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Eva Ogiermann

# On the inclusive and exclusive functions of the ‘other’ language in family talk

**Abstract:** The present study analyses bilingual conversations taking place in binational families living in the UK. The focus is on two Polish/English step-families, where the Polish mothers’ concern with preserving and developing their children’s linguistic and cultural identity collides with the English partner’s limited knowledge of Polish. While the paper takes a CA approach to bilingual conversation (Auer 1984; Li 1994), it shows that even when language choice is rational and participant- rather than discourse-related, it can have a crucial impact on the discourse identities of the participants in the interaction. The application of Goffman’s participation framework (1981) to the analysis of the data makes it possible to investigate different functions of and motivations for language choice and their impact on the participation status of the English participants – as well as their identity.

**Keywords:** binational families, Polish, English, code-switching, participation framework, identity

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## 1 Introduction

When the United Kingdom opened its borders to the new members of the European Union after its enlargement in 2004, it was estimated that between 5,000 and 13,000 people would move from the new EU countries into the UK every year (Drinkwater *et al.* 2009: 165). By December 2006, over 550,000 EU8 migrants entered the UK; and 65 percent of them were from Poland (*ibid.*). This unexpected migration movement, significantly increasing the number and changing the composition of immigrants in the UK, has attracted considerable attention from media and scholars alike. Numerous publications engaging with this new wave of Polish immigrants have appeared over the last few years, including not only statistical reports and scholarly papers, but even popular books with titles such as *Hello, I’m your Polish neighbour* (Moszczyński 2010).

Research on Polish immigration has investigated numerous aspects of the migration process itself and the immigrants' lives in the UK. Scholars have looked at migration flows and motivation as well as the different factors that determine its temporary or permanent character (White 2010). The role of the family and its participation in the migration process has also received considerable attention (White 2010; Moskal 2011), with some studies focusing on how Polish families operate transnationally (Moskal 2011; Ryan 2011).

Work on Polish migrants' experiences of integration into UK communities (White 2010; Cook *et al.* 2011) shows how they negotiate their identities and position themselves in relation to other ethnic groups in the UK (Ryan 2010). Research has also been conducted on various issues related to the preservation of Polish identity, such as the role of food habits in creating a Polish home (Rabikowska 2010), the emergence of Polish shops (Rabikowska & Burrell 2009) and the relationship between the use of Polish language and identity (Temple 2010).

At the same time, several authors discuss the problems Polish migrants encounter in dealing with their new lives in the UK (Galasiński & Galasińska 2007; Galasińska & Kozłowska 2009) and their struggle to achieve normalcy (Lopez Rodriguez 2010). Still others draw attention to the phenomenon of highly-educated Polish immigrants working in low-skilled jobs (Currie 2007; Trevena 2011).

Interaction between Polish immigrants and UK citizens (Ryan 2010; Cook *et al.* 2011) has been mainly investigated in the workplace context (Trevena 2011; Datta 2009). However, most research addressing questions related to Polish migrants' process of integration has focused on how they cope with living in the UK rather than how they interact with British people. Furthermore, the information that can be derived from the above-cited studies is based on elicited data, most commonly interviews (with the exception of Galasińska's work on internet discourse, e.g. Galasińska & Kozłowska 2009; Galasińska 2010).

The present study differs in that it provides insights into the lives of Polish migrants who have reached a very advanced level of integration, namely those who have married a UK citizen and founded a family in the UK. And it does so by analysing video-recordings of their family lives and interactions that take place in two languages. Unlike the great majority of research on identity in intercultural contexts (including contributions to this issue), this paper focuses on the impact of bilingual language practices on the British partner, thus shifting questions of identity towards the concerns of the members of the receiving society.

## 2 Theoretical background

The present study combines the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach to bilingual interaction (Auer 1984; Li 1994) with Goffman's concept of footing in order to demonstrate how identity operates in bilingual interaction. Traditional CA research rejects the relevance of macro-factors for the analysis of identities in interaction, regarding identities as something that is done rather than given. Hence, CA studies tend to focus on how participants orient to locally relevant membership categories (Schegloff 2007), often juxtaposing situated identities with discourse identities (Zimmerman 1998) or social structure identities, such as parent vs. child, with locally relevant identities, such as guest vs. host (Butler & Fitzgerald 2010). This study, in contrast, links locally constructed discourse identities to language competence and preference in bilingual interaction.

