

ASPECTS OF DIGLOSSIC CODE SWITCHING SITUATIONS: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

Code switching, a type of discourse that occurs as a natural outcome of language contact, has attracted linguists' attention and been studied from a variety of perspectives. Scholars do not seem to share a single definition of the concept, and this is perhaps inevitable, given the different concerns of formal linguists, psycholinguists, sociolinguists, anthropo-linguists and so forth. Whatever the definitions are, it is obvious that anyone who speaks more than one code switches back and forth between these codes or mixes them according to certain circumstances. CS can occur in a monolingual community, or in a plurilingual speech collectivity. In a monolingual context, Code switching relates to a diglossic situation where speakers make use of two varieties for well-defined set of functions: a H variety, generally the standard, for formal contexts, and a L variety typically for everyday informal communicative acts. In addition to alternation between H and L varieties, speakers may also switch between the dialects available to them in that community via a process of CS. *In such a case, i.e. monolingual context, CS is classified as being 'internal', as the switch occurs between different varieties of the same language. In a multilingual community, the switch is between two or more linguistic systems. This is referred to as 'external' code switching. Hence, the present research work includes a classification of the phenomenon in terms of 'internal' code switching which is of a diglossic nation as well as 'external' one with denotes a kind of extended diglossic contexts.*

Keywords: Codeswitching, diglossia, external, internal.

INTRODUCTION

The Algerian linguistic situation is very intricate. Its intricacy lies in the co-existence of more than one language. Many factors have been responsible for such complexity; some being historical, other political, and some other socio-cultural. As a result of the diverse events that the country has gone through, the Algerian speech community has acquired a distinctive sociolinguistic situation that is characterized by dynamic speech variation. Variation, both intra- and inter-lingual can be clearly attested in individuals' day-to-day linguistic behavior. The Algerian speech community not only reflects the intra-lingual features of a diglossic situation where two varieties (MSA and AA) of the same language are in a functional distribution (Ferguson 1959), but also the conquest linguistic phenomena of an inter-lingual situation that occurs when distinct languages are in contact, i.e. code switching

The different languages characterizing the Algerian linguistic situation are Arabic, having two forms: Modern Standard Arabic, and Algerian Dialectal Arabic, in addition to French, and Berber (Tamazight). Throughout this analysis, hence, we shall shed light on today's Algerian linguistic situation; focusing on the most decisive historical fact that characterizes the Algerian speech community as well as those of the other Maghrebi countries in North Africa.

ALGERIA: A LINGUISTIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Algeria, in fact, witnessed a number of successive invasions that affected the country culturally, and that its traces are still visible in today's Algerian Arabic vernaculars. The longest and the most effective invasion is the French colonialism which is considered as the most important factor and, thus, regarded as a reference in dividing Algerian history into three prominent eras: pre-colonial Algeria, Algeria during and after the French occupation

ALGERIA IN THE PRE-COLONIAL ERA

It is commonly agreed among historians that the original inhabitants of Algeria were the Berbers who were commonly found and located all along the Northern coast of Africa. This is why the area was known as the Barbary Coast. Berbers spoke the Tamazight language which gradually gave birth to the different Berber varieties present today in Algeria.

After 1000 BCE, the Carthaginians also began establishing settlements along the coast. The Berbers seized the opportunity to become independent of Carthage; however, the Punic language left its traces visible in the modern Berber varieties. The Carthaginian state declined because of successive defeats by the Romans in the Punic Wars, and in 146 B.C the city of Carthage was destroyed. As Carthaginian power waned, the influence of Berber leaders in the hinterland grew. By the second century B.C., several large but loosely administered Berber kingdoms had emerged.

Berber territory was annexed to the Roman Empire in A.D. 24. Increases in urbanization and in the area under cultivation during Roman rule caused wholesale dislocations of Berber society, and Berber opposition to the Roman presence was nearly constant. The prosperity of most towns depended on agriculture, and the region was known as the "granary of the empire". Christianity arrived in the second century. By the end of the fourth century, the settled areas had become Christianized, and some Berber tribes had converted en masse. Vandals occupation which coincided by the fall of the Romans was not sufficiently long (455-533). Even though they used their Germanic language and the Gothic script as well as Latin in the fields of legislation and diplomacy, they were disappeared by leaving practically any influence in the language of the Mountainous Berbers.

