

Understanding the Bilingual Situation in the Algerian Mass Media: Code Switching between Cohabitation and Conflict

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Abstract:

The present ethnographic research aimed to analyze one of the bilingual phenomenon “Code Switching” (CS) among Algerians and its use in the mass media context. The findings in general showed that despite French is no more an official language in Algeria, but it still occur heavily in the different broadcasting means.

Keywords: Algerians; bilingual; CS; French; mass media

1. INTRODUCTION

Acquiring a foreign language beside one’s mother tongue and especially using this language in one’s daily life conversations in different settings and under different situations is the matter of many people across the world, and the Arab world is no exception. Algeria, being a bilingual country, is a good case in point. In this country, both literate and illiterate people have the habit of using some French words along with the Algerian Arabic (AA) to the point that these words become integral parts of their language. A good instance about the phenomenon can be demonstrated in the following example; we most often heard Algerian speakers talking about a football match saying for example; “[l’zu:wer ti:ra:] *ballon* [ma:rka:] *but*” (le joueur a tiré le ballon, il a marqué un but) (the foot ball player shoot the ball, he scored a goal). Here one could notice the absence of both of the language high variety (the Modern Standard Arabic or MSD) and the language low variety (AA). What is surprising; however, is that

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these speakers are neither recognizing that they are speaking a language that is not theirs, nor using at least a one single word from their mother tongue (AA). Obviously, this sentence is composed of five words where just three of them (joueur, ballon, and but, that is, football player, ball, and goal) have been produced in their original form, while the others (marquer and tirer, that is, scored and shoot) have been accustomed to the AA structure. Therefore, these words are no longer belonging to the French language because they have lost their original phonological aspects once they have been included into the AA. It can be seen that one part is borrowed from the French language (the original language), and the other part belongs to the AA. In this respect, Hudson (1996) stated that sometimes when bilinguals mix up two languages in the same conversation, they are, in fact "... mixing the systems themselves, because an item is borrowed from one language to become part of the other language" (p. 55). Accordingly, the objective of the present study is to examine the occurrence of CS in the different Algerian mass media (TV and radio). However, before the discussion moves on, it has been felt important to mention the rationale behind choosing the mass media. In fact, the reason that have urged the researcher to focus on the mass media has been attributed to the fact that journalists are often holding a specific linguistic behavior due to their "openness to strangers", that is, their linguistic behavior "might be different than other "core" community members" (Bijeikienė & Tamošiūnaitė, 2013, p. 102). The researcher's choice has been also attributed to the fact that journalists are generally considered as "influencers", that is, they have established credibility with their listeners and viewers, and they have built a good reputation for themselves. Hence, they have an influence over the viewers and the listeners behaviors in terms of; speaking, thinking, dressing, managing conflicts, etc.

Accordingly, the following question is addressed;

- After many attempts that aimed to establish the Arabic language throughout the country in all disciplines, does the status of the French language is in regression or does it still in expansion?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Bilingualism

As time goes on, language witnesses many changes. These changes are the result of a social contact among people within the same country or from different countries. Such contact may occur due to different factors; chief among them, trade, occupation, traveling, migration, etc. To this end, one could say that language cannot be developed in isolation, but it is rather associated with people movement and direct contact. This latter, in fact, paved the way to different sociolinguistic phenomena such as; bilingualism.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, many scholars tried to find out a comprehensive definition that covers all aspects of this widespread phenomenon. Weinreich (1953) and Trudgill (1992) defined it as the ability of using two different languages, while the person who has such an ability is called a bilingual. As for a broader definition of bilingualism, Bloomfield (1933) proposed that bilingualism involves much more than practicing two languages. It is the management of two languages in a native-like way; in other terms, it is regarded as the equal mastery of two or more languages. Here, one could understand that Bloomfield put much emphasis on the question of proficiency. For him, a perfect command of both languages is recommended. In this concern, the degree of proficiency had been strongly debated by many researchers. Wardhaugh (1998); for instance, recommended that a bilingual is not obliged to have exactly the same abilities in both languages. Hoffmann (1991) on his own also disagreed upon the idea of proficiency; he claimed that it is not necessary to have an equal mastery of the two languages; that is why he considered bilingualism as an unstable phenomenon.

