



## The Evolution of Code Switching in the Algerian Theatre: Case of “Galou Laarab Galou” (1983) and “Khatini” (2020) Plays

Dr Khedidja HAMMOUDI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Languages, ESPT Lab, University of Tlemcen,  
[khedidja.hammoudi@univ-tlemcen.dz](mailto:khedidja.hammoudi@univ-tlemcen.dz)

Received: 14 February 2023

Accepted: XX March 2023

### Abstract

This paper aims at studying code switching (CS) in the Algerian theatre. More importantly, it focuses on tracking the evolution of this sociolinguistic phenomenon throughout time by taking two Algerian plays as its corpus: “Galou Laarab Galou” produced in 1983 and “Khatini” that was performed in 2020.

After detecting, transcribing, and analysing the segments of code switching articulated by the characters, data reveal that switching exists from previous years in Algerian theatre speech and still characterise it up to date. The codes to which the participants switch, beside the dialect, are mainly French and Standard Arabic. The CS found in theatrical speech is explained depending certainly on the functions and purposes for which the switch is performed.

### Article info

Received  
14/02/2023  
Accepted  
03/06/2023

### Keywords:

- ✓ Code switching
- ✓ Algerian Arabic
- ✓ French
- ✓ Standard Arabic
- ✓ Plays

## 1. Introduction

Code switching, or the alternation of speakers between different languages in their performance, is a well-known linguistic phenomenon that is observed in different speech communities all over the world. Definitely, the Algerian community is of no exception since it is characterised by a myriad of varieties where code switching is performed *par excellence*. CS, in different studies, has always been explained in relation to its types and functions as proposed by Poplack (1980), Koziol (2000), Martin (2005), Fauzia (2008), and many others.

“Galou Laarab Galou” [*the Arabs said*] (1983) and “Khatini” [*I’m not concerned*] (2020) are two plays that marked the Algerian theatre especially with the content they treat and offer to the audience. Linguistically speaking, CS is a phenomenon that richly appear in the two plays; a fact that makes them worth being a corpus of sociolinguistic study especially with regard to its different types and functions. The codes that are under the microscope are the Algerian variety and its interference with both French and Standard Arabic as well in the speech of the actors.

Corresponding author: Dr Khedidja HAMMOUDI,

## *The Evolution of Code Switching in the Algerian Theatre: Case of “Galou Laarab Galou” (1983) and “Khatini” (2020) Plays*

Switching between codes, be them languages or dialects, has got the lion's share in sociolinguistic investigations especially in real time contexts such as in schools, in political speech, on media, online, etc. but apparent time studies that compare the CS production and evolution within the same community throughout time are few. For this reason, this paper raises the following questions:

- 1/ What are the aspects of code switching that are found in the Algerian theatre?
- 2/ Why do the actors switch between codes?
- 3/ Is the frequency of CS that is found in the first play (1983) similar/ lower than that of the second play (2020)?

According, the following hypothesis are put forward:

- 1/ Code switching found in the two plays occurs between the Algerian variety and French with little reference to Standard Arabic.
- 2/ Actors switch when they want to quote or emphasize an idea. The quality of the role dictates the frequency of change.
- 3/ Probably, switching to French is less frequent nowadays than in previous times (where Algeria was still affected by the French colonizer)

In order to confirm or disconfirm those hypotheses, a deep analysis to the plays has to be made. Along the paper, methodological procedures are provided for the sake of studying CS and bringing new insights that can definitely enrich the literature on this sociolinguistic phenomenon as well as fostering the idea of approaching arts (theatre for example) in a scientific manner (via language studies).

### **2. Code Switching**

Code switching has always been referred to as a process of alternating codes, i.e., different languages (Mayer-Scotton 2006). The switch usually occurs within the same conversational or discursive sequence (Winford *et al.* 2009) and most of the time within the same utterance (Bullock and Toribio 2009).

Obviously, for someone to be able to switch between varieties or codes, they need to be bilingual or even multilingual speakers (Auer 2010). The phenomenon of CS, in most cases, happens spontaneously in bilingual speakers' speech as there is an introduction and inclusion of words and phrases from one language to the other depending as well on their conversational motivations and purposes and eventually the situation and the topic of the discussion (Kachru 1977). And this is what makes the distinction between CS and borrowing whereas the former entails a good, fluent knowledge of the languages used, the latter doesn't require from the speaker to have knowledge about the other language nor is he under the obligation of making grammatical or syntactic changes

in his speech. In the same line of thought, many other concepts are mirrored in CS including mixed structure (Canut & Caubet 2001), mixed code (Auer 2013), which are all the concern of interactional sociolinguistics as highlighted by Ezeizabarrena and Aeby (2012).

