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A Sociolinguistic Study of Code-Switching in the Algerian Hirak (Movement)

دراسة لغوية اجتماعية للتناوب اللغوي في حراك الجزائر

Abdelaziz AGTI
Batna 2 University
a.agti@univ-batna2.dz

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Abstract:

Code-switching phenomenon cannot be separated from the fact that many people are bilingual, trilingual and even multilingual. Code-switching has become socially and communicatively unavoidable. The main focus of our study is to find out the reasons and motivations behind using code-switching in the slogans carried by the demonstrators in the hirak in Algeria. Data for the present study are collected from the hirak and analysed, using descriptive qualitative method to identify socio-cultural factors that underlie code-switching. The results reveal that socio-cultural variables appear to be strong factors in determining the use of code-switching. The most dominant type of code-switching used in the hirak is inter-sentential switching.

Keywords: Code-switching; communication; socio-cultural factors; hirak

ملخص

لا يمكن فصل ظاهرة التناوب اللغوي عن حقيقة أن العديد من الأشخاص هم ثنائيي اللغة وثلاثيي اللغة وحتى متعددي اللغات. لقد أصبح التناوب اللغوي اجتماعيا وتواصليا لا مفر منه. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة الأسباب والدوافع الكامنة وراء استخدام التناوب اللغوي في الشعارات التي يحملها المتظاهرون في الحراك في الجزائر. يتم جمع بيانات الدراسة الحالية من الحراك وتحليلها باستخدام المنهج النوعي الوصفي لتحديد العوامل الاجتماعية والثقافية التي يقوم عليها التناوب اللغوي. توضح النتائج أن المتغيرات الاجتماعية و الثقافية هي عوامل قوية في تحديد استخدام التناوب اللغوي. إن نوع التناوب اللغوي المستخدم في الحراك والمهيمن هو التناوب بين الجمل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التناوب اللغوي؛ التواصل؛ العوامل الاجتماعية والثقافية؛ الحراك

I. INTRODUCTION

Code-switching is a multifaceted topic. It is difficult to deal with it sociolinguistically, psycholinguistically, pragmatically, etc within a single study. This study deals mainly with the sociolinguistic dimension of code-switching. Bilinguals or people having more than one language may shift from one code to another to achieve their own communicative goals. Code-switching is an important aspect of sociolinguistics that is worth investigating to understand what makes people code-switch. It is noticed that most of the slogans carried by the Algerian contesters in the hirak are written in mingled languages (standard Arabic, Algerian dialectal Arabic, French and English). So, this study attempts to explain the reasons behind making use of code-switching as a strategy of communication. The alternation between distinct codes in a single discourse shows that code-switching is not arbitrarily used. Algeria is a diglossic and multilingual society. That's why, Algerian people code switch when communicating and this facilitates contact between them, especially in informal situations

where they can escape the normative constraints of the standard code. This research work intends to deal with code-switching from sociolinguistic perspective with reference to the protesters' slogans carried in the hirak in Algeria. It attempts to highlight the social motivating factors behind the use of code-switching as a means of self expression and communication. Besides, it sheds light on the functioning and process of code-switching in terms of expressing and transmitting powerful messages. This study tends to have pedagogical value in the area of both bilingualism and multilingualism. Foreign languages learners will be encouraged to practice code-switching to achieve communicative goals. In addition, engaging in code-switching should be perceived as sign of linguistic competence.

2. Study Problem

On the basis of what is said in the introduction regarding the main concepts of the topic under study, the question that is worth raising in this regard is the following: Is the value of code-switching as a communicative strategy in the hirak slogans derived from its socio-

cultural functions and the fact that it matches the Algerian society's social reality? The hypothesis that may be put forward as a possible answer to the raised research question is: The value of code-switching as a communicative strategy in the hirak slogans stems from its socio-cultural functions and the fact that it matches the Algerian society's social reality.

3. Research Methodology

The present work takes as an example the slogans used in the hirak of February 22, 2019 in Algeria. A descriptive qualitative method is used to investigate the social aspects of code-switching. The investigation of the issue of sociolinguistic dimension of code-switching is based on a corpus of 21 code-switched expressions (see the appendix) taken from the hirak slogans. We opt for a judgment or targeted sample, selecting important and relevant code-switched expressions to the study. The sample depends on the personal assessment of the researcher in terms of selection. The sample of our study is deliberately selected from the hirak slogans. The analysis of data focuses on the social aspects of code-switching and its communicative effect. It starts by identifying code-switching patterns

found in the slogans carried by the hirak participants. Then, the most frequent type of code-switching is determined in relation to the types of code-switching suggested by (Poplack, 1980) and analysed.

