

**LINGUISTIC BEHAVIOUR OF ARABIC LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN DAILY LIFE
CONVERSATION: REASONS AND ATTITUDES**

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ABSTRACT

Based on the Revisited version (1991) of Ferguson's classical diglossia, the present research work aims fundamentally at examining the phenomenon of diglossic code switching by Arabic language teachers from Algerian Arabic to Modern Standard Arabic in daily life conversation. Accordingly, individuals interact in informal situations using the L variety; however, this seems not to be always the case; mainly with those Arabic language teachers who often switch from L to H, the language of instruction, during their informal talk when interacting out of a classroom context, i.e., with colleagues, friends, or within family members. Hence, the present research work includes a classification of the phenomenon in terms of 'internal' code switching which is of a diglossic nation, i.e. switching back and forth between the H and L varieties. More precisely, our concern, here, is about code switching as a 'process' rather than 'a product'. This does not attempt at describing all the possible switches from L to H but rather to diagnose the reasons that stand behind the Arabic language teachers' use of MSA, to which they stick even within an informal linguistic situation.

Keywords: attitudes, code switching, diglossia, teaching experience, topic.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues that characterizes the Algerian speech community is the co-existence of two or more varieties of the same language. The relationship between these varieties, indeed, leads to a linguistic phenomenon termed as *diglossia* (Ferguson 1959b), where two different varieties of the same language are used in different domains to fulfill different functions. Modern Standard Arabic occupies the high status and is named "H variety" while Algerian Arabic is considered of having a lower status and is named "L variety". H is reserved to formal contexts like public meetings, scientific conferences, and television broadcasting and fits all educational and administrative purposes in general. AA, on the other hand, is used in everyday speech interaction, and thus, in more relaxed settings: at home, workplace, and among friends. These varieties' function, however, may be in some cases overlapped; speakers may code switch from one variety to another for a given communicative purpose. One may use AA in a formal setting and may at the same time include some forms from MSA in an informal context, as it is the case of our Arabic language teachers.

In an attempt to understand teachers' linguistic behaviour and to examine the reasons behind such a linguistic phenomenon, the following overall question is raised: Why do our Arabic language teachers at Tlemcen schools (Algeria) switch to MSA in informal situational contexts?

In order to facilitate the research work and our investigation of the issue, the following sub-questions are put forward:

1. What are our Arabic language teachers' attitudes towards AA?
2. Which type of Arabic language teachers (experienced Vs beginners) tend to use much more MSA in informal contexts?
3. Do our Arabic language teachers use MSA in any informal talk?

DIGLOSSIC CODE SWITCHING

The Sociolinguistic Approach to Code Switching

The role of sociolinguistic studies is to answer the broad general question: 'why do bilinguals switch languages?'. In other words, sociolinguistic research deals with CS as a process. By the way, it is wiser to return to Muller and Ball's distinction (2005:51) between CS as a product or a process who stated that a first distinction is "whether our focus of analysis is going to be the language (talk, writing) produced, and preserved in some medium [...], or the process of producing language". More precisely, CS as a product attempts to solve the question 'where does CS occur, and how it is patterned', i.e. it identifies syntactic and morpho-syntactic constraints on CS; it also investigates the possible role of CS in textual organization, stylistic features or levels of formality. CS as a process, which is the concern of our research work, deals primarily with CS as a 'behaviour', i.e. an aspect of a speaker's linguistic 'performance', influenced by different factors such as: topic, attitudes, competence and so forth.

In dealing with CS as a process, sociolinguistic studies have been conducted from two levels: macro and micro levels. The macro level was adopted by Fishman (1965) in his referential work 'Domain Analysis'. Fishman focuses on "the correlation between code choice and types of activity" (Boztepe, 2008:12).

This differs considerably from Blom and Gumperz (1972) micro approach that identified two types of code choice: *situational* switching and *metaphorical* switching. Situational CS, as its name implies, depends on the situation, i.e. the language used in formal situation is different from the one used in informal one. It is very clear that, for many parts, the social context defines the linguistic choice, and such a choice is controlled by social rules that have been become integrated part of the daily linguistic behaviour of individuals as a result of experience. This type of CS is different from diglossia. In diglossic communities, people are aware when switching from H to L or vice versa while CS is often quite subconscious. Wardhaugh (2006:104) summarizes this idea by stating that "diglossia reinforces differences, whereas CS tends to reduce them". Metaphorical CS, on the other hand, occurs according to changes in topic rather than the social situation. Here, it is "the choice of language that determines the situation" (Hudson, 1996:53). Metaphorical switching is then topic-related.

