

DIRECT SPEECH REPORTING AND CODE-SWITCHING IN BILINGUAL CONVERSATION: KINYARWANDA-FRENCH LANGUAGE ALTERNATION¹

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1. The problem

The site of direct speech reporting or quotation is one of the most documented where language alternation has been observed to occur (see Auer, 1991: 326). At the same time, as Auer says, no systematic account of the relationship between direct speech reporting and language alternation is currently available. The problem such a systematic account of the relationship between direct speech reporting and language alternation should solve is why, among bilinguals, some instances of direct speech reporting are accompanied by language alternation while some others are not (Álvarez-Cáccamo, 1996a: 55). Such an account would further show whether language alternation in direct speech reporting is code-switching, i.e. an instance of “talk which is oriented to by speakers themselves as an instance of deviance from the medium they are using” (Gafaranga, this conference).

As Auer recommends, any account of functional language alternation must be based on a theory of interaction. As regards direct speech reporting, research conducted in various disciplines has led to the conclusion that direct speech reporting is “primarily a creation of the speaker rather than the party quoted” (Tannen, 1989: 99). Talk is not out there ready to be reported as it were. Rather, direct speech reporting can be thought of as a method current participants use to produce talk which looks like it had been produced on some earlier occasion. It is within this perspective where direct speech reporting is seen as a method used by current participants that one may ask the question of what work participants accomplish by means of direct speech reporting and whether language choice allows speakers to accomplish that work, whether language alternation in direct speech reporting is an instance of code-switching.

¹ The data used in this paper comes from conversations I have collected, as part of my PhD research project, among bilingual Rwandese currently living in Belgium.

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2. Direct speech reporting as an aspect of current interaction

A very simplistic view of the work direct speech reporting accomplishes in conversation would be that it is used “to evidence what was said” (Holt, 1996: 5). One need not fetch far to demonstrate the inadequacy of such a view. As I have said above, some instances of talk which masquerades as if they were instances of a mere reproduction of some earlier talk have actually never been uttered. Here is an example:

Extract 1

Civil war has just erupted in Zaire and participants are talking about the consequences this is going to have on Rwandese refugees in that country.

1. C: ubu rero ab (.) [A helping him to wine] buretse (.) abazayuruwa bagiye gutangira ngo
(.) **fukuza munyarwanda** (.) abaz
2. B: // *avec raison puisque* (turi un état)
3. C: laughter
4. D: *avec raison* (.) none se none wanzanira ibibazo iwanjye

1. C: now Zairians Zair (.) (A helping him to wine) wait a minute (.) Zairians are going to start saying **kick out Rwandese** (.) Zair
2. B: // *rightly so as* (we are a state)
3. C: // laughter
4. D: *rightly so* (.) if you bring problems at my door

In turn (1), speaker C reports talk which he attributes to Zairians. That this talk has never occurred is obvious for C himself says that what he is reporting is yet to take place. Therefore, in this case, direct speech reporting cannot be said to “evidence what was said” for nothing has been said yet. However, participants do not seem to have any problems with the reporting.

A situation which may seem to be different is observed in extract (2) below where the reported event precedes the reporting, a situation where one may think that reporting reproduces an earlier interaction.

Extract 2

Before this extract, participants have been saying that children learn languages very easily. To illustrate this, the following is produced as a joke.

1. C: bakigera ku kibuga rero aba baje
2. A: //nka wa mukobwa we rwose
3. C: mbakubise mu modoka tugiye mu rugo (long talk omitted) batubwira ibibazo bari bagize kuko barahageze
4. A: //umh

5. C: bakabaza (.) ngo **ese ngo ese muje muzasubirayo** (.) ngo **mufite amatike yahe** (.)
kaba barituramira nyine (.) noneho umwana aratubwira (.) ati **ubu mvuye muri Zaire**
(.) ati **murakoza kuvuga ibyo bifaransa nanjye ndavuga ikizayiruwa** (.)
6. D: //nanjye ndavuga
ikizayiruwa
7. C: ati **Habari gani**
(laughter)
8. A and B: laughter

