Code-switching and Preference Marking: Disagreement in Persian/Azerbaijani Bilingual Conversation

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1. Introduction

The idea of studying bilingual interaction from a conversation analytic (CA) perspective took off seriously during the last two decades of the 20th century (Li Wei, 2002: 159). It began against the background of the quantitative analysis of grammatical patterns in bilingual data, and of the macro-level sociolinguistic analysis of external factors affecting language choice. The advantages of the CA approach are that it facilitates the analysis of fragmentary and unidealized data, and gives primacy to interpretations that are demonstrably oriented towards participant actions rather than towards global social categories.

The aim of this article is to describe how the bilingual participants manage disagreement in talk-in-interaction. The analysis will focus on the creation and maintenance of opposition and the manner in which code-switching is used as one among several strategies in order to accomplish disagreement. The notion of preference, then, is regarded as both structural-based as well as practice-based (Schegloff, 1988c). As far as language preference is concerned, we can see that disagreements may (but not necessarily always) be handled through the use of contrastive language choice. Using the CA approach to analyze the functions of code-switching gives a complex picture of the phenomenon.

However, the CA approach to bilingual interaction has been criticized for its over-emphasis on detailed transcription techniques, often with no attempt to explain the speakers' motivations regarding their code-switching. Another recurrent issue has been the monolingual and cultural bias of CA, which was originally developed on the American West Coast, with a focus on American English. The disciplinary heterogeneity of the researchers who use the CA approach to bilingual interaction, often with diverse agendas, has led to confusion and misreading certain key concepts and procedures of this approach. One of these technical concepts discussed briefly below is 'preference'.

2. Preference marking in talk-in-interaction

In order to focus on the procedures of building opposition in conversation I will follow Goodwin's approach (1990: 144), and start by comparing the organization of opposition turns with that of talk displaying a preference for agreement. The concept of preference, as it is used in CA, is not intended to refer to the psychological motives of individuals. Rather, it refers to structural features of the design of turns associated with particular activities, by which participants can draw conventionalized inferences about the kinds of action a turn is performing. Schegloff has described the concept of preference as used in CA in two complementary ways, indicating some of the relevancies of the concept in a broader sense. One approach is represented by the work of Sacks, and focuses on how first pair parts can be designed to prefer certain seconds. In this approach, preference relates to structure in the following way:

"Whether a question prefers a 'yes' or a 'no' response is a matter of its speaker's construction of it… the preference is built into the sequence,
and is not a matter of the respondent's construction of the response. If the question is built to prefer 'yes', then 'no' is a dispreferred response, even if delivered without delay and in turn-initial position, and vice versa. (Schegloff 1988c: 453)

In the other approach, represented by much of the work by Pomerantz (1984a), the issue is thought of in terms of how second pair parts are designed.

"Speakers display the kind of action they are doing, and the kind of stance they take toward what they are doing, by their deployment of [dispreferred turn-shapes]... They do the response they do 'as a preferred' or 'as a dispreferred', rather than doing 'the preferred or dispreferred response.'" (Schegloff 1988c: 453)

In Pomerantz' data, then, disagreement is a dispreferred activity, and is organized and minimized through the use of phenomena such as delays in its occurrence, and prefaces that mitigate it when it finally appears. These two approaches are complementary in the sense that they both tell us something about the inferential properties of sequences. For instance, speakers may design first pair parts in particular ways in order to get certain social actions done. At the same time, certain kinds of first pair parts conventionally 'prefer' different second pair parts in different contexts (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998: 45-46). Another way of determining the preference structure of some sequence type involves the practices of response employed by the recipients of the first part. Preference organization is thus a powerful inferential device in talk-in-interaction. It seems that a general 'preference for agreement' operates in everyday interaction, but researchers have called for the need of attention to the context sensitivity of interaction. Kotthoff's study (1993) e.g. shows that as soon as arguments begin, the context specifications change and the consensus orientation ceases to dominate (see also Bilmes 1988; Goodwin 1990).

