Code-Switching in Algerian English as a Foreign Language Speakers' Facebook Interactions: Exploring Functions and Motives

Cezayir'de Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Konuşanların Facebook Etkileşimlerinde Kod Değiştirme: İşlevleri ve Güdülerinin Keşfi

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Öz

Bu çalışma, Cezayirli genç Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce (EFL) Facebook kullanıcıları arasındaki kod değiştirmeyi, işlevlerine ve motivasyonlarına odaklanarak incelemektedir. İki dilli ve çok dilli toplumlarda yaygın bir olgu olan kod değiştirme, dijital çağda çevrimiçi iletişim uygulamalarının şekillenmesinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Facebook gibi sosyal medya platformları, kullanıcıların dilsel tercihlerini, kültürel kimliklerini ve iletişim stratejilerini yansıtacak şekilde diller arasında sorunsuzca geçiş yaptıkları dinamik bir ortam sunmaktadır. Bu olguyu araştıran çalışma, çok dilli bireylerin sanal ortamlardaki dil tercihlerine ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, Batna 2 Üniversitesi İngilizce bölümü ikinci sınıf öğrencileri ile gerçekleştirilmiş ve öğrencilerin Facebook etkileşimleri analiz edilerek kod değiştirmenin amaçları ve altında yatan nedenler ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Hem nicel hem de nitel içgörüler sağlamak için karma yöntem yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir. Birincil veri kümesi, kolayda örnekleme yoluyla seçilen 19-22 yaş arası 42 öğrenciden toplanan 917 gönderi ve yorumu içermektedir. Bu etkileşimler, belirli dilsel ve sosyal işlevlerini kategorize ederek kod değiştirme örneklerini belirlemek için sistematik olarak analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca, aynı gruptan rastgele seçilen 17 katılımcı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bu görüşmeler, katılımcıların bakış açılarının daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayarak analize niteliksel bir derinlik katmıştır. Bulgular, bu öğrenciler arasında kod değiştirmenin rastgele bir olay değil, kasıtlı ve stratejik bir seçim olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Alışılagelmiş ifadelerin kullanımı, sözcük boşluklarının doldurulması, sözcük tasarrufu, anlamın netleştirilmesi ve belirli noktaların vurgulanması gibi çeşitli dilsel işlevler gözlemlenmiştir. Sosyal bir perspektiften bakıldığında, kod değiştirme katılımcıların sevgilerini ifade etmelerine, belirli kitlelere hitap etmelerine ve tabulardan kaçınmak gibi kültürel hassasiyetlerin üstesinden gelmelerine olanak sağlamıştır. Bu farklı işlevler, öğrencilerin iletişimlerini zenginleştirmek ve mesajlarını hedef kitlelerine göre uyarlamak için çok dilli kaynakları kullandıkları uyarlanabilir yolları göstermektedir. Kod değiştirmeye iten motivasyonlar da aynı derecede çeşitli ve nüanslıdır. Sınırlı İngilizce yeterliliği, dilsel kısıtlamalarla birleştiğinde, öğrencileri etkili iletişim sağlamak için genellikle Arapça veya Fransızcaya geçmeye sevk etmiştir. Kod değiştirme aynı zamanda iki dilli veya çok dilli bir çevrimiçi ortamda daha sorunsuz etkileşimler sağlayan ve karşılıklı anlayışı teşvik eden kolaylaştırıcı bir araç olarak hizmet etmiştir. Diğer motivasyonlar arasında, dil değiştirmenin paylaşım ve yorumlara üslup çeşitliliği ve yaratıcılık kattığı yenilik arayışı da yer almaktadır. Duygusal ifade bir diğer önemli faktördü, çünkü katılımcılar duygularını daha gerçekçi bir şekilde aktarmak için genellikle ana dillerine dönüyorlardı. Kibarlık stratejileri de önemli bir motivasyon olarak ortaya çıkmış, öğrenciler sosyal normlara uyum sağlamak, saygı göstermek veya çevrimiçi topluluklarındaki belirli kültürel beklentilere hitap etmek için kod değiştirmeyi kullanmışlardır. Bu çalışma, kod değiştirmenin iletişimsel hedeflere ulaşmak ve üslupsal ifadeyi geliştirmek için geleneksel normları aşan amaçlı ve çok yönlü bir dilsel strateji olduğunun altını çizmektedir. Bulgular, katılımcıların sosyodilbilimsel bağlamları, dilsel yetkinlikleri ve kültürel kimlikleri arasındaki etkileşimi vurgulamakta ve dijital iletişimin taleplerine uyum sağlama becerilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu araştırma, çevrimiçi ortamlarda kod değiştirmenin işlevlerini ve motivasyonlarını keşfederek, dijital alanlarda dil kullanımının gelişen dinamikleri hakkında değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, diğer sosyal medya platformlarındaki kod değiştirme uygulamalarını inceleyerek ve yaş, cinsiyet ya da yeterlilik seviyeleri gibi ek değişkenleri araştırarak bu bulguların üzerine inşa edilebilir. Bu tür çalışmalar dijital iletişimde dil, kültür ve teknoloji arasındaki etkileşimin daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kod Değiştirme, Facebook Etkileşimleri, İşlevler, Güdüler, Bilgisayarlı İletişim.

