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Attitudes Towards Code-Switching: A case study of Kabyle speakers living in Oran

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Abstract: *This paper describes and analyses the phenomenon of Code-Switching as practiced by Algerian Kabyle speakers living in Oran. The aim behind the present investigation is to explore the attitudes of Kabyle speakers towards Code-switching (CS), and examines the factors that determine language choice and direct Code-switching. It should be noted that Kabyle speakers represent a minority group in Oran. This minority group uses a variety of Berber that is unintelligible with the varieties that are used by the Algerian Arabic speakers in the city of Oran. The contact between Kabyle, Algerian Arabic and French in the minority speakers listed above triggers contact phenomena such as code switching. The data on which this paper is based consists of a questionnaire made of three sections administered to a group of Berberophones in order to see whether they hold favorable or unfavorable attitudes towards the phenomenon of code-switching.*
Keywords*: Code-switching, Attitudes, Classical Arabic, Algerian Arabic, Kabyle, French.*
Résumé : *Cet article décrit et analyse le phénomène du Code-Switching pratiqué par les locuteurs kabyles algériens vivant à Oran. Le but de la présente étude est d'explorer les attitudes des locuteurs kabyles à l'égard de la commutation et d'examiner les facteurs qui déterminent le choix du langage et la commutation directe. Il convient de noter que les locuteurs kabyles représentent un groupe minoritaire à Oran. Ce groupe minoritaire utilise une variété de berbères qui est inintelligible avec les variétés utilisées par les arabophones algériens dans la ville d'Oran. Le contact entre le kabyle, l'arabe algérien et le français chez les locuteurs minoritaires ci-dessus déclenche des phénomènes de contact comme le changement de code. Les données sur lesquelles se fonde ce document consistent en un questionnaire composé de trois sections administrées à un groupe de Berbérophones afin de voir s'Ils ont des attitudes favorables ou défavorables vis-à-vis ce phénomène.*
Mots clés *: alternance codique, Arabe Classique, Arabe Algérien, Kabyle, Français.*

1. Introduction

The Algerian historical background had a direct influence on the Algerian current linguistic situation. Three main languages characterize the Algerian linguistic situation, these languages are: Arabic, having two forms: Standard Arabic (SA) as the first official language, Algerian Dialectal Arabic (AA) the mother tongue of the majority, Berber

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which has been recognized recently (2016) as the second official language which has different varieties throughout the country (Including the Kabyle variety which is the subject matter of this paper) and French as the language of teaching and knowledge.

Linguistically speaking, Algeria is a multilingual country where complex sociolinguistic phenomena exist namely diglossia, bilingualism, and code-Switching. At the macro sociolinguistic level, Algeria is a diglossic community, where CA, the high variety is reserved for use in formal settings, AA and BR the Low varieties are used in informal situations.

Bilingualism is another aspect of the Algerian speech community in which speakers can use two or more codes available to them, and may eventually switch between them. New trends in the study of bilingual speech communities revealed the importance of code-switching study as a normal and common part of daily interactions. Indeed, if the primary aim of any interaction is communication, the primary aim of CS is probably to facilitate communication. Moreover, most research on CS was fueled by the recognition that CS probably should be regarded as a type of skilled performance with social motivations.

Interestingly enough, many linguists such as Myers-Scotton (1997) claim that before articulating utterances, speakers may assess the feasibility of bilinguality of bilingual discourse. This means that they take into account attitudes towards the linguistic varieties that the speakers have the potential to employ. Moreover, the speakers may take into consideration the perceptions of their own proficiency and the interlocutors in the same linguistic varieties possible attitudes towards even specific varieties of bilingual production are also weighed and greatly considered in any speech event. Hence, speakers in a particular discourse interaction pay attention to such sociolinguistic matters and they are free to choose the appropriate mode of speaking.

In order to examine the language attitudes of our informants towards Code-Switching, I used a questionnaire that deals with different aspect of language attitude and language choice which illustrate the reasons behind the use of different varieties to accomplish certain communicative needs.

