

Code-Switching and Borrowing in Algeria

Abstract

In Algeria, the coexistence of Arabic and French for a certain period of time has led to the emergence of language phenomena which may be found with varying degrees in many bilingual societies. Using an ethnographic approach, a sample of students at Mentouri University, Constantine, was recorded to identify and investigate mixing patterns. The paper first looks at the linguistic research on the structural features of code-switching focusing in particular on the code-switching versus borrowing distinction. Then, it analyses the different mixing patterns according to phonological and/or morphological integration. Finally, results reveal that although code-switching and borrowing are distinct phenomena, they may both be used within the same utterance.

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ملخص

أدى تعايش اللغتين العربية والفرنسية في الجزائر لمدة طويلة إلى ظهور ظواهر لغوية يمكن تواجدها بنسب متفاوتة في البلدان التي تتسم بازدواجية اللغة. ولدراسة هذه الظواهر اللغوية تم تسجيل محادثات مجموعة من الطلاب في جامعة منتوري بفسنطينة بغرض تعريف وبحث أنماط المزج اللغوي.

ويبدأ البحث بتقييم البحوث اللغوية التي تناولت الخصائص البنيوية للتبادل الرمزي مركزا بالخصوص على تحديد الفرق بين التبادل الرمزي والاقتراض، ثم يحلل مختلف أنماط المزج اللغوي حسب الاندماج الصوتي والمقطعي. وفي الأخير يستخلص البحث إلى استعمال التبادل الرمزي والاقتراض في الجملة الواحدة بالرغم من وجود اختلاف كبير بينهما.

Introduction

Code-switching (CS) is a widespread phenomenon throughout the world. Unfortunately, research on code-switching is plagued by the thorny issue of terminological confusion. Not all researchers use the same terms in the same way, nor do they agree on how many phenomena are subsumed under the umbrella term code-switching (e.g. Eastman, 1992; Myers-Scotton, 1992). Issues in question include whether borrowing and switching are one or two types of behaviour, whether borrowing is a form of switching or vice versa (Gysels, 1992; Myers-Scotton, 1992; Poplack, 1980, 1981), whether code-switching and code-mixing are the same or different phenomena (Kachru, 1983; Sridhar & Sridhar, 1980) and what distinguishes code-switching and borrowing from the use of loan words (Milroy & Muysken, 1995; Eastman, 1992).

In this paper, our focus is on the perceived distinction between the terms code-switching and borrowing and their use in Algeria.

Upon examining Algeria's sociolinguistic situation following the independence, we can say that Algeria fits what Fishman (1972) describes as a type B nation. Type B nations are called uni-modal and are characterized by an indigenous language with a literary tradition (Classical Arabic or Modern Standard one), plus a language of wider communication (French) that often exists as a result of colonial policy.

Furthermore, Algeria's sociolinguistic profile is more complex than it seems. The consequences of the French linguistic impact are very strong. The long and sustained spreading of French language and culture had gradually succeeded in maintaining Algeria as a stronghold until the independence. Thus, when Algeria became independent in 1962, in addition to Dialectal Arabic and Tamazight, the languages of indigenous inhabitants, French was commonly used. To this day and despite massive and intensive continuous policies and programmes of Arabization, one can notice that the influence of the French presence did not cease with the independence. In addition to Arabic, French is used with varying degrees of fluency. This language contact situation through a long period of time has led to a phenomenon of mixing between Arabic and French and resulted in different levels of integration. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to identify some of the French words, phrases, or even utterances that illustrate this phenomenon and to classify them as borrowing or code-switching.

To achieve this purpose, code-switching is defined as the use of unassimilated elements of a second language in a single utterance or conversation. Assimilated loan words, which have assumed the phonological and/or morphological features of the matrix language, are classified as borrowing.

The database for this research consists of tape recordings of authentic student conversations. Students at Mentouri University, Constantine, were randomly asked to tape record a segment of natural conversation with fellow students. The conversations took place in various parts of the campus, predominantly in the University cafeteria, the esplanade, and the halls of residence. There were 33 recordings which lasted for almost 29 hours. They included 112 participants (70 female students and 42 male ones).

1. Definition of code-switching

Although much has been written about code-switching, there is a lack of consensus among linguists and sociolinguists about what the definition of code-switching actually is. Jacobson (1990:1) writes about this disagreement:

The notion of alternation between varieties is not conceived of in a homogeneous way, but, rather, that different investigators examine the phenomenon in ways that elude the possibility of providing a definition of code-switching that all will subscribe to.