Code-switching in Algerian english as a foreign language speakers' facebook interactions: exploring functions and motives

Abstract
This study examines code-switching among young Algerian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Facebook users, with a focus on its functions and motivations. Code-switching, a widespread phenomenon in bilingual and multilingual societies, plays a significant role in shaping online communication practices in the digital era. Social media platforms like Facebook provide a dynamic environment where users seamlessly alternate between languages, reflecting their linguistic preferences, cultural identities, and communicative strategies. By investigating this phenomenon, the study seeks to shed light on the ways multilingual individuals navigate language choices in virtual spaces. The research was conducted with second-year English-major students at Batna 2 University, analyzing their Facebook interactions to uncover the purposes and underlying reasons for code-switching. A mixed-methods approach was adopted to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights. The primary dataset included 917 posts and comments collected from 42 students aged 19–22, who were selected through convenience sampling. These interactions were systematically analyzed to identify instances of code-switching, categorizing their specific linguistic and social functions. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 randomly chosen participants from the same group. These interviews offered a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, adding qualitative depth to the analysis. The findings reveal that code-switching among these students is not a random occurrence but a deliberate and strategic choice. Several linguistic functions were observed, including the use of habitual expressions, filling lexical gaps, economizing words, clarifying meaning, and emphasizing specific points. From a social perspective, code-switching allowed participants to express affection, address specific audiences, and navigate cultural sensitivities, such as avoiding taboos. These diverse functions illustrate the adaptive ways in which students use their multilingual resources to enrich their communication and tailor their messages to their intended audiences. The motivations driving code-switching were equally varied and nuanced. Limited proficiency in English, coupled with linguistic constraints, often prompted students to switch to Arabic or French to ensure effective communication. Code-switching also served as a facilitative tool, enabling smoother interactions and fostering mutual understanding in a bilingual or multilingual online setting. Additional motivations included novelty-seeking, where alternating languages added stylistic diversity and creativity to their posts and comments. Emotional expression was another significant factor, as participants often turned to their native language to convey feelings more authentically. Politeness strategies also emerged as a key motivation, with students using code-switching to align with social norms, demonstrate respect, or address specific cultural expectations within their online communities. This study underscores code-switching as a purposeful and multifaceted linguistic strategy that transcends conventional norms to achieve communicative goals and enhance stylistic expression. The findings highlight the interplay between participants' sociolinguistic contexts, linguistic competencies, and cultural identities, showcasing their adaptability to the demands of digital communication. By exploring the functions and motivations of code-switching in online environments, this research provides valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of language use in digital spaces. Future research could build on these findings by exploring code-switching practices on other social media platforms, investigating additional variables such as age, gender, or proficiency levels. Such studies would enhance understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and technology in digital communication.
Keywords: Code-switching, Facebook Interactions, Functions, Motives, Computer-mediated Communication.

Introduction

Recent advancements in studying how language functions in social settings have made significant progress. Social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have popularized instant messaging language. Moreover, these platforms not only share content but also enable users to convey their responses and interests on various subjects. For instance, on Facebook, users engage in organizational communications through actions such as like, share, and comment. However, the choice of language on platforms like Facebook, especially in multilingual settings like Algeria, varies based on individuals' fluency and attitudes towards specific languages for conveying messages. The interplay between these languages and varieties in contact situations transcends ethnic boundaries, influencing language norms, values, and grammatical rules, often resulting in instances of code-switching. Facebook, as a global communication platform, significantly impacts language usage, not only favoring English but potentially strengthening languages like Arabic and French as well.

The phenomenon of code-switching has become increasingly prevalent among young Algerian EFL Facebook users, prompting inquiries into its underlying motives and communicative functions within their online interactions. This study seeks to address several key questions regarding code-switching among this demographic: Is code-switching a random occurrence or a deliberate linguistic strategy serving specific communicative intents? What functions does code-switching serve within Algerian EFL speakers' Facebook interactions? Lastly, what are the reasons behind the use of code-switching among these speakers on social media platforms? By examining the functions and motivations of code-switching in Algerian EFL speakers' Facebook interactions, this research endeavors to add to our comprehension of how language is utilized in digital environments. Understanding the role of code-switching in online communication is essential for elucidating the complexities of language dynamics within multicultural and multilingual communities. Moreover, by elucidating the reasons behind code-switching usage, this study may provide insights into broader sociolinguistic phenomena and shed light on the intricate relationship between language, identity, and communication in contemporary digital societies.

1. Review of Literature

1.1. A Synopsis of Language Contact in Algeria

To grasp the linguistic dynamics within a community where multiple languages are spoken, it is essential to clarify certain terms which highlight the interactions between languages such as bilingualism and multilingualism. These terms refer to the ability to use two or more languages proficiently. According to Myers-Scotton (2006), bilingualism is described as "the capability to engage in limited casual conversations in two or more languages" (p. 44). This suggests that bilinguals and multilinguals can effectively communicate in multiple languages at a similar level of proficiency. In addition, it is noted by Myers-Scotton (2006) that bilinguals have at least acquired some phrases demonstrating internal structural relationships in a second language.

In Algeria, Arabic and Berber are the indigenous languages, with French emerging as the predominant non-native language due to the country's 130-year colonization by France (1830-1962), during which French became the primary official language. Arabic exists in two forms: Modern Standard Arabic, utilized in formal settings like educational institutions, media, and legal contexts, and Colloquial/Algerian Arabic, employed in informal interactions such as conversations with family and friends. Moreover, Algerian Arabic exhibits diverse variations across different regions. For example, the way people speak in the eastern area is not the same as how they speak in the middle, south, or west. Also, in some areas of the country, many people speak Berber, but the way they speak it changes from place to place. There are different dialects like Kabayli, Chaoui, Mzabi, and Tergi.