3. Preference in bilingual interaction

Li Wei (1998: 165) states that bilingual speakers often seem to combine both more usual monolingual discourse markers (e.g. hedges, delays, pauses) with code-switching to mark preference organization. Through his English-Cantonese data, he has also demonstrated that aside preference organization code-switching may as well contextualize issues such as turn-taking, pre- and embedded sequences, and the organization of repair. This works also parallel to the way in which various kinds of prosodic, phonetic and indeed non-verbal markings contextualize such phenomena in monolingual conversations.

However, one issue of confusion in the study of bilingual interaction stems from the very word preference. In earlier studies on bilingualism and code-switching, the common notion of language preference was often attributed in a quite fixed manner to participants. In many cases, this has meant that the native speaker of a minority language has been assumed to have the minority language as his/her preferred language, with the native speaker of the majority language having the majority language as his/her preferred language. Today it is common knowledge that this kind of simplistic division is in many cases not relevant. Instead, linguistic relations of bi- and/or multilingual speakers are much more complex.

Auer's (1998: 8) definition of language preference makes clear that individual speakers' preferences for one language or the other does not imply that any kind of psychological concept is at issue. Rather, the term refers to "the interactional processes of displaying and ascribing predicates to individuals." Torras and Garafanga (2002: 540) argue that Auer's definition points to two different aspects of language preference: one dealing with competence and the other with political considerations. The problem seems to be that "what surfaces in conversation will be the same sequential arrangement of language choices" (Auer 1995: 125). Torras & Garafanga (2002: 540) further argue that the two dimensions of language preference are conceptually different on the level of speech as practical action. Still, these dimensions of language preference lead to the same effect: language preference
might effect speech either on the level of its overall structure, or just on the level of its local organization.

In analyzing bilingual interaction, however, it should be kept in mind that a preferred action may but does not have to occur in the preferred language of the speaker. And, vice versa, a dispreferred action, e.g. a disagreement, may but does not necessarily have to be delivered in the dispreferred language of the speaker. Many studies on bilingual interaction (Alfonzetti 1998; Jørgenesen 1998) have shown that code-switching occurs for a number of different reasons simply in order to create contrast in the on-going conversation, such as changes in footing (Goffman 1979) and framing (Goffman 1974). In those cases, the language preference of the individual speakers or the direction of the switch do not play any significant role. Again, every single case must be analyzed individually in order to avoid mechanistic conclusions.

I agree with the complementing definition of preference organization given by Schegloff (1988c) and Li Wei's findings of the way bilingual speakers combine monolingual discourse markers with code-switching in order to contextualize, among other things, preference organization. As far as language preference is concerned, I refer to the notion in a non-CA manner, because there are too many cases in my data where it is impossible to decide whether language preference is or is not a 'psychological concept'.

4. Collection procedures and the data

The audio recordings took place in Tehran the fall of 1999 and were carried out by the younger brother in the family. The researcher was not present during this specific recording. The recording session was one of several recordings carried out in Tehran in a number of families during 1999 and 2000, and is a part of the field research carried out for my Ph.D. thesis.

The three related female participants in this session live close together in a family building, on separate floors. The participants are: the mother (M), the daughter (D), and the sister-in-law of the mother (S). They have different language preferences: the mother prefers Azerbaijani, the daughter Persian, and the sister-in-law both Azerbaijani and Persian. The mother was born and raised in one of the Azerbaijani provinces, and moved to the capital city when she married. Her daughter was born in Tehran, where she received her high school education. The sister-in-law was also born in Tehran, but belongs to an older generation than the daughter, and never finished school.

The codes of the conversation are Azerbaijani, Persian and stylized Persian (Rampton's definition, 1995: 52-53). Persian is the single official language in Iran, and has high prestige. Azerbaijani, as opposed to Persian - an Iranian language - is a Turkic language, and is the largest minority language in the country, as well as in the capital city of Tehran. The Azerbaijani language is heavily stigmatized (Nercissians, 2001: 63), but at the same time enjoys local prestige in the community as the in-group language. Unconfirmed estimated figures of the number of Azerbaijani speakers in Tehran vary from 1,5 to 6 million people (Bani-Shoraka, 2003). The Azerbaijani language in Iran, with all its dialects, is not yet standardized. The variety of stylized Persian refers to Persian pronounced with a heavy and exaggerated Azerbaijani accent, often indicating a non-serious and ridiculous tone of voice.