Gardner-Chloros (1995) and Backus (1996) also agree that the term "code-switching" is ambiguous and that there is no clear and cohesive definition to account for all the cases where code-switching occurs. The variation in the definition of the term is due to the ambiguous definition of the word "language" itself.

Crystal (1987:363) defines code-switching as switching between languages stating, however, that “as the definition of ‘language’ is tenuous at best, perhaps it is better to say switching between varieties in addition to switching between languages”.

According to Milroy and Muysken (1995:7), code-switching is “the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation”. They use code-switching as a cover term under which different forms of bilingual behaviour are subsumed. The term intra-sentential is used to refer to switching within the sentence, in contrast with the term inter-sentential used for switches between sentences as the relevant unit for analysis.

Myers-Scotton (1993b:1) also uses code-switching as a cover term and defines it as “alternations of linguistic varieties within the same conversation”. Other researchers (e.g., Gardner-Chloros, 1991) also emphasize that switching can occur not only between languages but also dialects of the same language. In the same vein, Gumperz (1982:59) refers to the term as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems”. He simplifies this by saying that code-switching is alternating between two or more languages within the same interaction.

From this brief overview of the term code-switching, it is clear that different researchers use different definitions of the word. For the purpose of this study, the definition of code-switching given by Bentahila and Davies (1983:302) will be used as it seems to be more comprehensive and relevant to this work. They write:

We shall henceforth use the term code-switching to refer to the use of two languages within a single conversation, exchange or utterance. The result is an utterance or interaction of which some parts are clearly in one of the bilingual’s languages and other parts in the other language.

2. Code-switching and borrowing

Distinguishing code-switching from borrowing is very important but problematic in the sociolinguistic literature, since syntactic and phonological features can be shared among languages. In fact, the question over where to draw the line between these two terms has not been answered. The debate is still going on and there is no agreement on a distinction between them.

The question that needs to be asked is: Which of the foreign words in code switched utterances constitute code-switching as such and which ones constitute lexical borrowing? This problem can in fact be traced back to what Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) called the transition problem: Because language change is a diachronic process, we cannot really determine at what point in time a particular lexical item gained the status of a loanword in the recipient language. There are two contradictory approaches as to whether and how to distinguish between the two terms.

One group of researchers associated with Poplack (1978, 1980, 1981) have argued that loan words are fundamentally different from longer stretches of switches. They proposed morpho-syntactic and phonological integration of foreign words into the recipient language as criteria for establishing the status of such single words. Most researchers (Bentahila & Davies, 1983; Myers-Scotton, 1993a), on the other hand, have chosen to deal with the problem by claiming that the perceived distinction

between the two processes is not really critical to analyses of bilingual speech. Moreover, unlike the first group of researchers, they acknowledged single-word (i.e., insertions) and multiple-word (i.e., alternations) occurrences as two forms of code-switching, rather than as distinct processes to be distinguished from each other.

According to Poplack and her associates, borrowing and code-switching are in fact based on different mechanisms. Poplack proposed three types of criteria to determine the status of non-native material in bilingual utterances. These include whether or not single lexical items from a donor language in code-switched utterances were (1) phonologically, (2) morphologically, and (3) syntactically integrated into what she called the base language. She identified four possible combinations of integration. According to this approach, in cases where a lexical item shows (a) only syntactic integration, or (b) only phonological integration, or (c) no integration at all, it is considered to be an instance of code-switching. In contrast, cases where a lexical item shows all three types of integration constitute borrowing.

Sankoff and Maineville (1986) state that borrowing from one language involves satisfying the morphological and syntactic rules of another language, while code-switches involve sentence fragments, each morphologically, syntactically, and lexically belonging to one language, and each connected with a fragment of the other language.

Similarly, Gumperz (1982:66) states:

Borrowing can be defined as the introduction of single words or short, frozen, idiomatic phrases from one variety (i.e., language), into the other. The borrowed items are fully integrated into the grammatical system of the borrowing language and they are treated as if they are part of the lexicon of that language and share the morphological and phonological systems of that language. Code-switching by contrast relies on the meaningful juxtaposition of what speakers must process as strings formed according to the internal syntactic rules of two distinct systems.

