

Constructing social categories in interaction: evidence from Stra-ParlaBO

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This paper investigates how social categories are constructed and negotiated in interaction by speakers with a migration background, based on data from the *Stra-ParlaBO* module of the KIParla corpus (Ballarè et al. 2022; Mauri et al. 2019). The dataset includes semi-structured interviews and spontaneous conversations with participants from the Bangla, Moroccan, Ukrainian, and Chinese communities living in Bologna.

We consider both *ad hoc* and lexically established social categories (Barsalou 1983), as examining how individuals with a migration background talk about their own and others' social groups is key to understanding the dynamics of belonging, othering, and identity construction in interaction (Schegloff 1996, Mauri et al. 2022).

We address three core questions:

- (1) **Which social categories are constructed in interaction, and how?**
- (2) **How are social categories defined and negotiated?**
- (3) **How do these practices differ between elicited and spontaneous speech?**

We distinguish between *ad hoc* categorization practices and lexically established social categories. In the first case, particular attention is given to strategies such as exemplification and relative clauses (e.g. “those who...”), which are known to support context-sensitive categorization. In the second case, we will draw on a frequency-based list of recurring social terms in the *Stra-ParlaBO* corpus (e.g. *immigrants, foreigners, friends*).

We will analyze the linguistic strategies through which social categories are introduced in discourse (lexicalization, exemplification, relative clauses, or a mix thereof), and consider their functions within local contexts, together with the argumentative patterns through which their meanings are collaboratively shaped. By comparing the social categories emerging in interview settings with those found in unstructured conversations, we highlight the interactional dynamics that support or constrain category construction depending on the degree of co-participation and thematic scaffolding.

References

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