Early work on bilingual interaction (e.g. Gumperz 1982), which established a systematic relationship between code-switching and macro-factors, was conducted in diglossic contexts. The functional distribution between a minority language spoken in a bilingual community and a majority language spoken in the wider society has led the researchers to suggest a 'we-code/they-code' distinction. Interestingly, a similar pattern has emerged from analyses of interactions involving different generations of immigrants, with the children's use of the host society's language becoming the 'we-code' and the parents' native language the 'they-code' (Jørgensen 1999).

At the other extreme, Gafaranga (2001) successfully applies 'ethnomethodological indifference' (Garfinkel & Sacks 1970) to multilingual data, demonstrating that language alternation can well be a code in its own right. His sequential analyses of interactions in which code-switching constitutes the unmarked code of communication show that bilingual interactions can be analysed without taking into account the fact that different languages are involved.

Most researchers applying Conversation Analysis to the study of bilingual interaction, however, view macro-dimensions as relevant to the interpretation of code-switching. According to Auer, 'the wider social and cultural context of an interactional episode links up with conversational structure' (1999: 4), while Li emphasises the need to link 'the sequential analysis of code-switching in conversation to the rational choice analysis of social motivations' (2005: 387). Auer distinguishes between two types of code-switching related to micro- and macro-factors respectively. Discourse-related switching results in changes in 'footing', making relevant the question 'why that language now?', while participant-related switching reflects the participants' (perceived) language preference or competence (1999: 8).

While there is ample research applying CA to bilingual interaction, the focus has been on contexts in which all participants are (more or less) competent in both languages involved in the conversation. Many studies have examined interactions taking place in international schools (Cromdal & Aronsson 2000; Cashman 2008; Greer 2008), while studies based on recordings of bilingual family interactions tend to address issues such as language shift across generations (Li 1994; Williams 2005; Del Torto 2008).

The present study, in contrast, analyses interactions involving the use of two languages in binational families in which not all family members are (fully) competent in both languages. Therefore, Goffman's work on footing, and in particular his participation framework, will be used to demonstrate the impact of language competence on participation status.

According to Goffman, a change in footing 'implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present' (1981: 128). Although Goffman recognises that changes in footing can be accomplished through code-switching (*ibid.*), his framework has rarely been applied to the analysis of bilingual interaction. Cromdal & Aronson's study of footing in bilingual play (2000) is a notable exception. It shows how children alternate languages as they switch between sequences of mocking or teasing and serious play.

Goffman's participation framework, i.e. the participation statuses of all participants in an interaction in relation to an 'act of speaking' (1981: 137), is particularly useful for the data analysed in the present paper as it distinguishes between different degrees of participation. Goffman introduces the concept of a ratified participant, while further differentiating between addressed and unaddressed ratified participants, as opposed to a bystander, who is merely overhearing or eavesdropping on the conversation.

He considers a variety of constellations, including a scenario where participants have merely visual access to an encounter. While he takes into account the specific participation status of a deaf person, the present study illustrates cases where a ratified participant is constrained by language competence. It investigates participation frameworks specific to many newly-formed binational families, where one parent's concern with preserving and developing the children's linguistic and cultural identity collides with the other parent's limited knowledge of the 'other' language. The recordings analysed in this study illustrate how family members, who are clearly ratified participants to the interactions taking place in their own home, orient to their participation status in conversations taking place in the 'other' language.

### 3 Data collection and participants

The data analysed in this paper come from a project investigating the linguistic resources for sharing responsibilities in English and Polish families, as well as mixed, English/Polish families.<sup>1</sup> A total of eighteen families were video-recorded and interviewed, including six binational families, five of which live in England and one in Poland. The recordings were made by the families themselves, mostly while they were having or preparing a meal. The total recording time amounts to over 25 hours, of which nearly 10 hours feature material from binational families. The interviews were conducted with the purpose of obtaining video-stimulated comments on the analysed fragments and learning more about the families' bilingual practices (Pomerantz 2005).

The use of the two languages is handled differently in each of the binational families, but the only family in which all family members are fluent in both Polish and English is the one living in Poland. In the families living in England, which are the focus of this study, the English partners' knowledge of Polish is limited to a small number of individual words and formulaic expressions, with the exception of one English participant who has acquired a good passive and basic active knowledge of Polish. In the present paper, I will analyse data from this family and the only other family living in the UK in which, despite the English partner's lack of competence in Polish, both Polish and English are used.

