Language in Society **31**, 527–548. Printed in the United States of America
DOI: 10.1017.S0047404502314027

Social identities and language alternation in non-formal institutional bilingual talk: Trilingual service encounters in Barcelona

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ABSTRACT

Identity-related accounts of language alternation among bilingual speakers have traditionally drawn on the social values of the languages involved in specific communities (Gumperz 1982, Myers-Scotton 1993). However, recently researchers have expressed reservation against this approach (Wootton and Sebba 1998, Li Wei 1998, 2002). Following from this, Gafaranga 2001 argues that, in order to account for the orderliness of language alternation, LANGUAGE PREFERENCE (Auer 1984) must be seen as a MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIZATION DEVICE (Sacks 1966, 1974). In developing his argument, Gafaranga draws on instances of ordinary everyday conversation among bilingual speakers. In this paper, we take Gafaranga's argument a step further and look at language alternation in first-time TRILINGUAL SERVICE ENCOUNTERS collected in the Barcelona area. The languages involved are Catalan, Castilian, and English. Analysis of these data reveals that, in addition to doing service-relevant tasks, participants accomplish "medium-related activities" (Gafaranga 2001) drawing on their various LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES. Therefore, the analysis confirms the need to see linguistic identities as social identities in their own right.

INTRODUCTION

A number of recent ethnomethodologically inspired studies (e.g., those in Hester & Eglin 1997, Antaki & Widdicombe 1998) have been concerned with the

notion of SOCIAL IDENTITY and the work it accomplishes in monolingual talk-in-interaction. In these studies, social identity is understood as "something that is USED in talk: something that is part and parcel of the routines of every day life, brought off in the fine detail of everyday interaction" (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998:1). As these studies demonstrate, social identity pervades practical social action. On the other hand, studies in bilingual conversation (e.g., Auer 1984, 1988, 1995, Gafaranga 1998, 1999, 2000) reveal that LANGUAGE ALTERNATION,[1] among bilingual speakers itself is practical social action – is an activity that speakers accomplish while talking. Put together, these developments allow us to raise the issue of the relationship between social identity and language alternation.

The issue of the relationship between language alternation and social identity is not new. One of the most popular approaches to language choice and language alternation among bilingual speakers proposes an identity-related account (see Sebba & Wootton 1998). Classic studies in this perspective include Gumperz 1982 and Myers-Scotton 1988, 1993. Starting from the observation that, in bilingual communities, languages are associated with different "transportable identities" (Zimmerman 1998) such as ethnic, regional, national, and educated identities, and with differential social values, researchers claim that bilingual speakers actively draw on that association when accomplishing the practical task of talking. As consequence, an underlying assumption is that the meaning of specific instances of language alternation is a reflection of those identities and social values. Some key notions in this "identity-related explanation" of language alternation are WE-/THEY-CODE (Gumperz 1982) and MARKEDNESS METRIC (Myers-Scotton 1993).

However, concern has been expressed about the adequacy of this approach as a way of accounting for specific instances of language alternation. Early on, Gumperz stated that "the association between communicative style and group identity is a symbolic one (and) does not directly predict actual usage" (1982:66). More recently, authors such as Sebba & Wootton 1998, Stroud 1998, and Li 1998 warn researchers against importing their knowledge of society into the interpretation of specific instances of language alternation. As these researchers argue, the relationship between language choice and the social values associated with particular languages cannot be taken for granted. For example, in their study of language choice among adolescents of Caribbean origin in London, Sebba & Wootton 1998 demonstrate that either Jamaican Creole or London English can function as a we-code, depending on the occasion. Even more striking in this respect is the evidence from Joergensen 1998. Studying language alternation among children of Turkish origin in Denmark, the author concludes that, among these children, Danish-Turkish language alternation itself is sometimes the we-code. In our view, these observations warrant an alternative account of language alternation in terms of speakers' social identities.

Given the concerns expressed above, our aim in this article is to flex the muscles of the ethnomethodological mentality and revisit the relationship between language alternation and social identity. The key concepts in the ethnomethodological perspective on social identity are, as we will discuss later, MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIZATION DEVICE and CATEGORY-BOUND ACTIVITIES (Sacks 1966, 1974, 1992); the approach as a whole is known as MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIZATION ANALYSIS (MCA). A first attempt to adopt this perspective for the analysis of language alternation is Gafaranga (2001). Gafaranga argues that, in order to account for language alternation in terms of social identity, LANGUAGE PREFERENCE (Auer 1984, 1995) must be seen as a categorization device.

Our aim is to take this view a step further. Gafaranga (2001) is based on instances of INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS among bilingual participants. In the present article, we base our discussion on a corpus of NONFORMAL INSTITUTIONAL (Drew & Heritage 1992) bilingual interactions collected (by Torras) in the Barcelona area of Catalonia. The data consist of SERVICE ENCOUNTERS (Merritt 1976, Ventola 1983, 1987, Halliday & Hasan 1989, Bailey 1997) audio-recorded at an Erasmus student exchange office on a university campus and at two Anglo-Celtic pubs.[2] In the data, three languages are observed: English, Catalan, and Castilian. In Catalonia, Catalan is the local language and shares co-official status with Castilian, the official language of the Spanish state.[3] In this context, most speakers – especially those participating in institutional settings such as those considered for this study – are bilingual in Catalan and Castilian. The use of English in the data can be understood with reference to the international/foreign nature of the service settings. In the two pubs, there seems to be a policy of employing native speakers of English. At the Erasmus student exchange office, service providers are Spanish; however, because of the international nature of the institution, they are also required to have some command of English. The service seekers are from various sociolinguistic backgrounds and have varied proficiency in these three languages.