Even though nearly sixty-two years have passed since the French colonizers left, their language continues to be widely used and remains a prominent feature of Algeria's linguistic landscape. Many Algerians, including those who are not formally educated, incorporate French into their everyday conversations, or blend it with Algerian Arabic naturally (Bouhadiba, 1998) as illustrated in the following example: "*Je pense que* Fatiha rahi *chez la maison de ses grands-parents.*" [I think that Fatiha is at her grandparents' house]. This bilingual usage gives rise to another sociolinguistic phenomenon known as code-switching.

1.2. Definition of Code-Switching

Defining code-switching lacks a singular consensus, yet its origins trace back to the early 20th century, notably articulated by Weinreich (1953). Early scholars, including Espinosa (1917) and Bloomfield (1927), as cited in Wiens (2014), viewed code-switching as either indicative of linguistic incompetence or unworthy of investigation. Broadly, code-switching encompasses the alternation of languages within a conversation. For instance, Myers-Scotton (1993) asserts that code-switching is "alternations of linguistic varieties within the same conversation," (P. 1) while Bullock and Toribio (2009) view it as "the alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by a bilingual person." (p. 11). Similarly, Abousoud (2019) asserts that code-switching refers to changes of code (variety) by individuals. Dividing code-switching, Poplack (1980) classifies it into three types: intersentential, intrasentential, and extrasentential. Intersentential code-switching occurs when one language is used in the first part of an utterance and another language in the second part. Intrasentential code-switching, on the other hand, involves switching languages within a sentence or within its units. Extrasentential code-switching entails the incorporation of tags and expressions from one language into sentences of another language. For instance, "Are you going to see your sister *chez tes grands-parents*?" illustrates intersentential code-switching between English and French. Below are examples of intrasentential and extrasentential code-switching between Algerian Arabic and French:

- Mon ami djab *la meilleure note* fi *l'examen d'entrée* li fawatnah *le mois dernier*. [My friend got the best mark in the entrance exam we took last month.]
- *Sheft wech sra lbareh*, n'est ce pas? [You saw what happened yesterday, didn't you?]

Due to socio-historical influences, code-switching often occurs between the two variations of Arabic—Modern Standard Arabic and Algerian Arabic—and French. A lot of Algerians view French as a language associated with prestige and civilization. Thus, they consciously switch to it to convey a sense of sophistication. Expressions such as "c'est bon," "normal," "ça y'est," and "déjà" have become ingrained in Algerian speech. Additionally, new terms like "flexy," "connecter," and "taper" are prevalent, particularly among youth and teenagers, reflecting advancements in technology.

2.3. Facebook

Facebook stands out among various social networking platforms as the most widely recognized among individuals of diverse age groups. It has evolved into the leading platform for staying updated and engaging in online communication. Users can establish connections and interact in groups, which can be centered around any topic, create event invitations, or share notifications for gatherings. In addition to updating their status and commenting on others' posts, users can engage in online conversations and messaging with their friends. Notifications are automatically sent to users whenever they receive a message, have a post on their profile, or any other activity in their account (Marium, 2024).

2.4. Functions and Motives of Code-switching: Hoffman's Model and Cakrawati's Contributions

Hoffman's (1991) model of code-switching functions and motives provides a comprehensive framework for understanding why bilingual or multilingual speakers might switch languages. According to Hoffman, participants switch languages to quote famous expressions, proverbs, or sayings of prominent figures, a practice that highlights the cultural significance and authority of the quoted material. Additionally, individuals may switch to their mother tongue or vice versa to convey a sense of solidarity, thereby strengthening social bonds. Another common function is the insertion of interjections, such as short exclamations like "hey!" or "well!", which are used to convey surprise, emotions, or attract attention, primarily in spoken language. Furthermore, bilingual individuals often switch between languages or varieties to provide additional clarification and certainty in speech, ensuring that their message is understood clearly. In specific contexts, participants may choose to switch codes to discuss particular subjects, such as feelings, where the alternative language provides a more precise or culturally relevant expression.

Building on Hoffman's model, Cakrawati (2011) identifies additional motivations for code-switching that further elaborate on the complexity of this linguistic phenomenon. One such motivation is the lexical need, where the lack of appropriate lexical items in one language compels speakers to switch or mix elements that suit their needs in a particular situation. This necessity highlights the pragmatic aspect of code-switching, where communication efficiency takes precedence. Another motivation identified by Cakrawati is the exclusion of others from communication. Participants might use codes unfamiliar to certain audiences to maintain privacy or exclusivity, such as using a specific code only understood by friends on social media. Lastly, speakers may switch to another language variety to soften or strengthen a request, depending on the situation. This strategic use of code-switching allows speakers to navigate social interactions more effectively, making requests either more polite or more assertive as needed.