1. C: when they arrived at the airport when they came
2. A: //like that girl R
3. C: I put them in car to go home (long talk) they told us the problem they had had for when
they arrived
4. A: //umh
5. C: they were asked **are you going to go back** (.) **what kind of tickets do you have** (.)
these of course kept quiet (.) and then the child told us (.) **I'm now coming from Zaire**
(.) he said **if you keep on speaking French I too will speak Zairian**
6. D: //I too will speak Zairian
7. C: (.) he said **How are you**
8. A and B: laughter

However, that the event has taken place before its reporting does not mean that current speakers are merely reproducing “what was said” on that earlier occasion for speakers could not have memorised that earlier interaction so as to reproduce it. Nevertheless, reporting is taken to be an adequate rendition of that earlier interaction as speakers themselves confirm it in turn (6). As other participants are confirming to one another that they do not doubt that what is reported has taken place, direct speech reporting cannot be said to have evidenced what was said for that evidencing is not interactionally relevant (Schegloff, 1984; 1991; 1992).

Even when the event which is reported has taken place, it is not always the case that it is reported as it actually occurred. Consider extract (3) below:

Extract 3

Participants are talking about driving practices. They say that, on a motor way, a simple collision between two cars can cause the death of hundreds of people. B narrates a situation where another car almost ran into his, that other car being conducted by ‘old women’.

1. B: umunsi umwe nagiyeye Louvain la Neuve mu gitondo (.) noneho (.) mfata *sortie numéro 9* (.) (...) udukecuru tubiri ngiyeye kubona mbona turamanutse (.) muri *sortie*.
2. A and C: umh
3. B: yampayinka
4. A and C: laughter

5. B: (laughter) yampayinka (long talk about what he did) njya hirya ndahagarara (.) ku yindi *bande* (.) mvamo (.) ndavuga **niko**
6. C: //urahagarara
7. B: ndahagarara *donc* (.) **ubu murajya he** (.) bati **turajya iNamur** (.) **mukaba muciyeye he se** (.) **ko iyi ngiyi ari sens ijya iBuruseri mwinjiriyemo** (.) *donc* binjiriye muri *sortie vraitment*
8. C: //umh
9. B: umh (...) barambwira bati (.) **umva** (.) **twabonye ligne ntabwo tumenyereye ibi** (.) (talk goes on about what he told them to do) (.) bati **yaa** (.) bati **erega twebwe bigera aho bikatugora kuko tutabimenyereyeurakoze rwose urakoze**
10. A: // **ibi by ibi byaje dushaje**

1. B: one day I went to Leuven in the morning (.) then (.) I took *exit no 9* (...) all of a sudden I saw to old women I saw them coming down (.) in the *exit*
2. A and C: umh
3. B: my goodness
4. A and C: laughter
5. B: (laughter) my goodness (long talk about what he did) I went on the side and stopped (.) in the other *lane* (.) went out and said
6. C: //you stopped
7. B: *so* I stopped **where are you going** (.) they said **we're going to Namur how can you take this direction as this leads to Brussels** they (.) had come in through the *exit*
8. C: umh
9. B: umh (.) my goodness they said to me (.) **we've seen the arrow we're not used to these things** (long talk telling them what to do) they said **sometimes it confuses us for we're not used to it thank you very much thank you very much**
10. A: // **this this came when we were already old.**

In this extract, participant B reports an interaction that he would have had with people he construes to be “old women”. And he displays that identity to other participants through the voice quality he adopts in reporting their words. In doing the reporting, he speaks his own words using his normal voice and those of his co-participants in a voice which is recognizedly that of “old women”. In turn (10), A orients to that identity by saying that the “women” themselves have said they were old. That is, in current interaction, the identity “old women” is very salient. The question here is: was the same identity equally salient in “original” interaction or its salience is relevant only in current interaction?. Nevertheless, in turn (10), B is revealed to have produced an adequate report of that “original” context.