This data set presents two more elements of interest for the analysis of the relationship between language and social identity. First, most previous accounts of language alternation in terms of speakers' social identities have been conducted in established and localized bilingual communities. In bilingual conversations, however, the alternated languages need not be part of the linguistic repertoire of the speakers' community. One or both languages may also be foreign/international. This is important because, in the increasingly discourse-mediated age of globalization, accounts of language choice can no longer be limited to established community bilingualism. Our data partake of this globalized reality and consist mostly of first-time encounters. Our hope is that this study will lead to more interest in this rather neglected area of bilingual interaction. Second, in the data, precisely because of their first-time nature, issues of identity in talk-in-interaction come to the fore and are visibly settled. From a methodological per-

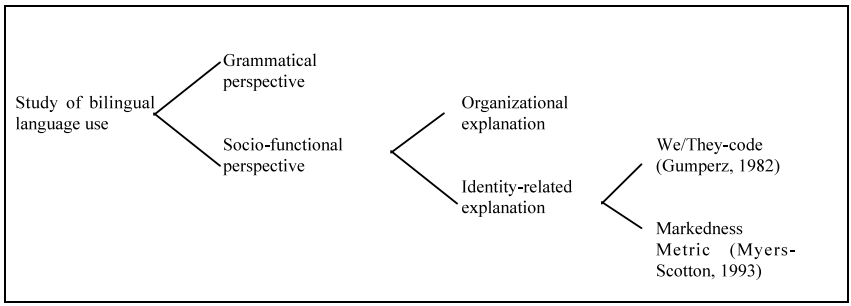

FIGURE 1: Approaches to language alternation in bilingual conversation.

spective, this visibility has obvious advantages because it allows the observer to formulate warrantable claims.

Given the theme of this article, the following logical organization suggests itself. In the first section, we describe language alternation as practical social action, drawing on available conversation-analytic (CA) accounts. This section also affords an opportunity to present the instances of language use we draw on in the rest of our discussion. In the second section, we characterize the relationship between social identity and practical social action as viewed from Membership Categorization Analysis. Finally, the third section looks from an MCA perspective at language alternation, which is described in the first section from a CA perspective.

LANGUAGE ALTERNATION AS PRACTICAL SOCIAL ACTION

In order to understand the relationship between language alternation and social identity, it is necessary to be clear about both parties to this relationship, for neither of them is theory-free. In this section, we are concerned with describing language alternation as practical social action. A tentative schematic representation of the field of language alternation studies is shown in Figure 1.

The view of language alternation as practical social action falls into what is referred to in the schema of Figure 1 as "organizational explanation." Introduced by Auer 1984, the organizational perspective on language alternation draws upon Conversation Analysis, which itself aims at accounting for the organization of conversation as practical social action. One of the central claims of this approach is that language alternation is multifaceted. Following from this central claim, different schemes for categorizing language alternation phenomena have been proposed. For instance, Auer 1984 establishes the following four-way distinction: discourse-related code-switching, participant-related code-switching, discourse-related transfer and participant-related transfer. Drawing on the same conversation analytic perspective, Gafaranga 1998, 1999, 2000

and Gafaranga & Torras 2001, 2002, view language alternation as consisting of four activities: medium selection, medium repair, medium suspension, and the bilingual medium. In this article, we adopt the latter classification. In the data we are considering, only the first three activities are found.

Medium selection

In order to understand the role of language alternation in medium selection, it is necessary to see language alternation within the array of different members' methods that participants draw upon in selecting the medium of their interaction. In the data on which this discussion is based, the following methods have been observed. First, the activity of selecting a medium of interaction can be accomplished explicitly through what Codó 1998 refers to as "explicit language negotiation." Consider ex. (1):

(1) This encounter takes place at a pub.

1	AAA:	hola 'hi'
2	BBB:	hola (.) *can I order in English* (.) *yeah* 'hi'
3	AAA:	sí 'yes'
4	BBB:	*uh: I'd like to have a pint of blonde beer*
5	AAA:	mmm mmm

In (1), right after the greeting sequence, the problem of what medium to use for the ensuing service arises, perhaps because BBB is not proficient enough in Catalan. To solve this problem, participants apply the method described by Garfinkel & Sacks 1970 as FORMULATION. In this case, medium selection is explicit in the sense that participants have stated "in so many words" what they are doing here and now.

A less explicit pattern of medium selection is presented in (2):

(2) This encounter takes place at a pub.

1	AAA:	**hola**. 'hi'
2	BBB:	*erm are you Scottish*
3	AAA:	*no* (.) *I'm Irish*
4	BBB:	*ah well*
5	AAA:	*near enough*
6	BBB:	*erm* (.) *I'll have* (.) *a Lagavulin* (pointing at the whisky bottles)
7	AAA:	*a which*
8	BBB:	*Lagavulin*

In terms of the interactional work that is accomplished, (1) and (2) are similar. In both, the problem of what medium to use arises right after the greeting; however, in (2), service participants use a different method to solve it. In line 2, BBB asks AAA about her nationality. In line 3, AAA discloses it. Participant BBB seems to be working on the assumption that by knowing AAA's nationality, he can infer what medium to use for the encounter.

In the above examples, language alternation occurs at the point where the issue of medium selection arises. However, the alternation is not, in itself, significant for the activity of medium selection. What is significant is the more or less explicit request for medium choice. The request may or may not involve language alternation, as evidenced in (3) (from Codó 1998):

(3) Interaction takes place at a tourist information office in Barcelona (original transcription kept).[4]

1 ENQ: hola.
'hello.'
2 AS1: +^ hola.
'hello.'
3 ENQ: hablas inglés?
'do you speak English?'
4 AS1: **yes**.
5 ENQ: **uh I'd like to know some addresses like International House.**
(*shows notebook to AS1 with a few names written on it*)

As in (1) and (2), a problem of what medium to adopt arises after the greeting sequence, which has been conducted in Castilian. ENQ requests the use of English. Unlike in (1) and (2), however, this request does not involve any language alternation. It is formulated in Castilian.

