A Conversational Analysis of Arabic-French Code Switching in Algerian TV Talk Shows

Rafat Al Rousan, Kenza Merghmi
Department of Translation, Yarmouk University, Jordan

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Abstract

The current study is a conversational analytic study of Arabic-French code switching among Algerian bilinguals in some TV talk shows. The first objective of this study is to reveal the aspects of language negotiation among Algerian bilinguals. The second one is to find out what code switching may display about the participants’ language preference and bilingual competence. The last objective is to understand how code switching is employed by Algerian bilinguals to organize their conversations. A sequential (turn-by-turn) analysis was conducted to examine a corpus of four (4) excerpts extracted from three different Algerian TV talk shows, following Auer’s (1984) theory of conversational code switching (1984). This qualitative analysis revealed that the Algerian bilinguals tend to negotiate the language of interaction through sequences of language convergence and language divergence during their exchange of turns. It was also found that code switching gives an insight about the interlocutors’ language preference and competence. Finally, the study revealed that the Algerian bilinguals switch between Arabic and French to manage turn-taking and to organize the sequence of their conversational tasks. The findings also showed that code switching is used by the Algerian bilinguals to fulfill the following conversational tasks: topic change, stating a side-remark, stating a personal evaluation, giving an account or explanation, shifting back to the previous point of talk, self-repair, other-initiated repair, marking a contrast in the internal structure of the narrative, reinitiating turn-taking after an interruption or talk-overlap, marking preference or dispreference and stating direct quotations.

Keywords: Algeria, Arabic, code switching, conversational analysis, French, talk shows.

1. Introduction

Like most African countries, Algeria is a multilingual speech community. This linguistic situation is manifested by the co-existence of different languages and language varieties across the country. In fact, the long-lasting contact between Arabic and French in Algeria had a big role in shaping its current linguistic situation. A large proportion of the Algerian population is bilingual using French regularly in their social interactions. Therefore, several language contact phenomena such as borrowing and code switching have emerged.

On the other hand, the Algerian Arabic dialect is highly influenced by the French language where a large number of French borrowings are observed. Arabic-French and Berber-French code switchings are also the main patterns of bilingual practices among the Algerian speakers. These patterns of language alternation take place in different settings and with varying degrees. Moreover, the alternation between
native languages, Arabic/Berber and French, is not just a common characteristic of Algerians’ daily interactions, but it also appears in media talk and mass communication. “Media practices both reflect and feed back into everyday talk” (Jaffe 2007, p.172). Arabic/Berber-French code switching is usually employed in the Algerian advertisements, social media, and most importantly, TV talk shows.

Auer (1998) defines code switching as “the alternating use of two or more codes within one conversational episode” (p.1). This linguistic phenomenon has been approached from different analytical orientations, and within several contextual settings. A conversational analytic model of code switching, specifically the theory of conversational code switching proposed by Auer (1984) is adopted in this study to explain the conversational role of this linguistic behavior in the discourse of Algerian bilinguals.

The contextual work of code switching allows the interlocutors to organize and develop their ongoing discourse by signaling a move from one type of interaction to another. Switching from one code to another may contribute to mark several conversational functions. It may also contribute to understanding the participants’ language preference and bilingual competence according to their actual language choices and language negotiations (Auer 1988, 1995; Li 1998, 2005). Therefore, an internal (micro) analysis of this kind may arrive at locally derived interpretations of code switching within its context in the conversation. Thus, this study is based on a conversation analytic model which is assumed to bring more detailed and rigorous interpretations of conversational code alternation in Algeria. “ It is an analytic procedure that focuses on the sequential development of interaction because the meaning of code switching is conveyed as part of the interactive process, and cannot be discussed without referring to the conversational context” (Li 1998, 162).

Code switching in Algeria has been studied from a macro sociolinguistic perspective, in which some issues such as frequency, attitudes and social motivations have been the focus. However, to the best of the researchers’ knowledge, few studies have dealt with the interactional dimension of this phenomenon, where code switching is regarded as a conversational strategy. In addition, the researchers did not come across any study that has adopted the conversational analytic model to the study of code switching in Algeria. Hence, the present study is an attempt to fill in a gap in the literature. Specifically, the current study is mainly concerned with Arabic-French code switching in some Algerian TV talk programs where code alternation is regarded as a conversational strategy of talk organization.

This study is a sequential (turn-by-turn) analysis of Arabic-French code switching in the conversation of Algerian bilinguals in some Algerian TV talk shows. The first objective of this study is to investigate language negotiation among the Algerian bilinguals. Secondly, this study aims at revealing some contextual information about these Algerian participants such as their language preferences and bilingual competences, which code switching may display. The final objective is to explore the different ways the Algerian bilingual participants tend to manage their conversational tasks through switching from Arabic to French or vice versa.

The present study aims at answering the following three straightforward questions:
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1. How are Arabic and French negotiated among the Algerian bilinguals during their interactions in TV talk shows?

2. What does Arabic-French code switching reveal about the interlocutors’ language preference and bilingual competence?

3. How is Arabic-French code switching employed by Algerian bilinguals to organize their conversational tasks?

2. Background of the Study

2.1 Location, Population, and Languages of Algeria

Algeria is located in the middle of the Arab Maghreb and extends upon 2.381.741 square km. It is the largest country in the Arab- Maghreb with a population estimated at more than 45 million people (Benrabah 2007). It includes a mixture of ethnic groups such as Berbers, Arabs, Turks, Sub-Saharan Africans and Andalusians (Benrabah 2007). Modern Standard Arabic is the national and official language of Algeria whereas the Arabic Algerian colloquial is the first language of the majority (Benrabah 2007). The Berber language also has different varieties, which are not always mutually intelligible. They are Kabyle, Mzabi, Chaoui, Touareq, and Chenwi. French, on the other hand, represents the first foreign language spoken by most Algerians with various degrees of fluency. Algeria is a multilingual society, but it is marked by its Arabic-French bilingual situation that may take different patterns.