Briefly, the view that the work direct speech reporting accomplishes in conversation is to “evidence what was said” is a gross oversimplification. Rather, as an interactional accomplishment, direct speech reporting can be used for a variety of functions each of which must be discovered in a specific instance. In the three examples I have given so far, a different function seems to be served in each case for reasons I will demonstrate later in the discussion. As a consequence, for a specific instance of direct speech reporting to be said to have been

used to “evidence what was said”, that evidencing must be shown to be interactionally relevant. In none of the examples above, as the discussion shows, was that evidencing relevant.

In analysing direct speech reporting as a conversational activity, a useful question to ask is in fact, not whether what is reported has actually taken place or not so as to be evidenced, but rather that of accounting for the “appearances” of factuality that reported speech takes. A question one may ask with respect to extract (1) is how to account for the fact that, although no ‘original’ talk has taken place, the activity of reporting becomes possible, takes the form of normative conduct. With respect to extract (2) and (3), the question to ask is how D’s and A’s conduct respectively can be accounted for. How do they know that what is being reported is true for them to commit themselves to it, to affirm themselves that it is?

To answer such questions, I propose to adopt Sharrock and Anderson’s (1991) distinction between what they refer as “professional scepticism” and the “natural attitude” and to make a distinction between two types of truth. On the one hand, there is what I may refer to as “the scientists’ or logical truth” and, on the other, there is the “conversational or participants’ own truth”. As Garfinkel (1963) shows, one of the main properties of “concerted” social action is “trust” among participants. This corresponds to the pragmaticists maxim of quality (Grice, 1975). Therefore, among participants in the “natural attitude”, if something is reported to have been said, whether it actually has been said or not, it is normatively taken to have. It is only when there are compelling reasons not to that the “natural attitude” is suspended and that the “factuality”, the truth, of what is said, in this case what is reported, becomes an issue. And it is in this case that direct speech reporting can be seen to serve the function of evidencing “what was said”. In that sense, direct speech reporting mainly and normatively evidences itself, evidences what it reports. Briefly, it is by virtue of “trust” that direct speech reporting in extract (1) is reacted to by participants themselves as normative conduct, and it is by virtue of the same “trust” that D’s and A’s conduct in (2) and (3) respectively can be accounted for.

3. The language issue in direct speech reporting

The discussion above shows that, as a conversational method, direct speech reporting can be defined as a method whereby participants in current interaction, on the basis of the property of “trust” which characterises social action, produce talk which looks like it had been produced on some earlier occasion for discoverable purposes. The question I would like to

turn now onto is whether, in producing that type of talk, participants achieve the intended effect by means of language choice.

As Álvarez-Cáccamo (1996b) has argued, many dimensions interact to produce significant talk. To produce meaningful talk, speakers rely on many “communicative codes”. Sometimes more than one code co-occur (see the co-occurrence of contextualisation cues in Auer, 1992; 1995), but, some other times, one of them will be salient. When one of the different communicative codes is salient, the others take what I may refer to as a “default version”. Therefore, if, in talk, the different “communicative codes” are significant, they should also be reportable objects. In extract (3) above, for example, it is the voice quality which is being reported. That is to say, the function of documenting the reported people’s identity as “old women” is accomplished by adopting the voice which is recognizedly that of old women. As a consequence, other codes, notably language choice, have taken a ‘default version’. Current medium, Kinyarwanda-French language alternation, is used.

As the question I am investigating is that of the relation between language alternation and direct speech reporting, I will limit myself to the question whether the medium itself can be reported. That the medium of an interaction is a reportable aspect of talk is clear for, as I have shown (see Gafaranga, this conference), it is a significant aspect of talk. The question rather is how one determines that the medium is reported. To be very simplistic, I will speak of two types of direct speech reporting: medium reporting vs. content reporting. While, by medium reporting, I mean those instances where reporting is aimed at reproducing the medium of “original” talk, by content reporting, I simply mean all those instances where the medium is not significant, where it adopts a “default version”. Other codes may be significant, but, such not being my problem here, I will not insist on that. In that sense, extract (3) above is taken to be an instance of content reporting although, as I have already shown, it is not content as such which is reported. Extract (4) below further illustrates this type of reporting.