4. Bilingualism

Bilingualism is regarded as one of the most important aspects in worldwide communication. It is a lingual phenomenon related to the individual's ability to use two languages alternatively in communication. Bilingualism is a linguistic phenomenon that exists in several speech communities including Algeria. It is the use of two languages by individual speakers within a speech community. Weinleich (1968:1), one of the founding fathers of bilingual studies and a bilingual himself, offers one of the shortest definitions in his book, language in contact: "The practice of alternately using two languages will be called bilingualism, and a person involved a bilingual". Bloomfield (1933: 56) defines bilingualism as "near- native control of two or more languages". A person who uses two linguistic systems within a speech community is called a bilingual speaker. Using more than a

linguistic system is a natural phenomenon. Grosjean (1982) argues that bilingualism is indeed more than a linguistic phenomenon since the notion of an individual becoming bilingual is largely influenced by other aspects; namely, the psychological and socio-cultural context.

Bilingualism can be described as a socio-cultural aspect of language. This is due to the fact that bilingualism has a multifaceted nature depending on different factors in the process of communication, i.e. contextual, social and sociological. Bilingualism is considered to be a normal requirement for daily communication. It has become inevitable issue as a result of global communication and its existence and development will depend on the development of individuals and communities. It plays a great role as a means of communication in our world. The Algerian speech community can be considered as a multilingual community because of the diversity of codes used among the speakers, regardless of the educational levels.

5. Multilingualism

Multilingualism is the ability of an individual speaker or a community of speakers to communicate effectively in three or more languages. Contrast with monolingualism, the ability to use only one language. A person who can speak multiple languages is known as a polyglot or a multilingual. A multilingual person is someone who can communicate in different languages in different settings. The term can be applied to people who have competences in a number of languages. Multilingualism is of particular importance. That's why, many countries encourage learning as many languages as possible. It is not surprising that people in a community may have the ability to speak more than one language.

6. Sociolinguistics

People are in need of language to interact with each other in society. There is no people or society without a language. The role of language as a means of communication is very crucial. Linguistics reveals that language and society cannot be separated to be investigated. It develops into sociolinguistics. Holmes (2001:1)

says that sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. Examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community, and the way people signal aspects of their social identity through the language. Sociolinguistics focuses on how language is used. Sociolinguistics is a term which is concerned with the relationship between language and context in which it is used. "Sociolinguistics is interested in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts, and it is concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning" (Holmes 1992: 1). The way people talk is influenced by the social context in which they are talking. Wardhaugh (1986) as quoted by Jendra (2010: 10) states that "Sociolinguistics is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal of a better understanding of the structure of language and how language functions in communication." Symbolically

language represents fundamental dimensions of social behavior and human interaction. The communication ways are influenced by the social context.

7. Speech Community

Human beings are social beings who are always committed to a certain group of people called a community. A particular community has its own characteristics, including the way of communication. This community is called speech community. Blommfield (1933: 40) offers the simple definition of speech community. He says that a speech community is a group of people who interact by means of speech. In addition, Hymes (1974: 51) defines speech community as "a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech". Hudson (1980: 28) also confirms that speech community is a set of people who have something in common linguistically – a language or dialect, interaction by means of speech, a given range of varieties and rules for using them, a given range of attitudes to varieties and items.

The members of the same speech community should share linguistic norms. That is, they share understanding and values of attitudes

toward language varieties present in their community. "The term speech community refers to the unit of analysis of a language in its context; that is, the speech community is the unit of analysis of language in a culture or in society. A speech community is a set of individuals who share the knowledge of what is the appropriate conduct and interpretation of speech. These individuals also share the understanding of at least one language so that they may communicate with each other" Eastman (1983).

8. Code-Switching

Code switching is used throughout the world. It is also a complex process, which involves different levels of switching or mixing in accordance with proficiency in the languages used. Code switching is a powerful tool for communication between people. In general, there is agreement in the literature that code-switching is a common creative communication strategy employed for sociolinguistic and pragmatic purposes to alternate between two varieties of a language (Al Birini, 2011). Bilinguals both consciously and unconsciously can