2.2 Code Switching

The term “code” refers to any linguistic form used for communication such as language, a variety of language, style and so on (Romaine 1995; Wardhaugh 2006). Bilinguals usually use two languages in their speech, switching from one code to another or mixing between the two codes within the same single utterance. This kind of linguistic behavior is called “code switching”. Code switching is one of the frequent and natural parts of bilingual behavior. It is “an example par excellence of skilled performance” (Myers-Scotton 1993, p. 74). It is the use of two different languages or language varieties (codes) in the same conversation. It can be regarded as a linguistic ability of an individual speaker, or as a sociolinguistic feature that marks a certain speech community (Wardhaugh 2006). This process can take place within or between sentences (Appel and Muysken 2005). It may also appear within or across the interlocutors’ turns in the conversation (Li 2005; Wardhaugh 2006; Gafaranaga 2009).

Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) and Romaine (1995) claim that language choice constitutes a pragmatic indexical that marks social relations, rights and obligations. Auer (1995), Li (1998) and Appel and Muysken (2005), on the other hand, believe that code switching is a natural strategy employed by bilingual speakers to signal different conversational functions. At the social level, Appel and Muysken (2005) and Wardhaugh (2006) argue that code switching is used by bilinguals as an instrument of expressing their mixed or double linguistic identities. This bilingual identity is the result of intensive, long-lasting language contact. Auer (1988, 1998), Myers-Scotton (1993), Li (1998, 2005), Gafaranaga (2007), and Bullock and Toribio (2009) confirm that code witching is not a sign of linguistic gap and
inability, but it is indeed an additional interactional resource (procedure) available to bilinguals to develop their talk.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Previous Studies

Code switching has been investigated from a conversational analytic perspective in which a more detailed sequential analysis of this linguistic behavior is carried out. Auer (1984, 1988) was the first linguist to analyze code switching using this analytical framework. Auer (1988) investigated code switching among children of Italian migrant workers with a southern Italian background in Constance, Germany. He found that code switching into Italian or German among these children actually revealed some kind of imbalanced bilingual competence in some switching instances and reflected different language preferences in other cases. This study also revealed that code alternation achieved several conversational tasks, such as marking reformulations or elaborations, setting off settings in narratives and distinguishing various types of information in an utterance. Moreover, code alternation was also found to signal a contrast in the conversational context, for example, when speakers switch from formal to casual interactions, or when there is a change of topic. Code switching was also employed to mark sequential contrast between the ongoing talk and sudden self-repair or side remark. Most of these conversational activities were accompanied with code switching. Furthermore, Auer (1988) noticed a sequence of language negotiation among these children who have different bilingual competences and language preferences.

Similar findings were revealed by Alfonzetti (1998) in her study of code switching between Italian and a dialect in Sicily, and Li (1998) in his study of Cantonese-English code switching among speakers in the Tyneside Chinese community in Britain. Alfonzetti (1998) dealt with two aspects of code switching: when the direction of switching matters, and when it does not matter. In the first case, speakers seemed to switch in order to show accommodation or divergence and to reformulate or repair their code choices. For the second case, switching occurs for self-repair, pre-closings, sequential contrast, story-telling, topic change and setting quotations. Li (1998), on the other hand, shed light on the sharp difference of language preference among two different Chinese generations. While the first generation seemed to prefer Cantonese, the second generation showed more preference for English. Li (1998) clarified that these social meanings were derived from a sequential interpretation of language negotiation among these participants.

Wong (2005) examined conversational code switching among high and secondary school students respectively. Bailey (2000) aimed at finding out the local functions of code switching among Dominican American high school students during their peer interactions. The study revealed that code switching is employed by these students to manage their bilingual discourse by achieving self-repair, reformulations and showing agreement or disagreement. Wong (2005) also carried out an analysis of code alternation among teacher-student interaction in a Hong Kong EMI secondary school. He found that these students code switch to switch between topics or to display preferred language choices. The same author stated
that “all these are purposeful functions and bilingual speakers do not code-switch just because of language incompetence” (p.56).

Bani-Shoraka (2005) investigated how Persian/Azerbaijani Bilinguals in Tehran tend to manage dispreferred responses, i.e., disagreement in their discourse through employing code switching. It was found that switching to another code can be used “to mark, maintain, and sometimes aggravate opposition and distance” (Bani-Shoraka 2005, 196). Balamoti (2010) also conducted a conversational analytic study of code switching among Greek bilinguals. The focus of this study was to find out how and why the Greeks use code switching when engaging in in-group interactions, and when they interact with non-Greeks. Ten hours of recorded conversations were analyzed following a conversational analytic approach. Many instances of inter-sentential code switching were observed in the second situation where code switching is more needed, whereas more instances of intra-sentential code switching were noticed during these participants’ in-group interactions. Code switching in this study was found to fulfill some linguistic and interpersonal functions like quotation, self-repairs and to show solidarity with the non-Greek co-participants. Another investigation was concerned with Arabic-English code switching in bilingual conversations held between Americans and Moroccans in Morocco. In this study, Al-Masaeed (2013) found that code switching from a conversational analytic perspective is employed to fulfill a set of conversational tasks, among which are quotation, reiteration and change of participant constellation.

3.2 Auer’s (1984) Model of Conversational Code switching

As far as code switching is concerned, many scholars such as Auer (1984, 1988, 1995, 1998), Alfonzetti (1998), Li (1998, 2005) and Gafaranga (2007, 2009) believe that code switching must be regarded as a conversational strategy of organizing the bilingual on-going discourse in the same way monolingual talk is organized by other discursive tools. The sequential and the emic features of the conversation inspired Auer (1984, 1988, 1998) to propose the theory of conversational code switching that considers a bilingual conversation as “a set of complex linguistic activities” (Auer 1998, 119), so it should be examined sequentially (turn-by-turn). This model emphasizes the role of code switching in organizing these activities in their local context, i.e., in relation to preceding and following units of talk (Auer 1988, 1995, 1998; Li 1998). Auer (1988) supports his suggested model of analysis by stating the following:

Participants have to solve a number of problems independently of whether they use one or more languages, these are problems related to the organization of conversation in general e.g. to turn taking, topical cohesion, the constitution of specific linguistic activities. The alternation use of two languages may be a means to cope with these problems (p.193).