Extract 4

Participants are talking about the possibilities of working abroad. B says that it is difficult to find a job in Germany because Germans do not like foreigners. Talk proceeds as follows:

1. B: ikikwereka ko badashaka abanyamahanga iwabo baraza bakakubaza (.) **urikwiga iki** ah ngo *c’est pour aller travailler dans ton pays* (laughter)
2. A: *il faut* kubahubiza uti *oui*
3. B: reka da (.) ndababwira nti **ubungubu nta muntu nti nti iyo urebye la situation yo mu Rwanda ni catastrophique nta muntu ushobara gu guplanifia** (.) **ubu aho azaba ari**

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1. B: what shows you that they don't want foreigners is that they come and ask (.) you **what are you studying** ah say *is it to go and work in your country* (laughter)
 2. A: *you should* tell them *yes*
 3. B: no (.) I tell them **if you look at the situation in Rwanda it is catastrophic nobody can plan (.) where they will be**

In the extract, a conversation which would have taken place between a Rwandese and Germans is reported. While such a conversation would have used German as the medium, in the reporting, Kinyarwanda-French language alternation is used. That participants do not react to this use of Kinyarwanda-French language alternation to report an interaction which would have used a different medium not only confirms that this practice is normative, and not only that the medium of 'original' interaction is not locally relevant, but also that Kinyarwanda-French language alternation is indeed the medium of the on-going conversation. In turn, this use of the medium of current interaction becomes possible because of "trust" among participants. As I have said, unless there are interactionally relevant reasons not to, participants "trust" the reporter to have produced an adequate report of "original" talk. It is in this sense that Álvarez-Cáccamo's observation that some instances of direct speech reporting are not seen to be accompanied by language alternation can be explained. Those instances are seen not to be accompanied by language alternation because, current medium being monolingual, they are instances of content reporting. This is also how the question of whether language alternation in direct speech reporting is necessarily code-switching can receive a partial answer. Some instances of language alternation in direct speech reporting are not code-switching. They are instances of current medium.

The second type of direct speech reporting occurs when the medium of "original" talk is itself reported. In such instances, the content of what is said is interactionally irrelevant. The work that direct speech reporting accomplishes is realised by virtue of the medium adopted. Here is an example:

Extract 5

Participants are criticising some Rwandese whose French is closer to Kinyarwanda than to French. A illustrates this telling the following joke about a certain bishop:

- 1.A: (...) hari um umusenyeri witwaga S yigeze kuza kuduha *conférence* (.) à l' école cyera niga muri *secondaire* aratubwira (.) ngo **le roi Rwabugiri a été interonisé dans les montagnes de Ntongwe** (laughter)

- 2.B: laughter
 3.A: ugash. ugashakisha niba ari igifaransa arimo vuga cyangwa niba ari ikinyarwanda
 4.C: S ndamuzi
 5.A: ngo *interonisé* (laughter)
 6.B: //interonisé (laughter)
 7.A: *dans les montagnes* (laughter)

- 1 A: one bishop S by name one day came to give us *a talk at school* when I was still going to *secondary school* and (.) said he said *the king Rwabugili was enthroned in the hills of Ntongwe* (laughter)
 2.B: laughter
 3.A: and you would wonder whether he was speaking French or Kinyarwanda
 4.C: S I know him
 5.A: he said *he was enthroned* (laughter)
 6.B: //enthroned (laughter)
 7.A: *in the hills* (laughter)