The main topic of this stretch of conversation is money-lending. It involves a business agreement where a person lends money to an investor for a given interest rate. These businesses are carried out on private initiatives and are very common, despite the fact that interest is forbidden according to Islamic law. The typical scenario for such a business is that it rarely involves two persons/parties. Instead, there is often a chain of middlemen/women involved, all expecting profit from on the one hand their own investment, and on the other, from involving another person in the business. Almost every actor, then, pays a certain amount of money as an investment as well as being charged a certain amount. This is no doubt a high-risk business. The sister-in-law at a certain point in the conversation mentions that she is in contact with a reliable investor, and with this comment catches the interest of the daughter. In contrast to the riskiness of this type of business, money lending as a conversation topic in this specific constellation is quite risk-free. All the participants present
are well aware that a business situation involving the daughter will never be realized. Since she is unmarried, any money that the daughter might have is still her father’s. Further, it would be regarded as highly unethical to involve a young inexperienced girl in such affairs. In the event she loses money, both the daughter and the sister-in-law would lose face. Despite this knowledge, the participants engage in this conversation as if it was something real.

The conversation style has been characterized as argumentative, due to the prevailing disagreement between the daughter and the sister-in-law, and as very informal because of the sensitive topic of money-lending. For this specific article, I have focused on a tape recording lasting two minutes and forty seconds, from which I have chosen five excerpts. In the analysis, I have chosen four strategies used to produce different kinds of dispreferred turn shapes by the participants: avoiding the question, silence, contrastive choices of code, and self-repetition. The last excerpt deals with the consensus reached among the participants, an issue frequently discussed in research on argumentative talk.

5. Analysis of Data

Excerpt 1: Avoiding the question

Earlier in the conversation, the sister-in-law has mentioned that she is in contact with a reliable investor, which catches the daughter’s interest. After several turns in Azerbaijani, the daughter self-initiates in turn 194, asking the sister-in-law a straightforward question about how much she would charge for involving her in the business. The daughter’s choice of a contrastive code marks a change in footing as well as frame, and she signals an intensification of her forthcoming request activity.

194 D>S {ma:i čegæ migiri}
<<how much (interest) do you charge per month?>>
195 S (hhh)
196 (1,0)
197 D>S domahiæ netsæ ver- [alisanda:
<<how much will you giv- charge for two months?>>
198 M>D [üšmin tüman ver jahænæm
<<give (her) three thousand toman, what the heil>>
199 S>M (XXX) -im da üšmin tüman =
<<three thousand toman is (XXX)>>
200 M>D = (X) dæ san pullusan da neinisæn dæ nææbær
<<but you are wealthy, what do you want to do, what is going on?>>
201 (2,0)
202 D>S næ: jeddæn čegæ migiri mæsan pusædezær tomæno
<<no, seriously, how much do you charge for like five hundred thousand toman?>>
203 S>D "neinisæn axe"
<<well, what are you up to>>>

The answer to the daughter’s question in turn 194 is absent. The sister-in-law apparently does not take the daughter’s question seriously. Instead of answering, she laughs, which is followed by a noticeable silence in turn 196. In Pomerantz’ terms (1984) this is a dispreferred second pair part in the adjacency pair, including laughter and withheld talk. The daughter
reformulates her question in turn 197, starting out in Persian but very soon code-switches to Azerbaijani. This can be seen as a number of strategies to accommodate: she specifies her question by giving a time frame, and she alternates language from her initial use of Persian to Azerbaijani, the original language of the conversation.

The mother overlaps the daughter in turn 198, suggesting that the daughter should lend a trifling sum of money. The mother's suggestion is almost on the border of being ridiculous, since three thousand toman (a monetary unit) is neither worth investing nor would it give any profit. Her utterance also has a noticeable jocular tone, and is a recurrent strategy of neutrality of hers in this stretch of argumentative talk. The daughter, by again posing such a straightforward question in turn 197, is directly challenging the sister-in-law, a face-threatening action since she is the younger one and therefore has a lower social status than the sister-in-law. The sister-in-law reacts in turn 199 with something that sounds like protest; the first part of her utterance is inaudible. In doing so she turns to the mother, again avoiding any response to the daughter.

