

Exploring Bilinguals' Behaviour and attitudes at Tabuk university towards code-switching and mixing of Arabic and English in everyday conversations

Nadyh N. Alawfi

Dept. of Languages & Translation, Faculty of Education & Arts,
The University of Tabuk, Tabuk, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ejells.2013/vol11n119>

Published: 17th January 2023

Citation: Alawfi N. N. (2023) Exploring Bilinguals' Behaviour and attitudes at Tabuk university towards code-switching and mixing of Arabic and English in everyday conversations, *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol.11, No.1, pp.1-9

ABSTRACT: *The key purpose of this work is to investigate the topics of code-switching and mixing, as well as the factors influencing code-switching and mixing. In turn, this will enable the various language forms used in daily communications between students to be identified. The sample used in this study consisted of ten English Language students from the female section of Tabuk university). Information was gathered using two different research tools, namely interviews and personal observations made by the researcher during conversations and interactions with her students. The interviews involved questioning the students about why they used code-switching and mixing. The data took the form of statements, phrases, and words used by students in everyday communication that feature code mixing and switching. The findings indicated that there is a higher degree of openness to code-switching and mixing and that opinions regarding code-switching and mixing between English and Arabic are generally positive. Moreover, the results demonstrate that there are three types of code mixing, namely the code-mixing of words, the code-mixing of phrases and the code-mixing of sentences. Furthermore, the findings of this research indicated that there were many factors that motivated students to engage in code-switching and mixing. Most factors were related to speaking two languages, showing one's ability to be prestigious, integrating into the modernized world and the effects of globalization. Nonetheless, a number of other motivational factors were also identified, such as a desire to stand out from others, the desire to express themselves clearly (especially for those with pronunciation problems) and the belief that certain content is more appropriately expressed in one language (e.g., either English or Arabic). Other reasons included appearing more knowledgeable, demonstrating one's cultural identity, excluding some people from conversations, demonstrating modernisation, developing a sense of social belonging and saving time.*

KEYWORDS: code-switching -code mixing, daily conversation, Tabuk university, English and Arabic language, language attitude and bilingual behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Due to their symbiotic relationship, language and society have always had significant and mutual impacts on each other. Since humans are social creatures, language plays a crucial part in daily life as a means of communication. When a person uses more than one language to communicate, they are mixing the languages they use in one language with those they use in another. According to Hammer and Blanc (2000), a situation in which multiple codes are employed in interpersonal interactions is referred to as "languages in contact." Bilingualism is a psychological state in which an individual can access multiple linguistic codes to engage in social communication. However, the extent of this access is determined by a number of cognitive, psychological, social, linguistic, sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors (Hammers, 1981). Code-switching and code-mixing undoubtedly play a significant part in human communication and have done so throughout history. Those who speak multiple languages or who are proficient in multiple varieties of one language tend to be extremely very aware of differences in the vitality of the languages that they use. They also understand that one language variety is often more suitable than another in specific situations (Meyerhoff, 2006). Marjohan (1995) describes the word 'code' as a term that is wide-ranging. An idiolect, a dialect, a sociolect, a register, or a language are all examples of codes. The linguistic repertoire of speakers includes a variety of codes. The use of various codes in a monolingual setting is determined by the extent of variation in the language. It is common for persons in a bilingual or multilingual society to have to choose between two or more languages in a given situation. Fishman (1965) explains that, in certain situations, bilinguals may need to carefully consider factors such as who they are speaking to, which languages are being used, and when or where the conversation is taking place.

Literature Review:

Code-Mixing and Code-Switching Terms in Sociolinguistics

Many academics have discussed code switching and code mixing between the first and target languages (English to Arabic in the present case). Code-switching, which is a frequent occurrence in second or foreign-language classrooms, is when speakers switch between two or more languages (or language subtypes) during one single conversation. Spolsky (1998) defines code-switching as a phenomenon that occurs when bilingual individuals switch between multiple shared common languages during a conversation. This switching can take place between or within sentences and can involve phrases, words, or even individual letters.