resort to a linguistic phenomenon called code-switching or language switching. (Auer, 1995.1998; Scotton, 2002). Moreover, Poplack (1980) defines code-switching as the alteration of two languages within the same clause, sentence, or turn. It is a sophisticated, rule-defined use of language that can provide insight into the more complicated aspects of bilingual speech. Gort (2012) gives an explanation for code-switching and states within one clause there can be alternation between two varieties and this operation is rule governed. Code-switching can be defined as "the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction" (Scotton and Ury 1977). Earlier works on sociolinguistics treat code-switching as a result of the linguistic inadequacy of the target language (Weinreich 1953). Hudson (1996:53) discusses code-switching as the inevitable consequences of bilingualism, as any one who speaks more than one language chooses between them according to circumstances." Crystal (1995) states, "Code or language switching occurs when an individual, who is bilingual, alternates between two languages during his or her speech

with another bilingual person.” Halliday (1978:65) defines code-switching as, code-shift actualized as a process within the individual: the speaker moves from one code to another and back, more or less rapidly, in course of a single sentence.” Verma (1976:156) focuses on code switching as “a verbal strategy used by speakers in much the same way as creative artists switch styles and levels (i.e. from sublime to the mundane or the serious to the comic or the vice versa) or the ways in which monolinguals make selections from among vocabulary items” and concludes, “Each type of coding or code-switching is appropriate to the topical and situational features that give rise to it.” Ashok Kumar (1995:44) adds, “Code-switching which is influenced by extra-linguistic factors such as topic, interlocutors, setting etc. is the alternate use of lexical items, phrases, clauses and sentences from the non-native language into the system of the native language.”

8.1. Types of Code-Switching

The researchers have generally agreed on the classification proposed in Poplack (1980) which was based on the linguistic structures

of code-switched utterances. This classification differentiated between three kinds of code-switching: inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching and tag-switching.

8.1.1. Inter-Sentential Code-Switching

Inter-sentential code-switching refers to switching languages across the sentence boundaries. It is most common among fluent bilinguals and it is believed to be a mechanical and an unconscious linguistic process that “fills in unknown or unavailable terms in one language” (Bista, 2010:3). A good example would be the title of Poplack’s (1980) study which is ‘Sometimes I will start a sentence in English y terminé in español’, [Sometimes I’ll start a sentence in Spanish and finish in Spanish].

8.1.2. Intra-Sentential Code-Switching

Intra-sentential code-switching occurs within the sentence boundaries. It is more complicated than the first type. “The complexity of this type of switching is explained

by the high probability of violation of syntactic rules, as well as the requirement of a great knowledge of both grammars and how they map onto each other” (Jalil, 2009: 4). According to the matrix language model, the word structure of the dominant language, i.e. the matrix language, governs the practice in this type. The material from the other language, namely the embedded language, is just inserted in the frame of the matrix language. The switches take place within clause boundaries inside a sentence or even within the word boundary. In other words, intra-sentential switches are within the same sentence, from single morpheme level to higher levels. Linguistically speaking, intra-sentential switches are the most interesting as different syntactic structures belonging to two languages may coexist within the same sentence. Here is an example where code-switching is used within a sentence, that is intra-sentential code-switching:

A. Tu vas au cinéma avec moi ?

B. Yes, je vais avec toi.

8.1.3. Tag-Switching

Tag-switching is less acknowledged. It is the switching, in

which tags and certain set phrases in one language are inserted into another, as when a Arabic - English bilingual says: *يوم جميل, isn't it?* [It's a nice day, isn't it?]. It was a good performance, *n'est-ce pas?* [It was a good performance, wasn't it?] *بلادنا طيبة, you know* [Our country is good, you know]. Such inclusion of a tag like a discourse marker or conversational fillers can be simply inserted in discourse without breaking the syntactic structure of the matrix language, or the language used in the conversation. Tag-switching which involves the insertion of a tag (e.g. no way, oh my God, you know, right, etc) may be freely inserted at any point in a sentence. It does not require a high competence in L2 and it may be claimed that it is the easiest type to be practiced since its use does not usually involve grammatical violations. For some people, it seems difficult to define the limits between these three types of code-switching. Alternating codes respects the structural rules of the languages that compose it and that alternation may only occur at certain points in the statement.

8.2. Code-Switching as a Communicative Strategy

In certain conditions, speakers find themselves switching codes, consciously or unconsciously, in an attempt to communicate more effectively and to achieve specific communicative effects. Code-switching is most likely to happen to create a specific communication effect and transmit a striking message.

Gheitanchian and Rezaei(2008:79) explored code-switching as a communication strategy and concluded that code-switching “functions not only as a filler to cover the language deficiencies in expressing meanings but also as a means to transfer a range of social, cultural facts in various settings”. Code-switching is a strategy to convey cultural specific messages and lower language barriers. The main reason for using code-switching is to achieve effective communication. Code-switching is often used to attract the attention and persuade the audience.