2.5. The Multifaceted Dynamics of Code-Switching: Sociolinguistic Functions, Attitudes, and Technological Analysis

The examination of code-switching across different contexts reveals its intricate sociolinguistic functions, the complex attitudes it evokes, and the promising potential of technological tools to analyze its usage, demonstrating the diverse and nuanced nature of bilingual communication. Firstly, several studies focus on the sociolinguistic aspects and functions of code-switching. Redouane (2005) investigates the structural constraints of code-switching between Moroccan Arabic and French, challenging the universality of previously proposed linguistic constraints such as 'the equivalence of structure,' 'the free morpheme,' and 'the size-of-constituent.' The study found that these constraints were often violated in the data, with switches occurring at word-internal morpheme boundaries, indicating a more fluid and less restricted form of bilingual communication than previously thought. Similarly, Patmasari and Agussatriana (2019) explore the functional use of code-switching in EFL classrooms in Indonesia, identifying eleven

distinct functions, such as checking for understanding and topic switching. This highlights how code-switching serves practical pedagogical purposes in multilingual education settings, adapting to the needs of the learning environment and facilitating communication.

Next, studies on attitudes towards code-switching reveal significant insights into societal perceptions. Bentahila (1983) demonstrates a strong disapproval of code-switching among Moroccan bilinguals, associating it with negative traits such as lack of education and identity. This negative perception persisted even in a more indirect matched guise test, suggesting deep-seated attitudes against language mixing despite its common occurrence in everyday communication. Al-Nofaie (2010) similarly examines attitudes towards using Arabic in English classes in Saudi Arabia, finding generally positive views among teachers and students. Participants supported the use of Arabic for specific purposes, such as grammar explanation and vocabulary clarification, indicating a pragmatic approach to code-switching in educational contexts despite the broader societal disapproval found in Bentahila's study.

Finally, the role of technology in studying code-switching is prominently featured in the works of Amazouz, Adda-Decker, and Lamel (2017) and Cotterell et al. (2014). Amazouz et al. (2017) focus on the automatic detection and analysis of French/Algerian Arabic code-switching using speech technologies. Their study utilized automatic speech recognition systems to analyze code-switched segments, highlighting the challenges in language identification, particularly for short duration code-switching segments. The study emphasizes the potential of automatic speech recognition systems in advancing the acoustic-phonetic analysis of bilingual speech. Cotterell et al. (2014) contribute a unique corpus of Algerian Arabic-French code-switched text extracted from social media comments, annotated for word-level language identification. This corpus offers valuable data for computational linguistics and highlights the informal nature of code-switching in digital communication. Both studies underscore the importance of technological tools in capturing and analyzing the nuances of code-switching in different contexts.

3. Methodology

The present study is an online ethnography. It employed convenience sampling, selecting participants who were easily reachable and willing to share their private data. The study focused on 42 second-year English-major students from Batna 2 University, comprising 31 females (73.81%) and 11 males (26.19%), aged between 19 and 22, with an average age of 20.23. The rationale behind selecting EFL learners is their bilingual nature, with some being multilinguals whose first language is Chaoui. It is this bilingualism that forms the basis of our inquiry: Why do they transition between Arabic (or Arabic and Chaoui for Chaoui speakers), English, and French (if applicable), when they could simply use one language in their posts? To safeguard participant privacy, the researcher sent electronic messages via Facebook, explaining the study's purpose, and seeking permission to access their profiles and examine their posts and comments.

To explore the Facebook code-switching habits of the chosen participants, a two-fold approach was adopted. Content analysis was employed to examine the structure of code-switching, while interviews were conducted to delve into the participants' motivations. The study examined the functions of code-switching through grounded theory. This theory was opted for as it is not limited to those functions identified in prior research. This approach aimed to uncover new functions that may arise. The interviews aimed to complement the content analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the participants' code-switching behavior.

Primary data collection involved gathering participant posts and comments on Facebook, including captions, statuses, comments, and hashtags, over a period of 14 days, starting from February 2, 2024, at 0:00 a.m., and ending on February 15, 2024, at 11:00 p.m. The final analyzed corpus includes 917 posts and comments. It is worth

mentioning here that the posts and comments that do not exhibit any code-switching were not taken into consideration. To ensure participant privacy, pseudonyms (P1, P2, P3, etc.) were used.

The findings regarding the functions of code-switching were presented using numerical values and percentages. Extracts selected for discussion were maintained in their original form as they appeared in the participants' Facebook posts and comments, even if they contained grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. Any non-English content within the participants' posts and comments was translated by the researcher and then reviewed by two EFL teachers from Batna 2 University's English department to ensure accuracy.

Ensuring the validity and reliability of the study was a paramount concern addressed through several measures. Triangulation was employed by combining content analysis and interviews, which allowed for cross-verification of the findings, enhancing the robustness and depth of the results. To address potential translation issues, the translations of non-English content within the participants' posts and comments were meticulously reviewed by two independent EFL teachers from Batna 2 University's English department, ensuring accuracy and consistency. Additionally, inter-rater reliability was enhanced by having these independent reviewers cross-check the translated data. Member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the data and the findings related to their contributions, which helped validate the interpretations and conclusions drawn from their posts and comments. By maintaining the authenticity of the data through the use of original extracts and addressing potential biases through these comprehensive validation processes, the study aimed to produce credible and dependable research outcomes.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Quantitative Analysis of Facebook Interactions

Quantitative analysis of Facebook interactions showed that code-switching primarily served purposes such as using habitual expressions, indicating availability, specifying addressees, adhering to the principle of economy, conveying emotions, providing clarification, emphasizing points, and employing euphemisms. The most common function of code-switching, making up 36.95% (336 posts and comments in total), was using habitual expressions. These expressions, typically formulaic phrases and tags, were frequently used by participants to convey various emotions such as love, admiration, and anger.