2. Methodology

2.1. The informants of the Study and Data Collection

The main instrument that is used to examine the language attitudes of my informants towards code-switching is a questionnaire made up of three sections. The first section deals with different aspects of language attitudes; it contains ten demographic questions which are meant to collect information concerning the attitude of the respondents in practicing code switching.

The second section deals with language choice and tends to illustrate the sociolinguistic behavior of Kabyle bilingual speakers as to what language they use in different situations; it contains five questions which symbolize the choice of language according to different extra-linguistic factors. The third section consists of three questions and tackles the parameters that determine the directionality of Code-Switching patterns. The questions were inspired by works of Bentahila (1983), Bouamrane (1986), and Benali Mohamed (2007). The questionnaires were handled to fifty informants, representative of different sexes, ages, occupying various job.

2.2. Profile of the informants

Age	Male	Female
[17 - 25]	06	08
[26 - 33]	07	13
[34 - 41]	05	04
[42 - 49]	02	03
[50 - 57]	02	00
Total	22	28
Percentage %	44%	56%

Table 2.1 Respondents gender and age

Occupation	Male	Female	percentage
Retired people	04	02	12%
Civil servants	05	04	18%
Doctors	00	01	02%
House wives	00	05	10%
Pupils	04	02	12%
Students	05	07	24%
Teachers	03	04	14%
Jobless people	01	03	08%

Table 2.2 The distribution of the informants by occupation and sex

Level of education	CF2	CEP	CAP	Middle school	High school	University
Respondents	2 %	8 %	8 %	2 %	32 %	48 %

Tabe 2.3 The Respondents' Level of Education

2.3. Section one: Findings and Discussions

- **Attitudes towards Code-Switching**

This section is devoted to check the attitudes of my informants towards the phenomenon of code-switching.

- **Question one: Do you alternate between codes (languages)?**

Results show that 70% of our informants alternate between codes frequently and 30% code switch occasionally. These tendencies indicate that code switching is an important component of the verbal repertoire of the Kabyle minority group.

- **Question two: According to you, code-switching for a Kabyle is?**

1) Good 2) Bad 3) You do not know

Answers for question (02) show that 30% of our informants qualify code switching as being good. 50% think that it is bad. 20% of our informants gave a null answer by choosing I do not know. As we can see half of our informants display negative attitudes towards the phenomena of code-switching.

- **Question three: Does CS make Kabyle lose its purity?**

The percentage we obtained for this question indicates that 50% of our respondents believe that code alternation makes Kabyle lose its purity. Whereas 40%think that CS doesn't effect on the purity of Kabyle, and 10% said that they do not know whether it does or not. Again from this percentage we notice that Kabyle speakers hold a negative attitude towards code alternation.

- **Question four: When you alternate between codes is it to?**

1) Fill gaps 2) Prove your mastery of the language 3) You do not know

Results indicate that 50% of our informants think that code-switching helps them to fill the gap, respondents think that code switching is due to weaknesses in Kabyle. 40% said that they switch between languages to prove their mastery of the languages they use. Only 10% didn't know what to answer.

- **Question five: How do you consider Kabyle speakers who alternate between codes?**

1) Literate 2) Illiterate 3) Other

From the answers we got we notice that 60% of or our respondents consider people who alternate between codes as literate, 20% think that these people are illiterate. As far as this result is concerned we can see that for the majority of Kabyle speakers living in Oran CS is associated to literate people.

- **Question six: When you alternate between codes is it?**

1) Consciously 2) Unconsciously 3) You do not know

Half of our respondents said that, when they code switch they do it on purpose and in a conscious way. The second half said that they are unconscious when they code switch. Benhattab (2004:106) explained that, this unconsciousness is due to the recurrent use of single items that are inserted from other varieties into the Kabyle language.

- **Question seven: Do you think that CS destroys the language?**

60% of our informants think that the alternation between codes destroys the language. 40% said that it does not destroy it. It's clear from this results that most of the respondents hold negative attitudes towards CS. The negative attitudes towards codes switching may be explained by the fear this minority feels towards this form of speech which is considered as a threat to the maintenance of Kabyle.