2.2 Aspects of Bilingual Speech

Within a sociolinguistic scope, being a bilingual requires the use of two languages simultaneously. However, the way in which the bilingual tends to use both languages determine the type of the bilingual feature. Within the tenets of bilingualism, borrowing, diglossia, code-mixing, and CS are all good instances of the different bilingual features.

2.2.1 Code Switching

It is apparent that the French language still occupies a considerable place among almost all the Algerians, both educated and non-educated can read and speak at least few French words and expressions in their daily

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conversations. In sociolinguistics, the use of two different codes within the same sentence leads to an intricate phenomenon called CS. According to Weinreich (1953, p.73) “the ideal bilingual switches from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in the speech situation [...] but not in an unchanged situation, and certainly not within a single sentence”. CS, is then the most creative aspect of bilingual speech. Hoffmann (1991) on his side considered this phenomenon as a sign of linguistic decay; i.e., using CS reflects the bilinguals’ inability of acquiring two different codes properly and keeping them separately. The most general description of CS is that it involves the alternate use of two languages or linguistic varieties within the same utterance or during the same conversation (Gumperz, 1972). It had been defined as “the process whereby bilingual or bidialectal speakers switch back and forth between one language or dialect and another within the same conversation” (Trudgill, 1992, p. 16). CS is also considered to be the process where the bilinguals move from one language to another in the midst of the utterances with due regard to the addressed interlocutors’ linguistic abilities; in terms of which language will be more comprehensible to them (Hudson, 1996; Spolsky, 1998). On the flip side, CS considered to be an involuntary process as has been asserted by Wardhaugh (1998, p. 103) who claimed that “code-switching, [...] is often quite subconscious: people may not be aware that they have switched or be able to report, following a conversation, which code they used for a particular topic”. From a different standpoint, Blom and Gumperz (1972) distinguished between two types of CS: situational CS and metaphorical CS.

2.2.1.1 Situational CS vs. Metaphorical CS

First, situational CS refers to the use of different codes in different situations; one code is used in a particular setting and the other in an entirely different one. In other words, the switches between languages occur once each language had a particular social function which could not be fulfilled by another language (Hudson, 1996). If, however, the change in topic requires a change in language; in this case, we have the metaphorical CS. A good example of this type of switching can be seen in the Algerian community. More often Algerian speakers switch back and forth between the French language and the AA when they speak either about a computer

program or a football match. They used the French language to talk about everything that has a relation with computers and suddenly switch back to the AA to discuss what had been happened during a football match (Ammour, 2012). So, once one redefines the situation, that is, from “formal to informal, official to personal, serious to humorous, and politeness to solidarity” (Wardhaugh, 1998, p. 103), the metaphorical code switching would take place.

2.2.1.2 Types of Code Switching

Poplack (1980) distinguished between three types of CS; namely, extra-sentential, inter-sentential, and intra-sentential.

2.2.1.2.1 Extra-Sentential Switching

This type refers to the insertion of a tag or a ready-made expression as in the following illustrations:

-[*Fa:du:*] les inscriptions, ce n'est pas vrai ! “the registrations are over, it is not true!” (personal example).

-Ça alors ! [*ʕomri ma:fu:ft ha:ka:*] “My goodness, I have never seen as such” (personal example).

2.2.1.2.2 Inter-Sentential Switching

The switch in this type occurs at a sentence and/or a 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; i.e., it entails a fluent bilingual in both languages. Before the discussion goes any further, it should be noted that the provided examples are recorded by the researcher herself in different settings with colleagues and friends.

-[*ra:hu:m muxtalfin fwiya:*], à l'université vous avez un volume horaire hebdomadaire de douze heure. Alors que dans le centre de recherche vous avez un volume horaire quotidien de huit heure avec un salaire plus important celui de l'université. (They are different a little bit, at the university a weekly hourly volume of twelve hours. While in the research center you would have a daily hourly volume of eight hours with a higher salary than the university) (personal translation).

-[*s'ratli ʔa:na: tana*] c'est un problème de surcharge de document. Personnellement je n'arrive pas à lire tous les documents PDF. (It happened

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to me as well, it is a document overload problem. Personally, I cannot read all the PDF documents) (personal translation).