This analytic model is based on two main categories that direct the interpretation of code switching functions. These are transfer vs. code alternation and discourse-related vs. participant-related code alternation (Auer, 1984, 1988, 1998). Auer (1984) stresses that these category pairs are not put for classificatory purposes, i.e., to restrict or classify code switching into certain types, but rather they are two procedures that underlie the process of code switching production and interpretation (Auer, 1988).
4. Methodology

4.1 Data Collection

Four episodes of three different TV talk shows were downloaded from the internet (YouTube). The three TV talk shows are: ‘Aljaza’iria Show’ TV program at Aljaza’iria One TV channel; ‘SahahiyaSah’ (Health is What Really Matters) at Eshuruk TV channel; ‘Maw’idThakafi’ (The Cultural Date) at KBC TV channel. All these TV channels are private Algerian TV channels. These particular TV shows are among the most watched TV shows in Algeria. The selection of these four particular episodes was random. After that, four excerpts were extracted from these four downloaded episodes. These extracts were selected because they contain various interesting instances of language negotiation and code switching. Two excerpts were extracted from two different episodes of ‘Aljaza’iria Show’, which were uploaded in June 2017. The third excerpt was extracted from an episode of the new medical TV show ‘SahahiyaSah’, which was uploaded in October 2017. The fourth excerpt was extracted from an episode of the ‘Maw’idThakafi’, which was uploaded in January 2017.

The extracts were then transcribed, translated and written down on big cards. The cards contained notes like, the title of the TV show, the TV broadcast channel, and the uploading dates of the episodes, in addition to some information about the participants of the conversational extracts and the duration of the conversations.

The participants in this study were Algerian bilinguals, who belonged to different affiliations such as journalists, TV show presenters, actors, singers, doctors as well as film directors and producers.

4.2 Data Analysis

Four (4) excerpts were analyzed sequentially. In this study, a turn-by-turn examination of language choice and code switching was carried out. In this kind of analysis, it is the interactional sequence and not the analyst that controls the interpretation of code choice and code switching. During the analysis, the researcher followed three essential parameters of interpretation. Firstly, all the instances of language convergence or divergence between the participants were discussed. This was found to be useful to understand how the Algerian bilingual interlocutors negotiate the language of interaction, and how this may display their language preferences. Secondly, the researchers were concerned about what Arabic-French code switching may reveal about the interlocutors’ bilingual competence and language preference. The third concern of this study was to explore the different discourse-related functions that the Algerian participants may achieve through switching from Arabic to French and vice versa. The analysis was not just based on the interlocutors’ language performance, but also on their physical movements and body language. Aspects of turn-taking such as turn initiation, interlocutors’ selection, overlaps and interruption were taken into account. Moreover, the emergence of some prosodic cues especially pauses and hesitation was given so much importance in this study. These prosodic mechanisms may have a significant role in arriving at the contextual interpretation of code switching, specifically participant-related code switching. All these analytic steps are based on one major principle, which is the sequential context where extensive attention focuses on the relationship between preceding and subsequent turns within the interaction.
5. Analysis and Discussion

Four (4) excerpts were analyzed from a conversational analytic perspective. No criterion was followed for the numeration of these excerpts because this study does not rely on any typology of code switching discourse-functions. Each excerpt in the corpus was examined sequentially. It is worth mentioning that all the interlocutors in this study were bilinguals, and did not face any difficulty of language comprehension because they all understood the languages used. In all examples, the Arabic utterances are given in bold, the transliteration of the Arabic utterances in italics and in bold, the French utterances in italics, and the English translation for both Arabic and French utterances between parentheses.

5.1 Analysis of Excerpts

5.1.1 Excerpt No.1

This extract was taken from an episode of the TV talk show ‘‘Aljaza’’ria Show’ at Aljaza’’ria One TV channel. The episode was uploaded to YouTube on the 13th of June 2017. The interlocutors in this excerpt are Anissa Shayib (A), an Algerian journalist and the presenter of the talk show; Marouane Guerouabi (M), an Algerian comedian; Leila Boursali (L), an Algerian singer and musician; and Asma Halimi (S), an Algerian journalist who presents the sport rubric of the program. Leila and Marouane are the guests of the episode. The duration of this conversation is 4 minutes.

At the beginning of this excerpt, the presenter of the TV show, A initiated a certain comment in Arabic, and then, she marked its end by switching to French. After that, she immediately switched back to Arabic to change the topic while addressing her guest, L.

A: ليلي!عطالبك باش نجيبك c'était tout un programme. إذن واش هوما ﺗﺎوﻋﻚ ﻓﻲ ﻫﺬا اﻟﺸﻬﺮ ﺗﻔﻀﻴﻞ؟

L: تاواعدك في هذا الشهر الفضيل?

L: Bon! Déjà les dates اﻟﻲ ﺟﺎزو ﻓﻮا ﻫﻮ ﻫﺬا ﺗﺎوﻋﻚ ﻓﻲ ﻫﺬا اﻟﺸﻬﺮ ﺗﻔﻀﻴﻞ؟

(A: Leila! Do you know? To bring you here, it was a whole program. So what are your dates for this holy month?)

After starting her utterance in French, L was about to continue her sentence in Arabic when she was interrupted by M, who stated a remark in French. The movement of her head accompanied with a smile revealed perhaps that L liked this remark. L, then, reacted by switching again to French as well to show agreement and preference. After that, she switched back to Arabic while shifting back to her previous point of talk.