Another frequently noted function observed in posts and comments was code-switching to denote availability, accounting for 19.52% of the total number of interactions (N=186). Participants sometimes inserted expressions from languages other than their first language to fill lexical gaps.

Additionally, code-switching for economy was a significant function among participants, representing 18.67% (N=168) of the total. This involved the utilization of abbreviations and acronyms from both French and English, especially in computer-mediated communication language.

Code-switching to express emotions also emerged in the analyzed corpus, constituting 9.34% (N=84) of the total. While other functions of code-switching were present in participants' posts and comments, they were less frequent. These included addressee specification (6.62%, N=59), emphasis (2.13%, N=17), clarification (1.85%, N=15), and euphemism (1.25%, N=8).

4.2. Qualitative Analysis of Facebook Interactions

The qualitative analysis of Facebook interactions revealed that code-switching serves two primary functions: linguistic and social. Linguistically, it is used for habitual expressions, filling lexical gaps, economizing

words, clarifying, and emphasizing. Socially, it is employed for showing affection, addressing specific audiences, and avoiding taboos. These functions along with relevant examples are detailed below:

4.2.1. Using Habitual/Formulaic Phrases

Participants often incorporate habitual expressions into their Facebook interactions, borrowing from French and English. These expressions encompass formulaic phrases and discourse markers, such as "top", "nice", "joyeux anniversaire", "merci bcp (beaucoup)," and others. They serve as vehicles for a range of emotions, from admiration to love, compliments, birthday wishes, gratitude, and even anger.

1). Aymen ezzin happy birthday bro [Happy birthday to my handsome brother, Aymen!]

It is commonplace among young Algerian Facebook users to write on someone's timeline to wish them a happy birthday, often accompanied by code-switching to French and English, even for those who primarily use Algerian Arabic. These expressions have become ingrained in the Facebook jargon for the majority of participants.

2). Hmph, rani mrid fi hala [Hmph, I am terribly sick]

Participants commonly use French and English interjections to express anger, dissatisfaction, and other negative emotions. These interjections are more prevalent in languages other than Algerian Arabic, where their use might be considered inappropriate or embarrassing. Code-switching at this level could also be interpreted as a form of euphemism.

Code-switching for habitual expressions is pervasive in the analyzed corpus. Proficiency in the foreign language is not necessarily a prerequisite for using these borrowed words and expressions, as they often consist of formulaic phrases and discourse markers that can be seamlessly inserted into sentences. This may account for the high frequency of this function.

4.2.2. Filling Lexical Gaps

Code-switching to fill a lexical gap or for availability, as named by San (2009), is another function observed in the participants' Facebook interactions. This occurs particularly with words and expressions that carry significant meaning and might lose their impact if translated into another language. Consequently, participants frequently resort to code-switching in their posts and comments, either because they are unfamiliar with certain terms in French or English, or because they wish to preserve the exact meaning of specific expressions to have a powerful effect on the recipient.

In the interactions of young Algerian Facebook users, expressions from French or English are commonly utilized when L1 lacks equivalent expressions. These foreign language terms are often employed as gap-fillers, particularly in computer-mediated communication, where speakers may lack suitable terms in their mother tongue. During the analysis of our corpus, numerous instances of code-switching for availability were identified and categorized into three main groups: Computer-mediated communication expressions, religious expressions, and youth slang.

Most of the interactions analyzed featured code-switches serving the availability function, particularly with computer-related English and French terminology. These terms are frequently blended with Algerian Arabic grammar, perhaps because they are more easily accessible to Algerian Facebook users in French and English compared to Algerian Arabic. Example comments include:

3) "Rak mkoumounti w mdayer j'aime lnes kamel" [You admired and commented on all people's posts]

4). "Kashma kayen nouveau fi had l group. Ana le count nta3i manish nkounakti menou. bloukitou [Has anything new been published in that group? I am no longer signing into that account. I blocked it.]

These expressions (e.g., mkoumounti [I make a (Facebook) comment], ndir j'aime [click on "like"], nkounakti [sign in], bloukitou [block the (Facebook) account]) are commonly used by most young Algerians. They have been assimilated into Algerian Arabic to the extent that their foreign origins are often indistinguishable. Essentially, they have become loanwords integrated into Algerian Arabic youth slang.

Young Algerian EFL Facebook users often employ religious expressions in Modern Standard Arabic or Algerian Arabic particularly when expressing condolences, wishing someone a happy religious occasion, or congratulating others on achievements or marriages as the following examples show:

5). "C'est qui notre collegue li twafa babah? rabi yarahmou » [Who is our classmate whose father passed away? May God bless his soul.]

6). Je vous souhaite une bonne continuation ma cherie. MashaaAllah

In example (12), it appears that the participant's primary language in the comment is French. However, they switched to Arabic and concluded with MashaaAllah [Literally, the term is equivalent to 'God's will' but figuratively, it is employed to prevent the evil eye].

Young globally create their own language to express their identity, customized to suit their communication requirements. In Algeria, expressions originating from social networking sites have transitioned into everyday speech among young people, reflecting what Gumperz (1982) termed "we code" or peer language, symbolizing membership in their social group.