The arrival of the Arabs in the 7th century was a turning point in the history of all Northern African countries, including Algeria. The Arabs brought Islam and the Arabic language which had a profound impact on North Africa. The new religion and language introduced changes in social and economic relations and provided a rich culture and a powerful idiom of political discourse and organization, which paved the way to the dominance of Arabic over the other already existing language varieties. With the coming of these Arab invasions of the 7th and 8th centuries, the Berber of the cities started to adopt Arabic gradually while the Berber of the mountains stick to their ancestral languages and the greatest cultural impact on Berber came until the 11th century with the coming of the tribes of 'Banu Hillal' when Berber would start its decline and Arabic became deeply rooted in Algeria (Berrabeh, 1999)

The Spanish presence is historically and linguistically clearly attested particularly to the West and on the coastal areas which were known as a commercial route for Spanish, Italian, British and Levantine sea-traders. The Spanish presence in Algeria was a way of neutralizing the Turkish piracy harboured by the North African coastal shelters. What complicates the issue

more and more is the French occupation in 1830 which makes the linguistic situation in Algeria more intricate.

ALGERIA DURING THE FRENCH OCCUPATION

Unlike the other Maghreb countries, Morocco and Tunisia which were controlled just as protectorates and lasted for much less time, French colonialism in Algeria continued for a long period; more than 130 years. Algeria was considered as a province of France by the French Government. This latter aimed at acculturating Algerians, and steadily erasing their Arabo-Islamic identity, and imposing their language as “the only official language of civilization and advancement” Bourhis(1982:44).

The French policy was, indeed, so strong and it was undertaken by a combination of force, violence and disease epidemics which led to the beginning of the decline of the indigenous Algerian population by nearly one-third from 1830 to 1872. The conquest, however, was slow because of the intense resistance led by *Emir Abdelkader*. It was only by 1848 that nearly all Northern Algeria was under French control, and the new government declared the occupied lands as integral part of France. Three civil territories: Algiers, Oran, Constantine were organized as French departments, i.e. as local administrative units under a civilian government. Algeria, therefore, was immediately perceived like a ‘colony of settlement’ at the same time they attempted to apply a kind of a “human genocide” and a “cultural cleansing”.

The French occupation was long and so brutal; however after the First World War (IWW), the value of nationalism and anti-colonialism raised among Algerians. The referendum was held in Algeria on July 1st, 1962 and Algeria's independence was formally on July 5th, 1962. Yet, in spite of declaring MSA as the official and national language, French resisted in many spheres such as: education and administration and left its traces deeply in the AA and Berber which were the spoken varieties used by the indigenous population.

ALGERIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

After a long and a brutal war (1954-1962), Algeria was declared as an independent state which is characterized by a linguistic diversity. Therefore, the state must be unified with a single religion, a single language, and a single political party. The new nation refused any status with French, Berber or even AA. Not surprisingly, policy makers of Algeria had defended Arabic to regain its prestige and attempted to reinforce MSA as the official language of the state. They had also aimed at elbowing out the French language that had pervaded all walks of life during the French period and even after independence when bilingualism grew more and more. (Bensafi, 2002)

ALGERIA: AN INTRICATE DIGLOSSIC CODE SWITCHING SITUATION

The Algerian linguistic situation is very complex. Its complexity lies in the co-existence of more than one code and the interplay between these codes.

DIGLOSSIA

One of the most prominent facts about the linguistic situation in all Arabic-speaking communities in general, and in Algeria in particular is the co-existence of two varieties of the

same language, each one used for specific functions with clearly defined roles. Unlike most Arab countries, the Algerian diglossic case is particular since the L variety is not very close to the H one; illiteracy and colonialism are the main factors that maintain the gap between L and H. The former is a local form of Arabic called: Informal or colloquial variety which is the natural medium of interaction between speakers. It is used in informal contexts: home, workplace, market, among friends and acquaintances. The latter is MSA which takes its normative rules from CA. It is used in formal situations for high functions such as: public meetings, scientific conferences and educational purposes.