L: Bon! Déjà les dates ﺑﺎد ﺛﺎواﻋﺪك ﻓﻲ ﻫﺬا اﻟﺸﻬﺮ ﺗﻔﻀﻴﻞ? [interruption]

"Bon! Déjà les dates ئلي جازوكانوا؟!" [interruption]

(Well! The dates that already passed ee) [interruption]
M: Nous avons ratés
(We have missed it)

L: Oui, vous avez ratés (Laughter)
(Yes, you have missed it (Laughter)

في عناية، في وهران وعندني تاني بجاية:

L: fi Sanaabah, fi wahraan, wuSandi taani bjaaya
(In Annaba, in Oran, and I also have Bejaya)

A asked L another question in Arabic. L, in this turn, chose to diverge from the code choice of her addressee and to answer in French. In the meantime, S also interfered using French. L’s and S’s talk overlapped for a while. Both of them showed hesitation at first before S stopped her talk allowing L to retrieve her turn. In doing so, L switched to Arabic, the language which contrasts her previous choice and the choice of S. Perhaps code switching here indexed some kind of dispreference, or it was just a repair device (Alfonzetti, 1998) that solves a certain problem of communication (talk overlap). L maintained this language for the rest of her utterance before switching again to French to express her personal evaluation of the information stated previously by her when she said: “C’est malheureux d’attendre Ramadan pour travailler (It’s not good to wait just for Ramadan to work.).

A: وعلاق الحفلات يكترو، ليلي في رمضان؟ ربما لأنو الجمهور يحب يسمع للألغنية المنتزمة ولا انتموا في الفناء الأندلسي الحفلات يكونوا طول العام؟

L: أنا طويل العام نخدم بالصح صحة، كان فنانين يستنار حتى لرمضان حتى يعطوه الفرصة بش يجوزوا

C’est malheureux d’attendre Ramadan pour travailler.

I work all year long, doing a perfect job. There are some artists who wait for Ramadan to have the chance to appear. It’s not good to wait just for Ramadan to work.

The next turn by L was full of back and forth switches. She started her utterance in French, and then she switched to Arabic before making a self-repair and shifting back to French ‘on a une autre manière de presenter aujourd’hui la music Andalouse, par exemple dans ce spectacle je raconte.’ (We have another manner of presenting the Andalusian music, for example in that show, I narrate). Finally, she made another self-repair of her code finishing her explanation in Arabic. A, in turn, chose to stick to her preferred code choice when she expressed her own opinion of what has been said by her co-interlocutor.

L: Oui, bien sure, بالประจำ حنا عندي on a une autre manière de presenter aujourd’hui la music Andalouse, par exemple dans ce spectacle je raconte. نحكي حكايات و من بعد نغني مقطع من التراث اللي يوالي مع القصة. فالجمهور يحظ واتن راني نغني.

L: Oui, bien sure, biSaH Hinnaßandna, on a une autre manière de presenter aujourd’hui la music Andalouse, par exemple dans ce spectacle, je raconte, niHki Hkayaat wu min bašd nyani maqTaṣ min ituraq ?ili ywaalim mṣa liqiSa, fa ljumhuur yiHis waafraani nyani (Yes, of course. But we have, we have another manner of presenting the Andalusian music, for example in that show, I narrate, I narrate stories and then, I sing a part of the heritage that suits the story, so that the audience feels what I am singing.)

A: wi tsaafrì biih min Xilaal ?íHkàya illì tìHkìihà (And you travel with them through the story that you tell.)

In the last turn, L initiated another topic when she started talking about some people’s opinion about her music. This shift of topic was associated with code switching. “CS also can apply to impersonal remarks expressed in the form of a direct quote by an unidentified locutor” (Alfonzetti 1998, 203). It seems that L also employed this strategy in her last turn. She started using French to initiate her talk about a group of unidentified people, and then, she stated a direct quotation in Arabic before stating her own opinion while switching back to French.

L: Bon! Moi je comprends les gens اللالي يقولو"الموسيقى الأندلسية ترقد، نا الناس الكبار وكاين اللي مايفهمواش" mais si on met la chanson dans une histoire, ces gens deviennent dans un contexte.

(Well! I understand those people who say that « the Andalusian music makes us feel sleepy, it is for the old people, and that there are some people who do not understand it» but when we put the song in a story, those people become within a context).

L reported what some people may say about the music she produces, using Algerian Arabic. Firstly, it can be inferred that L predicted that those unidentified people may use the Algerian Arabic because this language is the native language for the majority of the Algerians, and it is the most commonly used code among them. Perhaps L also heard some people one day discussing that issue in that language. Secondly, since it is clear that those speakers are unknown to L, it does not matter which code she has to choose while reporting their talk. Finally and most importantly, perhaps L used Arabic in setting off a quotation, whereas she used French before and after to distance herself from this quotation and to mark the contrast between what others think and what she personally thinks. Therefore, this language contrast can be a strategy of signaling a contrast in voices and viewpoints. This point may display that French is the preferred language of L though she looked competent in both languages.

5.1.2 Excerpt No.2

This extract was also taken from an episode of the TV talk show ‘Aljaza’iria show’ at Aljaza’iria One TV channel. The episode was uploaded on YouTube on the 13th of June 2017. The interlocutors of this excerpt are Anissa Chayib (A), a journalist and the presenter of this TV program; Marouane Guerouabi (M), an Algerian comedian, Zahra Harkat (Z), an Algerian journalist, a presenter of TV talk shows and a novice actress, and Asma Halimi (S), an Algerian journalist who presents the sport rubric of the program. Zahra and Marouane are the guests of the episode. The duration of this conversation is five (5) minutes. It should be mentioned that the participants of this conversation did not encounter difficulties in comprehension. Arabic and French were distributed along the conversation where code switching was taking place within and between turns. The following sequential analysis will reveal more details about the contextual functionality of code switching in this interaction.

In this extract, when A asked Z a question, she said a word in modern standard Arabic (MSA), “Alasdaa” (the echoes). Z, in turn, instead of directly answering the question of A, she rather commented on that word addressing M. In fact, changing the addressee, not answering the question, and criticizing the language used by another interlocutor may all be signs to show or mark dispreference for the language used in previous turns. Z, then, was trying to negotiate the language of the interaction with A. She was perhaps inviting her to use another language and to repair her language choice. This conversational task is called ‘other-initiated repair’ (Li, 1998). However, this language negotiation initiated by Z was carried out in a form of a joke. Perhaps this strategy has been employed to mitigate any kind of face-threatening act, and to avoid any possible communicative breakdown.
It seems that Z won this negotiation because A responded to her and code switched through saying the word in French ‘les échos’ (the echoes).