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 Magda and Leo

The first two interactions feature the Polish/English couple Magda and Leo, their daughter Laura (3) and Magda's son Adam (8), whose father is Polish and who was born in Poland. Leo has taken a great interest in the Polish language and culture since he met Magda and, since the birth of his daughter, has actively participated in the girl's acquisition of Polish. At the time of recording, his competence in Polish was, therefore, comparable to that of a 3-year-old

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child, enabling him to participate in all family conversations, which are characterised by a heavy use of code-switching.

#### 4.1.1 Deciphering a bilingual question

In the following fragment, Laura asks permission to have a piece of ice which fell out of the freezer as Magda was searching it for vegetables. The problem her parents face in this interaction is that they cannot understand what she is saying, nor determine which language she uses:

(1)

1. LAU: a:a<sub>ɨ</sub>
2. (2.2)
3. LAU: daddy<sub>ɨ</sub>
4. LEO: yeah:<sub>ɨ</sub>
5. LAU: *yogo haffu:n?*  
'???? ????'
6. (0.2)
7. LAU: *moge?*  
can.1SG  
'Can I'
8. MAG: have fun<sub>ɨ</sub>
9. (.)
10. LAU: *moge to?*  
can.1SG this  
'Can I have this?'
11. (0.2)
12. LEO: °did she [mean° can I have one
13. MAG: [*nie to jest FUJ*]=  
'No, this is yucky'
14. LEO: =*nie*  
'No'
15. (.)
16. MAG: *ten jest fuj baby: to jest >zimne bardzo<*  
this.M is yucky baby this is cold very  
'This is yucky baby, this is very cold'
17. (0.8)
18. MAG: *>ja potrzebuje<- wzięła do buzi*  
I need.1SG took.3SG to mouth  
'I need- she put it into her mouth'
19. (0.6)
20. LEO: what. *zostaw*  
leave.IMP  
'Leave it.'

21. (0.2)
22. MAG: *Laura nie jedz to- to jest lód z: zamrażarki nie↑dobrze*  
 Laura NEG eat.IMP this this is ice from freezer not good  
 'Laura don't eat it, it's ice from the freezer, bad'
23. LAU: *nie ja nie [jem]*  
 no I NEG eat.1SG  
 'No, I'm not eating'
24. MAG: [bardzo niedobre]  
 'Very bad'

This fragment starts with Laura trying to get her father's attention (lines 1–3), who reacts in line 4. Laura's next turn is recognisable as a question due to its rising intonation, but it is difficult to understand because of the child's pronunciation and the use of intra-turn code-switching. Her *yogo haffu:n* (line 5) becomes the trouble source for repair over the next five turns.

Conversational repair has been defined as a set of practices used to deal with problems of hearing, understanding or speaking (Schegloff *et al.* 1977). Repair suspends the ongoing activity until the trouble source is repaired. It can be initiated by either the speaker or the hearer, and it can be accomplished by either party, resulting in four different types of repair.

While these repair practices have been established on the basis of dyadic, monolingual interactions, problems of understanding are more likely to arise when more than one language is involved and speakers bring different levels of linguistic competence to the conversation. Work on family conversations involving different generations of immigrants has shown that repair can also be accomplished by a third party acting as a language broker in a repair sequence (Del Torto 2008; Bolden 2012). Gafaranga (2010), on the other hand, has introduced the term 'medium request' to refer to four different types of repair used by children who are passive bilinguals and want their parents to switch to their dominant language.

The repair sequence in the above fragment is much more complex as the trouble source is produced by a very young child who is not fully able to distinguish between her languages and whose pronunciation is not clear. Laura's turn in line 5 is met with silence, after which she repeats the first part of her turn, with a clearer pronunciation, making it identifiable as the Polish *mogę* ('can I'). In line 8, Magda offers a candidate understanding of the second part of Laura's original turn – or a phonetically close variant thereof – which she believes to be the English *have fun*.

Similar forms of repair have been discussed by Lanza (2007), who partly draws on Ochs's work (1988) on language acquisition of Samoan children, but neither her 'minimal grasp strategy', whereby the 'adult indicates no compre-



hension of the child's language choice', nor what she terms 'adult repetition', whereby the parent repeats 'the content of the child's utterance using the other language' (2007: 56) correspond to Magda's attempt at finding a phonetically close equivalent.