A third pattern of medium selection contrasts with the two procedures above in that language alternation itself is the method participants use to negotiate the medium. Consider (4):

(4) Interaction takes place at a pub.

1 AAA: **hola**
2 BBB: 'hi' (.) *two Carlsberg pints*
3 AAA: *pints*
4 BBB: *yeah*

AAA opens the service encounter in Castilian. In line 2, BBB requests the use of English by using it. In line 3, AAA grants that request by adopting this language herself. It is thus through language alternation itself that the medium is negotiated.

The fourth pattern of medium negotiation contrasts with patterns one and two in that it does not involve any explicit negotiation. Further, it contrasts with pattern three in that it does not show any language alternation. Consider the following extract:

(5) Interaction takes place at a pub.

1 AAA: **hola**
'hi'
2 BBB: **una vaso de Carlsberg** (.) **una de Guinness y: un agua**
'a glass of Carlsberg (.) one Guinness and: one water'
3 AAA: **un //agua//**
'one water'
4 BBB: **//un agua// fresca**
'one cold water'

In (5), AAA opens the service in Castilian with a greeting. In line 2, BBB adopts Castilian to formulate the service request, thus confirming that Castilian can be used as the medium of their encounter.

To recapitulate, one of the sites where language alternation can be observed is that of medium selection. Language alternation is one of the methods participants may use to select the medium of their interaction. Medium selection is, therefore, one of the sites in which the relationship between language alternation and social identity can be investigated.

Medium repair

So far, we have identified medium selection as one site for investigating the relationship between language alternation and social identity. However, language alternation need not contribute to medium selection: It may also consist of MEDIUM REPAIR (Gafaranga 2000; Gafaranga & Torras 2002). The activity of medium repair, unlike that of medium selection, has already been described in detail, so here we will only sketch it. Gafaranga 2000 highlights the following two aspects of medium repair: (i) medium repair is a strategy used by bilingual speakers to solve a word problem (*mot juste*, lapse, etc.); and (ii) in medium repair, participants draw on a language other than the current medium while orienting to this other language as a repairable matter. Consider (6):

(6) This encounter takes place at the Erasmus office.

1	AAA:	*no* (.) *I'm going to give this mmm* (.) *eh today* (.) *maybe today or tomorrow you will be inscribed*
2	BBB:	*uh*
3	AAA:	*matriculated* (.) *and after this eh it has to wait* (.) *four five six* **jours** eh *six* . . .
		'registered (.) and after this er it has to wait (.) four five six days er six . . .'
4	BBB:	*days*
5	AAA:	*days* (.) *after being* . . .

In this extract, participant AAA is sorting out participant BBB's registration. English has been adopted as the medium. In line 3, AAA inadvertently slips into another language, French. Immediately, he tries to repair the use of French (see subsequent hesitation marker, retracing, and trailing off). In line 4, BBB provides the repair, and AAA acknowledges it in line 5. Compare (7):

(7) This encounter takes place at the Erasmus office.

1	AAA:	*but* (.) *you have to* pr (.) *to*: . . .
2	BBB:	*get the notes*
3	CCC:	(unclear)
4	AAA:	*to: only* p (.) **prever** (.) preveure (addressing DDD)
		'to: only f (.) foresee (.) foresee?'
5	DDD:	*//foresee//*
6	CCC:	*//do you want// us to* (unclear)
7	AAA:	foresee this
8	CCC:	*oh* (.) //**español**//
		'oh (.) //Spanish//'
9	AAA:	*//mmm //* (.) *and maybe it's better to speak with the teacher* (.) *to talk with the teacher mmm*

As in (6), in (7) an instance of medium repair occurs. AAA is dealing with some registration problems he has been presented with by BBB and CCC. The participants have adopted English as the medium for their interaction. AAA runs up against a problem of finding the *mot juste*, as revealed in the retracing and subsequent trailing off in line 1. In line 4, AAA draws upon Castilian (*prever*) in order to identify exactly what his problem is. He then goes on to seek support from DDD, who so far has been a bystander.[5] In line 5, DDD provides the needed *mot juste*, which is acknowledged by AAA in line 7. In line 8, CCC offers her evaluation of AAA's and DDD's talk, revealing her own understanding of what the problem has been all along. Because language alternation may occur in the interactional site of medium repair, this is yet another site where the relationship between language alternation and social identity can be examined.

Medium suspension

The third site where language alternation can be observed is MEDIUM SUSPENSION, described in detail in Gafaranga & Torras (2002). This type of language alternation is defined as a temporary departure from the current medium that is not oriented to as a repairable problem. Medium suspension is not repaired precisely because, in the talk where it occurs, it serves some communicative function. One way this communicative function of medium suspension has been theorized is Gumperz's (1982) notion of METAPHORICAL CODE-SWITCHING. Consider (8):

(8) This encounter takes place at a pub.