(Zahra! How are the echoes about the drama series that you have participated in?)

Z: durkbdaat déjā tquut?al?aSdaa?

(Now, she already started saying ‘the echoes’)

M: ?ilqay ruukh im?aaha duuka (laughter)

(Try to understand her now)

A: les échos

(The echoes)

It is predicted that that tendency of Z was not motivated by her lack of competence or comprehension of MSA because she is a journalist, so she is supposed to master this language. Rather, it is a matter of language preference. She perhaps preferred to be addressed in Algerian Arabic or French to avoid formality of interaction in that particular kind of discussion.

In her next turn, Z looked satisfied and then, she answered the question in French. After that, she switched to Algerian Arabic to state a side-remark and to express her own perception of the information that she stated before in French ‘raani farhaana bizaaf ?inu ?yamalkaa miinaal ?anajaah’ (I am very happy because the whole work has succeeded.).

Before finishing her talk, she was interrupted by A, who was addressing everybody while trying to give her personal evaluation about the role of Z in the series of (Alkhawa). A chose to initiate her turn by using Algerian Arabic, and then, she switched to French to express her strong positive impression about the performance of Z. Later on, A switched back to Arabic while shifting to another topic, and she asked Z another question.

Z: Beine! Les échos sont t rêspositifs.

(Well! The echoes were very positive. I am very happy because the whole work has succeeded ee)
l'impression on a sequence of Zehra: and I really have the impression that she is acting since a long time. But I have a question. We as TV show presenters and journalists, wonder how Zehra could move from presenting TV shows to participating in a casting like the one of ‘The Brothers’?

Z, in this turn, showed convergence and accommodation with A’s code choice in which she used Arabic to tell the story of her first experience as an actress. The narration was in Arabic, but some changes of the narrative sequence within the same turn have been expressed via switching to French.

(A was not waiting for something like this. They already have done the whole casting, but they have been missing the character of Yassmine, and the director ‘MadihBel’eid, he was not satisfied. Then, I met him, and he was the one who convinced me to participate.)

By having the privilege of self-selection (Li 1998), A reinitiated the conversation and asked Z another question in Arabic. In this time, however, Z showed divergence from this code choice, and she instead chose to answer in French first before switching back to Algerian Arabic. Z started narrating her experience with the actor Hassan Kechach using Arabic, but she switched again to French when setting off some quotations said by Hassan Kechach. The verb of saying was in Arabic whereas the language used by Z to report what Hassan has said was French. It is worth pointing out that Hassan is a francophone actor, and he is also a doctor. Thus, we can suppose that he actually uses the French language regularly with other bilinguals. Therefore, the language used in the quotation may really reflect the original language that has been used by the original speaker. In this turn also, Z switched to French to signal a certain part of the narration ‘j’essaye de la faisait naturellement’ (I try to make it naturally.)
A: kifaa kiaan ilaamal ‘Hassan Keshach’ ili Sarafnaa fi aamaal sinimaayi yakatiiira?
(How was the work with Hassan Keshach whom we have known through several cinematic works?)

Z: Hasan Kechach était très généreux avec nous. kaanyiji yiquli kifaa raaki ‘Hassan ruuhik, nqulu fwai raani Xaayfa, yquli ‘diriha le plus naturellement possible’? ana j’essaye de la faisait naturellement, min ba’d yquli ‘voila, ça yé, c’est bon!’.

(Hasan Kechach was very generous with us. He used to come to me and tell me « how do you feel? », I responded: “I am a bit scared”, he said: « make it as natural as possible». I tried to make it naturally, and then, he said: « that’s it, it’s over; it’s good »).

After being asked another question in Algerian Arabic by A, Z made again a divergent code choice. Her turn was initiated by a French proverb. After that, she tried to provide more explanation in Arabic, but she failed to remember a certain word. After a pause of 2 seconds, she switched again to French to solve this problem. Auer (1984, 1988) refers to this kind of linguistic problem as a momentary lack of competence. In the meantime, another interlocutor, S interfered to express her strong agreement with Z. This agreement was accompanied by a convergent language choice.

A: ana kamunafa wa saHaafiah raani Xaayfa titXalaay Ja itanfiiT
(I, as a presenter and a journalist; I am worried that you may stop presenting TV programs)

(2 seconds) à la hauteur, de même niveau de le ee [interruption]

Z: laa! kiima yqulik «l’un n’empêche pas l’autre»… donc si on va un autre projet?li yi’shibni wi ykuun ee (2 seconds) à la hauteur, de même niveau de ‘lxawa’ee ” [interruption]

(No, as they say «one does not rule out the other»… so if I have another project which I like and which it is ee (2 seconds) at the same level of ‘lkhawa’ ee) [Interruption]

S: Voilà! Ça ce que je veux te dire, parce que ‘lkhawa’ c’est vraiment quelque chose extraordinaire, il faut vraiment que le produit soit à ce niveau-là pour accepter.
(Exactly! this is what I would like to tell you, because ‘lkawa’ is really something extraordinary, the product should really be at this level to accept it.)

Z: Voilà! Exactement
(Yes! Exactly)

Attributes like language competence and language preference are more evident in the following excerpt:

5.1.3 Excerpt No.3

This excerpt was extracted from an episode of the Algerian medical TV program “SahaHiyaSah”. The participants in this conversational exchange are Dr. Ferial Hafid (F), an Algerian gynecologist and the presenter of the program, and her guest Prof. Brouri (B), an Algerian francophone professor of internal medicine. The duration of this conversation is 2 minutes and 45 seconds.

After selecting her addressee, F asked B a question using Algerian Arabic. B was trying to accommodate to the language choice of his addressee, but it seemed that he had a difficulty talking in Arabic. After a pause for 5 seconds, F interfered while switching her code from Arabic to French to encourage B to use French freely. The hesitation of B, coupled with this kind of other-initiated repair on the part of F, may give clues about the language competence and preference of B who seems to have superior competence in French, and this may reveal an imbalanced bilingual competence (Auer 1988). Perhaps B was thinking in French rather than Arabic, and this may explain his inability to talk in that language. Another evidence of this assumption is found in B’s next turn. When he was allowed to use his preferred code, B immediately switched to French, and started talking with high fluency.