In line 10, Laura rephrases her turn as *moge to* ('can I this?'). Although this is not visible in the recording, it is highly probable that the deictic *to* ('this') is accompanied by a gesture pointing to the ice, which makes the utterance interpretable as a request.

Leo's next turn, produced in English, is an unusual case of repair solution. He identifies the second part of Laura's utterance as *have one*, thus deciphering Laura's bilingual request. But although Leo is able to finally provide the second pair part to his daughter's question, rather than attending to the ongoing interaction and providing Laura with a response, he reconstructs her original turn. By consulting Magda's opinion on the exact phrasing of his daughter's turn and referring to Laura in the third person Leo changes footing from 'talking *to* a child' to 'talking *about* a child', which is accomplished in English.

In overlap, Magda responds to Laura's request in Polish by declining it and explaining that the ice is *yucky*. Leo then supports Magda by saying *nie* ('no') in Polish (line 14), which is followed by further explanations provided by Magda (line 16). In line 18, Magda, still speaking Polish, changes the topic but then abandons her turn and notices that Laura has put a piece of ice into her mouth after all. Leo responds with the English *what* directed at Magda, followed by the Polish *zostaw* ('leave it') directed at Laura, again showing that English is the language Leo uses to speak *about* the children and Polish the language he prefers to speak *to* the children. The remaining dialogue between Magda and Laura continues in Polish.

The above fragment discusses an interactional problem caused by Laura's imperfect pronunciation in producing a turn in which she uses two different languages. The parents have different approaches to solving this problem: while the mother responds to the child's request as soon as the trouble source is repaired, the father changes footing as he reconstructs his child's bilingual turn. Although he shows a clear preference for English when discussing Laura's linguistic behaviour with his wife, he switches to Polish when addressing her directly (lines 14 and 20).

Magda consistently uses Polish when addressing Leo and Laura, while Leo alternates between the languages. While his use of Polish with Laura seems to be participant-related, with Polish being the language he prefers to speak to his daughter, his use of English to address Magda can also be interpreted as an instance of discourse-related code-switching, with the footing changing to meta-talk devoted to interpreting Laura's speech.

## 4.1.2 Claiming membership

In the following fragment, Leo is cooking Sunday roast and the rest of the family are having tea in the kitchen and keeping him company:

(2)

1. MAG: ((to LAU)) *weż zjedz ↑gruszke*  
take.IMP eat.IMP pear  
'Have a pear.'
2. (0.5)
3. MAG: ((to ADA)) *chcesz też grusz- ((hiccups)) gruszke?*  
want.2SG also pea- pear  
'Do you also want a pear?'
4. LAU: *>nie ciem<*  
NEG want.1SG  
'I don't.'
5. (0.2)
6. ADA: *°nie dziękuję°*  
no thank.1SG  
'No, thank you.'
7. (1.6)
8. ADA: ((burps))
9. MAG: ((to LEO)) *>she's drinking milk<*
10. LEO: ((to LAU)) *MLEKO?*  
'Milk?'
11. LAU: ((nods))
12. ADA: (° °)
13. (0.6)
14. MAG: ((to LEO)) *chcesz herbatki?*  
want.2SG tea.DIM  
'Do you want tea?'
15. (0.4)
16. LEO: *JA nie (°hm°)*  
I not  
'I don't.'
17. ADA: hm::
18. (.)
19. LEO: *↑£ kawę proszę £.*  
coffee.ACC beg.1SG  
'Coffee, please.'
20. MAG: *Enie, zrób sobie sam£*  
no make.IMP REFL yourself.M  
'No, make it yourself.'
21. LEO: *£no co ty£*  
PARTICLE what you  
'Are you joking?'



In line 24, Adam repeats Leo's words while mocking Laura's pronunciation, thus taking up another recurrent situation, namely his sister's way of picking up new expressions. Laura's attention, however, has been caught by Magda's words in line 20, which she reproduces three times while varying the grammatical gender of the word *yourself* – a form of exercise through which she internalises the expression used by her mother.

The above fragment not only provides an example of a bilingual child's language acquisition, but also of an English father's forms of participation in conversations taking place in Polish. It shows that in a family context, being addressed in one's native language rather than the language in which an ongoing conversation takes place can be interpreted not only as an ascription of incompetence and exclusion from the group of bilingual speakers (as in Cashman 2005 or Greer 2008), but also as a form of exclusion from one's own family.