This Algerian youth jargon acts as a method for self-expression, enabling young Facebook users to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries by crafting their unique language. For instance, example 7 showcases a unique way to compliment a girl's beauty, using terms like "Zella" and "Bomba" from Algerian youth jargon. Participants opt for these expressions to freely express admiration, perhaps to avoid discomfort or to align themselves with a youthful and trendy identity. Example 8, illustrate another youth jorgon "Khabbech" [geek].

7). "Ma cousine zella wallah bomba in this dress"   [My cousin is gorgeous in this dress. I swear]

8). "See with this khebbech lol" [See with that geek? Lol].

4.2.3. Word Economy

The present study's subjects also employed code-switching to economize words. This entailed incorporating French or English abbreviations and other shortened forms of language into their Algerian Arabic Facebook posts and comments. Since Modern Standard Arabic often lacks such expressions, Algerian Facebook users frequently insert code-switches to streamline their interactions and save time. Example comments include:

9). Bezzaf des etudiants marifizawech bien pour les examens, AMOF [Many students did not revise well for the exams; AMOF (as a matter of fact)].
10). C U 2main bb, merci bcp ki saksiti ali3a. [See you tomorrow baby. Thanks a lot for asking about my health].

Algerian EFL students commonly employ the abbreviation "AMOF" (As a matter of fact) as a time-saving shortcut instead of typing out the entire phrase. In example 10, the speaker transited from English abbreviations "C U" (See you) to French ones "2main bb" [tomorrow baby].

4.2.4. Clarifying

Code-switching for clarification was evident in certain Facebook posts and comments, where participants aimed to make their ideas clearer by switching to another language.

14). After trying everything, ladies let me tell you Lucky Travel is the best travel agency in Batna c'est la vérité et pas une publicité. J'ai payé tous mes déplacements ce n'est pas une collaboration. [… This is the truth, and not an advertisement. I have paid all my travels, and this is not a collaboration]

In this example, the speaker utilized French to clarify that she is expressing her opinion about the travel agency and not advertising for it.

4.2.5. Emphasizing

Another function of code-switching observed in the analyzed posts and comments is to emphasize a point. Algerian Facebook users sometimes switch to another language to highlight a particular statement.

15). "c la première & la dernière fois que je vais le dire matzidish tahadri ala foumna" [This is first and the last time that I tell you: do not speak on our behalf]

16). "timagini rahat daratha, wellah elle l'a fait " [Can you image? She did it. She did it; I swear.]

In example 15, the participant wrote her comment in French then switched to Algerian Arabic to accentuate her anger, aiming for a deeper impact on the recipient. In example 16, code-switching serves both emphasis and reiteration functions. Gumperz (1982) defines the latter as " a message is written in one language and reiterated in another to emphasize its content." The same is done in example 16 where the speaker reiterates her message in French.

4.2.6. Showing Affection

The analysis of our corpus revealed that the expressions of love, often accompanied by emoticons symbolizing affection, are commonly conveyed in Algerian Arabic to express deep feelings and have a profound impact on the recipient as shown in examples 11 and 12 below.

11). Je t' aime bcp habibti [I love you so much, dearest]

12). Waslouni les cours merci hobi [I received the lectures; thank you, my love]

Interestingly, these displays of affection are less frequent among male Facebook users, who typically reserve such expressions solely for commenting on their girlfriends' posts. In these cases, the male Facebook users often opt for foreign language expressions, as illustrated in example 13 below, possibly to avoid embarrassment, given the reserved nature of Algerians regarding such matters.

13). "jiti lyoum top ma belle" [You look stunning today, baby.]

4.2.7. Addressing a Specific Audience

17). Wow, what a big faculty! It is a maze. If I were there, I would have been lost. @Asma tetfakri hadak nhar? hhh [Wow, what a big faculty! It is maze. If I were there, I would have been lost. @Asma Do you remember that day? hhh]

Addressing a specific audience also entails excluding another, as illustrated in example 17, which is intentionally marked by switching from English to Algerian Arabic. Here, the speaker disregarded other recipients and addressed her comment solely to one friend "Asma" by tagging her, emphasizing that it is meant for her alone.

18). Hadi F Paris. Kanou yehtaflou homosexuals. [This is in Paris, where homosexuals were celebrating.]

4.2.8. Avoiding Taboos

Code-switching for euphemism was a common practice observed in numerous Facebook posts and comments, where participants switched to foreign languages when discussing taboo topics such as sexual orientations which are generally deemed socially inappropriate by most Algerian speakers. Code-switching is opted for here to lessen the impact of these expressions and avoid potential embarrassment. Using foreign words may sometimes appear less offensive than Modern Standard Arabic or Algerian Arabic equivalents.

It is notable that in some instances, different functions overlap, and certain switches may serve multiple purposes.

4.3. Results of the Interview

Through the thematic analysis of interview data, several recurring themes emerged, shedding light on the reasons why the present study's participants engage in code-switching between Arabic, English, and French in their Facebook interactions.

4.3.1. Lack of Proficiency in English

Some participants expressed a lack of confidence in their English proficiency, which led them to code-switch to avoid making mistakes and the potential embarrassment of being corrected or laughed at. This motive reflects a concern for maintaining face and social acceptance within online interactions. The following extract exemplifies this motive:

P4: "Honestly, I'm not fluent in English, so I prefer to mix in some Arabic to avoid embarrassment."

4.3.2. Linguistic Limitations

Participants also expressed difficulty in finding the exact words in Arabic to convey their intended meaning. This limitation often led them to seamlessly incorporate English or French terms into their messages. The following extract illustrates this motive:

P6: "We move to French when we don't know how to say it in Arabic."