## **2.1 Types**

Whenever a study discusses CS, the types have to be provided for the importance they give and the explanation they provide to the linguistic performance under investigation. Many types are found in the literature; however, in order to discuss these types, one has to point out that there are patterns of CS as there are theories of CS.

### **2.1.1 Patterns of CS**

Two patterns of CS have been proposed by Bloom and Gumperz in 1972 namely situational CS and metaphorical CS. Later on, Gumperz (1982) has come with the concept of conversational CS as another pattern to this linguistic production. The first pattern involves the context and the interlocutor as influencing and directing the switch of codes. The second pattern occurs if the speaker switches to emphasize something or draw the attention, i.e., switching to achieve a special communicative reason/ effect. The third pattern evokes the juxtaposition of the grammatical systems of the contributing codes or languages within the conversation.

### **2.1.2 Theories of CS**

Linguistically speaking, switching codes can be at different levels and in different degrees of the mixing within the speech of any speaker. The switch can occur within the same sentence, interasentensial CS and mainly is code mixing, as it can occur between sentences/ utterances, intersentential CS. Once a speaker inserts a tag (discourse markers, interjections) of a language into a sentence or an utterance that is performed in a different language, s/he is doing a tag CS (Romaine 1995).

## **2.2 Code Switching in the Algerian context**

Studies about CS in Algeria are ample and abundant. CS is used in daily life speech of Algerian people. This is due to the diversity of the linguistic situation in Algeria. Diglossia, Triglossia, bilingualism and multilingualism are all present in the community with the performance of Standard Arabic, French, Berber, along with Algerian Arabic as major varieties in addition to some loan words from Spanish and Turkish languages. Accordingly, CS finds its place in the linguistic production of the Algerian Arabic speakers. The switching is prominent in daily life conversations in expressions as [ro7t lelxedma f **taksi**] ‘I went to work via taxi’, [hdert m3a **lprof** ysegadli **la note**] ‘I talked to the teacher to fix my grade’, etc.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data collection**

Data of this study were taken from two Algerian plays as previously mentioned in this paper namely “Galou Laarab Galou” and “Khatini”. The text was written, transcribed and analysed quantitatively in terms of CS frequencies and qualitatively in terms of the functions and purposes attributed to this CS in the speech of the actors.

##### **3.1.1 An overview of the first play**

The first play that is under analysis in the current study is entitled “**Galou Laarab Galou**” which can be translated as *‘The Arabs said’*. It was written by Mohammed Maghout, directed by Ziani Cherif Ayad, and performed in 1983 by a number of actors who are so famous in the ancient Algerian theatre. It discusses what the Arab world has recently become especially with regard to the Palestinian case. One of the most attractive chapters is the one that calls an Arab leader to nowadays’ Arab society and how things have radically changed under the label of politics.

**Figure 1. Pictures from the 1<sup>st</sup> Play**



**Source:** retrieved on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 from

<https://www.tna.dz/%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%80%D9%88%D8%A7-%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%80%D9%88%D8%A7/>

##### **3.1.2 An overview of the second play**

The second play that is under analysis in the current study is entitled “**Khatini**” which can be translated as *‘I am not concerned’*. It was directed by Ahmad Rezag, and performed in 2020 by a variety of actors who are so famous in the modern Algerian theatre. It discusses the current situation of youths in Algeria and the impact of the system on them. A young man named ‘Khatini’ wanted to quit the country because he didn’t find work in his country but unfortunately, he was banned from

leaving by the ministry in order to stay and work for them. In later scenes of the play, the young man with his friends wanted change and went out to ask for it in a peaceful march where he was put in jail for freedom and love of bettering the situation in the country.

Figure 2. A poster of the play “Khatini”



### 3.2 Data analysis

Aspects of code switching exist in both plays. It is performed between Algerian Arabic (AA) and French (Fr) in addition to Standard Arabic (SA) as mentioned in the tables (1-2) below.