- **Question eight: Is CS a sign of lack of identity?**

The percentage we obtained for this question indicates that 50% of our informants think that code-switching is not a sign of lack of identity. 30% said that it is a sign of lack of identity.

- **Question nine: Is CS a sign of dual identity?**

Unlike the results obtained by Benhattab (2004) the results of this question show that 70% of our respondents believe that code-switching is not a sign of dual identity. 10% think that alternation between codes is a sign of dual identity; only 10% said that they do not know.

- **Question ten: Do you think that the alternation between codes is a problem?**

Resulted obtained indicates that 30% of our respondents consider code-switching as a problem, whereas 60% do not see this phenomenon as a problem. 10% said that they do not know whether it is a problem or not.

Studies conducted on other bilingual contexts involving minority groups revealed similar negative attitudes towards code switching (Dorian (1981) on Scottish Gaelic/English code switching; Romaine (1995) on Punjabi/English code switching in the UK; Swigart (1992) on Wolof/French code switching in Dakar). However, our informants do not consider it as a problem but rather as a problem solving. Some said that CS is not a problem. According to some informants, it is the language which doesn't serve their communicative needs that pushes them to switch to other languages to accomplish different needs. Kabyle as a language lacks many technical words; therefore, it cannot be used in all domains, (this will be explaining more in the coming sections).

2.4. Section two: Language Usage according to Different Interlocutors, Topics and Settings

The present section is devoted to the investigation of some factors that influence language choice in the speech of Kabyle bilinguals. It also examines the factors that determine the directionality of CS patterns. The informants were asked to select the language they use depending on some extra-linguistic factors such as the type of interlocutors, the setting and the topic of discussion, they were also asked to select the pattern of CS they use in accordance to different contexts.

2.4.1. Language Usage According to Different Interlocutors

- **Question one: Which language do you use most with you?**

1) Parents 2) Brothers and sisters: 3) Kabyle friends?

From the obtained results we can notice an overwhelming dominance of Kabyle with parents and brothers/sisters with a percentage of 60%. Algerian Arabic scored 40% with parents, brothers/sisters and friends. French on the other hand was not used at all with neither parents nor brothers and sisters, it was used only with Kabyle friends with a percentage of 10%.

2.4.2. Language Usage According to Different Settings

- **Question two: Which language do you use the most when you are in these settings:**

1) At home 2) At work 3) In the street

In different settings, answers of our respondents revealed an over dominance of Algerian Arabic such as at work and in the street, this can be explained by the fact that

Algerian Arabic is the language of the majority; however, at home the dominant language is Kabyle this explains that Kabyle speakers living in Oran are keen on their language and despite the fact that AA is the language of the majority they tend to preserve the use of their mother tongue to private matters. At work French was preferred by 30%, whereas Classical Arabic was used only by 10 %.

- **Question three: Which language do you use most in these situations?**
  1) Happy 2) Tired 3) Angry

The findings representing the results of question 03 (1, 2, 3) show that the use of Kabyle and Algerian Arabic represents the highest percentage (40%) in expressing the feelings of happiness tiredness and anger; Whereas the use of French in expressing these different moods represents only 20%.

The dominance of Kabyle, the mother tongue, emanates from the fact that all the three moods express deep feelings and emotions. The latter when they are natural and unsophisticated are only expressed in the language a speaker knows best. This is generally the native language but it is sometimes the second language. Happiness, tiredness and anger are moods where a human does not have complete control over his reactions therefore call for the most spontaneous language an individual has at his disposal.

2.4.3. Language Usage According to Different Topics

- **Question four: which language do you use most when you speak with your Kabyle friend about?**
  1) Daily life 2) Science 3) Politics 4) Religion

Results for question 04 (1, 2, 3, 4) indicate that the majority of our informants use Kabyle with a percentage of 60% when talking about daily life topics they do not need any formality or status showing, followed by AA with 30% and French with 10% of the total number. While they opt for French when discussing scientific topics with 80% followed with Algerian Arabic with 20%. No one of my informants selected the use of Kabyle in scientific topics. As compared to AA and K, F is seen a more scientific and technological language. In tackling religious matters AA scored 40% followed by Kabyle with 30% this is due to the close relation between AA and SA which is the language of Islam. As far as the political topics are concerned French marks its supremacy over the other languages with a percentage of 40% followed by AA with 30% then Kabyle with 20%.

