that only certain Indian populations in Dar es Salaam eat meat. Interestingly, although these turns involve Braj’s contestation and repair of Irene’s categorial assumptions regarding the Baniani and Hindu populations, Braj does not alternate languages. A possible explanation for this is that, compared to his previous responses to Irene’s categorizations, his lines 86, 88, and 90 are a ‘softer’ rejection and repair of Irene’s monolithic grouping of all Baniani or Hindu as meat eaters. The softening may be seen as an attempt to downplay the interculturality between Irene and himself. In other words, through demonstrating the diversity among the Tanzanian Indian population, all forms of interculturality may become less identifiable and hence, less significant. Irene’s use of yaari (“in other words”) in line 89 is an instance of other-initiated repair, and her use of Swahili to carry out this repair can be understood as a means by which bilinguals may handle the dispreferred act of other-initiated repair. In comparison with self-initiated repair sequences, other-initiated repairs typically co-occur with dispreference markers in monolingual conversations (Schegloff, 2000), so language alternation occurring here is not surprising.

**Claiming and resisting a shared membership**

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

02

03 Excerpt 11

04 (((8 second pause)))


06 UNICEF you-pres-do um you-pres-volunteer

07 at UNICEF do you um do you volunteer

08

09 101 B: wapi?

10 where

11 where

12

13 102 I: UNICEF do they pay you.

14 103 B: no, na-jitolea.

15 no I-pres-volunteer

16 no I volunteer

17 104 I: u-na-jitolea? ((with high pitch))

18 you-pres-volunteer

19 you volunteer

20

21 105 B: mhm.

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

23

24 110 I: kwereje ile project ya: naanii 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-past-go

29 Movement project

30

31 112 B: ipi project.

32 which project

33 which project

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

35

36 115 I: i-li-kwema State House. (. ) naanii wasela wa-

37 it-past-be state house um streetboys they

38 it was at the State House um streetboys they

39 116 wa-ka-tengenezza sakafu na caps

40 -they-cone-make scarf and caps

41 were making scarves and caps

42
120 B: I was not around. (0.5) Ni-li-kuwa Nairobi
     I was not around  I-post-be Nairobi
     I was not around I was in Nairobi

121 na-hudhuria mkutano
     I-attend meeting
     attending a meeting

122 I: mkutano wa watu gani?
     meeting of people kind
     what kind of people were at the meeting

123 B: wa Lions. (.) convention
     of lions  convention
     people meeting at the Lions convention

124 I: a ah okay kumbe nyle ni liones.
     oh okay wow you.pl are lions
     oh okay you all are Lions, huh

125 B: eeh.
     yes
     yes

126 I: niye ku-omba mimi msaada kwenu
     I-come-subj to-beg what help from-you.pl
     if I should come to ask for your help

127 ni-lo-powa.
     I-fut-give-psv
     would I get it

128 B: msaada wa,
     help of
     what kind of help

129 I: kama moto na-m-somesha stule.
     like child I-her-help-study school
     for example I am sending a child to school

130 B: (0.3) ah okay. (.) you need uh school fees.

131 I: mm.

132 B: bei gani.
     price type
     how much

133 I: (1.0) si a-na-soma tu. ni mtoto yaani (.)
     neg she-pres-study only  is child that is
     she's just studying right she's a child, I mean
Irene asks Braj about his work with UNICEF in an effort to establish topical talk through a set of questions. Again, Braj does not use the opportunity to offer more personal or intimate talk, such as a story about his experiences with volunteering, or a clarification that he actually volunteers for the Lions Club; instead, he offers minimal responses with no expansions. Braj’s line 103 shares much with his line 06 in Excerpt 8, where he concedes to being Hindu rather than explaining about the Banani sect of Hinduism. Both responses maintain the pretopical talk by evading elaboration.

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

Braj’s response in line 120 leads to a clarification regarding his activity with the Lions Club, and this has the effect of categorizing him as a person who helps people in need, especially needy children. Irene’s change of state token in line 124 seems to indicate that for her, a shared experience has been achieved that confirms that both participants are involved in charitable organizations and activities that help children. In terms of shared memberships, this confirmation of shared experience effectively moves the pair from insider-outsider in regard to the social category of ‘religion’ to that of insider-insider in terms of the category ‘people who help those in need.’ This mutual category membership is proposed by Irene’s references to CBAs such as attending meetings about children’s rights.
in Tanzania. The sequencing of the shared categorization followed by a request for help makes it appear that the mutual category membership has established a context in which such a request can be made. In line 126, Irene asks B raj for help to pay for the school fees of an orphaned child by saying, "if I should come to ask for your help, would I get it?"