The two varieties, however, may overlap to varying extents in a semi-formal setting. Speakers, mainly educated ones, may switch, for a shorter or a longer period of time, to the H variety, or they mix the two varieties in the same conversation. This kind of speech is called 'the middle variety', as it is explained by Al-Toma (1969:5),

Between...CA and the vernaculars..., there exists a variety of intermediary Arabic often called 'allugha al wusta' 'the middle variety' and described as a result of classical and colloquial fusion. The basic features of this middle language are predominantly colloquial, but they reveal a noticeable degree of classicism.

As a result, the Algerian context raises a situation which is more composite than that of Ferguson' Arab world. The intricacy of the Algerian speech community is made by the use of four varieties in correspondence to two settings, namely a formal and an informal one. The varieties involved are: AA, MSA, French, and Berber. The Algerian speaker, so, may use French as H for educational and other prestigious domains and AA as L for more informal, primarily spoken domains though they are unrelated genetically. There are other possible distribution for H and L; MSA can be used as a H variety whereas Berber as a L one or French as H while Berber as L which are known as inter-lingual diglossia.

Additionally, Meisless(1980) recognizes four varieties of contemporary Arabic and Literary or Standard Arabic, Sub Standard Arabic, Educated Spoken Arabic and Basic or Plain Vernaculars. Differently put, the use of more than two linguistic varieties is referred to as "Polyglossia" (Platt, 1977).

However, French is not used only for formal purposes. It is so deeply rooted in the Algerian society, under varying degrees of comprehension and actual use, and widely appears through the use of borrowings and morphological combinations in informal settings. The mixing of French structures with Arabic has become an inherent characteristic in the linguistic behaviour of Algerian speakers.

CODE SWITCHING

Code Switching, the alternative use of two or more codes, is a hallmark of multilingual communities world-wide. Hence, being a community where a myriad of language co-exist, CS prevails the sociolinguistic behaviour of most Algerian speakers. It is very easy to notice the switching from one code to another by a mere exposure to a natural and spontaneous conversation between individuals. Because of some historical factors, CS is usually between MSA and AA and/or French and AA.

Even though there has been more than fifty years after the departure of the French colonizers, French has deeply rooted in the Algerian society and continues to play an important role in all

fields. At the same time, mainly after the arabization process, the majority of educated speakers switch back and forth from AA to MSA in their daily utterances. These two types of code switching MSA/AA AA/French can be clearly heard, where the three types of CS distinguished by Poplack(1980), as it is shown in the following examples: (MSA & French italicized)

Extra-sentential Switching refers to the insertion of a tag or a ready-made expression as in the following instances:

- 1) *Je crois* had triqra mbale3a (I think that this road is closed).
- 2) wachhadax*affidsawtak*(what is this? lower your sound).
- 3) ri hadac'*est déjà beaucoup*(just this, It's enough)

Inter-sentential switching where the switch occurs at sentence and/or clause boundary. This switch seems to occur more by educated people in comparison with extra-sentential one as it depends on the fluency in both languages. Consider the following example:

- 1) hadi sa3tayan wana m3a *la révision et enfin je n'ai compris rien que le titre*.
(It is more than two hours I am revising and I have understood nothing only the title).
- 2) da3wa mata3jabch *albarnaamajmukathafjiddanwayafuuqoqudratattilmiidi l3ilmiyya* (theprogramme is very condensed, it exceeds the pupils' educational capacities).

Intra-sentential switching involves switching within the clause or sentence boundary as in:

- 1) ranirayhala *mairienxarrajlès papiers*bach n *inscri*(I am going to the town hall to get some papers to enroll).
- 2) yballirahafi *tahassuntafiif*bessahrayrkaafin (I think there is a slight improvement but not sufficient).