## 4.2 Agata and John

The next two fragments feature John, who is English, and Agata, who is Polish but, at the time of recording, had been living in the US and then the UK for over 10 years. Both have children from previous marriages who also participate in the recordings. Agata's son Chris (8) lives with them, and John's son Walter (15) lives with his biological mother but spends the weekends with John and Agata. John's knowledge of Polish does not go beyond individual words and Walter does not speak Polish at all.

Agata is very consistent in speaking Polish to Chris so that he gets to practice his mother tongue. As John and Walter do not speak Polish, this creates an imbalance in the participation framework prevalent in the family. Agata is the one who decides which parts of her conversations with Chris need to be shared with the rest of the family and which are not relevant to them and can be exchanged in Polish. Even though this arrangement excludes John from conversations that take place in Polish, during the interview he explained that he understands the need for Chris to speak Polish and trusts his wife that whatever is said in Polish does not concern him.

While most of the recorded conversations follow this arrangement, with Agata addressing Chris and Chris responding in Polish, as well as John accepting these conversations as not relevant to him, the following two fragments illustrate situations deviating from this pattern.

### 4.2.1 Refusing to speak the other language

Prior to the start of this transcript, Chris offers to help in the kitchen and John asks him to grate cheese. Chris has never grated cheese before, so John first demonstrates how this is done. As Chris is grating the cheese, Agata enters the kitchen:

(3)

1. CHR: mummy look I'm grating chee::se=
2. AGA: =\*uhm::: >ślicznie<  
                  'beautiful'  
                  *\*pats Chris on the head*
3. (2.8)
4. AGA: ((to JOH)) uh the cheese goes on top yeah;
5. JOH: >yeah cheese goes on top<
6. (1.5)
7. CHR: look at all that chee:se
8. (3.4)
9. AGA: ((tries to open drawer next to Chris))
10. CHR: A:: cheese cheese on cheese
11. AGA: \*przepraszam słonko przesuń się  
          apologise.1SG sun.DIM move REFL  
          'Excuse me sweetie, move aside.'  
          *\*gently moves Chris aside*
12. AGA: ((opens drawer))
13. CHR: don't you see me grating chee:se he:re
14. (0.2)
15. AGA: ((playfully)) no i co:ż  
          PARTICLE and what  
          'So what?'

In the above extract, Chris addresses his mother in English. There are various reasons why he does not speak Polish in this particular situation. Not only does his turn refer to a new task which he has learnt in English, and it is unlikely that he knows the Polish word for 'grate', but the choice of English also broadens his audience to include John, the person who has taught him the new skill.

Although Agata responds in Polish, the prosodic and non-verbal features of her turn, i.e. the stretched sound of recognition and the patting of Chris's head (line 2) make her response understandable to John as an expression of praise and admiration.

The next seven lines, including two turns exchanged between Agata and John and another two turns produced by Chris, are all in English, and all revolve around the cheese. The linguistic choices and prosodic features used by Chris illustrate his fascination with the newly learnt task.

In line 11, Agata, after trying to access the drawer partially blocked by Chris, now switches back to Polish and asks him to move aside, thus introducing a change of footing away from Chris' 'performance' to practical matters. Again, the accompanying non-verbal behaviour allows John to follow the interaction. Chris formulates his response (line 13) in English, thus resisting the mother's language choice as well as the change of footing. The phrase *Don't you see* expresses irritation and transforms his response into a complaint. Chris not only portrays grating cheese as an important task from which he should not be distracted, but simultaneously resists becoming part of a participation framework that excludes John.

Agata seems unimpressed and remains consistent as she responds in Polish (line 15), her *No i co?* ('So what?') apparently refusing to accept grating cheese as a legitimate reason for standing in someone's way.

The above fragment shows that Agata is very consistent in providing language input for Chris. While she speaks English to John, when responding to Chris's turns, which are all formulated in English, she switches back to Polish throughout the conversation. At the same time, her turns contain enough prosodic and non-verbal features for their meaning to be derived by John.

This fragment illustrates an interesting tension between the habitual language choice patterns and the novelty of the task. Chris has not only learnt this task in English, but has initiated a dialogue about it in English. He is clearly proud of himself, and by formulating his enthusiastic exclamations in English and resisting his mother's language choice, he reaches a wider audience, including a non-addressed participant who taught him the new skill.