1	AAA:	*whenever I say Ireland in Spanish they all think I say Holland* (laughs)
2	BBB:	*Ireland*
3	AAA:	*yeah* (.) **Irlanda Holanda**
		yeah (.) Ireland Holland
4	BBB:	*oh it's quite different*
5	AAA:	*yeah*

In this encounter, a bar attendant and a customer are having some casual talk in English while the bar attendant is complying with the customer's request. The topic of their conversation turns to their nationalities. In turns preceding the extract, AAA has identified himself as Irish, whereas BBB has identified himself as Dutch. At the point where (8) starts, AAA makes the remark that when he says 'Ireland' in Spanish, people understand 'Holland' instead. Line 2 shows that BBB does not quite follow AAA's explanation. The clarification in line 3 is accomplished through a language display in Spanish. In other words, AAA temporarily suspends the current medium, English, in order to accomplish the language display in Spanish. Because it is a language display, there is no attempt to repair the use of Spanish even though it deviates from the current medium.

A more elaborate case of medium suspension is illustrated in (9), an instance of the use of language alternation in pre-sequences – in this case, a pre-request (see Milroy & Li Wei 1995):

(9) This encounter takes place at a pub.

1	AAA:	*hello*
2	BBB:	*hello* (.) //eh:// …
3	CCC:	//dues// de negra no (addressing BBB)
		'//two// of stout right'
4	BBB:	**quieres pequeña o grande**
		'would you like it small or large'
5	CCC:	**grande**
		'large'
6	BBB:	**grande**
		'large'
7	AAA:	mmm mmm
8	BBB:	eh: *one big* (.) *one half pint* (.) *for me* (.) *//one half pint for me//*
9	AAA:	*//one half pint for you//*
10	BBB:	*and one pint for him*

In this extract, two customers, BBB and CCC, and a bar attendant, AAA, are involved in the business of ordering and serving drinks. The extract shows two overlapping interactional episodes. The bar attendant starts the encounter by greeting the customers and thereby making relevant the ordering as a next action. BBB greets back, and through the hesitation marker and the trailing off in line 2, he reveals his orientation to the relevance of this next action. The next action, the ordering, does not come off because the customers have not sorted it out yet. Therefore, they engage in an insertion sequence (lines 3–6) in which they decide on their order. In line 7, the bar attendant conveys receipt of the order through the change-of-state token *mmm mmm* (Heritage 1984). However, from line 8 onward, as if the ordering has not been properly conveyed, BBB explicitly formulates it for the bar attendant. During this episode in which the main business is suspended, the medium of that business, English, is suspended too. When the main business resumes, the original medium is resumed. Briefly, a third type of language alternation occurs in medium suspension. An account of language alternation in terms of speakers' social identities should be able to account for this possibility.

To sum up, viewed as practical social action, language alternation is not a unitary phenomenon. Rather, it consists of different MEDIUM-RELATED ACTIVITIES (Gafaranga 2001). In the data we are using, three such medium-related activities have been identified. Here, language alternation contributes to the selection of the medium, it occurs in medium repair, and it is also observed in medium suspension. Therefore, any account of language alternation in the data in terms of speakers' social identities must take account of these different sites.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIZATION ANALYSIS: SOCIAL IDENTITY AND PRACTICAL SOCIAL ACTION

For an account of language alternation in terms of speakers' social identity, it is necessary to be clear both about language alternation and about social identity. In the section above, we described, albeit briefly, language alternation as practical

social action. In this section, we look into the second party to the relationship: the notion of social identity. Because our concern is with practical social action, we sketch a theory of social identity in practical social action, known as Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA).

MCA has been elegantly discussed by other researchers (Hester & Eglin 1997, Antaki & Widdicombe 1998, Silverman 1998; see also Sacks 1992), so we will only point out some of its most salient properties, specifically referring them to our data. The starting point for MCA is that identity is CATEGORIZATION. In practical social action, members organize the social world into categories, understood as "collections of things." For instance, in (2), right after the service opening, BBB asks AAA to fit herself into a category – whether she is Scottish. Compare (10):

(10) This encounter takes place at a pub.

1	AAA:	**hola** 'hi'
2	BBB:	**esta tarde he hablado** (.) **con alguien por teléfono** 'this afternoon I talked (.) to someone over the phone'
3	AAA:	**sí** 'did you'
4	BBB:	**que venía a hacer unas fotografías** (.) **tenía que venir a las seis y media y hasta ahora no he podido venir** (.) **sabes con quién he hablado o no** 'I've come to take some pictures (.) I was supposed to come at half past six but I haven't been able to come until now (.) do you know who I spoke to then'

In this extract, BBB comes to the pub to do business other than pub business. To handle this non-pub business, he displays a number of strategies that, together, help him to construct himself as a nonmember of the setting. The first strategy is found in line 2, where a pre-request is formulated in order to set the ground for the request in line 4. In other words, the request is not made relevant by the simple presence of the speaker in the setting. To emphasize this point, consider a typical service sequence such as the one presented (5) and reproduced here as (11):

(11) Interaction takes place at a pub.

1	AAA:	**hola**
2	BBB:	**una vaso de Carlsberg** (.) **una de Guinness y: un agua**
3	AAA:	**un //agua//**
4	BBB:	**//un agua// fresca**

The reason for the pre-request in (10) is that the request itself is a dispreferred (deviant) act in this service setting. The literature of CA has amply demonstrated that dispreferred acts are delayed through a number of devices (Pomerantz 1984, Bilmes 1988). By contrast, in (11), no need is felt to make the request in line 2 relevant. BBB is doing what people routinely do when they drop into a pub. In fact, BBB does not even make a direct request. Instead, he just names the goods, and this is interpreted unproblematically by AAA as a proper service request. In other words, by entering the pub, BBB classes himself and is classed by AAA as a customer.