9. Sociolinguistic Approach to Code-Switching

Sociolinguistic approach to code-switching helps researchers to recognise and identify the factors

that affect code-switching as well as help in determining the functions of code-switching in discourse. The sociolinguistic approach examines code-switching from a macro perspective where code-switching is examined within language use in a speech community to find out how members in this speech community use it, in what situations and for which purposes. According to this approach, code-switching is seen not basically as an issue of competence, but is primarily influenced by the macro-sociolinguistic factors of the institutional setting and the larger societal context. Sociolinguistically, code-switching is a communicative strategy used by bilingual speakers to communicate and to convey meaning in an effective way. The major concern of the sociolinguistic approach is the question “why do bilinguals switch languages?” It is important to deal with code-switching as a discourse phenomenon, by trying to understand how social meaning is created by participants in code-switching, and what specific discourse function it serves.

10. Socio-Cultural Factors Motivating Code-Switching

Code-switching is an effective strategy of communication. It is a linguistic strategy involving social meanings. It involves mixing a form which has a social value. Slogans used in the “hirak” movement in Algeria are characterised by code switching i.e. making use of more than one language. This may be explained in terms of social aspects as motivating factors for combining a number languages to convey a particular message. Most of the slogans carried by the demonstrators are written in a mixture of languages (Arabic, either classical or dialectal, French and English). English tends to be less frequent as it is a foreign language. Resorting to code-switching may be justified by the fact that Algeria is a multilingual country.

Contextualisation factors are determinant elements for the use of languages. As the hirak participants are from different walks of life and with different language abilities, they are expected to express their preoccupations and demands differently, keeping in mind the audience they are addressing. Blom and Gumperz (1972: 421) state that social events, defined in terms of

participants, setting, and topic, “restrict the selection of linguistic variables” in a manner that is somewhat related to syntactic or semantic restrictions. The hirak takes place in the street and the protesters have different social and political claims. All this determines the protesters’ means of expressing their messages, choosing the appropriate languages. Code-switching is perceived as a natural communicative strategy. It is thought that the demonstrators’ style of expression depends on the situational context in which they find themselves. The hirak is a popular movement, so we expect slogans to contain simple words and low variety of language to convey popular demands. The slogans express people’s needs and interests. Code-switching which characterises most of the slogans used reflect the way people express themselves in real situations of communication, mixing languages. Algerian people express their demands in different forms using different languages. They use distorted French, when speaking. This may be noticed in some slogans such as BOUTEFLESKA اللسقا لي تلسق (Boutefglue the glue which صومبيني

sticks pitilessly). The word صومبيتي is a French distorted expression used in dialectal Arabic “ sans pitié ” (mercilessly). An impressive form of expression. This slogan is metaphorical and contains some humour. Some sociolinguists describe the relationships between code-switching behaviours and class and other social positions. Peter Auer suggests that: “Code-switching does not simply reflect social situations, but that it is a means to create social situation.” Language choice is constrained by ‘domains’ consisting of topics, interlocutors and settings. Blom & Gumperz (1972/2000:126) introduced two patterns of code-switching, namely situational code-switching, in which the speaker switches languages according to the change of the situation and metaphorical code-switching in which the speaker switches languages to achieve a special communicative effect.

Languages used in the slogans of the hirak mark professional identification which is a type of social identification. Protestors define themselves as profession members. For example, doctors’ slogans reflect their demands with reference to their job.

On the basis of their occupational context, they communicate their preoccupations to others. « Faites-vous vacciner contre le cachir » (Get vaccinated against sausage) is a sign held up by a doctor. We notice the use of medical jargon in this slogan which identifies the job of doctors. Cachir is an Algerian Arabic word which designates a sausage made from beef and it symbolises what the Algerians call “ chitta ” (brush), expressing people’s fed up in a funny and sarcastic way. Code-switching occurs in this slogan as French and Arabic are used. Switching from French to Arabic using the word cachir expresses a certain social reality that only Algerian people can understand it with reference to a particular social context. There is a certain attitude of sarcasm expressed through this slogan which is meaningful as social norms of language use are respected. If the hirak participants code switch in their slogans, this expresses their group identity, belonging to a specific community. Code-switching may be used to show solidarity, social status, and express identity. Code-switching is used as a means of communication and it expresses at the same time group membership.

For instance, the handicapped people who take part in the popular movement adapt their slogans in such a way to signal group membership.