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

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

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

I: u-na-ona, (.) kama sasa hivi na-hitaji
you-see like now right I-need
look like right now I need to pay for

uniform na-hitaji ma-daftari na-hitaji(.)
uniform I-need pi-notebook I-need
a uniform notebooks

nini nauli na school fees
what travel and school fees
and what else travel and school fees

>ni kama yaani kuyo mtoto ni kama
it is like that is this child is like
it's like this child I mean this child is like an

orphan sasa hivi
orphan now right
orphan right now

B: Aah okay.

I: yaa kwu hiyo a-li-kwa a-na-kaa na
yes for this she-see be she-see-live with
yes, and so she was living with

shargazi yako, both parents wa-me-kufa
aunt her both parents they-pas-die
er aunt (since) both parents had died

na wala riyo kabila langu.
and though reg. ethnicity my
and even though she's not of my ethnic group

she is from Tabora kwu hiyo yaani
she is from Tabora- for that I-mean
as she is from Tabora, so that's why

a-na-kaa na kijiji-ni mama-ngu.
shar-see-live with village-loc mother-my
she is living in the village with my mother

B: now let me talk with my board, board of members.

Here, the reference to helping someone who is outside of one's own ethnic

group in line 159 intertextually relates to the category memberships that have

been built so far in the conversation. Through her CBAs that affiliate her with the
categorization 'someone who helps those in need;' she associates the practice of
helping those outside one's ethnic group as something charitable people do. This
identity work neatly ties back to the interculturality that was based on religious
difference that had been so clearly established earlier in the talk. In other words, through her categorization moves involving herself and Braj in lines 100–124 and 159, she implicates Braj as ‘someone who helps those in need who are not of one’s own kind’ and as someone who can offer an act of charity in spite of ethnic and/or cultural difference. In contrast to the previous talk (Excerpts 8–11), Irene uses interculturality as a device to achieve mutual understanding. The use of interculturality here allows her to achieve a shared personal biography with Braj because her own relationship with the orphaned girl of a different ethnic background groups her with people like Braj, that is, people who help those in need, no matter what their background may be. By virtue of asking Braj to help those not of his ethnic group, Irene offers Braj membership in the category of people who help others, not because of a sense of duty based on kinship or ethnic ties, but based purely on humanitarianism and philanthropic, and even religious, ideals.

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

Conclusion

This paper has examined the ways that participants use bilingual conversation to produce and resist membership categorizations. I have argued that among bilinguals, resisting, downgrading, and rejecting categorizations are disaffiliative actions that may be understood as dispreferred acts. In a manner similar to the ways that bilinguals use codeswitching to manage dispreference in refusals and disagreements (Cashman, 2001; Li Wei, 1996; Shin & Milroy, 2000), the data in this chapter have shown that codeswitching appears to be a resource available
to bilinguals for managing the dispreferred action of challenging a membership
categorization that has been proposed by others. Throughout the data, language
alternation is used as a resource by both Braj and Irene to dissociate with proposed
memberships and to manage other dispreferred actions, such as providing
dissociative answers to questions structured for positive responses, initiating
other-repairs, and responding in noncommitted ways to requests for assistance.

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

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

The history of political, economic, and social tension between the Indian population and the Black Tanzanian population may be affecting the conversational dynamics, but such information is not normally considered relevant in analyses of membership categorizations. Interviews that I carried out with Irene and other Black Tanzanians show a common belief that Indian Tanzanians will not freely share information about themselves. From another view, however, Braj’s reluctance to elaborate can be understood as the result of his minority culture being repeatedly poorly understood by many Black Tanzanians over time, leading him to be less-than-enthusiastic about clarifying it, especially when it involves the uncomfortable issue of explaining polytheistic beliefs in a society where monotheism is highly valued by the majority.

In this data, the interview-style interaction may very well be due also to age and status differences because Braj is a freelance journalist in his 20s, while Irene is a senior editor in her 40s.

This way of speaking is known by many Tanzanians, and this interpretation was confirmed by Braj and Irene themselves as well as a group of scholars who participated in a data session at the University of Dar es Salaam.

References


Malden, MA: Blackwell.


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<th>Appendix: Abbreviations in gloss translations</th>
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