The second set of strategies is observed in line 4 of ex. (10). The request takes the form of an announcement rather than a direct request. Indirectness has been widely documented as a way of mitigating FACE-THREATENING ACTS (Brown & Levinson 1987). The possibility that this act may be face-threatening results from and reflexively confirms the fact that it was not expected in the setting. Here again, the indirectness of this request contrasts with the directness of the request in (11). Notice also that, in the announcement, the past form *venía* 'came' is used, rather than the present form *vengo* 'come'. In Castilian, the use of the past form indicates politeness. Third, line 4, where the request is formulated, is noticeably long and detailed, unlike line 2 in (11). In pragmatic terms, line 4 flouts Grice's (1975) Maxim of Manner, which calls for conciseness, as illustrated in line 2 of (11). This flouting can be justified on the grounds of the unexpected nature of BBB's business in the pub. Finally, BBB's talk is pervaded by accounts meant to legitimize his presence in the pub. Most notably, he tries to link his current business with the business of the pub. He is especially at pains to link himself to some representative of this institutional setting (*he hablado # con alguien por teléfono* 'I talked to someone over the phone', turn 2; *sabes con quién he hablado o no?* 'do you know who I spoke to?', turn 4). Through these four strategies, BBB visibly constructs himself as a nonmember of the pub setting, as belonging to a different category.

In the literature, these "collections of things" – such as 'Scottish' in (2), 'customer' in (11), and noncustomer in (10) – are referred to as CATEGORIES within membership categorization devices such as 'nationality' and 'customer-bar attendant'. According to Sacks 1974, membership in a categorization device corresponds to specific CATEGORY-BOUND ACTIVITIES (features, predications, rights and obligations, and so on). In (2), the customer asks the waitress about her nationality. The positioning of such a request right at the beginning of the encounter seems to indicate that it is crucial for participants to establish their identities at this point so that the service interaction can proceed. This is consistent with studies, such as Zimmerman 1998, that demonstrate that participants' identities need to be established right at the beginning. As we have seen, the customer's conduct seems to be based on a simple association, which may be formulated as follows: If I know who you are, I know what to do next. The same applies in (10), but in reverse fashion. BBB anticipates that his calling into the pub will lead the bar attendant to categorize him as a customer and therefore to expect a specific action trajectory. Therefore, in order to block this expectable association between the act of walking into a pub and categorization as a customer, he deploys a number of strategies. Because of the association between social identities and social activities, in practical social action, social identities are said to be CONSEQUENTIAL (Schegloff 1991, 1992). According to Banks 1988, "Identity is what it does in interaction."

Central to MCA is the notion that each person can have MULTIPLE IDENTITIES – each person can be categorized differently depending on the occasion.

Therefore, the identity one is doing here and now cannot be taken for granted. In (2), the need for BBB to ask AAA to confirm her identity stems from the fact that she could have any identity, or at least that her identity could not be assumed from external appearance. However, as (10) and (11) indicate, the fact that someone is in a pub does not necessarily mean that he is DOING BEING a customer. From the notions of consequentiality and multiplicity of social identity, it also follows that in a specific instance of social action, not all of one's identities are RELEVANT (Schegloff 1991, 1992). An illustration of this can be found in (7), where, up to line 4, DDD has been a bystander. She has been doing being a researcher, a participant observer. In line 4, this identity is temporarily suspended, and DDD becomes a participant in the interaction.

If not all of one's identities are relevant on all occasions, an issue for the researcher is how to find out which one is relevant at a given moment. In approaching this issue, MCA views "identity as an analysts' and a participants' resource" (Widdicombe 1998). As a consequence, MCA holds to be relevant only those identities that are used by participants themselves to accomplish relevant category-bound activities. In other words, the relevant identity is seen through the activities it has allowed participants to accomplish. In (10), for instance, BBB is demonstrably (for himself, for AAA, and for analysts) not a customer because he is not doing what customers do. In contrast, in (11) BBB is demonstrably a customer because he is doing what customers do. From this, it can be understood why in (2), in lines 2–5, BBB is not a customer yet. Language issues are not the business of pubs. After the language issue has been settled, BBB could have proceeded to engage in activities other than doing pub business, as in (10). Because MCA sees participants' identities through the acts they accomplish, this approach can be characterized as a participant's own perspective.

According to MCA, participants in social action recognize and fit themselves into categories following two main rules: the ECONOMY RULE and the CONSISTENCY RULE (Sacks 1974). In this study, we are concerned only with the latter. According to Sacks, the consistency rule holds that "if some population of persons is being categorized, and if a category from some device's collection has been used to categorize a first member of the population, then THAT CATEGORY or OTHER CATEGORIES OF THE SAME COLLECTION may be used to categorize further members of the population" (1974: 219, emphasis added). For participants, recognition of one another's category is revealed through claiming (or rejecting) for themselves the relevant category in the same device. In turn, the claim of the same or of a different category seems to depend on the ongoing activity. In some activities, participants fit themselves into TEAMS (Sacks 1974) while in some others, they fit themselves into TOGETHERINGS (Ryave & Schenkein 1974). In the first case, participants adopt different yet complementary action trajectories; in the second, they adopt the same action trajectory.

To illustrate these points, consider (11). In the setting of the extract, BBB recognizes by default AAA as a bar attendant, and, equally by default, he applies

the consistency rule and categorizes himself as a customer. The device 'bar attendant–customer' works as a team because the acts of one category are different from but complementary to the acts of the other. Similarly, in (10), AAA is, by default, a bar attendant; however, given BBB's current business, BBB cannot adopt the corresponding default identity. Therefore, in order to block the consistency rule from applying, he deploys the strategies we have described above. Those strategies seem to be aimed at leading AAA to see the default definition of himself and of the interlocutor as inoperative here and now.