The topic is a major factor for code switching. People code switch to express and transmit their ideas and thoughts. Sometimes, people resort to code-switching for the sake of expressing a particular concept appropriately or talk about something in a suitable way. The topic as a social factor indirectly influences the way we express and speak about something. Switching to Algerian dialectal Arabic seems to be important in the hirak slogans as it gives them a certain local flavour and adds interest to them as it expresses the contesters' local identities, values, and attitudes. Besides, the audience interacts better with what is expressed through this low variety of Arabic which fits the informal context of the hirak and is able to communicate meanings and messages efficiently in terms of being impressive and convincing. Hence, it is also important to understand the social functioning of signs written in a mixture of languages. The linguistic mixing

shows the linguistic plurality of Algerians and their mastery of foreign languages. The openness of Algerians to languages, their multilingualism offered them the image of an educated people whose behaviour is imbued with civility. Algerian Arabic is mixed with other languages in many slogans used by all Algerian protesters: "makanch el khamssa ya bouteflika, jibou el BRI w zidou assaîqa" (there will be no 5th term O Bouteflika, you bring back RIB (research and intervention brigade) and add special troops). The use of dialectal Arabic indicates a return to the reality of Algerian society. The slogans of the demonstrators are mostly written in either Algerian dialectal Arabic alone or mixed with other languages. The hirak takes place as an existential situation that only dialectal Arabic manages to describe and express it properly in terms of using a particular type of language with specific vocabulary and structure. A situation that could only be reflected in the everyday language of the Algerian, the one with which he lives and expresses himself. The Algerian dialectal Arabic moves from an enclosed space to more open

spaces. The slogan “Yetnahaw ga3 ” (let them all go) becomes wide spread. It moves from football stadiums, considered as “marginal” spaces sheltering “marginal” people who are the supporters, towards public places and the big boulevards of cities, towards these public spaces of citizenship. These immense spaces which are occupied by the demonstrating crowd give more visibility to the Algerian dialectal Arabic and its expressions: One of the main features of the hirak in Algeria is that it reveals the linguistic reality of the Algerian people. The slogans used in the hirak derive their force and value from the fact that they contain expressions which carry within them a political and socio-economic discourse inspired from the daily reality of Algerian people. The terms cachir and cachirists are part of the Algerian dialectal Arabic and they have particular political, social and moral connotations and associations. The word cachir designates the highest degree of corruption and the buying of souls. The Algerians of all social classes find in their dialectal Arabic a truthful and direct language that makes it possible to express and convey their demands.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study is based on a corpus of 21 code-switched expressions, containing standard Arabic, dialectal Arabic, French and English, taken from the hirak slogans. The analysis of these blended expressions focuses on understanding the social factors influencing the process of code-switching.

At the end of our analysis of code-switching from a socio-cultural perspective, a number of considerations are reached. Our hypothesis with reference to the value of code-switching as a communicative strategy in the hirak slogans is derived from its socio-cultural functions and motivational factors and the fact that it matches the Algerian society’s social reality. It is found that the hirak participants code switch intentionally for socio-cultural reasons to express and transmit strong and striking messages through slogans, reflecting popular and social demands. This linguistic behaviour serves socio-cultural functions and communicative purposes. Switching-codes is a feature of the Algerian people’s way of communicating. It reflects the social reality of the Algerian society.

The use of code-switching in the hirak is socially motivated, indicating the demonstrators' attitudes, orientations, conceptions of things around them, social statuses, levels of education, etc. Simply put, code switching used in the hirak may be interpreted and dealt with for social reasons. Social motivating factors underlie code-switching as a social phenomenon used in the hirak. Resorting to code-switching by the demonstrators is an effective strategy of communication in terms of expressing their preoccupations and demands. The inter-sentential switching is the most common occurring type in code-switching used in the hirak. Intra-sentential switching is less frequent in the slogans. Tag-switching doesn't exist as it is part of conversation. Sociolinguistic functions and communicative functions are at the basis of code-switching. This study focuses on the effects of socio-cultural factors on code-switching. Further researches should be conducted to investigate other factors that account for code-switching. We hope this study provides useful information about the topic in question.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on what had been said so far, it can be concluded that:

1. Code-switching is used as a means of communication.
2. Code-switching is a communicative strategy used to express messages and convey meaning in an effective way.
3. Algerian people practice code-switching in their daily interaction and this makes it a natural linguistic behaviour.
4. Code-switching fits the slogans used in the hirak as an informal situation to transmit strong messages.
5. Code-switching is socially and communicatively unavoidable as people switch between languages for different social and cultural reasons.
6. Code-switching plays an important role in enhancing effective communication.
7. Sociolinguistic factors are very influential in determining linguistic behaviour.
8. Code-switching is influenced by societal factors.

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