2.2.1.2.3 Intra-Sentential Switching:

Involves switching within the clause or sentence border as in:

-[ʔani ra:yħa] l'université [nha:z] mes papiers, en même temps [ndjir] ma réinscription vite fait [u: nra:wa:h] (I'm going to the university to get my papers and at the same time I will quickly make my registration and come back home) (personal translation).

2.2.2 Reasons for Code Switching

It is worth mentioning that the use of CS has some reasons. Many researchers believed that speakers use the language in different situations and for the sake of different purposes. Spolsky (1998) summarized some of the reasons that lead the speakers to use code switching:

For a bilingual, shifting for convenience (choosing the available word or phrase on the basis of easy availability) is commonly related to topic. Showing the effect of domain differences, a speaker's vocabulary will develop differentially for different topics in the two languages. Thus, speakers of a language who have received advanced education in a professional field in a second language will usually not have the terms in their native language (pp. 49-50).

Consequently, people use language to set up social relationships and exchange ideas bearing in mind the target's speaker competency. People in Algeria do use CS as a mean that serves many purposes, they tend to use this phenomenon as a sign of lack of vocabulary (lack of the intended words in their mother tongue), they used it also as a sign of familiarity; in other words, Algerians switch to French because they have the habit to use such words in their daily life conversations. So switching for them seems to be a matter of routine and tendency.

3. Method

As the main objective of the present study was to get a closer look about the CS phenomenon among Algerians in their own settings. An ethnographic study was; therefore, the most suitable research method that best fit the aforementioned purpose. Being largely an observation-based approach (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018), it was seen appropriate to

observe the participants under investigation, especially that the participant observation is considered a valuable tool "... in studying language used in bilingual or multilingual settings" (Bijeikienė & Tamošiūnaitė, 2013, p. 102), where "code-switching, linguistic choices of bilinguals can be better explained after an in-depth observation of the respondent's" (ibid.). In fact, the participant observation "produces a tremendous supply of high-quality data and crucial insight into community dynamics". (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p. 71).

Before proceeding any further, a small account should be given to the literally meaning of ethnography, Creswell (2012) referred to ethnography as being the process of "writing about groups of people" (p. 461). Central to this definition is writing, this implied that within the principles of this design, the researchers "can identify a group of people; study them in their homes or workplaces; **note** how they behave, think, and talk" (ibid.). It is based primarily on "observation and a researcher's long-term involvement in a community" (Bijeikienė & Tamošiūnaitė, 2013, p. 11).

Prior to the planned observation, some major steps proposed by Johnstone, 2000 had been taken into account; (a) selecting an area of study, (b) selecting the group being studied, (c) reviewing the literature of what has been done before (stated earlier, see above), and (d) finding a way into the group.

To make a solid base for the participants observation, the researcher considered Hymes SPEAKING paradigm (Johnstone, 2000, p. 96), where each letter in the acronym represents an important aspect of the communicative event (Bijeikienė & Tamošiūnaitė 2013).

S: stands for the **setting**, and it refers to the place (in our case, Television and radio).

P: stands for the **participants** (in our case the TV and the radio hosts and their guests).

E: stands for the **ends**, or "the purposes or goals that participants or institutions have" (ibid.), since the "ends" of our participants is quite different, "this might make the observation even more interesting" (ibid.).

A: stands for the **act sequence** which refers to the sequence that usually take place during a particular conversation, (in our case the TV host as a

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case in point is the one who leads the conversational process).

K: stands for the **key**, which refers to “the tone, the style or the register of the communicative event”. In this case, the TV shows or the radio channels are usually formal,

I: stands for **instrumentalities** and it refers to the media of communication. In the context of our study it is oral.

N: stands for the **norms**, and it refers to both the “norms for interaction and norms for interpretation”. The host opens the show and the host do not leave the stage whenever they want because it is a matter of agreement.

G: stands for **genre**, which refers to “the way participants categorize the event” (ibid.).

4. Results and Discussion

Under the umbrella of this title, the researcher has presented different instances that have been recorded during the observation stage. These instances clearly show the heavy use of the French language among the journalists (in TV programs and in radio stations) and their guests. The different types of CS have been also emphasized.