An example of a togethering can be found in (9). In the extract, although three physical people are involved, only two identities are significantly and recognizably present: bar attendant and customer. In line 1, AAA formulates a greeting. This greeting seems to have been addressed to both BBB and CCC together. In line 2, BBB returns the greeting. This greeting seems to have been formulated by BBB on his own behalf, as well as on the behalf of CCC, since the latter does not produce his own. In lines 8–10, BBB again seems to be talking on his own behalf as well as on the behalf of CCC. In both cases, if BBB and CCC were each working alone, CCC would have formulated his own talk. BBB and CCC's togetherness is even more explicit through the insertion sequence (lines 3–6). Because BBB and CCC have not sorted out their order, there was a possibility for each to formulate his own order, thus leading to a three-party interaction. Alternatively, BBB and CCC could suspend the ongoing interaction with the bar attendant and sort themselves out as a togethering before engaging with AAA. In the interaction, participants have adopted this last option. In other words, the device 'bar attendant–customer' is a team, while BBB and CCC form a togethering. In the next section, we suggest that the activity of language choice involves participants in a togethering context.

AN IDENTITY-RELATED ACCOUNT OF LANGUAGE ALTERNATION

Language preference

As we have argued in the first section, language alternation can be viewed as an instance of practical social action consisting of a number of medium-related activities. On the other hand, as argued in the second section, every instance of practical social action can be explained in terms of participants' social identities, using MCA. If this is the case, a logical conclusion is that there must be a categorization device that allows medium-related activities to occur. Following Gafaranga (2001), we claim that the categorization device that allows medium-related activities to happen is LANGUAGE PREFERENCE (Auer 1984, 1995). The notion of language preference was first introduced in the literature on language alternation by Auer (1984, 1988, 1995, 1998). Ever since, it has been adopted by a number of authors working on bilingual conversations. For instance, in Milroy & Muysken's (1995) collection, this notion is used eight times by different authors, and in Auer's (1998) collection, it occurs eleven times.

Auer defines language preference as consisting of "interactional processes of displaying and ascribing predicates to individuals," rather than "any kind of psychological concept" (1998:8). Auer's definition points to two different aspects of language preference:

> By preference-related switching, a speaker may simply want to avoid the language in which he or she feels insecure and speak the one in which he or she has greater COMPETENCE. Yet preference-related switching may also be due to a deliberate decision based on POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. . . . (However) what surfaces in conversation will be the same sequential arrangement of language choices. . . . (Auer 1995:125)

In other words, preference can be related either to LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE in the Chomskyan sense, or to EPISODE-EXTERNAL IDEOLOGICAL FACTORS. Different authors seem to emphasize one or the other of these two aspects. For example, Alfonzetti 1998, Rampton 1998, and Stroud 1998 draw a distinction between the two aspects and use the term "language preference" only to refer to episode-external preference. Issues of episode-external preference seem to be linked to the ethnomethodological notion of OWNING KNOWLEDGE (Sharrock 1974).

Although the two dimensions of language preference are conceptually different, on the level of talk as practical action they lead to the same effects: language preference can affect talk either on the level of its overall structure, or just on the level of its local organization. In the first case, it leads to medium selection; in the second, it leads to language alternation as an aspect of the local order of talk (medium suspension and medium repair). An example of competence-related preference that affects the overall structure of the encounter is (1). The participants come from different sociolinguistic backgrounds. AAA is a speaker of Catalan, and BBB is not. This seems to be the reason why BBB initiates a language negotiation episode right after returning the greeting. The negotiation results in the adoption of English as the medium of the service interaction, although none of the participants can legitimately claim to "own" English.[6] An example of episode-external preference affecting the overall structure of the encounter can be found in (9). BBB and CCC are speakers of Catalan and Castilian. In the insertion sequence where BBB and CCC are negotiating their service order, a language negotiation sequence occurs. CCC proposes Catalan in line 3, and in line 4 BBB rejects it and proposes Castilian. From then on, Castilian is adopted as the medium for the insertion sequence. The choice of Castilian seems to have been influenced by external factors, since nothing in the talk indicates that participants have any problems in understanding Catalan. As reported by Woolard 1989, 1999 and others, in Catalonia medium choice is a matter of constant negotiation because it may index political allegiance.

Competence-related preference that affects local organization is illustrated in (6). In this extract, French is used not because of any ideological positioning toward this language, but because of a purely local linguistic problem in English

(a lapse). The same is observed in (7). The interaction is conducted in English. In line 1, AAA has a problem finding the *mot juste*. This problem does not result from any ideological positioning toward English, but rather from language ability. Indeed, after the problem has been solved, talk is resumed in English. By contrast, line 4 in (7) shows an instance of episode-external preference. The repair between Castilian and Catalan does not arise because DDD has any problems in understanding Castilian (DDD, one of the researchers, is proficient in both languages). Rather, the fact that the use of Castilian is repaired in favor of Catalan seems to point to the participants' sociolinguistic allegiances.

Auer's definition makes it clear that language preference is an interactional process. Whether competence-related or ideology-related, language preference is not something set in stone. Rather, it consists of negotiated claims and attributions. Evidence of this dimension of language preference can be found in (6). In lines 3 and 4, an instance of competence-related preference occurs. As after the repair, talk is resumed in English, an instance of local language preference. In line 3, participant AAA attempts to repair the use of French right after it has occurred. On the level of talk organization, this attempt can be explained in terms of "preference for self-correction" (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977). However, the fact that a repair is attempted also seems to point to a claim by AAA that BBB is not competent in French. In line 4, BBB rejects that definition and reveals her competence in French by providing the repair. In other words, BBB is perceived by AAA as not being competent in French, but in reality he is, as revealed in the talk. In this respect, (9) is even more explicit. AAA is constructed not to be competent in Castilian, as revealed by the order placement in line 8. However, as the change-of-state token in line 7 indicates, AAA is competent in Castilian for all practical purposes, since she seems to have followed BBB's and CCC's talk in lines 3–6.