Table 1. Examples of CS in the 1<sup>st</sup> play

From—to And vice versa	Examples
AA-- Fr	[3la hadouk <b>les artistes</b> ] <i>'for those artists'</i> [ <b>jamais</b> yetkesser] <i>'he is never broken'</i>
AA-- SA	[bash yredou <b>lmasra7 fi khidmat sha3b</b> ] [a3lam ya qahwaji beli 7odourna <b>Sharaf lik</b> ] <i>'know that our presence honors you'</i>

*The Evolution of Code Switching in the Algerian Theatre: Case of “Galou Laarab Galou” (1983) and “Khatini” (2020) Plays*

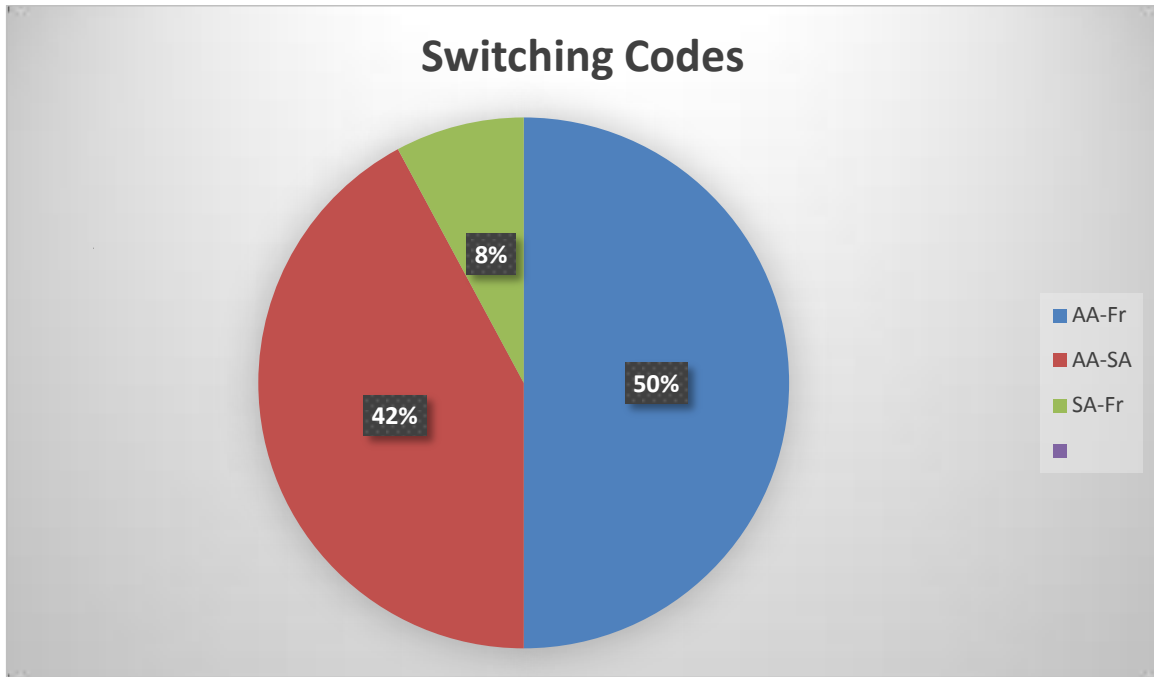
SA--Fr	[mina <b>lwaqi3iya</b> lelmiziriya] <i>‘from reality to misery’</i> [mayehtamoush b <b>lux</b> e <b>abadan</b> ] <i>‘they don’t care about prestige, never’</i>
--------	--

**Table 2. Examples of CS in the 2<sup>nd</sup> play**

From—to And vice versa	Examples
AA-- Fr	[ta7at m <b>lbalcon</b> ] <i>‘she has fallen from the balcony’</i> [ <b>attention</b> mat7ellish lbab] <i>‘be careful, don’t open the door’</i>
AA-- SA	[Wkan sheftoulou <b>wizarat etashghil</b> ] <i>‘you should have checked the ministry’</i> [ <b>l7okouma</b> kamel mbouqla] <i>‘the government is dumb’</i>
SA--Fr	[ <b>les champs Elysées</b> wa <b>layali lmilah</b> ] <i>‘les champs Elysées and the good nights’</i>