4.1 Television Programs

4.1.1 [larjæm] (gazelles)

In this program an Algerian singer called Sami was asked about his feeling towards the Kasba city (an ancient popular city in Algiers); he was so excited and eager when he remembered his experience in this city. He was very happy because of some acts that had been established in order to save the value of this city; he said; *“heureusement que [ʃu:ft] [ʔa:na] dernièrement [ki:] [ru:ɦt] [l] musée [tæʃ] [lfunu:n] [lʒæmila:]... La musée des beaux arts [kajæn] toute un pavillon...”* (Fortunately, when I went recently to the museum of the beautiful art, I have seen a whole corridor...). This example clearly shows an intra-sentential CS, because the change happens within the clause border. During the same conversation the same type of CS had been occurred with the second guest of the show who said: *“[...] [wala:h] ça m’a fait [wala:h jaʃni ʔana] je suis naturel [ʔana ki tqisni hæza] c’est.... ça me rappel de plein de chose.... ”*. (I swear it hurts me, I’m natural, when something touches me I do remember many things).

4.1.2 [fhwæl ʔnæs] (People's State)

The presenter of this program has introduced a very interesting topic which is concerned with the spread of the video games and the consequences that these latter do cause. From her speech a French Arabic bilingualism is clearly presented. It is highly remarkable that the TV presenter is an unbalanced bilingual, since she has nearly the same competence in both codes. She has introduced the debate saying ; “[...] *Les cybers addict; c’est un nouveau phénomène [li] [dha:r] [mʃa ʔalʔalʃæb ʔal iliktrunija],... et nos enfants sont plus en plus approché [li hæd ʔalʔalʃæb u kæjn] des conséquences très néfaste [ʃlæ] le cerveau [ntæʃhu:m]....*”. (The cyber addicted, is a new phenomenon that has appeared within the electronic games, and our children are tightly attached to these games which have a very harmful consequences to their brain....) (my translation).

It is worth saying that in the previous example there is a kind of inter-sentential switching, since the switch occurs at sentence and clause boundary. The guest of the program who is a psychiatrist has replied to the request of the presenter that was about saying something as far as the topic is concerned from a psychological point of view, she said; “[...] *donc (kima: qu:liti hæd ʔlqahiræ qahart hæd) les dernières années [mʃa:] ... surtout [mʃa:] la sèment état internet donc les jeux (hædu:k) par réseau, et [nʃufu tæni bili:] il y’a certain parents [li balæk mæ jʃiqu:f] forcément [li ʔaji qaraza ʔatʃifl tæʃhu:m rahu: mu:dmin]*”. ([...] So as you have said this phenomenon has appeared in the recent years especially within the spread of the internet, therefore the network games, we also see that some parents do not pay attention to what extent their children are addicted to these games) (my translation). After having watched a real video of an addicted boy, the presenter said again; “[*waqtæf] le jeu [mæ jzidʃjtsæmæ] jeu c’est quand le plaisir n’est plus, enfaite [nlʃbu] pour le divertir [bæʃ nræʃhu ʃlæ ruhnæ] c’est un moyen de décompresser, du prend de plaisir, d’être content, de se déconnecter un peu de la vie quotidienne, de la pression [wæla] de devoir [wæla] de ce genre de chose...*” (the game is no more called a game where it has no pleasure, we play for entertain, for get some fun, it is a means of relaxing, taking a pleasure, being happy, to disconnect

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a little bit from the daily life, from pressure, or something like that....) (my translation).

4.1.3 Zik Mag

The presenter of this program has opened the second part of the show that was about the weddings in Algeria saying “[*ʕa:wɔda li:*] zik mag ... *Alors, la page [li ræhi tæktb] juste en bas haut, le lien, [binetna rasslouna ektboulna]. [ki na:hdru] a chaque fois [ʕlæ ʔalʔafra:h] ... [kæjn] toujours une musique qui accompagne...*”. (Welcome back to zik mag... So, there is a page that is appeared just bellow, send to us emails. Each time when talking about weddings in Algeria..... there is always music...). Then, she has met some guests. She said, “[*tfa:ɖlu mʕæna hædi kænt*] surprise [*tæʕ*] zik mag [*li sahra:t lju:m*] bravo public [*ja:ʕtʕiku:m sa:ha*] *ça me fait plaisir*”. (Welcome, that was the zik mag surprise, bravo for the public; it is a pleasure for me) (my translation). In the previous examples it is clearly obvious that there is an immense occurrence of CS as if the official program language is a mixture of French and AA, and not MSA.