While in this excerpt language choice is used with the aim of including more participants, the following fragment illustrates a situation where a ratified participant orients to the fact that he feels excluded from a conversation in the 'other' language. This happens while the family are cooking dinner together. Chris is cutting mushrooms, Walter is in charge of the wok and John and Agata move around the kitchen and oversee the children.

#### 4.2.2 Resisting exclusion

(4)

1. CHR: ((to JOH)) <the mushrooms over here are nearly done>
2. JOH: well done Chris, you can chuck them in when you want
3. (3.0)
4. WAL: ((to JOH)) <I'll put the:se vegetables> here °then°
5. (0.6)
6. JOH: [okay

7. AGA: ((to CHR)) [*no jak ci idzie*]  
PARTICLE how you.DAT go.3SG  
'How is it going?'
8. WAL: ((to JOH)) [*all*] of it?
9. CHR: ((to AGA)) [*dobrze*]  
'okay'
10. JOH: yeah let's just check the meat first.
11. ((*checks the meat in the wok*))
12. JOH: °yep° uhm no it's not cooked look at that actually (look at  
13. that) it's pink
14. WAL: no dad <you're meant to put some foods in while>
15. AGA: ((*starts putting mushrooms cut by Chris into a bowl*))
16. WAL: [( )]
17. JOH: [no I understand that but with chicken it's got [to be  
18. CHR: ((to AGA)) [MAMA  
19. JOH: *absolutely*  
20. CHR: [MAMUŚ  
mama-DIM  
'Mummy!']
21. AGA: [NIE TE \*CO PRZECIĄŁEŚ ODKładam [na bok °czekaj (no)°  
no these that cut.2SG.PAST put away.1SG to side wait PARTICLE  
'No, those that you have already cut I'm putting on the side.'
22. JOH: \*((glances at AGA and CHR)) [°absolutely ( the  
23. mushrooms can be° [put in] as well [cause they take as long to cook  
24. CHR: [mamuś  
mama.DIM  
'Mummy!']
25. AGA: [a te co pełne nie no  
and these that full not PARTICLE  
'and those that are whole I'm not'
26. CHR: *mamuś \*on \*po [wiedział żeby] WRZU:CIĆ*  
Mama.DIM he say.3SG.PAST to throw in  
'Mummy he told me to throw them in!'
27. JOH: \*((looks at CHR))
28. CHR: \*((looks at JOH))
29. AGA: [DOBRZE *dobrz-*]  
'okay okay'
30. AGA: *okay. wrzucaj.*  
okay throw in.IMP  
'Okay, throw them in.'
31. (.)
32. AGA: *no ale jeszcze nie przeciąłeś °wszystkich°*  
PARTICLE but still not cut.2SG.PAST all  
'But you haven't cut all of them yet.'
33. (.)

34. AGA: *tu jeszcze są nie przecięte dlatego od↑kła:dam te przecięte*  
 here still are not cut therefore put away.1SG these cut  
 'Here are some that aren't cut yet so I am putting away the cut ones.'
35. [synek  
 son.DIM  
 'My boy.'
36. CHR: [mama nie odkła:daj  
 mama NEG put away.IMP  
 'Mama, don't put them away.'
37. (.)
38. AGA: [°dobrze°  
 'Okay.'
39. JOH: [Walter do you understand what Chris and uh Aga are saying]
40. WAL: NO
41. AGA: ((looks up and laughs))
42. (0.4)
43. CHR: good

The excerpt starts with Chris announcing the progress on the task bestowed upon him by John. While his announcement is potentially relevant to all the participants, John is the addressed ratified participant, which is why the turn is formulated in English. John responds by praising Chris, thus treating Chris's turn as an implicit request for acknowledgement, and gives him further instructions allowing him to put the mushrooms into the wok.

After a gap of 3 seconds, Walter informs John that he will put the vegetables into the wok (line 4), though the slow pronunciation and the addition of *then* at the end of his turn make it sound more like a request for permission, which is also reflected in John's response when he expresses agreement. In the meantime, Agata approaches Chris to see how he is doing (line 7). She switches to Polish and Chris responds in Polish, which makes their exchange unintelligible to John and Walter.

While Goffman introduces the concept of byplay, which is a form of subordinate communication 'manned, timed, and pitched to constitute a perceivedly limited interference' (1981: 133) to the ongoing talk, the exchange between Agata and Chris rather seems to be a case of schisming (Egbert 1997). Schisming is a feature of multiparty interaction and occurs when a participant 'introduces a turn oriented to a subset of coparticipants who break away from the ongoing conversation' (1997: 2). Schisming is thus characterised by the co-existence of two turn-taking systems and two distinct floors; oriented to by two sets of speakers engaging in two independent conversations – as the participants in the recording analysed here do.