F: دكتور انت كيفااش تشووف المرضى ديالك؟ هل تشووف بلي المرضى ديالك عندهم تقافة صحية ولا 2؟

B: ?inhayi ?ildjumhuur wil mufaahidiin, eeee
(I salute the audience and the viewers, eeee)

F: ça dépend.
(It depends.)

B: C’est très varié dans notre pays. Nous avons à faire à des malades qui sont très bien informer, et parfois nous avons des malades qui ne sont pas du tout, et c’est devenu un véritable problème aujourd’hui en Algérie.
(There is a variation in our country. We have dealt with patients who are well informed, and sometimes we have patients who are not at all, and this became a real problem in Algeria today)

In turn (5) below, F shifted back to Arabic to comment on what has been previously said. B, then, tried again with more hesitation to switch to Arabic while shifting to another topic of discussion. However, the same problem emerged. After 4 seconds of hesitation, B decided for himself to shift back to French in order to rescue his speech. F, on the other hand, kept using Arabic for the rest of her talk. This may reveal that the preferred code of F is Arabic, and that she switched to French just to cooperate with her co-interlocutor and to solve a certain communicative problem. We may suppose, therefore, that unlike B, F may have a more balanced bilingual competence.

F: صح هادا مشكل كبير

F: SaH hada muʃkil ikbūr

(That’s right. This is a big problem)

B: il y’a l’éducation (4 seconds) il y’a l’information sanitaire qui devenue une véritable spécialité pour la prise en charge des maladies chronique, et il y’a l’information sanitaire qui concerne surtout la prévention, la vaccination et en ce de suite. Aujourd’hui nous avons un très grand problème. Nous avons des sources d’informations diverses. N’importe qui peux constitue un blog, un cite internet et raconter n’importe quoi sans aucune qualification.

B: lyuum kaayin kaayinee deux kaayin kaayin zuudj, kaayin ?itarbiya ?itiladjiya ?iliee (3 seconds) il y’a l’éducation thérapeutique qui devenue une véritable spécialité pour la prise en charge des maladies chronique et il y’a l’information sanitaire qui concerne surtout la prévention, la vaccination et en ce de suite. Aujourd’hui nous avons un très grand problème. Nous avons des sources d’informations diverses. N’importe qui peux constitue un blog, un cite internet et raconter n’importe quoi sans aucune qualification".

(Today, there are two ee there are, there are two, there is the medical education that eee (4 seconds) there is the medical education that has become a real specialty for the management of chronic diseases, and there is the Health information that is especially concerned with the prevention, the vaccination and so on. Today, we have a very big problem. We have diverse sources of information. Anyone can create a blog, a website and tell anything without any qualification).

F: لهادا احنا ديم نوصوا الناس أنهم ما يطالعوش على معلومات كيمه هادي عل الانترنت. عندهم أطباء لازم يعملوا تحاليل. يعني l’internet في هادي الحالة ما تكفيش باش نشخصوا المرض.

(That is why we always advise people not to get such information from the internet. They have doctors, they should do the tests. This means that the internet is not enough in that case to diagnose the disease).

5.1.4 Excerpt No.4

This excerpt was extracted from an episode of the Algerian TV talk show “Maw’idThakafi’. The interlocutors of this conversation are Mohamad Allal (Μ), an Algerian journalist and the presenter of the TV program, and his guest Mohamad Hazourli (H), an Algerian famous film director. The duration of this conversation is 2 minutes.

In the first turn of this extract, the journalist, Μ asked his guest H a question in MSA using a formal tone. H, in turn, aligned with the choice of his addressee before giving his evaluation of the event in French when he said “c’est un acte civilisé” (it is a civilized act). However, he immediately repaired his code, switching back to Arabic to continue his narration. At the end of his turn, H switched again to French to state a side-comment about the event when he said “vraiment ils étaient beaucoup d’émotions dans cette rencontre” (There were really a lot of emotions in this meeting).


(You have participated in the award ceremony of the artists. It was a big event with the presence of the prime minister. How was the event, Sir?)

H: kaana maw?id mumayaz li?anu takriim ?alfanaan, c’est une acte civilisé?e, huwa ?ay? 


(It was a special meeting because honoring the artist is a civilized act. It is a civilized act. The artists were honored by the minister of Culture and the prime minister with the presence of intellectuals and the media. There were really a lot of emotions in this meeting.)
While initiating another topic of discussion, which was about H’s new film, M asked H another question with preserving the same tone of speech and language choice. In this case also H accommodates to his co-interlocutor’s language choice before switching to French to start explaining his argument when he said “La technologie maintenant nous permet d’aller au bout de nos rêves et de notre imagination” (The technology now allows us to go after our dreams and imagination). Then he switched back to Arabic to provide a more comprehensive illustration.

M: أستاذ دعنا الآن نتكلم عن عملك الجديد التي كان فيلم سينمائي’الدخلاء‘. هذا الموضوع القريب من الواقع والثورة الجزائرية. حديثنا أهمية إنجاز أفلام من هذا النوع.

H: أنا أؤمن أن العمل السينمائي تجسيد للواقع خاصة أن التكنولوجيا السينمائية تطورت. La technologie maintenant nous permet d’aller au bout de nos rêves et de notre imagination.

(Sir, let us now speak about your new work which was a cinematic film ‘The Intruders’. This topic is close to the Algerian reality and revolution. Tell us about the importance of producing films of that sort.)


(I believe that the cinematic work is a realization of the reality, especially because the techniques of the cinema are developing now. The technology now allows us to go after our dreams and imagination. We can embody the dream in the image. In earlier times, to reflect imagination, to transpose feelings to the screen, to transpose feelings to the screen, it was difficult for you to embody them technically because the tools of yesterday did not allow this. Today, technology allows for everything.)