As speakers themselves have confirmed it (turn 3), in this instance, reporting is not about what was said as such, but rather about how it was said. As the talk which is being reported would have taken place in French, the same language is used to report it. However, although French can be said to have been used in ‘original’ talk, what is being reported is not French as grammarians would define it, but rather what participants themselves consider to be the medium of that ‘original’ talk. Participants themselves have confirmed this in turns (5), (6), and (7). They are laughing, not at French as such, but at the way the bishop pronounces it. The bishop’s pronunciation of French is illustrated by the cluster [nt] which is realised differently in French and Kinyarwanda. According to participants, the bishop does not make that difference. Therefore, as the actual aim of reporting is to illustrate the realisation of this cluster by the bishop, any words containing it would equally have been an adequate report. That is, the actual content of what is said is interactionally irrelevant. The bishop might have expressed it or not, but, by virtue of “trust”, current participants do not doubt it. Also, the bishop might or might not have pronounced the cluster [nt] exactly like participants are doing it now, but, current participants do not doubt that by virtue of the same “trust”.

It is in instances of medium reporting that code-switching can be claimed to have occurred. Participants orient to the medium of what is reported as somebody else’s choice, as different from their own medium. It is in this sense that those instances that Álvarez-Cáccamo observes to be accompanied by language alternation when current medium is monolingual can be accounted for. If current medium is bilingual, as in the conversations in my data, such instances will still be seen as instances of code-switching for they are oriented to by participants themselves as instances of other medium.

In the discussion above, the two categories of direct speech reporting have been illustrated by means of examples which may be thought of as extreme cases. In reality, the distinction might not be as clear as it has been presented above. In some cases, both the content and the medium of what is reported is significant. In such cases, participants must work out, in and as social action, to which of the two categories the instance belongs. Consider the following data borrowed for Álvarez-Cáccamo (1996a: 42-43).

Extract 6

- 1.A: figura-te como seriam de boas as jornadas que hasta x [#alcume#] presentou uma ponência *incitación a la creación literaria* ou algo assi
 2. R: presentou-na em castelão?
 3. A: não não em galego
 4. R: ah como dixeches o titulo em castelão

1. A: you can imagine how “good” the conference was that even X [# nickname #] gave a paper: “*Incitement to Literary Creation*” or something like that.
 2. R: Did he read it in Castilian (Spanish)?
 3. A: no, no, in Galician
 4 R: oh, since you mentioned the title in Castilian

(original transcription conventions amended)

In the extract, talk is conducted in Galician. In turn (1), participant A reports the title of a talk by somebody else using Spanish. Code-switching occurs. As a consequence, R in (2) wonders whether A is reporting the medium, implying therefore that content is also significant. In (3), A denies having ‘medium-reported’. Through this conduct, participants have confirmed that both content and medium are indeed reportable objects, that the distinction medium / content reporting is a members’ own method. But they have also confirmed that some instances of direct speech reporting do not come “tagged”, as it were, with the relevant category, that the actual category of a particular instance must be discovered.

In bilingual talk, the situation is even more complex for the medium of reporting, consisting of one of the languages involved in the medium of the on-going conversation, may have been used to report ‘original’ medium or as the ‘default choice’. In such cases, the actual category of the instance must be demonstrated to have been oriented to by speakers themselves. Here is an example:

Extract 7

Participants have been talking about the advantages and disadvantages of living in the countryside and in a big city like Brussels. One disadvantage, they are saying, is that of easy identification.

1. B: nagiyе kumusura (.) nsigaje kilometero nk' icumi ngo ngere iwe (.) uwo mbajije wese (.) ngo ah ngo **tu vas chez monsieur (.) le monsieur là le noir**
2. A: (laughter)
3. B: (unclear) ngo **tu vas chez le monsieur là (.) le monsieur le noir**
4. C: *donc* bose bamuzi

(A bit later, A narrates a similar example about someone else)

5. A: *oui* (unclear) ejobundi nari mfite *programme* (.) ejobundi *dimance* (.) numva abantu bari kumbwira S utuye (some place)
6. B: *c'est ça*

(two turns omitted)