The mother's turn in 200 is latched to the previous turn, and she questions the daughter's insistence in this matter. This may indicate that the mother also finds the action of the daughter very challenging. The daughter ignores her mother's question, expecting an answer from the sister-in-law. After a two-second pause in turn 201 she reformulates and upgrades her question a third time, now with a stronger formulation than before "no, seriously...". It is obvious that she does not feel that either the sister-in-law or the mother are taking her seriously. She also marks her re-framing through a contrastive language choice. In turn 203 the sister-in-law cannot ignore or avoid the daughter any longer. However, instead of an answer to the question, we see a dispreferred second pair part in the counter question posed by the sister-in-law. This can be seen as a way of avoiding or perhaps softening a refusal to answer the original question from turn 194, here again produced in a contrastive code.

Excerpt 2: Silence

After several turns and side sequences (turns 204-217) all produced in Azerbaijani, the daughter has built a case for herself, which will justify future demands. In the conversation dealing with her intentions of making money from this business, and whether she really possesses money of her own, she finally resorts to portraying an unfair situation, claiming that her younger brother has always been treated in a more favorable way than herself. In answer to a question from the sister-in-law as to how the younger brother, unlike the daughter, could be so successful in saving money, she argues that he receives paychecks from a family insurance company.

After a pause in turn 248, the daughter self-initiates in turn 249, expressing her helplessness, indirectly accusing the parents/mother. The mother utters in turn 250 what could be seen as an explanation, an excuse for the distinction made between the daughter and her younger brother, or perhaps as a way of freeing herself from responsibility: the daughter did not have good enough grades. The language of the conversation to this point is Azerbaijani.

248 (1,1)

249 D>S mæn nædzür özümæ tsa:r-
   <<how could I save by myself?>>

250 M>D "nümrælarina jöræsan baxipla"
   <<it seems they looked at his (school results) grades>>

251 D>S ğæblæn az ævvvale ðæbetsa [neš čiz kærde tonton ræf
   <<earlier from the beginning of his elementary school they did, like, they went often>>

252 M [(XXX)
253 D>S hey beheš hu:ğ midan dige: 
<<(now) they give him pay checks all the time, you see>>

254 (1,0)

255 D>S mæn- dige næbordæn nædadæn 
<<as for me- they didn't take me (there) and they didn't pay>>

256 (.)

257 D>S mæn ino jeddi migæm punsædezar tomanø čeqæ migi- migiri 
<<I say this seriously, how much do you take for five hundred toman?>>

258 (1,9)

The daughter does not react to the mother's turn in 250. She re-frames in 251. She continues working on her case in turn 251, with a change in footing realized through a switch to Persian. The mother's overlap in turn 252 is inaudible. After turn 253, we find a TRP (transition relevance place). The coming speaker is not chosen by the daughter, who seems to expect an answer or a comment from the sister-in-law. Instead, she is met with silence. The daughter self-initiates again, after the pause, in turn 255, this time directing more overt criticism toward her parents. It is interesting to note that she refers to them in third person plural, they, both general and indefinite. Her mother is sitting next to her. She could have approached her right there in person. This can be seen as one way of softening a dispreferred action, as described by Pomerantz (1984), by distancing herself from her mother while making the accusation.

Again, after a clear TRP in turn 255, there is no reaction from either the sister-in-law or the mother. After the micro-pause in 256, the daughter self-nominates, and once again directs a straightforward question to the sister-in-law. Her question is upgraded and stronger in formulation "I say this seriously...", legitimized through her recently acquired role as the 'victim' of an unfair situation. This question also makes an answer conditionally relevant. The long silence in turn 258 is certainly a dispreferred second pair part. In this excerpt we see that the sister-in-law has several opportunities to make comments and/or pose questions regarding the daughter's accounts and questions (turns 250, 254, 256 and 258). She chooses not to. This excerpt is the one in which the sister-in-law shows the least possible co-operation, and where the daughter does not seem to be able to get through the massive wall of silence.