Language preference as a categorization device

In the second section, we outlined the notion of social identity as seen from an MCA perspective. We saw that, from this perspective, identity is membership in a categorization device. In social action, people "do" identities: Identity is an interactional accomplishment. We have just developed the notion of language preference and have seen that it can be either competence-related or ideology-related. Further, we have shown that language preference is an interactional accomplishment. In this final section, we want to draw on insights gained so far and show how the question of relating language alternation and social identity can be resolved. As will be made clear, this issue is resolved if language preference is seen as a membership categorization device.

As a starting point, consider Figure 2, a portion of a customer form used by an optician based in the Barcelona area. As the form indicates, the optician uses language preference as a categorization device to sort her customers for the purposes of record-keeping.[7] Although this record-keeping practice does not neces-

DATOS PERSONALES
(Personal Data)

Nombre y apellidos: (Name and surnames)		**Fecha visita:** (Date of examination)
Dirección: (Address)		**Tel.:** (Telephone number)
Población: (Town)		**Idioma:** (Language)
F. nacimiento: (Birth date)	**Profesión:** (Profession)	**Sexo:** (Sex)

FIGURE 2: Optician's customer form.

sarily mean that, in her daily interaction with customers, the optician orients to their language preference, it establishes beyond doubt that, in social contexts where more than one language is available, language preference is or can be used as a categorization device.

Further evidence of the use of language preference as a categorization device can be found in the literature, albeit indirectly. For instance, Lazareton 1997 has studied the processes whereby learners are sorted into language-based categories "for the purposes of educating them" (Mehan 1991). In the study, learners were being sorted into categories of those who needed to be admitted into ESL classes and those who did not. Lazareton found that, during interviews, learners deprecated their competence in English in order to be admitted into those classes. In other words, learners categorized themselves as lacking competence in English (competence-related preference) in order to influence the outcome of interviews. For learners, and indeed for interviewers, lack of competence in English and recruitment into ESL classes formed a bound pair. Even more relevant for our concerns are Rampton's (1995, 1998) studies. Rampton has investigated language choice among multi-ethnic adolescents in London. He noticed that the youth in his data claimed competence (or lack of it) in the various languages found in the setting for purposes of accomplishing LANGUAGE CROSSING. Because it draws heavily on shared ideological assumptions about the various languages for its communicative effect, crossing can be seen as an instance of ideology-related preference in action.

Therefore, our claim is that, in the data we are considering, participants use language preference as a categorization device in order to accomplish the practical activity of talking. Support for this claim can be found in episodes of talk where participants engage in more or less explicit medium-negotiation sequences. In (1), for instance, through the question in line 2, BBB categorizes himself as a speaker of English and asks AAA to join him in a togethering device. The same work is accomplished in (2), although in a less explicit manner. In both extracts,

participants are doing, for the purposes of talking, exactly the same work as the above-mentioned optician does for the purposes of record-keeping. In both cases, people – interlocutors in the extracts and customers in the case of the optician – are being sorted into language-based categories. Even in less explicit cases of medium negotiation such as (4) and (5), the same work is accomplished. By adopting a particular language, speakers reveal their self-categorization, and, by virtue of the consistency rule, they hope that interlocutors will align themselves within the same category. Because speakers enjoy more or less EQUAL RIGHTS (Wilson 1989), especially in nonformal interaction, a proposed category may be adopted immediately, as in (5), but it may also be rejected and a new bid put forward, as in (4). Thus if language preference is seen as a categorization device, all the instances of medium-selection activities we have observed in the data can be accounted for in a unitary fashion.

As we indicated at the outset, apart from medium selection, the relationship between language alternation and social identity can be studied in the sites of medium repair and medium suspension. On the level of talk organization, these two sites have in common that speakers deviate temporarily from the current medium. On this level, they are also different because, in medium repair, the new language is seen as a repairable matter, while in medium suspension, language choice is seen as functional. The work that identity accomplishes in these two sites can be understood by reference to some of the properties of social identity in practical social action we have referred to above. As we have seen, people have multiple identities. In social action, not all of one's identities are relevant at all times. One need not stick to the same identity. It is along these lines that language preference works in the sites mentioned.

In the case of medium repair, participants suspend one identity in favor of another in order to overcome a local interactional difficulty. In (7), for example, AAA suspends her identity as a speaker of English in favor of her identity as a speaker of Castilian in order to overcome an interactional difficulty that has arisen. Once this difficulty has been jointly overcome, the former identity is reestablished (line 5 onward). In order to solve the current problem, AAA changes the existing participant constellation by drawing DDD into the talk. Because DDD has so far been only a bystander, her language preference must be established as soon as she officially joins the talk. In this instance, probably drawing on episode-external factors, she is categorized as a speaker of Catalan.

In the case of medium suspension, in contrast, participants depart temporarily from the identity they have adopted so far, not because of any difficulty on the level of current medium but rather to enhance expressivity. In (8), for example, although BBB has failed to get AAA's point, the difficulty has nothing to do with the use of English as the medium. To clarify his point, AAA uses the method of medium suspension through what we have referred to as "language display." In so doing, he reveals his language preference in Castilian and, at the same time, he shows that he believes that BBB shares this identity. BBB ratifies this categori-

zation in line 4 by revealing understanding of the work that the identity 'speaker of Castilian' was meant to accomplish in the interaction.