Amazingly enough, in this type of language modulation, some topics might be discussed in either code. However, because the choice encodes certain social values, the selection gives a distinct flavour of what is said about the topic.

As an attempt to incorporate the macro and micro perspectives, Myers Scotton (1993b) introduced her "*Markdness Model*" as a complementary device to "account for CS by proposing that speakers have unmarked and marked choices available to them when they speak". These choices are considered by Scotton (1980:360) as "individually motivated

negotiations” whose success only depends on the degree of awareness and adequate use of “the communally recognized norms” which establish the meanings of the choices in different types of talk situations.

Under her Markedness model, Myers Scotton lists three maxims of code choice: ‘the unmarked choices’ are expected and do not produce any special effect whereas ‘marked choices’ are “unusual, un-expected and encode the speaker's social disapproval”. The third maxim is ‘the exploratory choice’ which is assigned to “ ‘explore’ or to ‘negotiate’ the unmarked choice between interlocutors when the choice of code is not clearly apparent” (Smith, D.J. 2002:5). Attitudes towards distinctive varieties are also an incentive factor of code choice.

THE PSYCHOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO CODE SWITCHING

This approach is not prompted by the system but by the processes occurring in the speakers’ brain. In this vein, Weinreich (1953) classifies three types of bilingualism according to the way languages are stored in bilinguals’ brain. Coordinate bilinguals “...had learned each language in separate contexts, and so kept them distinct” (Spolsky, 1998:48) whereas compound bilinguals acquired the two languages in the same context. Subordinate bilinguals, however, are those who acquire one language and the other language is interpreted through the stronger one.

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 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.

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Language attitude is one of the most important topics in the social psychology of language and one of the central factors that engender linguistic variation which in turn may lead to language change. The concept of language attitude is used broadly to mean “any affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions toward different language varieties and their speakers” Ryan *et al.* (1982:7).

Daily speech interactions may have a set of different language varieties. Speakers, on their turn, may have different attitudes towards these surrounding varieties. Such attitudes, as Trudgill (1992:44) points out, “may range from very favourable to very unfavourable, and

may be manifested in subjective judgments about the ‘correctness’, worth, and aesthetic qualities of varieties, as well as about the personal qualities of their speakers”.

Attitudes may also fluctuate from one’s level of education and personality traits to another. Students from the Islamic Department, for instance, and others from the French Department could have different attitudes towards MSA and French. Regarding the first group, the majority of them may give positive evaluation of MSA and negative or neutral claims towards French. The second group, however, may favour French. Teachers, in their turn, may have divergent linguistic change. A teacher of the Arabic language, for example, may have positive evaluations of MSA unlike a French language teacher who may have less positive reactions towards MSA and more evaluations of French.

Accordingly, MSA, the supra-language associated with religion, literature and education in the Algerian speech community, is not used in ordinary speech interaction. Yet, Arabic language teachers remain strong enough to continually revitalize its use in their daily speech whatever negative attitudes it may bear.

METHOD

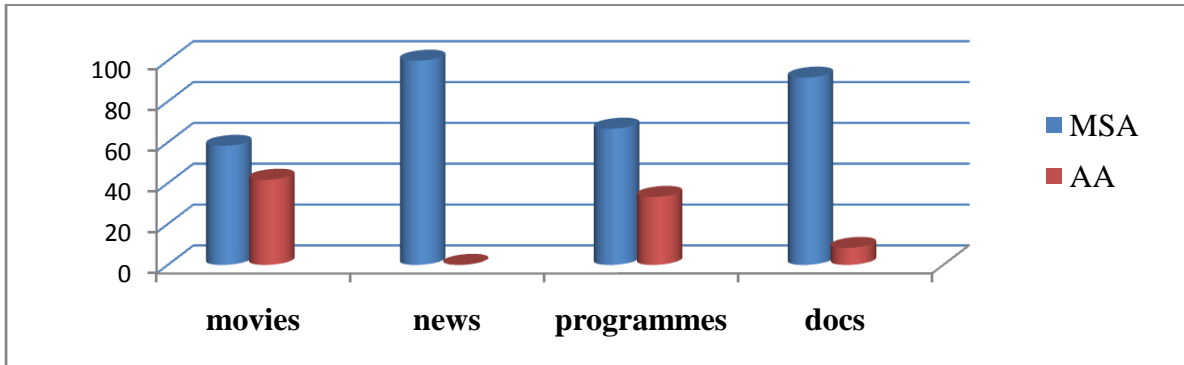
The data needed in this fieldwork are collected by means of questionnaires and interviews which are used to elicit data explicitly from the informants. A third perspective is observation and recording which may lead to yield more valid and authentic data and a direct study of the linguistic setting. The data come from a sample of thirty six participants. Arabic language teachers at «Tlemcen Primary, Middle, and Secondary Schools»; notably, the downtown Tlemcen schools, Abou- Tachefine schools, and Oudjlida schools, have been chosen as a sample population to restrict the field work. Thus, the informants were divided into two groups: beginners -having less than ten (10) years in teaching- and experienced –having more than ten (10) years.