Excerpt 3: Contrastive choices of codes

The stretch of talk in excerpt 3 follows the one in excerpt 2. Aside from the pause in turn 258 there is no gap between these two stretches. From the utterance produced by the daughter in turn 259 we understand that the sister-in-law is laughing. The participants have definitely not accepted the 'victim' story of the daughter. The tone of voice of the daughter is now artificial and louder, and shows that she has re-framed and given up her role as the helpless. She demands to know the reason why the sister-in-law is laughing. Instead, in turn 260, the mother self-initiates. In a jocular tone, she introduces the idea of the sister-in-law (in her non-cooperative way of behavior) pretending to be a wealthy and greedy male relative. This is then a character that the sister-in-law happily takes on.

259 D>S $ baba čera mi:xændi ho ba:$ 
<<come on, why are you laughing?!>>

260 M haj abdulla {a:di}
In turn 261, having accepted her new role, the sister-in-law responds to the daughter by posing a comic counter question. The question is not only formulated in a funny way but the tone of voice is also jocular, with the turn ending in laughter. She impersonates the male relative asking the daughter a silly question about the conditions for negotiating ("with or without coffee?"). The daughter in turn 262 has no answer to the question, but insists in 265 on receiving an answer. The sister-in-law requires details in turn 266, and poses another question about the period of time the daughter wants to be involved in this business, continuing the impersonation as well as the demand for negotiation conditions. Apart from the first counter question in turn 261 produced in Persian, the second one in turn 266 is produced in stylized Persian. This also strengthens the impression that the sister-in-law speaks like the male relative she is portraying. As was explained in the section on data, stylized Persian has a non-serious and sometimes ridiculous effect.

There is a pause in turn 267, and the daughter does not answer immediately. Perhaps she is surprised that the sister-in-law has not completely ignored her, as in the previous two excerpts. This might also be interpreted from the daughter as a moment of partial closeness, where the distance between them has decreased to some extent. It seems, though, as if the hesitation on the daughter's behalf in turn 267 and the indefinite answer of hers in turn 268 causes the sister-in-law to change her strategy again. The sister-in-law pauses in turn 269 before answering in turn 270. The answer is delivered in turn 270, after the pause, and contains an accusation, i.e. if the daughter cannot make up her mind about the details it is (indirectly) impossible to do business with her. The pause in turn 269 could be seen as a way of softening the coming refusal. The utterance in turn 270 is in fact a refusal, even though indirectly constructed. The daughter's previous utterance is declared as invalid, which is a common strategy used in argumentation (Wirdénäs 2002: 124 ff.). The fact that the utterance in turn 270 is produced in a contrastive code shows once again that contrastive choices of codes are effectively used in this stretch of talk as one among several strategies for maintaining opposition.

The strategy used by the sister-in-law is also quite different in this excerpt in comparison to the two previous ones. She is now highly engaged in the conversation, which has intensified for a short moment. The answer in turn 270 also seems to be yet another
softening in the delivery of an indirect refusal to the original question in turn 194. Very interestingly, the sister-in-law in this stretch of talk, when she is apparently more engaged in the conversation, uses the whole range of codes available: Persian in turn 261, stylized Persian in turn 266, and Azerbaijani in turn 270. She might seem co-operative in the sense that she is not ignoring the daughter, but at the same time she signals her lack of co-operation by her choice of contrastive codes. She is suddenly involved in the conversation, but 'not really', which will be seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 4: Self-repetition

The stretch of talk in this excerpt immediately follows the previous one. Strengthened by the closeness with the sister-in-law in excerpt 3 (the daughter managed to reach out and over the wall of silence built up by the sister-in-law) the daughter quickly composes herself and suggests a time period in turn 271. She is again met with noticeable silence and laughter.