7. A: twari mu nama gutya ari ikizungu cyanjyanye yo
8. C: umh
9. A: **donc tu es Rwandais (.) il ya un Rwandais qui habite dans la mairie** (omitted) ngo **il était militaire** (.) ngeze mu rugo ntelephona S
10. B: *donc* niho (.) usanga *bakwiyenteressaho* (.) haba habaye ikintu mu Rwanda (.) ukabona baraje baragufashe
11. A: //ngo jya gutanga ibisobanuro
12. B: umh

1. B: I went to visit him (.) about ten kilometres before I got to his place everybody I asked would say **you are going to see mister (.) mister the black**
2. A: laughter
3. B: (unclear) say **you are going to see mister (.) mister the black**
4. C: *so* everybody knows him

(A bit later)

5. A: *yes* (unclear) two days ago (.) two days ago on *Sunday* I had a *programme* (.) I heard people telling me about S who lives (some place)
6. B: *that's right*

(two turns omitted)

7. A: we were in a meeting were i had been taken by a whiteman
8. C: umh
9. A: **so you are Rwandese (.) there is a Rwandese who lives** (some place) they said **he was in the army** (.) when I came back home I *called* S
10. B: *that's it* that's where (.) *they show interest in you* and whatever happens in Rwanda they would come and call (arrest) you
11. A: // to go and explain
12. B: umh

In turns (1) and (3), B is reporting a situation which would have adopted French as the medium for it has involved a Rwandese and some Belgians. Similarly, in (9), A reports, using French, an event which would have used that language. As the medium of current conversation is Kinyarwanda - French language alternation, the problem here is whether French is used in both instances because it was used in “original” talk, in which case these would be instances of medium reporting, or because French is one of the languages involved in current medium, in which case these would be instances of content reporting. In other words, the problem is whether the use of French here can be seen as an instance of code-switching or not.

To answer this question, we must observe the conversation. The fact that B uses the same language in both instances of his reporting may be seen as evidence that he is attending to the medium. In (9), the fact that A himself adopts the same language in reporting the same category of people would reveal that he has analysed B’s reporting as an instance of medium reporting and that, by adopting the same medium, he wanted to mean that the people they are reporting indeed speak French. In other words, participants themselves would have revealed that they have been doing medium reporting. The use of French in the extract is code-switching. The problem then is: what work did participants want to accomplish through medium reporting? A detailed analysis of the extract, which I do not have space to present here, reveals that a contrast is established between the Rwandese and the Belgian community. It is that contrast on the level of social relations that language choice in direct speech reporting would have conveyed.

4. Summary and Conclusion

The relationship between direct speech reporting and code-switching in bilingual conversation is more complex than a casual mention of direct speech reporting as a conversational locus where language alternation is observed would imply. To understand that relationship, it is necessary to understand direct speech reporting as a conversational method in the first place. As a conversational method, direct speech reporting is better understood as an interactional accomplishment rather than as something ready-made that speakers pick up and reproduce. It consists of the fact that current participants produce talk which they claim to have been produced on an earlier occasion for discoverable functions. The method relies heavily on the property of “trust” which characterises social interaction in general.

Once direct speech reporting is seen as an interactional accomplishment, the question of relating it to language alternation becomes simply that of language choice and of the

function of language choice in current interaction. Although the actual function of a specific instance of direct speech reporting and of language choice in the structure cannot be predicted, a machinery exists which allows participants to interpret the function of language choice in direct speech reporting. An instance of direct speech reporting is either an instance of content reporting or it is that of medium reporting. In the case of content reporting, the medium of current interaction, whether it is monolingual or whether it is bilingual, is used. Language choice is normative. On the other hand, in the case of medium reporting, code-switching is observed, whether the medium switched to is monolingual or whether it is bilingual and whether the medium of reporting is one of the languages used in current medium or whether it is a different language altogether. Language choice is necessarily oriented to as deviant.

5. Transcription Conventions

- 1) Kinyarwanda: plain characters.
- 2) *French: italic.*
- 3) Other languages: underlining.
- 4) **Reported materials: bold.**
- 5) // Overlap.
- 6) = turn continues.
- 7) (.) silence / pause.

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