Although H sounded highly competent in Both Arabic and French, he showed more preference towards switching to French while producing expressive talk before tending to repair for himself and to
reformulate his expressions in Arabic. A similar finding was revealed by Alfonzetti (1998) who proved that language accommodation is usually frequent in back-channel responses in which the following turn is somehow affected by the preceding one. Alfonzetti (1998) also revealed that switching to the preferred code may occur when this effect is weaker.

It has been also observed that H appeared restricted in his language choices. This observation can be proved by H’s frequently unconscious use of French, and then his frequently immediate self-repairs in Arabic, the language that H perhaps thought that he should use in that certain context and with that particular addressee, M.

5.2 Discussion

The findings of the current study are presented and discussed in the form of answers to the questions of this study.

5.2.1 Code Switching and Language Negotiation

Several language negotiation sequences between the participants of the conversations have been noticed in this study. Instances of language negotiation were more obvious through sequences of convergent and divergent code choices (Auer 1984; Alfonzetti 1998; Li 1998) between the interlocutors in their exchange of turns. Making a divergent code choice usually means that the speaker is negotiating the language of interaction with his addressees, and inviting them to adopt his/her preferred code. However, most of the examples of this study revealed that the Algerian bilinguals did not have any intention to control each other’s choice of code. Rather, they were just trying to freely talk in their preferred languages. One exception to this result was found in excerpt (2) where Z was implicitly inviting his addressee to change the code of the interaction (MSA), and to adopt another code (French) or (Algerian Arabic). Such an aspect of language negotiation was also revealed by Auer (1988) in his study of Italian-German code switching. Another interesting aspect of language negotiation found in this study is the tendency of the participants to accommodate (Alfonzetti 1998) to the language used by their addressees in preceding turns before switching to their preferred codes. This strategy was highly frequent among most of the guests during their interaction with the presenters of the TV talk shows. The guests tended first to answer the questions of the presenters by aligning with their language choices, and then, they immediately shift to their preferred codes. This kind of temporal language accommodation was perhaps used by those bilinguals as a communicative strategy for more successful interaction, and maybe to show solidarity and cooperation.

5.2.2 Code Switching and Language Preference and/or Competence

Code switching in this study revealed different important clues about the bilingual competence and the language preference of the conversational participants. As it was mentioned in the previous section, language choice is the first clue of language preference and competence. The participants seemed to choose the code that they are more competent in, and which they prefer the most. Some participants, especially the TV show presenters, showed more preference for the Arabic language, whereas most of the
participants seemed to prefer the French language much more. Language preference, in fact, can be completely overt in conversations like excerpt (3) where Z explicitly expressed his dispreference for MSA and preference for French. However, participant-related attributes such as language preference and competence have been more displayed in this study through the way the interlocutors switched between Arabic and French. Switching to French after encountering the problem of momentary lack of competence in Arabic (the abandoned language) is the most common clue of an imbalanced bilingual competence found in this study. This kind of temporarily lack of competence was often manifested through sequences of hesitation and long pauses. All the participants who experienced this difficulty showed more competence in French and much more preference for it. This finding, therefore, revealed that language competence and language preference are two interrelated elements. The bilingual speakers in this study seemed to prefer the code that they feel more competent in (see excerpt No 3). A similar finding was revealed by Li (1998) and Georgalidou et al. (2010). However, this is not always the case. H in excerpt No 4, for instance, showed more preference for the French language in which he regularly switched to although he seemed highly competent in both Arabic and French.

5.2.3 Code Switching and the Organization of the Conversation

The major function of code switching, in this study, is to mark “sequential contrast” (Auer, 1984) in which the bilingual speaker marks a change of the on-going sequence of talk, or a change of the conversational task. The study revealed a range of conversational tasks fulfilled by these Algerian participants through switching codes regardless of the direction of code switching. Each turn in the excerpts of this study included a set of code switching instances that, in turn, mark a number of conversational tasks. They are as follows:

To change the topic: L in excerpts No 1 and Z in excerpt No 2 code switched to change the topic of discussion. This finding is in line with the findings of Auer (1988), Li (1998) and Wong (2005), who also found that code switching occurs whenever there is a shift of topic.

To state a side-remark or comment: Z in excerpt No 2 and H in excerpt No 9 code switched to give a remark about a certain part of the narration, or to comment on a particular information stated previously in another language. This finding agrees with Auer’s (1988).

To state a personal evaluation: L in excerpt No 1, for example, switched to French to evaluate a certain act mentioned before.

To give an account and explanation: The term ‘account’ was used by Li (1998) to refer to the different descriptions and explanations of events or experiences stated by the interlocutors. Z in excerpt No 2, for instance, code switched to provide more explanation of her idea.

To Shift back to the previous point of talk: This was clear in excerpt No 1 when L switched to French to comment on something and then switched back to Arabic while shifting back to her previous point of discussion.
**Self-repair:** It is when bilinguals repair their first language choices. This can be an unconscious process without any obvious reason like in excerpt No 1, or it can be stimulated by a certain linguistic problem. When Z in excerpt No 2, for instance, encountered the problem of ‘searching for the right word’, she switched to French to solve this problem. In her study, Alfonzetti (1998) also found that code switching can be used as a technique for solving the problem of ‘searching for the right word’. She also claimed that the code which we usually switch to in order to solve such kind of problems is the code that we are more competent in. However, it was found that this is not the case of Z. When B in excerpt No 3 was experiencing the problem of ‘temporarily lack of competence’ in Arabic, he switched to French to rescue his discourse. Code switching, therefore, can be regarded as a ‘repair device’ (Alfonzetti 1998) to solve particular conversational problems. Another example of self-repair was also found in excerpt No 9 when H was frequently repairing his code after speaking in French. This kind of highly conscious self-repair was maybe motivated by H’s desire to stick to the safe code choice, Arabic. This finding is also consistent with Auer’s (1988) and Bailey’s (2000).