271 D>S {xob næ: šiš ma hæ:f ma} <<well no, six months, seven months>>
272 (1,5)
273 M (hahaha)
274 D>S {to ye saleš bezar} <<let's say a year>>
275 (0,5)
276 M>D ° mæyæ zænæmün sæfeihi: [{(X)°} <<do you think your uncle's wife is an idiot?>>
277 D>M [yo: zænæmiyæ do:dan midæn <<no, aunty will give for real>>
278 (.)
279 D>S to ye sale be[za:r <<you make it a year>>
280 S [yo: če- mæn yayda istiræ:m <<no! wh- I (will) want it in the summer>>

In turn 274 the daughter upgrades her reformulation, specifying the time in a way she believes the sister-in-law might want. Due to the tone of laughter, both utterances in turn 271 and 274 indicate some hesitance. And once again, she receives no answer. As we have seen before, in extremely challenging moments the mother steps in as a neutralizing party (see excerpt 1: 198; excerpt 3: 260). The mother self-initiates in turn 276 by questioning the daughter's demand "do you think your uncle's wife is an idiot?" indicating that the daughter is going too far. The mother's utterance is also delivered in a jocular tone and is immediately rejected by the daughter "no, aunty will give for real", i.e. there is no problem or awkwardness in her demand/question. This is the first time the daughter actually comments on her mother's neutralizing turn, immediately rejecting it. This indicates that the daughter is getting impatient, which might be shown in the high involvement style realized through the repetitions.

There is a clear TRP after the daughter's turn in 277, followed by a micro-pause. Neither the sister-in-law nor the mother takes the opportunity to make a comment or deliver an answer. So the daughter repeats her specification, which in fact can be seen as a question, in turn 279. This is the third time she delivers specified time-frames (271, 274 and 279). The repetitions of the daughter are a way of keeping the floor and making sure that the topic is
not changed. It also indicates a high involvement style, as opposed to the strategies of the sister-in-law. The increased pressure on the sister-in-law on behalf of the daughter seems finally to work. Apparently the sister-in-law cannot ignore the daughter any longer without losing face, so she delivers a turn in 280, overlapping with the daughter's turn, and dismissing her time specification. The rejection in turn 280 (as the one in turn 277) is delivered without delay. The sister-in-law claims she wants the money sooner, (already) in the summer. This pattern of disagreement has been observed in a number of studies, and is one of the characteristic features of argumentative talk. Here, the dispreferred turn shape of the disagreement is reversed (see also Pomerantz 1984: 95; Schiffrin 1984: 328; Bilmes 1988: 175; Kotthoff 1993: 195; Gruber 1998: 473). This shows that counter arguments and objections can be delivered directly and without any modification, i.e. without a dispreferred turn shape. In practice, this means that the participants can disagree and at the same time have a conversation style that has a preferred structure. In this specific excerpt we have seen how opposition is challenged by recurrent repetitions.

Excerpt 5: Consensus

A number of turns (281-286) are omitted between excerpts 4 and 5. The daughter has been counting the number of months left before summer. In doing this, she realizes that her previous suggestion of around seven months actually is correct. With this assurance, in turn 287, she repeats her previous suggestion. The comment, quite strong in her tone of voice, makes an answer conditionally relevant. Instead, the daughter is once again met with silence, which indicates the non-cooperative conversation style of the sister-in-law.

287 D>S hæf ma miše dige: hæmun ye sal miše
<<well, that makes seven months, it is practically a year, right>>

288 (1,5)

289 M>S °hæf ma|h-°
<<seven months->>

290 D [hæf mahe dig[e:
<<well, it is seven months>>

291 S>D [(styl. Pers.) æz ye sal čar ma =
<<it needs four more months (to make it) a year>>

292 D>S = xord [ád
<<Khordad (the 3rd month)>>

293 M [(hhh)

294 D>S xordade
<<it is Khordad (the 3rd month)>>

295 (.)

296 S>D xo [b
<<OK>>

297 D>S [xob xordad
<<OK Khordad>>

298 (.)