| Teaching Period Teaching Level | Beginners Less than 10 years | Experienced More than 10 years | Total |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--------------|
| Primary | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| Middle | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| Secondary | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| Total | 18 | 18 | 36 |

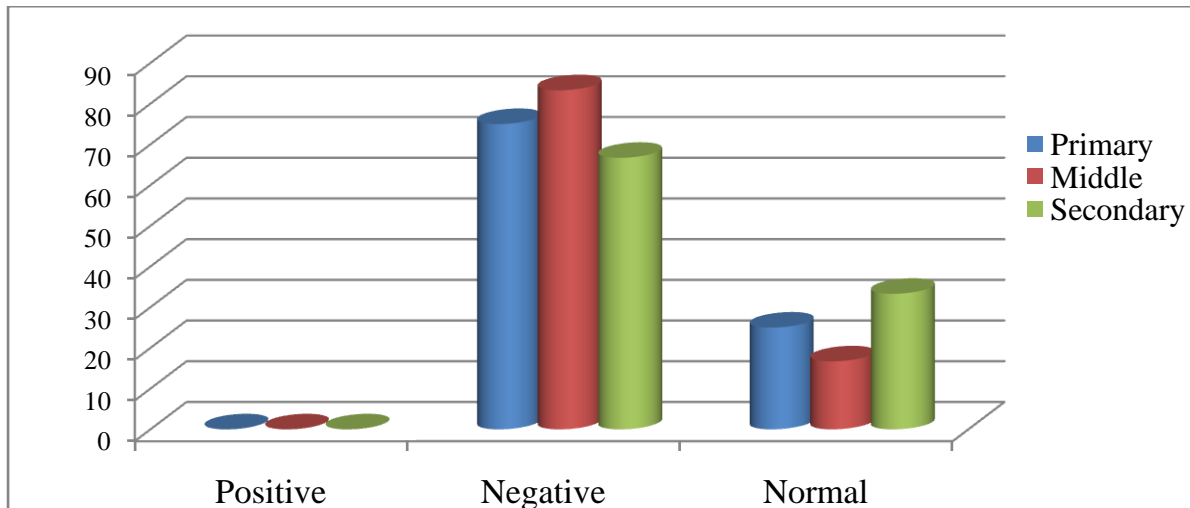
FINDINGS

1/ Questionnaire Results: ATTITUDE AS AN INCENTIVE PARADIGM

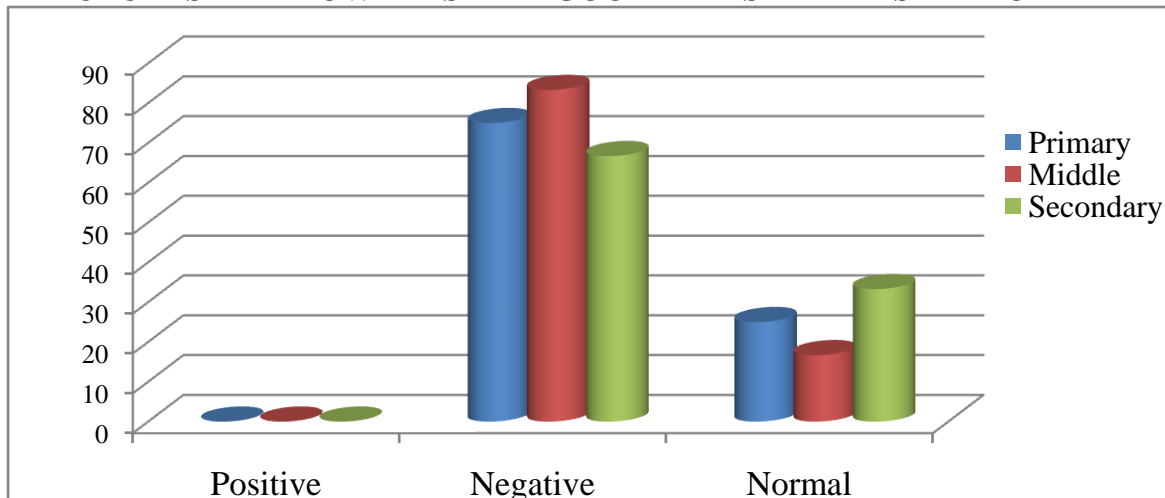
• **VARIETY PREFERENCE**



ATTITUDES TOWARDS PUPILS' AA USE IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION

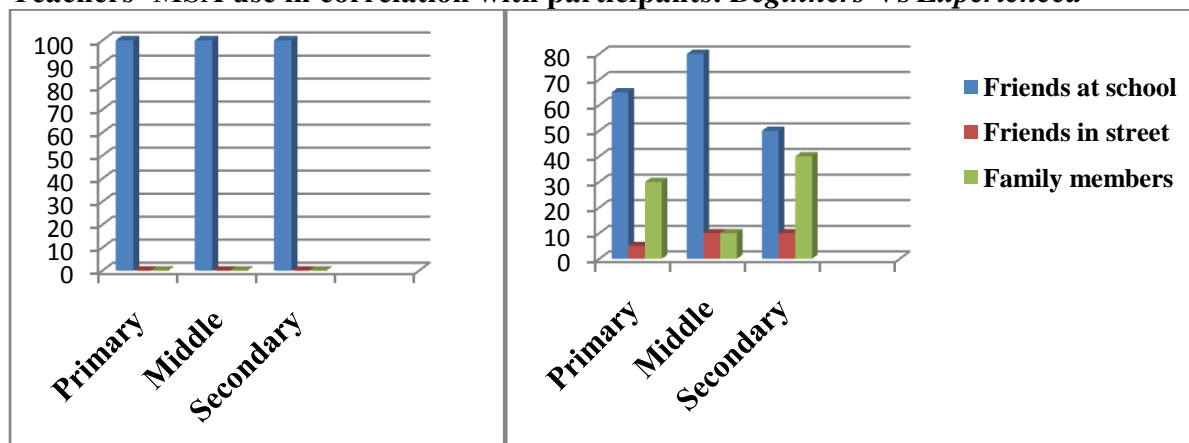


ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOOD SPEAKERS OF MSA



2/ Interview Results: EXPERIENCE AS A SOURCE OF INFLUENCE

Teachers' MSA use in correlation with participants: *Beginners Vs Experienced*



3/ Recording Results: TOPIC AS A CODE DETERMINANT

This aspect will be discussed in the light of Gumperz's semantic model. In Blom & Gumperz's (1972) 'Social Meaning in Linguistic Structures', metaphorical switching considers that a topic is entirely discussed in one code or another. Such switching demands a competence in either code. Consequently, participants' selection in the experiment mentioned below is based on their linguistic capabilities.

| | Topic | | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|----------------|--------------------|-----------|--------|----------|-------|-------|
| Variety | Drink | School program | Students' behavior | Education | Cloths | Religion | Sport | Music |
| AA | x | | X | | x | | X | x |
| MSA | | x | | x | | x | | |

DISCUSSION

This empirical research work provided us a closer picture to Arabic language teachers' interaction in daily life by including MSA in a setting where AA is used. It, consequently, carries out observations concerning the Arabic language teacher as a psychological being as well as a social one. In other words, it could unveil the psychological motives of teachers' linguistic behaviour in ordinary speech and the social psychological reasons lying behind it.

At the psychological level, it has been observed that the job of an Arabic language teacher in general and the long teaching experience in particular give the Arabic language teachers a psychological change that reflected their linguistic behaviour. Beginner teachers, hence, do not show a noticeable change in their communicative language.

Accordingly, teachers of the three levels indicate the same psychological change in their linguistic behaviour. More precisely, the change does not rely on which teaching level

teachers are. The important point is that s/he is a teacher of the Arabic language. The frequency of this change depends on the long teaching experience of those teachers. As a result, experienced Arabic language teachers express a certain linguistic awareness of which code to use in order to express their social identity and belonging. Many expressions are, in fact, used consciously; notably terms that they got to be used in class as: /liqaa2/ 'meeting', /mu2tamar/ 'conference' or /ixtibaar/ 'exam'. These words are heard as: /rondivu/, /konfiron/ and /kompo/ respectively in ordinary conversation.