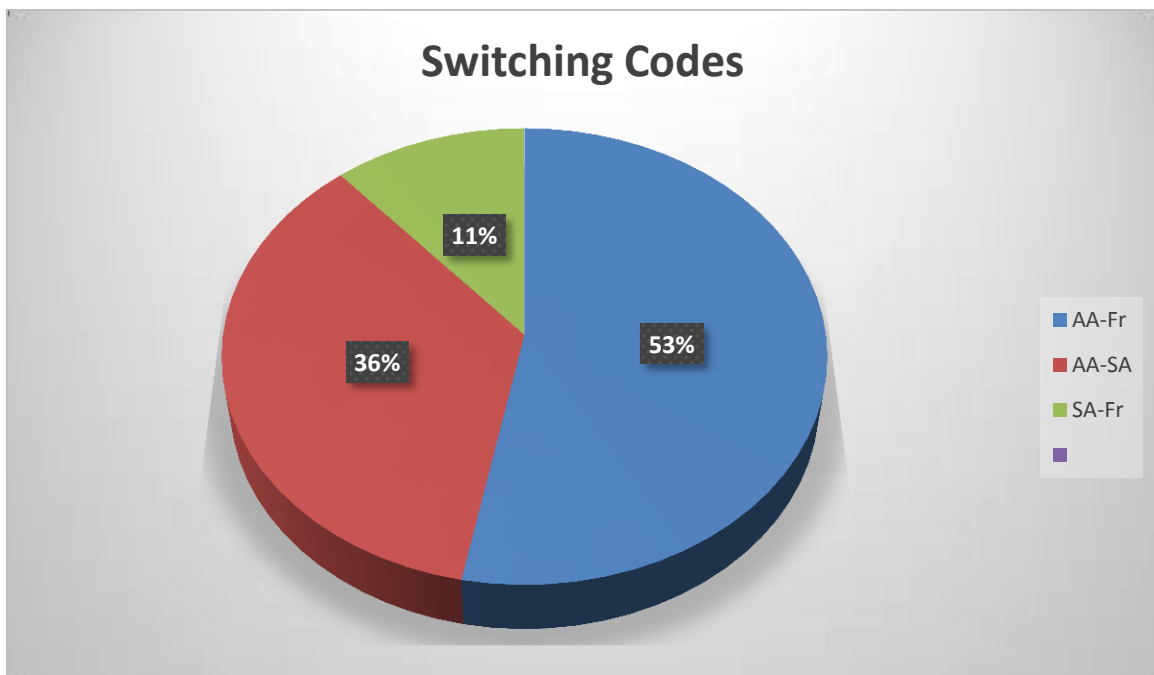
The frequency of code switching between the three mentioned languages (AA, Fr, SA) is shown in the charts below. We notice that in the first play, from 140 expressions that include switching between different codes, 50% of these expressions occur between AA and Fr (and vice versa). On the other hand, we see that SA is used with a proportion of 42% while the shift from Arabic to French is almost not found with 8% from the whole speech.

**Figure 3. The frequency of CS in the 1<sup>st</sup> play**



The fourth figure represents the frequency of switching that is exercised in the second play. Among 132 expressions including the activity of switching, 53% of them is between AA and Fr. On the other side, 36% is the average of AA and SA switching whereas the shift between SA and Fr in the same sentence is limited to 11% of the speech.

Figure 4. The frequency of CS in the 2<sup>nd</sup> play



Many types of CS are present in the speech of actors along the two plays.

- **Intra-sentential switching:**

here are some extracts from the actors’ conversations that include instances of intra-sentential switching, i.e., changes within the sentence.

- [ahdar bi **khtissar**]
- [yehtamou b lafen w mayehtamouch b **luxe**]
- [**vive** elmasra7]
- [blad lbokhs, la **i7tiram** la **protocol**]

- **Inter-sentential switching:**

here are some extracts from the actors’ conversations that include instances of inter-sentential switching, i.e., changes within utterance borders and between clauses.

- [**labudda lilqaydi an yankassir**... w **jamais** yetkesser]
- [**kifesh win kount**... **chez la coiffeuse**]
- [**sayidi ra2is**... **je vous présente ma femme**]
- [**Faites attention**... **matelabennash belkhobza**]

- **Tag switching:**

here are some extracts from the actors’ conversations that include instances of tag switching, i.e., changes that involve interjections and empty words or linking words in a different language.

- [ammala **ayuha l’ikha** 7okou jyoubkom]
- [hta ntouma **mashaallah**]

We notice that intra-sentential CS is very common among actors more than the other types. It is worth mentioning that this result is observed in both plays.

### ***3.3 Interpretation of findings***

The frequency of switching that has been noticed in the two plays has a direct relation with the topic of discussion as well as the purposes and functions of the language within turn taking on theatre. Gumperz (1982) identifies six basic functions that CS serves in conversation. They are: 1- Quotations, 2- Addressee specification, 3- Interjections, 4- Reiteration, 5- Message Qualification, 6- Personalization versus objectivization.