299 D>S čeğæ migiri
<<how much do you charge?>>

300 S>D °(æššoma) hičči hæmun punsaattomæno°
<<(from You nothing) just the five hundred (thousand) toman>>
What follows from turn 289 and onwards are a number of very interesting examples of a dual strategy of repetition and overlap. The mother in turn 289 inserts a very hesitant turn, repeating/echoing the first part of the daughter's utterance. This utterance is delivered in a lower tone of voice, and it is actually the first time that the mother utters anything in Persian in this two and a half-minute stretch of talk. However, another possible interpretation of turn 289 is that it in fact is an other-initiated repair. According to Levinson (1983: 334) and Li Wei (1994: 156), other-initiated repairs are often delayed and are therefore seen as a manifestation of dispreferred turn shapes generally marked by structural complexity.

The daughter overlaps the mother in 290, reclaiming the floor by interrupting her. By doing this she challenges both the mother, whose utterance she dismisses, as well as the sister-in-law, whose answer she tries to force. The sister-in-law seems to acknowledge this, and makes a last half-hearted effort (the turn is left unfinished) to undermine the daughter's argument as incorrect or perhaps invalid. In turn 291, she overlaps the daughter, using stylized Persian. The fact that here she is actually wrong about the seven months needing four months to complete a year (it is in fact five months) is not an important detail. The interesting issue is that the sister-in-law delivers her dispreferred turn without delay and in stylized Persian, a strategy that may have the intent of softening her recurrent rejection of the daughter.

The daughter ignores the comment of the sister-in-law, and self-repeats (the original utterance containing the name of the summer month "khordad" occurred in the omitted turns between excerpts 4 and 5) in turn 292. She knows she is right, and when she does not receive an answer she self-repeats again in turn 294. It seems that the sister-in-law is unable to ignore the daughter any longer. After a micro-pause in turn 295, she delivers a minimal response in turn 296, which is immediately picked up by the daughter. The daughter overlaps in order to confirm in 297, not letting the sister-in-law off the hook. When she does not receive an immediate answer, the daughter repeats her question for the last time, after the micro-pause, in turn 299: "how much do you charge?".

The self-nominations and quickly paced turn-taking procedures in turns 287, 290, 292, 294, 297, and 299 show heightened involvement and a competitive character of the talk. The daughter over and over again fights for and reclaims the floor. The other strategy in this high-involvement style is the pattern of repetition. The daughter both self-repeats (turns 287, 290, 292, 294, and 297), and allo-repeats, i.e. repeating others, (turns 290 "hæf mah" and 297 "xob") in this excerpt as a parallel strategy to both keep the floor and force a response.

In turn 300 the sister-in-law finally gives in. She cannot reject the daughter's demands for an answer any longer. The daughter has met all the requests for details posed by the sister-in-law. It would of course not be proper for the sister-in-law to use and make money from the daughter. So in turn 300, the sister-in-law delivers the inevitable response: "from You nothing just the five hundred (thousand) toman". The turn is produced in a lower tone of voice and the sister-in-law uses the polite second person plural form when addressing the daughter, clearly a distancing move.

Apart from that, we also notice that consensus has finally been reached in turn 300. The search for settlement in arguments and its more serious form, conflict, has long been a central issue in research. Consensus can be reached on different levels: the participants can obtain consensus on the issue discussed (at the level of content) or on the fact that the argumentation itself should be finished (interactional consensus). As Vuchinich (1990: 119) has argued: "Consensus on the speech activity can occur independently of consensus on features of the social world". Referring to the discussion in excerpt four about the possible reversed structure of disagreement, we can conclude that the participants in a conversation can disagree and at the same time show a preferred structure in their disagreements. In addition, they can be driven by a strong desire to reach consensus, i.e. to close and/or move beyond the argument.
6. Concluding discussions

The main focus of interest in this article has been to study the way in which code-switching is used among other monolingual discourse markers to mark preference organization. More specifically, I have tried to demonstrate how a group of bilingual Azerbaijani/Persian speakers in Tehran manage disagreement in talk-in-interaction. The stretch of talk analyzed above shows several strategies for managing disagreement in conversation. Within the given socio-cultural context, the participants were all aware of the fact that it was not appropriate for the daughter to get involved or for the sister-in-law to get the daughter involved in this type of business. The risks of losing actual money and face were too high. The basic common ground for the participants was that the conversation dealt with a non-issue, since there was no risk/chance that it would ever materialize.