Heath(1989:23) makes a distinction between code-switching and borrowing as follows:

By code-switching is meant a pattern of textual production in which a speaker alternates between continuous utterance of segments in one language, L_x, and another language, L_y, with abrupt and clear-cut switching points, often at phrasal or clausal boundaries. By borrowing is meant the adaptation of a lexical item, P_y, from L_y into L_x, becoming P_x (that is, a regular lexical item in L_x satisfying phonological, canonical-shape and morphological rules for this language).

Grosjean (1982:8) maintains that the code-switched item can be of any length and makes a distinction between code-switching and borrowing as follows:

A code-switch can be of any length (a word, a phrase, a sentence) and is completely shifted to the other language, whereas borrowing is a word or short expression that is

adapted phonologically and morphologically to the language being spoken.

Collins (2003:4) argues that the basic difference between code-switching and borrowing is that borrowing has an L1 history (i.e., part of the L1 lexicon), while code-switching does not have this history. He says code-switches “are brought into the stream of speech consciously, as part of L2 – a speaker’s second grammar”. Spolsky (1998:48) writes about the two terms, commenting that “the switching of words is the beginning of borrowing, which occurs when the new word becomes more or less integrated into the second language”.

Hudson (1980:58) states that borrowing refers to the use of a word element of foreign origin that has been accepted in the native language, while code-switching refers to the act of slipping into that foreign language for a phrase element. In spite of this, code-switching is not limited to a phrase element; it could be for a word, phrase, one sentence or more.

At the other end of the continuum are those who claim that assimilation may not always be the defining criterion to distinguish borrowing from code-switching. Myers-Scotton (1993a) rejects morpho-syntactic integration as a basis for distinguishing between code-switching and borrowing because she sees them as universally related processes such that both concepts are part of a single continuum. She therefore argues that a categorical distinction between code-switching and borrowing need not be made, yet she proposes frequency as the single best criterion to link borrowed forms more closely with the recipient language mental lexicon. She also disagrees with those researchers (e.g., Bentahila & Davies, 1983; Sridhar & Sridhar, 1980) who argued that one of the major characteristics of borrowed items is filling lexical gaps in the recipient language. Instead, she argues that not all established borrowings actually occur due to the perceived absence of an equivalent term in the recipient language culture.

The important point in Myers-Scotton’s argument is that, unlike Poplack and her associates, she does not see code-switching and borrowing as two distinct processes, nor does she see such a distinction as critical. Gysels (1992) takes this idea even one step further by claiming that whether a ‘lone other-language item’ is a switch or borrowing in fact cannot be determined because the same form may be interpreted as either a borrowed item or a code-switch one depending on the overall discourse structure.

Similarly, on the basis of his work among Turkish/Dutch bilinguals in the Netherlands, Backus (1996) also rejects morpho-syntactic integration as a criterion for distinguishing switches from borrowings, claiming that it lies, at least partially, within the individual speaker’s motivations to ascribe status to single-word foreign items in the recipient language.

Although Eastman (1992:1) states that “efforts to distinguish code-switching ... and borrowing are doomed”, and that it is crucial that we “free ourselves of the need to categorize any instance of seemingly non-native material in language as a borrowing or a switch” if we want to understand the social and cultural processes involved in code-switching, in this study, it would be preferable to distinguish between them. Indeed, we have seen that the various ways of approaching and analyzing code-switching and borrowing overlap and occasionally conflict. However, it is necessary to derive from

them an orderly analytical framework which will allow the systematic investigation of a range of code-variation within Algeria.

Therefore, for the purpose of the present study, a distinction is to be drawn between code-switching and borrowing. Borrowing refers to the use of items which originate in another language, but which are currently felt to form an integrated part of the borrowing language. Haugen (1956:40) uses the term integration instead of borrowing, describing it as “the regular use of material from one language in another so that there is no longer either switching or overlapping except in a historical sense”. However, code-switching refers to the use of items from another language which are completely unassimilated. As Haugen writes (*ibid.*), code-switching occurs “when a bilingual speaker introduces a completely unassimilated word from another language into his speech”.

3. Borrowing in Algeria

In her study of the speech of Chicanos (Mexican Americans), Pfaff (1979) pointed out that English words could be assimilated in varying degrees. Likewise, French borrowed words are integrated into Spoken Algerian Arabic according to a continuum that shows the degree of assimilation. A description of the different points in the continuum is given in what follows. The symbols used for Spoken Algerian Arabic are taken from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) chart.

3.1. Integrated borrowing

The use of borrowed French words in Spoken Algerian Arabic forms a continuum. At one extreme of the continuum, nouns are completely integrated phonologically and morphologically into the systems of Arabic, so that they seem to have an Arabic origin.