- **Question five: Which language do you use to?**
  1) Insult a Kabyle friend 2) Greet a Kabyle friend

Findings for question (1) reveals that AA ranks first as far as insulting is concerned with a percentage of 60%followed by Kabyle with 30%, French got a low rate with only 10%. The main reason behind the predominance of AA, is that the informants represents a minority group living in a majority speech community, tend to follow the same rules of conduct as the majority group where they live. As far as greeting is concerned Kabyle ranks first with a percentage of 70% followed with Algerian Arabic with 30%. In this

respect Bentahila (1983:65) says: "Greetings are among the kinds highly stereotyped phrase which perhaps remain more available to the bilingual in his fist learnt language".

2.5 Section three: Directionality of Code-switching Patterns in accordance to Different Contexts

This section is intended to the investigation of the parameters that determine the directionality of a certain pattern of CS. My respondents are asked to select one pattern of CS which they use the most hinging on disparate situations. Three situations are presented:

- At home with parents discussing private matters.
- In the café with a colleague commenting on a football match.
- With a colleague at work.

- *Which pattern of code switching do you use in these situations?*

	K/ AA	**K/F**	**AA/K**	**AA/F**	**F/K**	**F/AA**
With your parents at home Discussing private matters	20%	50%	20%	10%	00%	00%
With your colleagues in the café talking about a foot ball match	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	50%
With your colleagues at work	00%	00%	20%	30%	20%	30%

In discussing private matters at home, we can notice from the above table the dominance of K/F CS over the other patterns of switching with a percentage of 50%, followed by AA/K, K/AA with the same percentage (20%). The switch from AA to French got a low rate with only 10%.

According to some informants Kabyle is used by its speakers as a symbol of linguistic identity, some respondents claim that they intentionally avoid the alternation of codes from Kabyle to Arabic due the threat that AA represents to their native language. According to these informants there are situations where the mother tongue is lost to the benefit of a more prestigious and widespread variety, this occurs particularly in cases where minority group of speakers living in a majority group environment as it is the case with Kabyle in Oran. AA is the language of the majority, used almost in all domains, unlike Kabyle which is used only for intimacy, the used of Arabic at home will have a negative effect on Kabyle; therefore, they prefer to switch from Kabyle to French rather than Kabyle to Arabic.

It is clear that the setting and the level of formality play an important role in directing CS patterns. This can be illustrated by the code-switching patterns in the second and third examples. 50% of my informants claim that they switch from French to Arabic while talking to their colleagues in the café in an informal way, yet at work they switch more from Algerian Arabic to French (30 %) or French to Algerian Arabic (30%). The rate of switching from Kabyle to Algerian Arabic, K/F, AA/F, F/Ka, scored only 10%. From these results we can deduce that patterns of code-switching are directed by the different context.

3. Conclusion

From the overall results we can deduce that Code-Switching is stigmatized among Kabyle speakers of Oran, yet despite the negative attitudes that is displayed towards this alternation, our informants do not consider it as a problem but rather as a problem solving since they tend to Code-switch when their mother tongue doesn't sever their needs. In their speech interactions, Kabyle bilingual speakers choose among the various codes available to them according to certain speech components present in the verbal interaction such as the participant, topic, setting and purpose. The relation between language choice and these extra-linguistic elements cannot be denied, we cannot dissociate them from each other, they are intertwined that the choice of language depends on all of them at the same time. The outcome of this examination exhibit that context is an influential variable which directs Code-switching patterns. Moreover, the data obtained showed that the directionality of CS is determined by the context and the attitudes displayed towards the disparate verities in the verbal repertoire of the Kabyle bilingual speaker.

To sum up, we can say that, despite of the negative attitudes that is displayed towards this phenomenon, CS is used as a means to shape different meanings. It is a linguistic resource to achieve specific goals within social interactions.

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