**To initiate repair for others:** Except for excerpt No 2, this study revealed that the tendency of the speaker to initiate code repair for his co-interlocutors is not necessarily to invite them to adopt his preferred code, but rather to help them freely switch to their own preferred languages. This was clear in excerpt No 3 when H, the TV talk show presenter switched to French to allow her addressee to solve a certain communicative problem through switching to the code which he is more competent in. Hence, code switching in this case can be regarded as a strategy of interactional collaboration. Auer (1988) also provided some examples of that sort in his study. However, this finding contrasts with what Li (1998) and Georlaldou et al. (2010) found in their studies, in which the participants were initiating code repair for their co-interlocutors to negotiate with them the language of interaction as an attempt to control their code choices.

**To mark a contrast in the internal structure of the narrative:** Code switching can also signal a change of the footing of the story like in excerpt No 2 when Z switched back and forth to French to highlight certain stages of her experience. This, in fact, was also one of the most interesting findings of Alfonzetti’s (1998) and Auer’s (1988) studies.

**To reinitiate turn-taking after an interruption or talk-overlap:** To reinitiate her turn, L in excerpt No 1, for instance, switched to French after being interrupted by M. L also switched to Arabic to reinitiate her turn after her talk had overlapped with S’s talk. It was noticed that L switched back to her previous code choice later on.

**To mark preference or dispreference:** It was found that the Algerian bilinguals may code switch to express their preference for a certain action or utterance like in excerpt No 1 when L switched to the language of her addressee, M to express her agreement with him. On the other hand, using another code that contrasts the previous code choice may also signal some kind of opposition like in excerpt No 2 when Z switched to French to display her dispreference for the language used by her co-interlocutor and her possible rejection to be addressed in that language. This finding is supported by Li (1998), Bailey (2000), Wong, (2005), Bani-Shoraka (2005) and Georlaldou et al. (2010).
To state a direct quotation: In excerpt No 2, for example, Z switched to French to report what a famous actor someday has told her. In this example, the original locutor is known and identified. However, in excerpt No 1, L switched to Arabic to report what unidentified group of people might say about her music. Unlike excerpt No 1, the analyst in excerpt No 2 is able to predict whether the language used for the quotation is the same one used by the original interlocutor or not, if some social and language background about him/her is available. This finding is congruent with those by Alfonzetti (1998), Li (1998) and Georgalidou et al. (2010).

6. Conclusion

Code switching is a widespread phenomenon across bilingual communities. This linguistic behavior was examined from different analytic perspectives, among which the sociolinguistic approach, the psycholinguistic approach and the structural approach. The current study deals with code switching from a conversational analytic perspective that regards code switching as a contextualization cue that may contribute to the contextual interpretation of the conversation. The application of Auer’s (1984) theory of conversational code switching allowed for understanding the role of code switching in giving discourse-related and participant-related contextual information. The investigation of Arabic-French code switching among Algerian bilinguals in some Algerian TV talk shows was an attempt to understand three major issues. These issues involve how the Arabic language and the French language are negotiated among the Algerian bilinguals during their talk in TV shows, what contextual information can code switching reveal about the interlocutors’ language preference and bilingual competence, and how Algerian bilinguals use code switching to manage the sequence of their conversational tasks. A sequential (turn-by-turn) analysis was conducted to examine a corpus of nine excerpts selected for the analysis.

The findings of this study revealed how code switching as a conversational strategy contributes to the local interpretation of the conversation. Language negotiation among the Algerian bilinguals in this study was mainly manifested through their convergent and divergent language choices with their co-interlocutors. Few cases in this study showed that the language of the interaction can be explicitly negotiated through showing dispreference for a certain language, or through inviting the co-interlocutors to change their code choices. Language negotiation in relation to code switching was visible through one communicative pattern adopted by most of the Algerian interlocutors in this study. This was about the tendency of the interlocutors to accommodate to the code choice of their addressees before switching to their preferred codes.

Patterns of code choice and code switching could also give an insight about the interlocutors’ language preference and bilingual competence. Language preference was mainly manifested by the interlocutors’ frequent code choices and code switches. The bilingual competence of the Algerian interlocutors was mostly assessed through observing their actual performance in both the Arabic and the French languages. The findings of this study also concluded that code switching is used by the Algerian bilinguals as a repair device, through which they solve the problem of momentary lack of competence. The latter, in turn, is assumed to be a clue of imbalanced bilingual competence. The Algerian bilinguals in
this study seemed to prefer the language that they are more competent in. However, it was also found that this is not always the case. Some bilinguals seemed to prefer one language over the other although they showed high competence in both languages.

Moreover, code switching was found to have a significant role in the organization of the conversation. The findings concluded that Algerian bilinguals switch between Arabic and French to organize the sequence of their conversational tasks, and to mark contrast in the conversational context. Hence, code switching is employed as a contextualization cue that signals the transition from one task to another. Furthermore, the present study concluded that there is a set of conversational tasks fulfilled through code switching. These are as follows: topic change, stating a side-remark, stating a personal evaluation, giving an account or explanation, shifting back to the previous point of talk, self-repair, other-initiated repair, marking a contrast in the internal structure of the narrative, reinitiating turn-taking after an interruption or talk-overlap, marking preference or dispreference and stating direct quotations.
A Conversational Analysis of Arabic-French Code Switching in Algerian TV Talk Shows

A Conversational Analysis of Arabic-French Code Switching in Algerian TV Talk Shows

Rafat Al-Rosani, Kenza Mrichy

Department of Translation, Jordan University, Jordan

Abstract

This study is a conversational analysis of code-switching between Arabic and French in Algerian TV talk shows. The study aims to reveal the characteristics of code-switching in Arabic-French conversations among Algerians. The study also aims to identify the factors that influence code-switching between Arabic and French during conversations. The study analyzed four segmented episodes from nine different Algerian talk shows, based on the linguistic profile of the Algerian Arabic-speaking audience. The study found that participants frequently switch between Arabic and French, especially when discussing topics related to culture, history, and politics. The study also found that code-switching was used as a way to express identity and cultural belonging.

Keywords

Arabic, French, Code-Switching, Conversation Analysis, Algerian TV Talk Shows

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References