Quotations were present in the studied plays were the actors have reported speech of other people in their conversations. For example [elkhaylou wa laylou walbayda2o ta3rifuni] was an expression used inside a conversation performed in Dialectal Algerian Arabic.

In addressee specification, the switch serves to direct the message to one particular person among several addresses present in the environment. For example, [ayna kounti ya dezdimon], [ayouha sha3b], [yekhi hadi l7okouma].

Interjections simply serve to mark sentence fillers as in the insertion of the English filler [you know] in an otherwise completely Spanish utterance. Many of these fillers were present in the speech of the actors, more prominently: [eh bein, bein oui, bein non, tu sais] among others.

Reiteration occurs when one repeats a message in the other code to clarify what is said or even to increase the perlocutionary effect of the utterance. For instance, one of the actors had to explain the phrase of [jus de fruits] to a native SA speaker (another actor in the play), he said [3assir lfawakih]

Gumperz defines message qualification as “an elaboration of the preceding utterance in the other code”. For instance, [matefahmouch ntouma, c’est pas possible, vous ne comprenez pas].

Personalization versus objectivization signals the degree of speaker involvement in a message as in the case of giving one's statement more authority in a dispute through CS. For instance, [ayouha sha3b... walou... wa shokran]; the expression of ayouha sha3b has given a lot of power to the speech of the actor (president in the play) although the content of the speech included nothing important or literally nothing.

The two plays show a high degree of code switching either from/ to SA or Fr and this answers the different research questions that we have elaborated in the beginning of this paper. In the sense that CS exists in the speech of Algerian people from ancient times (the colonization) up to nowadays which was represented in the recent play of “Khatini”. The effect of France on Algeria has proved to be very strong linguistically speaking; the results speak for themselves.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The present research paper addresses theatre from a socio-linguistic perspective by studying the phenomenon of code switching in different plays that were produced in two distinct periods of time withing a distance of forty years. What can be concluded from the study is that CS existed in the speech of Algerians for years and still persists in nowadays’ theatre. Switching occurs for several purposes and has therefore different functions in theatrical linguistic performance. Nevertheless, one should point that French along with Standard Arabic form a good proportion from Algerian Arabic;

a situation that needs further investigation by sociolinguistics interested in the Algerian speech community.

### **5. Bibliography List**

- [1] C. Myers-Scotton, *Duelling languages: Grammatical structure in codeswitching*. Oxford University Press, 1993.
- [2] C. M. Scotton, *Multiple voices: An introduction to bilingualism*. Blackwell Pub., 2006.
- [3] L. Isurin, D. Winford, and K. De Bot, *Multidisciplinary approaches to code switching*. John Benjamins Publishing, 2009, vol. 41.
- [4] P. Auer, *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation. Theories and Methods*. Walter de Gruyter, 2010, vol. 1.
- [5] ———, *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. Routledge, 2013.
- [6] H. Kebeya, “Inter-and intra-sentential switching: are they really comparable?” Ph.D. dissertation, Kenyatta University, 2013.
- [7] C. Canut and D. Caubet, *Comment les langues se mélangent: codeswitching en francophonie*. Editions L’Harmattan, 2001.
- [8] J. J. Gumperz, *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press, 1982, vol. 1.
- [9] M.-J. Ezeizabarrena and S. Aebly, “Les phénomènes de code-switching dans les conversations adulte-enfant (s) en basque-espagnol: une approche syntaxique,” *Corpus*, no. 9, 2010.
- [10] D. Moore, “Code-switching and learning in the classroom,” *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, vol. 5, no. 5, pp. 279–293, 2002.
- [23] J.-L. Gauvain, L. Lamel, H. Schwenk, G. Adda, L. Chen, and F. Lefevre, “Conversational telephone speech recognition,” in *Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing, 2003. Proceedings.(ICASSP’03). 2003 IEEE International Conference on*, vol. 1. IEEE, 2003, pp. I–I.
- [17] A. Laurent, T. Fraga-Silva, L. Lamel, and J.-L. Gauvain, “Investigating techniques for low resource conversational speech recognition,” in *Acoustics, Speech and Signal Processing (ICASSP), 2016 IEEE International Conference on*. IEEE, 2016, pp. 5975–5979.