At a larger scale, it may be asserted that MSA/AA code switching relates to the speakers' mental image of the code they speak and their attitudes towards it. Though, associated with class and official contexts and is not the variety of daily conversation, MSA, receives a set of positive attitudes on the part of Arabic language teachers both beginners and experienced. MSA is viewed as 'aesthetic' and 'intellectuals' variety'. The fact of being a teacher of the Arabic language creates among them a psychological reality towards MSA. Despite the fact that AA is the variety in which daily interaction is coped, the majority of the informants, if not all, mainly experienced ones show some negative attitudes towards AA and see it as a 'lower variety' in comparison to their educational and literary level.

One may observe that those teachers use MSA with another Arabic language teacher or intellectuals or literate family members more than laymen speakers. Teachers, thus, prefer to drive all the conversation in MSA as they want to create a special social status which is higher and raised. This high conversation, however, may be interrupted if the other participants are illiterate and the teacher should switchback to AA.

Participants, consequently, are also seen as social forces that motivate teachers' choice. Myers ScottonMarkdness (1993a) assumes that when conversational participants are competent in the community languages, speakers' choice of the language is determined by their desire to index a set of 'Rights and Obligations' entailed by the choice of that language. The theory states that in each conversational encounter, there is unmarked (expected) language choice for each participant and that this choice indexes the appropriate 'Rights and Obligations set' in that social context. Any code choice is indexical of norms of society at large. Yet, norms only determine the negative markdness of choices.

Changes in topics, on the other hand, push teachers to switch to a certain code. Arabic language teachers are familiar with literary, educational and religious subjects. Therefore, metaphorical switching characterizes teacher's linguistic behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS

In this empirical work, consequently, it has been able to deduce some remarkable results in relation to our general research question. The majority of Arabic language teachers have been observed to switch to MSA when interacting in informal setting. The fact of being a teacher of the Arabic language and teaching MSA for a number of years seems to have created a psychological change that reflects their linguistic behaviour.

Experienced teachers, hence, express a certain linguistic awareness of which code to use in order to express their social identity. They view MSA as the prestigious and aesthetic variety, even for daily life communicative purposes. This attitude drives them to interact purposefully in MSA in order to create a special interaction with 'high status' which is special for Arabic language teachers in informal settings. Apparently, CS is therefore performed with the aim of

showing skillful management, manipulating both varieties and making the expressions aesthetic. CS can be also used for clarification, by which speakers can avoid confusion and express themselves clearly; for accommodation, when they seek convergence and approval in social encounters; for quoting, by which they can resolve what happened vividly, and at the same time, guarantee authenticity; and for emphasis, when they stress a point or a fact.

Teachers' diglossic code switching phenomenon is conceived to be the result of more affective reasons that are responsible for their linguistic behaviour. Teachers tend to avoid AA use even in daily conversation, showing some negative attitudes toward this variety which is the medium of interaction between all speakers. They view MSA as being the appropriate variety for them in order to show both their fluency and accuracy. Thus, their use of MSA in everyday interaction is of affective reasons rather than linguistic.

Despite of its association with class and more formal situations solely, MSA receives a set of positive attitudes by all Arabic language teachers of the three levels, both beginners and experienced. MSA is the preferred variety by most Arabic language teachers in daily conversation. Teachers view MSA as 'a symbol of prestige', of 'high interaction and more aesthetic' that is quite reserved to their profile. They, in this sense, show a desire and a tendency to be identified with intellectuals and express their belonging to a literary and teaching field. This desire, however, is divergent from one teacher to another. In other words, experienced teachers are more affected by the long period of experience. Such a consideration, indeed, appears to lead more experienced teachers to switch to MSA in daily conversation more than beginners do. Arabic language teachers use CS as a conversational strategy to enhance communication which may be interrupted in certain cases. To put it differently, educated individuals encourage teachers to switch to MSA; whereas, uneducated speakers limit teachers' linguistic behaviour by driving them to switchback to AA. That is to say, participants can be also an affective element that determines teachers' code choice.

The topic discussed, on the other hand, stands out as a trigger that operates to influence teachers' language of discourse. Arabic language teachers are familiar with certain topics relating to education, literary and some religious subjects. Thus, they have a natural, may be even subconscious, tendency to switch to the characteristic of such types of topics. This kind of metaphorical switching is, therefore, determined by attitudes towards the codes and the associations allocated to these codes. At last and not the least, the question that remains is that will experienced Arabic language teachers reserve their linguistic behaviour? Will their MSA use slowly extend to all speakers of the speech community in the future? Or will technology development of recent years be an obstacle to this linguistic behaviour and impose on teachers to switch more to other languages rather than MSA?

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