On the other hand, Gardner-Chloros (2009) defines code-switching as a practice in which an individual moves back and forth between multiple languages, registers or dialects during a conversation. Additionally, it tends to occur more often in verbal communication than in written communication.

The combining of multiple languages or linguistic subtypes in speech is referred to as code-mixing. When many languages are utilised in more stable contexts without any pragmatic consequences, this is referred to as code-mixing. Poplack (1980) has also put forth a definition of CS that has become frequently cited, defining it as the alternation of two languages inside a single discussion, phrase or sentence. After closely examining the various definitions, it is clear that they all share the concept of switching between several linguistic codes. For example, Gardner-Chloros (2009) define CS as the use of multiple language or dialects by bilingual individuals during one conversation. Moreover, code-mixing highlights the formal aspects of language structures or linguistic competence. On the other hand, code-switching focuses specifically on linguistic performance. In the modern world, code-mixing has emerged as a key topic of research interest as it helps us to understand why people mix languages (or language variants). Muysken (2000) explains that it can be applied to all cases where grammatical features and lexical items of two languages are present in one sentence. It is easy to characterize this process in bilingual or multilingual speech which commences with a sentence in one language and goes on to include (consciously or unconsciously) other languages.

Code-Switching and Mixing as a Bilingual and Multilingual Phenomenon

Most researchers in the field of language research (e.g., McArthur, 1998). Meanwhile, the term 'bilingual' refers to individuals who can use two languages, whilst 'multilingual' refers to those who use three or more. Moreover, Fabbro (1999) defines 'bilinguals' as individuals who use more than one language and bilingualism as the capacity to speak two languages or the colloquial use of two languages. Meanwhile, the term "polyglot" is occasionally used to refer to multilingual people. Such individuals are those who can use three or more languages (either independently or through varying degrees of blending). Mohanty (1994) defines a bilingual as a person who can engage with other speakers in natural situations in multiple languages and bilingualism as a person's capacity to fulfil their own communicative needs and those of the society around them.

Factors Motivating Code-Switching and Mixing

Understanding the factors influencing code-switching is critical. Initially, language was used for purposes of communication and thus code-switching has been a common occurrence in the modern world. For example, people typically code-switched in the primal state because no rigid linguistic patterns had been established. However, linguistic variations developed over time, and code-switching became critical. Initially, code-switching was used to help people communicate ideas in the same way as a native. This was primarily because they wanted to be treated "like a local" in L2 environments. Another factor motivating code-switching is the ability to address just one individual whilst talking to a group of multiple people. On the other hand, there are also proactive reasons. For example, some individuals code-switch to fit into a bilingual group, altering their words so that they sound similar to those around them. Some people code-switch in order to gain appreciation from others or to be viewed kindly by them. This is especially true in the service industry, in which employees often use specific accents/phrases that result in their receiving favours or tips (Omar, A. and Ilyas, M., 2018). A number of researchers (including Bautista [4], Mustafa and Al-Khatib [5] and Sridhar and Sridhar [6]) have identified factors motivating people to code mix, including emphasis, technical and social authenticity, role plays, excluding recipients from a conversation, or establishing a quick and easy way of conveying

a message. Additionally, code-mixing can occur when speakers imitate someone using a second language during role-playing, or when discussing religious or cultural terms that are non-existent in the first language. For instance, there are English terms in Western culture that many native Arabic speakers use as there is no translation/equivalent available in Arabic.

Research Objectives

1. To determine whether students in Saudi Arabia switch between Arabic and English in their everyday communications.
2. To identify the situations in which Arabic-speaking students switch and mix between Arabic and English.

Research Questions

1-What attitudes/perceptions do students' have towards code-switching and code-mixing between Arabic and English?