Parallel to Chris's answer, Walter enquires whether he should put all the vegetables into the wok (line 8), which is followed by John's suggestion that



they should check the meat first; and which results in a dispute between father and son. When John establishes that the meat is still *pink* (lines 12–13), Walter disagrees with his father's assessment by producing an unmitigated dispreferred turn, followed by an account presenting his view of how to cook meat, which is pronounced slowly and distinctly, with exaggerated emphasis placed on five consecutive words.

As the father starts his explanation, he is interrupted by a loud *mama* from Chris (line 18), which is a reaction to Agata's attempt to help Chris with the mushrooms, initiating another schisming sequence. While John continues speaking, Chris protests again by crying out the Polish word *mother* for a second time, this time using the diminutive form (line 20). In overlap, Agata, in a rather loud voice, explains in Polish that she is putting away the cut mushrooms and leaving those that Chris still needs to cut.

While both John and Walter register the animated exchange between mother and son taking place in Polish, there is no visible reaction from Walter, and John only briefly glances at the two (line 22) and resumes the account directed at Walter (line 23). However, he completes his turn by stating that the mushrooms take as long to cook as does the chicken and, therefore, can be put into the wok. The reference to the mushrooms suggests that his turn is, at least in part, directed at Chris – and perhaps also Agata – and may be intended as a contribution to their dispute visibly revolving around the mushrooms.

While Agata continues with her explanation, Chris insists that John told him to put the mushrooms into the wok (line 26), though it is not clear whether he has heard John's turn in line 23 or is referring to the permission he was given at the beginning of the excerpt. In any monolingual conversation, or a bilingual conversation where all participants to the interaction are competent in both languages, a discussion of what a present participant has said gives that participant the opportunity to step in and clarify the situation. John's lack of competence in Polish, however, denies him this form of participation. Another possibility of solving the problem would be for Chris to switch to English. He is, however, so caught up in defending his position as the sole mushroom cutter that this solution does not occur to him. He is not only consistent in speaking Polish to his mother, but also uses the third person pronoun *on*, rather than John's name, which would allow John to derive the fact that he is the object of the conversation. Given that he has merely visual access to the Polish interaction, it is interesting to note that when Chris utters the pronoun *on* John looks at him and, only a fraction of a second later, Chris looks at John and their eyes meet (lines 27–28).

Agata first agrees with Chris by allowing him to throw the mushrooms in, apparently closing the sequence (lines 29–30), but then re-opens it and contin-

ues explaining that not all the mushrooms have been cut and she is merely making space for them. Chris rejects her explanations and explicitly tells her not to put the mushrooms away (line 36), which is followed by a final *okay* in line 38.

Whether or not John understood that he was being talked about from the eye contact he established with Chris, in line 39, it becomes apparent that he is interested in the lively conversation from which he has been excluded. However, rather than asking for a translation, he engages in what Goffman terms an 'innuendo', where a speaker 'ostensibly directing words to an addressed recipient, overlays his remarks with a patent but deniable meaning, a meaning that has a target more so than a recipient' (1981: 134). His question as to whether Walter understands a Polish conversation is clearly not one that he needs an answer to. By asking this question, he not only aligns with his son and offers a reconciliation with him after the argument they have just had; he also uses him as a 'mock receiver' (Duranti 1999: 301), with the 'target' of the question being clearly Agata. When Walter responds with a loud *no* (line 40), Agata reacts to the question by looking up and laughing, thus displaying understanding of John's strategy. Chris, however, interprets John's question as a genuine request for information as he utters a satisfied-sounding *good*.

The above fragment contains two conversations which are both related to the ongoing activity and are similar in that both feature a disagreement between parent and child, but they are fully independent of each other as they take place in different languages. While Goffman did take into account a situation where 'two differently manned encounters can occur under conditions of mutual accessibility' (1981: 135), the above analysis illustrates a constellation where the accessibility is not mutual.

Agata's use of Polish when talking to Chris is strictly preference-related, in that it follows her strategy of language input, which is an arrangement independent of the analysed conversation and agreed upon with John. But even though her use of Polish is not discourse-related, it still has an impact on John's participation status. Being a family member and not only involved but in charge of the activity, John is clearly a ratified participant, but whenever he is not addressed, this reduces his status to a bystander who can merely derive meaning from prosodic and non-verbal features.