4.1.4 Le Grand [sbitʕar] (The Big Hospital):

The guest of this show was talking about her sitcom (a situation comedy) called “bint wa wala:d” (girl and boy), she said “[...] [*u:*] *voila on va travailler sur les tests [nʕala:h ʔalʒu:zʔ ʔæni] j’espère [jaʕʒb tænik lʒumhu:r] li vraiment..., [lʒumhu:r], les fans [kæml], la famille ils ont demandé...*”. ([...] well we will work on the tests, we hope they will be on live and appreciate the public, all the fans, the family, they have asked). Then, the presenter of the show has intervened saying “[*lha:za li: ʕalæt jku:n*] *un sucées [ki tzi tʕu:fi l] profile [tæʕ] les deux acteurs... sympathiques, des jeunes, et tous...*”. (The only thing that has ensured the success of the sitcom is the actors’ profile... friendly, young, etc....).

In the previous examples there was an intra-sentential CS; which seemed to be the most useful type of CS compared to the other types. For the previous reasons, one might state that the bilingual situation in Algeria is really so complex. This complexity resides in the way we speak French for a moment and then switch to AA and vice versa.

4.2 Radio Stations

4.2.1 Alger Chaîne 1 (Algiers First Channel)

The programs of this station were normally held in Arabic, but we can find in this station some cases where both Arabic and French are used in an analogous sense of communication. In fact, there was a frequent use of the French language that seemed to be something unavoidable between the presenter, the listeners and the guests. Here are some examples adapted from the program of [*rihænaet iqtis'adija*] “economic wagers”. The main guest of the show was the director of “Cosider Company” (an Algerian Company of Urbanism). He responded to the presenter question about the different standards that should be taken into consideration before establishing a building. He said “[...] [*qu:lti mækænf maqajis hna nqoulu: kajn maqajis, kajn*]..., des Lois et il y’a eu des règles d’urbanisme... il y’a donc des directions d’urbanisme et de l’habitat....” ([...] you have said that there are no standards, we said that there are standards, there are laws and rules of urbanism... there is therefore organization of urbanism and habitation). Then he adds the following, “[...] [*qbal mæ nwæzdu:h jzu:zu flæ muðirija jšajt'u:lha muðirijt ?tašmir*]... direction d’urbanisme de chacune wilaya à travers tous le pays, il se trouve que [*lmuskil*]... [*?liškæl huna li mudirijt ?trašmir bæf*]... au lieu de s’attacher à la qualité de bâti dans la ville ou la région ou la construction...” ([...] before we prepare it, it goes through an organization called organization of urbanism... the organization of urbanism of each state across the whole country, the problem of this organization is that instead of being attached of the construction of the building quality in the city or the in the region...) (my translation).

What is remarkably striking in the previous examples is the extensive use of the French language wherein the different types of CS have been used. Indeed, this result supports evidence that has been raised by the journalist Amghar who have claimed in “Al Moudjahed” newspaper that Algerian speakers;

Ils vous parlent 2 mn en français, 30 secondes en arabe, puis 1 minute en français et ainsi de suite, parfois les deux langues sont mélangées à tel point qu’il en ressort un langage bizarre, inintelligible, et l’on se demande si ces gens là ne sont pas bizarres eux-mêmes (cited in Bouamrane, 1986, p. 109).

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They speak to you 2 minutes in French, 30 seconds in Arabic, then 1 minute in French and so on, sometimes the two languages are mixed to the point that a strange and unintelligible language may appear, and we wonder if these people are not strange themselves (my translation).

Having the above-mentioned data in mind, it was highly noticeable that in the different given examples, there was some pause fillers where the speakers seemed to think about what to say without giving the impression of having lost the words. It is after that small pause that the speakers use some French sentences (e.g., La musée des beaux arts, ça me rappelle de plein de chose, et nos enfants sont plus en plus approché) as a way to cover their insufficient linguistic knowledge toward the AA or the MSA language use. This result corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work that has been achieved by Aitsiselmi and Marley (2008) who claimed that CS in Algeria is an inevitable phenomenon. They added that speakers tend to use French words because they often "...springs to their mind more readily" (p. 203).