2-Which factors motivate code-switching and mixing among students in Saudi Arabia?

METHOD

A qualitative design was adopted in this research. This involved two primary qualitative research methods, namely semi-structured interviews and observations. The sample consisted of ten female Saudi students who are majoring in languages and translation at Tabuk University. When students began discussing the various subjects and exchanging ideas, the researcher asked them why they were mixing and switching between languages. The researcher continued to monitor the students throughout the discussions. The information was presented in the form of words, phrases, and clauses that were taken from the recorded interviews with the students. The data were obtained and then examined after transcribing every word spoken during each student interaction. Subsequently, the researcher examined the transcripts to identify any words, phrases, or clauses that appear to be code-mixing or code-switching. calculating and identifying the code-mixing level that is the most dominant. All participants had the same linguistic level and the same level of education.

Results and Discussion

To commence the research process, the researcher met her students and asked them to select topics that they would like to speak freely about. She then obtained consent to record them. The students discussed a different topic on each occasion. The topics included (1) what do you want to do after graduation? (2), dream vacations (3), the advantages and disadvantages of technology, and (4) studying in the languages and translation department. Each discussion lasted between 1 and 2 hours. The data revealed that code-mixing and switching occurred in the students' daily conversations. These instances typically take the form of words, phrases,

sentences and clauses. The findings also revealed that the students generally had positive attitudes towards code-switching and code-mixing.

For instance, Student 1 stated that she would switch between Arabic and English to ensure that her companions understood what she meant (*fehmtm kasdi baldabt*). This was due to concerns that they would have difficulty understanding her. Moreover, Student 2 reported mixing Arabic and English if she did not know a specific word in English ("Not all of us can (*nethamal*)," which means not all of us can handle it). Once the researcher explained the word to her in English, she instantly changed it. Meanwhile, Mustafa and Al-Khatib (1994) suggest that, as well as fulfilling linguistic demands, code-mixing also has a number of other purposes. On the other hand, Sridhar and Sridhar (1980) assert that it can be used to change communication. Although Student 3 fluently discussed topic 1, she still mixed some words, (I want to have a good job, (*Mo aiya shay*)). Moreover, when she was asked why she engaged in code-switching and mixing, she replied that she knew all the words and was able to express herself in both languages, but she automatically started code-switching when speaking to Arabic pals. She said, however, that she never did this with her French friend (to whom she speaks only in English). Meanwhile, Student 4 began to mix between Arabic and English when discussing Topic 3 (i.e., the advantages and disadvantages of technology). Despite being highly proficient in English, she was quiet and shy when using English and thus used Arabic more. When the researcher asked her the reason for this, she stated that she was hesitant because her pronunciation is bad and she was concerned about pronouncing words incorrectly. Nonetheless, she acknowledged that she is a good student with an extensive vocabulary. She also stated that she loved grammar and that she had used an online dictionary to learn how to pronounce words correctly. She also admitted that she needed to learn more about grammar rules and to mingle with native speakers more often. She describes English as a crazy but important language. Student 5 reported that, although she believes that her English is sufficient, she still mixes Arabic with English when talking with her non-English speaking friends by using simple words such as yes, of course, and cool. She also highlighted the importance of demonstrating her knowledge of English to others whilst simultaneously ensuring that they understand her. She described it as a matter of prestige amongst societies in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, she added that she likes to be different. On the other hand, although the researcher knew that she had spent significant amounts of time in the United Kingdom and could speak fluent English, Student 6 mixed Arabic and English. When asked, she replied that her English is better than her Arabic because she grew up in an English-speaking country. However, when she is at home, she must speak in Arabic with family members as they cannot understand English. She reported that she has friends who can speak English but would also like to be able to communicate with others and admire her mother tongue whilst demonstrating knowledge of both languages. Student 7 indicated that she enjoys speaking in both Arabic and English, and as her friends can speak both, she likes to mix and switch languages. In agreement with this, Student 8 suggested that mixing is better because it makes her feel good to know that she is proficient in multiple languages. Student 2 responded to this, stating that she very much