4.3.3. Communication Facilitation

Participants mentioned using code-switching to facilitate smoother communication. Switching between languages was perceived as an effective strategy to ensure mutual understanding among interlocutors. The following extract demonstrate this motive:

P7: "Sometimes it's just easier to switch to English when discussing technical topics."

4.3.4. Attention and Novelty

The respondents acknowledged that using unique or unfamiliar words from other languages could attract attention and make their messages more engaging. This motive reflects a desire for novelty and linguistic diversity in online interactions. The extract below illustrates this point:

P3: "I think that using some English words here and there makes the conversation more interesting."

4.3.5. Repetition for Clarity

Participants reported that they resort to code-switching when repeating or reiterating a message to clarify its meaning and enhance comprehension. This strategic use aims to ensure that the intended message is effectively communicated. The following interview extract exemplifies this motive:

P9: "It might be intentional or unconscious, we sometimes code-switch to repeat in another language what we already said in another to make things clear."

4.3.5. Emotional Expression and Politeness

Participants reported using different languages to express emotions, feelings, or to soften or strengthen requests. This strategic use of code-switching helped convey politeness or emotional nuances that might be lacking in their native language. The interview extracts below exemplify this motive:

P7: "Sometimes it's easier to express gratitude in English. 'Thank you so much for your help' sounds better thank "شكرا جزيلا على المساعدة"

P10: "Actually, another reason for code-switching is politeness. In Algerian discourse, it is common that requests are accompanied by those well-known expressions in French and English such as 'please' and 's'il te plait'."

The results obtained from both the interview data and the content analysis of Facebook interactions provide complementary insights into the motives and functions of code-switching among Algerian EFL Facebook users. For instance, content analysis shed light on the social functions of code-switching such as showing affection which were further supported by the results of the interview. Similarly, content analysis revealed that the participants often switch between languages to fill lexical gaps while thematic analysis also identified this as a motive. Overall, the integration of findings from the interview data and content analysis strengthens our understanding of code-switching among Algerian EFL Facebook users. While content analysis delves into its functions, the interview data confirms and expands upon these findings. Together, these complementary approaches provide a comprehensive view of the complex dynamics of language use in the digital sphere, contributing to the broader discourse on sociolinguistic phenomena in online communities.

5. Discussion

This section provides a summary of the research findings and their relevance to prior studies. The main objective of this study, as outlined in the introduction, is to investigate the use of code-switching among Algerian EFL Facebook users and to identify the various functions as well as motives served by their code switches in their Facebook posts and comments. The main focus is to determine whether the increased prevalence of code-switching among these users can be attributed to strategic communication or perceived language incompetence.

The examination of Facebook interactions through content analysis revealed a high frequency of code-switching among participants, suggesting widespread adoption of this phenomenon among young Algerians in Facebook. This is consistent with several previous investigations on code-switching among young Facebook users worldwide, such as those conducted by San (2009), Khadim (2014), and Halim and Maros (2014), which also reported high levels of code-switching among their subjects. These findings lend support to Blommaert's hypothesis (1998) that code-switching could be viewed as a distinct code for specific social groups. In essence, code-switching is not merely a process of switching between languages within speech but can be regarded as a distinct form of language in its own right, with young Algerian EFL Facebook users adopting it as their own jargon on the platform, sometimes without even realizing they are switching between languages.

The results also indicated that code-switching among the participants in this study is perceived as a deliberate action serving various communicative functions, whether on social or linguistic grounds. For instance, socially, many switches were observed to fulfill specific social objectives, particularly excluding other speakers by specifying a particular addressee. Additionally, code-switching for euphemism was prevalent among the participants, where, for instance, individuals tended to switch to a foreign language as a tactic to soften the impact of certain taboo words and render them less offensive.

On a linguistic level, certain code switches observed among the participants served the function of availability, where individuals opted for the most readily accessible code in specific interactions. For instance, even French-dominant bilingual participants commonly used religious expressions in Arabic, which aligns with the expected choice for such expressions within the cultural context. Similarly, participants frequently utilized computer-mediated communication jargon in French and English, as these foreign terms are more prevalent and easily accessible in their Facebook community compared to their equivalents in Algerian Arabic. Additionally, code-switching for the principle of economy was prevalent, with many inserted foreign expressions in Algerian Arabic posts and comments comprising French and English abbreviations and acronyms commonly associated with computer-mediated communication. Phrases like "lpb" (la plus belle [the most beautiful]), and "lol" (laugh out loud) are widely used

among Algerian Facebook users, reflecting a tendency identified by San (2009) where bilinguals opt for the least effort in their language production by selecting the less complex forms of the two languages available to them.

These findings support conclusions drawn from earlier research on the utilization of code-switching among young Facebook users (Nur, Syazwani & Maros, 2014; Khan Khadim, 2014), where code-switching emerged as a strategic tool to enrich interactions among Facebook users. Similarly, Alfonzetti (2015) contends that the use of code-switching among young individuals, particularly on social media platforms, enables them to challenge traditional language norms, allowing them to utilize "whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best as they can, regardless of how well they know the involved languages," and "without regard to norms of linguistic purity" (Alfonzetti, 2015, p. 10).