Table 1: Examples of integrated borrowing from French into Arabic

Spoken Algerian Arabic		French		English	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Singular	Plural	Singular
1. /bu:sta/	/bu:sta:t/	poste	Postes	post-office	post-offices
2. /bla:ša/	/bla:jaš/	place	places	place	places
3. /ri:gla/	/ri:gla:t/	règle	Règles	ruler	rulers
4. /fila:Z/	/fila:Za:t/	village	Villages	village	villages

These French words have completely been integrated into the phonological and morphological systems of Arabic. They demonstrate phonological adaptation, where French phonemes adapt to the norms of Arabic. For instance, in the French words “poste” and “village”, the phonemes /p/ and /v/ have become /b/ and /f/ respectively, and some short vowels in French are used as long ones in Spoken Algerian Arabic. In addition, words 1, 2, and 3 end with the added /a/ to denote the feminine. In the plural, words 1, 3, and 4 take the suffix /-a:t/, denoting the regular plural feminine in Modern Standard Arabic, which is used with borrowed items in Spoken Algerian Arabic and other dialects of Arabic. Word 2 takes the irregular plural (broken plural) typical of

Semitic root-and-pattern morphology (/bla:jas/). Thus, the words have been completely assimilated into Arabic morphology and are indistinguishable from the other Arabic words.

Not far from this extreme are nouns which are well integrated morphologically but not completely adapted phonologically; they may be partly adapted phonologically. They are usually used by educated people who know French, as is the case with our sample.

Table 2: Examples of morphologically and partly phonologically adapted French words

Spoken Algerian Arabic		French		English	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1. /pi:ppa/	/pi:ppa:t/	pipe	pipes	pipe	pipes
2. /vi:sta/	/vi:sta:t/	veste	vestes	jacket	jackets
3. /vali:za/	/valiza:t/	valise	valises	suitcase	suitcases

Morphologically, the French words are completely integrated into Arabic. The singular words are adapted to the Arabic noun feminine ending by adding /a/ at the final position, and the plural words take the regular plural feminine with the /-a:t/ suffix. Phonologically, they are not completely integrated since /p/ and /v/ do not exist in the phonological system of Arabic, but they are used in Spoken Algerian Arabic. In this study, these two uses of French nouns are classified under the label “integrated (adapted) borrowing”.

3.2. Non-Adapted borrowing

Another point in the continuum is the use of verbs. French verbs are taken as raw material, but their use bypasses established routines for borrowing. French phonemes change little if at all; the rigid morphological requirements of the root and pattern system are completely bypassed. Instead, a French stem takes on Spoken Algerian Arabic prefixes and suffixes.

Table 3: Examples of non-adapted borrowing from French into Arabic

Spoken Algerian Arabic	French	English
1 - /nessantigra/ - /nessantigra:w/	- Je m'intègre - Nous nous intégrons	- I fit - We fit
2 - /neprovoki:h/ - /neprovoki:wah/	- Je le provoque - Nous le provoquons	- I provoke him - We provoke him
3 - /dubli:tuh/ - /dublina:h/	- Je l'ai doublé - Nous l'avons doublé	- I overtook him - We overtook him
4 - /SarZi:tuh/ - /SarZi:na:h/	- Je l'ai chargé - Nous l'avons chargé	- I charged it - We charged it

The first two verbs (1 and 2) are used in the present tense and the last two (3 and 4) in the past. The French verbs are adapted morphologically since they take Arabic prefixes and suffixes and follow the rules of Spoken Algerian Arabic inflection. Yet, they are almost unchanged phonologically. This use of French verbs is considered as an integral part of borrowing, and it is called non-adapted borrowing. It is not code-switching because code-switched items are the ones which are phonologically and morphologically completely unassimilated in the recipient language.

3.3. Non-conventional borrowing

It is important to mention that the analysis of the recorded conversations of the students has shown a new type of borrowing which is different from both integrated and non-adapted borrowings. Students use French nouns as if they were verbs, and apply to these verbs what has been applied to verbs in non-adapted borrowing. Because this phenomenon has not been mentioned in the literature so far and speakers do not abide by the patterns of integrated and non-adapted borrowings, I shall refer to this phenomenon as “non-conventional borrowing”. In the recordings, three instances of non-conventional borrowing were performed by students. They are as follows:

Table 4: Examples of non-conventional borrowing from French into Arabic

Spoken Algerian Arabic	French	English
1. /wikandi:t/	J'ai passé le weekend à la cité universitaire.	I spent the weekend on the university campus.
2. /sjasti:t/	J'ai fait une sieste.	I had a nap.
3. /gripi:t/	J'ai la grippe.	I have flu.