Despite this knowledge, the participants, in various degrees and with various agendas, engaged in this potential make-believe discussion. It was perhaps because of this knowledge that it was regarded as risk-free to set aside e.g. the prevalent social hierarchy. The very challenging approach of the daughter to the older sister-in-law, which demands an answer to a sensitive issue, would otherwise certainly not be regarded as the ‘preferred action’. Also, it would not be regarded as appropriate or expected to challenge a parent questioning his/her competence in bringing up children or accusing him/her to have been unfair. As Kotthoff (1993) has argued, as soon as argument begins, context specifications change. In this argumentative type of conversation, characterized by constant disagreement, this seems to hold true. In addition, the reversed pattern of disagreement demonstrated in excerpt four shows how counter arguments and objections can be delivered directly and without any modification, i.e. without a dispreferred turn shape. As other researchers already have pinpointed, it is then vital to be attentive towards the context sensitivity of interaction.

Using a quite competitive style, the daughter continuously fights for her right to enter and hold the floor. She frequently changes footing, which often coincides with code-switching. Her high-involvement style is also seen in her quick turn-takings, self-nominations, frequent repeats, and overlaps. The strategy of the sister-in-law, on the contrary, is the opposite of the daughter's. It is perhaps due to the risk-free context that she chooses to engage in this conversation at all. She could have told the daughter off at the very beginning, giving pretty much any reason for not even talking about this issue. She chooses not to. The sister-in-law engages in the conversation, even though she shows a lack of cooperation all along. She combines the whole range of practices for producing structurally dispreferred turns, using withheld speech, frequent pauses and delays, and counter questions, with contrastive choices of codes. She quite efficiently builds up and maintains opposition more or less during the entire stretch of talk. The mother, as the third party in this conversation, has a less prominent role. She occasionally steps in as a neutralizing party, when the daughter is too challenging, (see turns 1: 198; 3: 260; and 4: 276). In this stretch of talk, she overtly affiliates herself with the sister-in-law.

The different language preferences of the participants also color the conversation. I remind the reader again that the notion of language preference is used in a non-CA manner. The daughter code-switches to mark changes in footing and framing, as well as to accommodate to the language choice of the sister-in-law as a means of reducing social distance. The sister-in-law, on the other hand, often uses code-switching in a contrastive way to mark, maintain, and sometimes aggravate opposition and distance. The mother, finally, does not engage in code-switching in this stretch of conversation, aside from one instance of Persian usage (turn 5: 289). That particular instance is for the most part an echo of the previous turn produced by the daughter.

It seems as if the notion of preference organization here works on two different levels, to use Schegloff’s terminology regarding a practice-based versus a structure-based level (Schegloff, 1988c). The practice-based level sets the rules and gives a larger context, which in this case is a sense of risk-freeness of the subject matter. This seems e.g. to allow the daughter to interact in such challenging manner. The structure-based idea of preference is shown in the complex way in which the turns are structured, e.g. the many strategies of
producing and delivering disagreements. And finally, we also see that, despite the different strategies and agendas of the participants, consensus orientation is certainly present in this argumentative stretch of conversation.

**Appendix**

**Transcription conventions**

M: mother, mid 40's  
D: daughter, early 20's  
S: sister-in-law (of mother), early 30's

( ) English translation.  
( ) English translation within brackets is added by the author for clarification.  
: Extension of preceding sound.  
wòrd Emphatic stress.  
= An utterance is immediately latched to a previous one, without any intervening silence.  
[ ] Separate left square brackets, one above the other in two successive lines with utterances by different speakers, indicates a point of overlap onset.  
(X) Inaudible word, (XXX) inaudible passage of speech.  
(hhh) Laughter, also (hahaha), (hehehe).  
{} Words uttered while laughing.  
$ Artificial pronunciation.  
( . ) Micro-pause.  
° ° The degree signs indicate that the talk between them is markedly softer or quieter than the conversation around it.

The Persian parts of the transcription are in normal style and Azerbaijani is given in *italics*. Text within brackets in the English translation is added by the author and is intended to clarify the context and issues.

**References**