At this point, a problem arises as to why the consistency rule applies in the case of medium selection, but not in the cases of medium repair and medium suspension. In terms of talk organization, the difference between medium selection on the one hand, and medium repair and medium suspension on the other, is described by Auer 1984, 1995, who refers to the first as CODE-SWITCHING and the latter as TRANSFER. According to Auer, these two differ in that code-switching leads to a new medium ("language of interaction"), while transfer does not. In other words, Auer's category of code-switching corresponds with what we refer to as medium selection. In our approach, Auer's "transfer" can be divided into two categories: medium suspension and medium repair. In Auer's framework, the difference between code-switching and transfer is not made clear, since he does not show why transfer does not lead to a new medium.

If language preference is seen as a categorization device, not only can the difference between Auer's categories be explained; subtle differences within transfer also become visible. In all three cases (medium selection, medium repair, and medium suspension), the possibility of language alternation leading to a new medium is there by virtue of the consistency rule. In medium selection, however, the consistency rule is licensed to apply, while in the case of medium repair and medium suspension, it is blocked through a variety of devices. In (6), the consistency rule is blocked through AAA's attempt to repair the occurrence of French. In (7), it is blocked through repetition, trailing off, and change of participant constellation. In both examples, the boundedness of the new identity is visible to all participants and to analysts as well. In (6), for example, BBB's recognition of the boundaries of AAA's language preference in French is indicated through the actual repair (line 4) and is ratified in line 5 by AAA. Through the repair, CCC indicates that he has not taken AAA's switch into French to be an invitation to join him in a togethering. In (7), recognition of the boundaries of the identities 'speaker of Castilian' and 'speaker of Catalan' is revealed through CCC's evaluation in line 8; that recognition is confirmed by AAA in line 9. In line 8, CCC indicates that he has not taken other participants' choices as an invitation to join in.

Similarly, in the instance of medium suspension in (9), several devices are used to block the consistency rule. First, in line 3, AAA acknowledges the problem BBB is having (*yeah*). In line 4, BBB evaluates AAA's talk as meant to clarify the local problem experienced in lines 1 and 2. In line 5, AAA confirms BBB's evaluation. Through these activities, participants have concertedly achieved a common understanding that the activity of medium suspension – and therefore, the identity that allows it – has no effect beyond this local level. Finally, consider what happens in (9). AAA has followed the talk between BBB and CCC. In line 7, she reveals understanding of that talk. Through the change-of-state token, she may be seen to claim membership to the same language togethering with the other two participants. However, in a way that suggests that these other participants do

not consider her to be part of the same device, BBB reformulates the order, specifically for AAA and in English. In this way, AAA is officially excluded from BBB's and CCC's togethering, although she had oriented to the possibility of joining it. The possibility for the consistency rule to apply has demonstrably been there all along, and, for it not to apply, it becomes necessary to undertake some noticeable action. Briefly, if language preference is seen as a categorization device, not only does it become possible to account for the totality of our data, but it also becomes possible to account for it in subtle detail.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between language alternation and social identity has long interested researchers. During the last few years, however, researchers have grown increasingly dissatisfied with current models of that relationship, which explain specific instances of language alternation by reference to the social values of the languages involved in the society at large. Our aim in this article has been to contribute an alternative understanding of the relationship between language alternation and social identity. For any understanding of the relationship between language alternation and social identity, we have argued, both a theory of language alternation and a theory of social identity are required.

We have adopted an organizational perspective whereby language alternation is seen as consisting of various medium-related activities: medium selection, medium repair, and medium suspension. We have also adopted a "praxis perspective" (Banks 1988) on social identity, known as Membership Categorization Analysis, which sees social identity in the practical acts it occasions. A third important concept in our discussion has been language preference. Following Auer, we have argued that language preference consists of participants' claims for themselves and for each other of language-related attributes, which may be competence-related or ideology-related. Drawing on these three theoretical views, our claim has been that, in order to accomplish medium-related activities, participants in interaction categorize themselves and one another in terms of language preference; and more specifically, our claim is that language preference is itself a categorization device, a social identity.

APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions

Roman:	Catalan
Bold:	**Castilian**
Italics:	*English*
Bold and italics:	***Other language***
Single-underlined	Single-underlined utterances correspond to those stretches of talk where the language cannot be clearly identified as Castilian or Catalan by the researcher. A typical case is when a given utterance is the same in the two languages.

Double-underlined	Double-underlined utterances correspond to stretches of talk that cannot be clearly identified as Castilian, Catalan or English.
(.)	Pause. No need has been felt to indicate the length of pauses because pauses are not analytically significant for present purposes.
//	Overlapping material
. . .	Trailing off
:	Lengthening

Free translation into English is provided immediately after each extract.

NOTES

* Research for this study has been partially conducted with the support of grant 1998BEAI200015 awarded by the Comissionat per a Universitat i Recerca of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya).

[1] In this essay, "language alternation," instead of "code-switching," is used as an umbrella term for different types of language contact phenomena because of the disagreement among researchers as to what counts as code-switching. By "language alternation," we mean any occurrence of two (or more) languages in the same conversation.

[2] Although we have limited ourselves to these three settings, the corpus as a whole includes two other service settings, a chamber of commerce and an airline company head office.

[3] See Mar-Molinero 1990 for a description of the linguistic configuration of the Spanish state.

[4] Plain corresponds to Castilian stretches of talk and bold to English ones.

[5] DDD is actually the fieldworker.

[6] The notion of 'transnational community' and the role of English in such a community may be relevant here. However, a discussion of that notion is beyond the scope of this paper.

[7] Translation of the form into English is provided in brackets under the original Castilian. Our thanks are due to L.T. for providing us with their customer form.

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(Received 8 September 2000; accepted 24 September 2001)