A short glance at the above-stated results shows as well that the different means of the mass media TV programs as a case in point have considerably contributed to the widespread of the French language among Algerians. The obtained finding accords well with Sebaa (2002) who also found that few hours of TV programs could render more service to the spread of the French language. He said;

C'est ainsi que quelques heures de programme reçues par voies de parabole, rendent beaucoup plus services à la langue Française que toutes les lois sur l'arabisation ne peuvent le faire pour la langue arabe (p. 105).

Thus, a few hours of a program received by means of satellite, render more service to the French language than all the Arabization policy laws cannot do it for the Arabic language (my translation).

The obtained findings allow the researcher to answer the research question that was stated earlier; "after many attempts that aimed to establish the Arabic language throughout the country in all disciplines, does the status of the French language is in regression or does it still in expansion?".

Despite the fact that some amendments have been recently introduced in 2003 in all domains, chief among them; education, administration, mass media, etc. However, the Algerian linguistic identity clearly indicates that the French language has not lost its position among Algerians; whether intellectuals or illiterate. Previously mentioned, Algerian speakers make use of this latter in situation where some Arabic words cannot be readily available to their minds, they make pauses to think about what to say, but never use the AA, they rather use French as an alternative language to overcome their AA limited linguistic repertoire. It is apparent; therefore, that the French language is no more the language of the enemy, but simply a linguistic tool (Miliani, 2001). A tool that allows the speaker to fulfill some communicative tasks; in terms of sending a comprehensible and an understandable output.

5. CONCLUSION

Despite half a century of Arabization; however, the French language retains a strong appearance in the different mass media that enables greater exposure to this latter than ever before, especially that some means such as the radio are considered to be the most well-known and familiar equipment of mass communication which addresses different programs in different languages. In Algeria, as a case in point, the French language can be heard not only in the French broadcast radio stations but also in those stations broadcasting in the AA (or as it is known as Darijda). So, even if the program is held in the AA one can notice the frequent use of French, simply because the AA is highly characterized by the enormous number of the French words.

The obtained data of the present study come up with a major finding concerning the use of the French language among Algerians and especially in the different means of the mass media. It was found that different forms of CS were heavily used in TV programs and radio stations. Reaching such step in research, allowed the researcher to draw a clear image and get an apparent idea as far as the position of the French language among Algerians is concerned. In fact, the French language is strongly presented in the Algerian way of speaking. Today, French still has an essential place in the Algerian community; people do use it in all domains, and under different

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circumstances. This latter existed in the Algerian linguistic repertoire since the arrival of the French colonialism and it still existed in a heavy way. Remarkably, it holds a very exceptional appearance in the country, we can see this latter in the streets, in the sign directions, in the hospitals, in schools, in government, in announcements, advertisements, etc. Besides, French can be heard on radios, televisions, and can be read as well in different newspapers and magazines.

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7. Appendices

Table 1. List of transcription and transliteration

These phonetic symbols approximate the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA):

The sound	Example	English Gloss
[a:]	[sa ^ʕ :ya:ra]	car
[b]	[bayt]	home
[t]	[taʕala]	come
[ʒ]	[ʒa:malu:n]	camel
[ħ]	[ħalwa:]	sweet

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[x]	[xa:msa:tu:n]	five
[d]	[dajlu:n]	tail
[r]	[raʔsu:n]	head
[z]	[zarafatu:n]	giraffe
[s]	[sajalatu:n]	pen
[ʃ]	[ʃa:mʃatu:n]	candle
[sʕ]	[sʕfraʔu:n]	desert
[tʕ]	[tʕa:wila]	table
[ʕ]	[ʕaynu:n]	eye
[ʎ]	[ʎubaru:n]	dust
[f]	[fa ʔru:n]	mouse
[q]	[qamaru:n]	moon
[k]	[kasu:lun]	lazy
[l]	[la:lu:n]	night
[m]	[mi ʕtafu:n]	coat
[n]	[nisru:n]	eagle
[h]	[hawa ʔu:n]	air
[u:]	[u:sbu: ʕu:n]	week
[w]	[waraqa]	paper
[y]	[jasma ʕu]	hear
[ʔ]	[mi: dʃa ʔ a]	fire place