These words in Spoken Algerian Arabic seem to be French verbs to which an Arabic suffix is added to refer to the first person. Because they are verbs, one may assume that they are cases of non-adapted borrowing. Yet, they are not instances of non-adapted borrowing because they are not verbs in French. Instead, they are all nouns. Their use in French requires the addition of a verb to form a verb phrase (*passer le weekend*, *faire la sieste*, and *avoir la grippe* respectively).

The use of these three words is unusual and non-conventional as it does not conform to the regular use of French verbs in Spoken Algerian Arabic. As mentioned above, French nouns are normally used as nouns (integrated borrowing), and French verbs are used as verbs (non-adapted borrowing), and both types of borrowing undergo phonological and/or morphological adaptation.

Borrowing into Spoken Algerian Arabic has occasionally been carried to an extreme degree, rendering sentences syntactically Arabic, whose elements conform to Arabic morphological rules, but whose lexicon comes almost entirely from French.

1. /kraza:tu l-maSi:na w ramaša:wah muršuwa:t muršuwa:t/.

(The train crushed it and they gathered it piece by piece)

from the French sentence: La machine l'a écrasé et ils l'ont ramassé morceaux par morceaux (Hadj-Sadok, in Benabdi, 1980:98). It is obvious that the whole sentence is of French origin since all the lexical items (except the coordinating conjunction “w”) are French words. It conforms to Arabic grammar and morphology. The word order of the sentence has been changed from SVO in French to VSO in Arabic. In addition, all

lexical items have taken inflectional affixes specific to Spoken Algerian Arabic so that the sentence appears to be entirely Arabic.

4. Code-switching

The use of French words, phrases and longer utterances which preserve all of the linguistic features of monolingual French is distinct from borrowing. As mentioned above, code-switching occurs “when a bilingual speaker introduces a completely unassimilated word from another language into his speech” (Haugen 1956:40). Myers-Scotton (1993d:23) calls these unassimilated elements code-switched islands. They demonstrate little or no phonological and/or morphological adaptation to the Arabic that surrounds them. The most salient phonological features of these code-switched islands are the nasal vowels, rounded closed vowels, and uvular “R” *grasséyé* of Metropolitan French (in case the speaker is a female, most often).

2. *Pourquoi nahhakmu ʕla la jeunesse da:jman ? Non, ma ʕadna:ch le droit nahhakmu ʕali:hum.*

(Why do we always judge youth? No, we don't have the right to judge them.)

The words in italics show no phonological and/or morphological integration into Arabic; they are completely unassimilated. It should be noticed that we are not concerned in this study with the distinction between intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching as we are not dealing with structural constraints on code-switching.

In addition to Arabic-French code-switching, students who pursue their studies in Arabic, especially students of Arabic literature, tend to code-switch between Spoken Algerian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. The situation is different from diglossia where the alternate use of the standard and the vernacular depends on functions according to situations. The alternation between SAA and MSA occurs in this case either intra- or inter-sententially without taking into consideration function. It occurs occasionally when dealing with topics related to the students' specialisation. Thus, compared to Arabic-French code-switching, the number of SAA-MSA code-switches is less significant. In all the recorded conversations, 26 cases only of this kind of switching are depicted. In the following examples, the underlined elements are MSA code-switches.

3. /ka:n le prof jaSrah fil cours, w faZʔatan saʔlattu étudiante ʔala ʕanawi:n ad-duru:s al-muhimma/.

(The teacher was explaining the lecture, and suddenly a female student asked him about the titles of the important lectures).

Conclusion

Our sample population's mixing of Arabic and French is very complex. The speaker has Algerian Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and French as three alternatives in his speech repertoire. However, our results come to show that the Algerian speaker has, in informal conversation, four language forms. The first language form is Spoken Algerian Arabic only where most words are Arabic, plus some integrated, non-adapted, and, rarely, non-conventional borrowings from French. The other forms are Spoken Algerian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (code-switching), Spoken Algerian Arabic and French (code-switching), or a mixture of all three varieties in one utterance where all processes (integrated borrowing, non-adapted borrowing, non-conventional borrowing, and code-switching) are applied.

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