Moreover, for many individuals, French is the language of civilization and more prestige. As a consequence, many Algerian speakers switch consciously to French and purposefully in order to sound more 'civilized'; especially those who live in the cities like: Oran and Tlemcen where the educational level is higher in comparison with people living in the countryside. That is, the degree of bilinguality depends on the educational level of the speaker: the higher educational level has, the more and larger stretches becomes.

A long list of French words is used excessively by Algerian speakers, both literate and illiterate ones to the extent that the listener may be confused if it is French or Arabic such as: *çava, ça y est, c'est bon, c'est trop, déjà, normal, jamais, grave*. New items, too, are widely used nowadays, especially among youth and teenagers. These new items are due to the technology development as they have no equivalent in AA like: *flexy, chater, connecter, activer, imprimer, taper, site, email*, etc. This excessive use of French in daily speech resulted in a semantic shift, i.e. the Algerian individual may use a French word or expression but it does not mean the original meaning as used by French native speakers. Today, it is largely noticed and heard people saying, for example, /rak film/, /foor/, /numiriik/, or /bumba/ from the French words: *film, fort, numérique, or bomber* respectively to mean 'you are so beautiful'. It is the case of both educated and uneducated individuals. Many other instances are found in the Algerian society that strengthen "external CS", i.e. the switch from AA to French.

On the other hand, since Algeria is a diglossic community, “internal CS”, which occurs between two varieties of the same language (between H and L varieties), is also a common trait in the daily speech. After the arabization process, many individuals, indeed, switch from AA to MSA or the inverse from MSA to AA. That is a mixture of H and L in one conversation which is called the middle variety.

What is strange is the use of AA in a situation where Ferguson claims that only H is appropriate as: education, media, the court of justice and so forth. Middle and Secondary School pupils, for instance, switch to AA during a classroom interaction, where only MSA is supposed to be used. Most adolescents, indeed, switch to AA and avoid MSA, a linguistic behaviour which is according to them associating with primary school learners who sound childish.

After the process of arabization, however, the degree of using MSA has developed excessively especially those educated in the Arabized School who prefer using MSA in all situations. It has become, therefore, customary to hear people saying: /ssalaam/ and /leyla sa3iida/ or /lilamabruka/ instead: of *salut* and *bonnenuit*, also saying: /talab/, /istid3aa/ and /qadiyya/ instead of the French words: *demande*, *convocation*, and *affaire*. Many intellectuals switch consciously to MSA as it is the marker of Arab-Muslim identity. Besides, they teach their children to speak MSA in order not to lose their identity. The French words *cahier*, *cartable*, and *stylo*, for example, have been replaced by the Arabic: /kurraas/, /mihfada/, and /qalam/ respectively.

Larger stretches of H is nowadays obviously noticed by intellectuals who use MSA in their works such as: religious people, lawyers and teachers, especially Arabic language teachers who switch to MSA, the language of instruction, when interacting with colleagues, friends and even within family.

CONCLUSION

Historical, socio-cultural, and political factors, all together contribute in making the Algerian community full of linguistic intricacies worthy of scientific research. From the one hand, the relationship between MSA (H) and AA (L) denotes a classical diglossic context, while the combination between French (H) and AA (L) posits a case of extended diglossia. The interplay between H and L and the persistence of French as a functioning language, thus, resulted in making of Algeria an intricate multilingual speech community where different instances of code switching exist.

After the arabization process, MSA, the prestigious variety, has been given importance in language policy by the virtue of being the language of Arab-Islamic identity. AA, on the other hand, is considered of a lesser importance and the spoken variety that used in daily communication. In other terms, H and L are defined as complementary in the original definition of diglossia. Yet, it is quite common to hear Algerian speakers switch between these two codes. One may use L in a formal setting or may include H in his/her everyday conversation and mix it with L. This diglossic code switching phenomenon becomes observable and commonly noticed among intellectuals such as religious people and teachers especially Arabic language teachers who switch generally to MSA.

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