enjoys being able to speak multiple languages and that she often uses it as a way to ensure her friends understand her. Nonetheless, she did express concern about excluding friends that cannot speak or understand English. Meanwhile, Student 5 stated that she is capable of expressing herself in both English and Arabic, but sometimes feels that she should speak only in Arabic because it is a unique and beautiful language. She does not want the original words to lose their meaning, particularly if the meaning is stronger in Arabic. Student No 7 stated that she would speak in Arabic even if she knew the translation in English simply because she is Arabic, meaning is an important matter of cultural identity. Jackson (1999) asserts that a person's sense of belonging to a specific cultural community is formed by their interactions with others and the environment in which they reside. Cultural identity includes the practices, mannerisms, cuisine, attire, and other aspects of the civilization in question. This paradigm is unstable. As is also the case with other facets of society, it changes over time. Student NO 9 said "I just code-switch unconsciously". Student 10 reported that she mixes between the two languages because she is a native Arabic speaker studying English, and it is good to demonstrate one's proficiency in both. Some students also indicated that they often used social media and thus would communicate via speech and writing (in both languages). Code-mixing gives students a way to show their Arabic friends that they are familiar with western culture and language and it expresses one's identification with modernity, according to Student 10. Meanwhile, Student No 7 added that code-mixing and switching are important in certain situations, particularly between English and Arabic. She uses the example of a hummer situation as one in which she regularly uses both Arabic and English. In response, Student 1 added that she would mix and switch languages when she is angry, but did not know the reason why. This is consistent with findings produced by Deweale (2010), who discovered that CS was frequently induced by the feelings of the speaker. She also discovered that some Arabic speakers used CS more frequently than English when communicating anger because they could express themselves more freely and without being restricted by social norms. Student 8 reported that, although she can speak both languages separately, all of her close friends code-mix, and thus she started to do the same as it gives her a sense of belonging within her society. All participants agreed that switching between languages is a great way to set yourself apart from others, communicate, and explain things to others. However, she also expressed concern that, when mixing with monolingual people, those who do not speak English can be at a disadvantage. Student 4 explained expressed a positive attitude towards language switching and mixing and indicated that she does not need to think so much about her skills when speaking in English, although she does need to organize her thoughts and select the most appropriate words to express herself clearly. Thus, code-mixing helps her significantly in this regard. All of the participants demonstrated positive attitudes towards code-switching and mixing between Arabic and English. The findings also revealed that mixing and switching typically occur in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. The statements below are examples of code-switching and mixing and switching in sentences/phrases.

(*Baad al-ayam*) some days

(*Ala kol haal*) any ways

(*Ala hasab al- jaw*) country weather

(*Tawajohat Al- Naas*) people's attitudes

(*Baad alahyan nosafer bra al- soudya*) sometimes we travel outside KSA.

(*Al- technology laha hasanat and sayaat*) Technology has advantages and disadvantages

(*Tabaan*) of course

(*Alaamal*) work

(*Altakaraj*) graduation

(*Al waqt*) time

(*Alsafar*) travelling

(*Aljamaah*) university

CONCLUSION

Due to their proficiency in both English and Arabic, students often combine their words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Their opinions and attitudes towards code-switching and mixing were found to be positive in the present research. Meanwhile, the findings also revealed that there are multiple factors that motivate students to mix and switch languages. Code-mixing enables the discussion to continue flowing and this ultimately generates differences in communication. Students use code-mixing to express concepts and ideas in a concise manner, to integrate into a modernised culture and simply because some topics are better expressed in one language or the other. In future, it is recommended that researchers study the topic using larger samples and examining teachers' perspectives of code-switching. This is critical in fully understanding the importance of code-switching/mixing. Moreover, examining code-switching between Arabic and English may help teachers to develop better teaching strategies.