Viewing code-switching as a strategic and deliberate tool contrasts sharply with Bentahila's (1983) findings, which reveal strong societal disapproval among Moroccan bilinguals, associating code-switching with negative traits such as lack of education and identity issues. Al-Nofaie (2010) presents a mixed view, where societal disapproval exists, but teachers and students in Saudi Arabia pragmatically accept code-switching for specific educational purposes such as grammar and vocabulary clarification. Thus, while the present study emphasizes the positive and functional aspects of code-switching in digital communication, Bentahila highlights societal disapproval, and Al-Nofaie identifies context-specific acceptance despite broader negative perceptions. The variation in results may be interpreted as reflecting differences in societal norms and attitudes toward language use across different cultural and linguistic contexts. In digital environments, especially among younger populations, there may be a greater acceptance and strategic use of code-switching, whereas traditional or educational settings might retain more conservative views on language purity and identity.

Based on the various functions identified in the analyzed Facebook interactions, the present research suggests that code-switching among young Algerian Facebook users is a deliberate and conscious act. Instead of being a random choice indicative of language incompetence or attrition, code-switching appears to be a strategic linguistic behavior employed by these users to fulfill their communicative intentions. By engaging in code-switching, they effectively transcend linguistic and social norms, creating a new language hybrid that meets their specific communicative needs within the digital context. This implies that code-switching among young Algerian EFL Facebook users is not haphazard but rather a purposeful linguistic strategy aimed at enhancing communication and expression in their online interactions.

The findings of the present study align with previous literature in many aspects, demonstrating both similarities and differences in the motivations and functions of code-switching among bilingual/multilingual speakers in online interactions. Similar to Hoffman's (1991) and Patmasari and Agussatriana's (2019) findings, the present study identified several functions of code-switching, including repetition for clarification, and discussing specific topics. Additionally, Cakrawati (2011) highlights motivations such as a real lexical need, exclusion from communication, and softening or strengthening requests, which resonate with the findings of the present study.

However, there are notable differences between the present study's findings and those of previous literature. For example, while Hoffman (1991) emphasizes the function of expressing solidarity through code-switching, the present study primarily focuses on linguistic and social motivations such as communication facilitation, attention-seeking, repetition for clarity, and emotional expression. Moreover, Crystal (1987) suggests that bilingual speakers use code-switching as a communication strategy to index solidarity and affiliation with specific social groups. While

this may explain the prevalence of French-dominant code-switching among certain participants in the present study, it does not fully capture the diverse range of motivations identified through thematic analysis.

One interpretation of these differences could be attributed to the specific context and demographics of the participants in the present study. Algerian EFL Facebook users may exhibit unique patterns of code-switching influenced by factors such as language proficiency, cultural norms, and online communication practices. Additionally, the evolution of digital communication platforms and the increasing globalization of online communities may have introduced new motivations for code-switching not previously documented in the literature.

Overall, the findings of this study significantly contribute to both sociolinguistic theory and practical applications in digital communication. The research underscores the strategic nature of code-switching, challenging the notion that it is merely a byproduct of language incompetence. By identifying various communicative functions and motivations, such as filling lexical gaps, economizing words, and addressing specific audiences, the study illustrates how bilingual individuals utilize code-switching to enhance their expressive capabilities in online interactions. These insights enrich sociolinguistic theories by highlighting the adaptive and creative use of multiple languages in digital contexts. Practically, understanding these dynamics can inform the development of more effective communication strategies and educational practices that recognize and leverage the linguistic resources of bilingual and multilingual speakers. Additionally, the study's findings could guide social media platform designers in creating tools that better support multilingual communication, fostering more inclusive and engaging online environments.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the functions and motives of code-switching among young Algerian Facebook users, shedding light on its deliberate nature as a strategic linguistic behavior rather than a random choice indicative of language incompetence. It was observed that code-switching serves multiple functions, including availability, communication facilitation, emotional expression, and adherence to social norms. The findings suggest that code-switching among these users represents a conscious effort to navigate linguistic diversity and create a unique language hybrid tailored to their digital communication needs. By recognizing code-switching as a deliberate communicative strategy, rather than a linguistic deficiency, this research contributes to our understanding of how individuals negotiate language use in online contexts, with implications for both sociolinguistic theory and computer-mediated communication research.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of convenience sampling and the focus on a specific demographic—second-year English-major students from a single university—may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data from interviews might introduce biases, as participants may not fully articulate their code-switching motivations. Future research should aim to address these limitations by employing more diverse and representative samples, including participants from different educational backgrounds, age groups, and regions. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into how code-switching behaviors evolve over time in response to changes in language proficiency and social contexts. Moreover, exploring code-switching in other digital platforms beyond Facebook could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how bilingual individuals navigate multiple languages in various online environments. Finally, integrating quantitative methods with qualitative approaches could enhance the robustness of future studies, providing a more nuanced and detailed picture of code-switching phenomena in digital communication.

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Appendix

Thank you for participating in this interview. Today, we are discussing the reasons behind code-switching between Arabic, English, and French in your Facebook interactions. There are no right or wrong answers, and your honesty is appreciated.

Interview Questions

1. Can you describe any reasons why you might switch between Arabic, English, and French in your Facebook interactions?

2. How do you decide which language to use when you are posting or commenting on Facebook?

3. Are there specific situations or topics that make you more likely to use multiple languages? Can you give an example?

4. Do you find that using more than one language affects how others respond to your posts or comments? How?

5. How does switching languages help or hinder your communication on Facebook?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share about your use of multiple languages on Facebook?