The analysis further illustrates that an arrangement where one person decides what is relevant to a monolingual participant to the interaction in choosing the language is problematic, in that things that at first appear irrelevant can become relevant in the course of the interaction. While checking on Chris's progress and trying to help him with the task is indeed not relevant to John, Chris's insistence on exactly following John's instructions does make it

relevant for him. John's manipulation of the participation framework seems to challenge the legitimacy of the conversation taking place in Polish and communicates his desire to be treated as a ratified participant.

## 5 Discussion and conclusion

While the past decades have witnessed a rapidly growing interest in interactional approaches to bilingual talk, the present study investigates an under-researched but increasingly prevalent bilingual context. The parallel use of two languages analysed here is typical of many newly-formed binational (step-)families. In such contexts, language choice is mainly determined by two conflicting factors, namely the immigrant parent's concern for their children to acquire and maintain their native language *and* the need to include (and feel included by) all members of the family in the conversations.

The present paper shows how this tension is dealt with in two Polish/English families. Both families follow a similar arrangement of the mother addressing the children in Polish, but they differ in terms of the English partner's knowledge of Polish. Magda speaks Polish to the children throughout the two extracts and mostly also to Leo. The only turn in which she addresses Leo in English results in him switching back to Polish and addressing his child. Leo shows a preference for speaking Polish to Laura and being addressed in Polish. He speaks both languages to Magda, though English is preferred for serious talk and Polish for banter. At the same time, these changes in footing are clearly related to Leo's language competence, so that code-switching serves both participant- and discourse-related functions.

The use of a 'one-person/one-language' strategy is more systematic in the second family, where two family members speak English only. Polish is the language spoken between Agata and Chris, who switch to English in conversations involving John and Walter. However, as my analysis has shown, the distinction between conversations relevant to John and Walter, taking place in English, and those not relevant to them, conducted in Polish, is not always straightforward. In extract (3) Chris resists his mother's language choice as he consistently switches back to English, thus disagreeing that their conversation is irrelevant to John. Extract (4), on the other hand, shows Chris and Agata engaging in a dispute taking place in Polish, which does become relevant to John as it unfolds.

The analysis further illustrates that John and Leo both orient to language choice as a form of exclusion. Leo's use of Polish in response to a turn addressing him in English can be interpreted as a strategy displaying language compe-

tence and claiming group membership. While Leo resists being excluded from the rest of his Polish speaking family, John draws Agata's attention to his exclusion caused by a longer stretch of talk taking place in Polish. Unlike Leo, he does not have the means to enter the conversation directly, but he finds a subtle way of addressing his participation status by using his son as a mock receiver. On the other hand, the data from both families illustrate strategies of inclusion. Chris accomplishes this by persistently switching back to English, while Magda does so by engaging Leo in a familiar Polish dialogue.

On the whole, the present paper provides further evidence that participant-related language choice often has discourse-related functions as well. On the one hand, the mothers' consistent use of Polish with their children is clearly a rational choice, independent of the sequential unfolding of the interaction. Chris' insistence on speaking English, on the other hand, is local and strategic as it provides him with a wider audience, though neither Agata nor John orient to this marked choice. At the same time, Leo's use of code-switching indicates changes of addressee as well as footing.

While language competence functions as a crucial macro-factor determining language choice in the analysed interactions, it also affects the participants' discourse identities as the English husbands' limited knowledge of Polish can turn the other participants' language choice into a very sensitive issue. Goffman (1981) argues that participation frameworks are generated in conversation – and the present study clearly confirms their emergent character. While previous studies have already demonstrated that changes of footing accomplished by code-switching 'often project changes of participation frameworks' (Cromdal & Arronson 2000: 453), in the context of binational families these changes have a particularly large impact on the participants' identity. Magda's and Agata's language choices affect Leo's and John's participation status, the extent to which they can be part of interactions taking place in their home, and feel a full member of their family.

The present study has shown that in recently formed binational families, factors such as language competence or arrangements allowing a child to acquire both parents' languages determine much of the conversation without being explicitly addressed. At the same time, arrangements of language choice may need to be adjusted to the context of the ongoing interaction, as they affect not only the participants' discourse identities, but also their sense of belonging and their identity as members of an intercultural family.

## Bionote

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