References

- Marjohan, A. (1995). *Sejarah Singkat Linguistik*. Bandung: Institut Teknologi Bandung.
- Sridhar, S. N., & Sridhar, K. K. (1980). The Syntax and Psycholinguistics of Bilingual Code Mixing, *Canadian Journal of Psychology/Revue Canadienne de Psychologie*, 34(4), 407-416. dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0081105.
- Siregar, B.U. (1996). *Code Alternation in Bilingual Speech Behaviour*. Medan: USU Press.
- Mustafa, Z., & Al-Khatib, M. (1994). Code Mixing of Arabic and English in Teaching Science, *World Englishes*, 13(2), 215-224.
- Muysken, P. (2000). *Bilingual Speech: A Typology of Code-mixing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Meyerhoff, M. (2006). *Introducing Sociolinguistics*. London and New York: Routledge Publishing.
- Hammers, J. & Blanc, M (2000: 6). *Bilinguality and Bilingualism 2nd Edition*. Cambridge University Press 2000 (Retrieved August, 10, 2007 from
- McArthur, T. (1998). *Code-mixing and code-switching*. Accessed 12/10/14 from <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O29-CODEMIXINGANDCODESWITCHNG.html>).
- Fabbro, F. (1999). *The Neurolinguistics of Bilingualism. An introduction*. East Sussex: Psychology Press.
- Spolsky, B. (1998). *Sociolinguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Mohanty, A. (1994), *Bilingualism in a Multicultural Society: Psychosocial and Pedagogical Implications*. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages.
- Jackson, R. L., (1999). *The Negotiation of Cultural Identity: Perceptions of European Americans and African Americans*. Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Gardner-Chloros, P. (2009). *Code-Switching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Language and Social Identify*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Macswan, J. (1999). A Minimalist Approach to Intrasentential Code Switching. In L. Horn (Ed.), *Outstanding Dissertations in Linguistics, A Garland Series*. New York, NY: Garland Publishing.
- Nordquist, R. (2018). Learn the Function of Code Switching as a Linguistic Term. Retrieved July 10, 2018, from <https://www.thoughtco.com/code-switching-language-1689858>
- Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start in Spanish Y Termino en Espanol: Towards a Typology of Code-Switching. *Journal of Linguistics* 18 (2): 581-618.
- Hamers, J. F., & Blanc, M. H. A. (2000). *Bilinguality and Bilingualism (2nd Ed.)*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511605796>.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social Motivations for Code Switching: Evidence from Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Basnight-Brown, D. M., and Altarriba, J. (2007). Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Bilinguals' Cognitive, Developmental, and Empirical Approaches. In A. Ardila & E. Ramos (Eds.), *Speech and Language Disorders in Bilinguals* (pp. 69– 89). Nova Science.
- Heredia, R. R., & Altarriba, J. (2001). Bilingual language mixing: Why do bilinguals code-switch? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10(5), 164–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00140>.
- Ritchie, W. C., & Bhatia, T. K. (2013). Social and Psychological Factors in Language Mixing. In T.K. Bhatia & W.C. Ritchie's (Eds.) *The Handbook of Bilingualism* (pp. 375–390). John Wiley & Sons.
- M. L. S. Bautista, (2004), English Code Switching as a Mode of Discourse, *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 5 (2), 226– 233.
- Z. Mustafa and M. Al-Khatib, (1994), Code-Mixing of Arabic and English in Teaching Science, *World Englishes*, 13 (2), 215–224.
- S. N. Sridhar and K. K. Sridhar, (1980), The Syntax and Psycholinguistics of Bilingual Code Mixing, *Can. J. Psychol. Can. Psychol*, 34 (4), 407.

Omar, A and Ilyas, M, (2018), The Sociolinguistic Significance of Attitudes towards Code-Switching in Saudi Arabia Academia. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(3), 79, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v8n3p79>