



The Use of Code-switching in the Discourse of Maghrebi Influencers

L'alternance codique dans le discours des influenceurs maghrébins

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Abstract:

The Maghreb multilingualism reflects the linguistic identity of each country and every person belonging to this geographical sphere. This linguistic specificity is evident in the oral and/or written production of Maghrebis, taking the form of code-switching, borrowing, etc. Several researchers have attempted to work on this issue, based on different research questions and corpora. This work focuses on the use of code-switching in the discourse of Maghrebian influencers, in an attempt to determine how code-switching is manifested in the discourse of Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian influencers. To collect the corpus, a selective method was adopted followed by the transcription of three vlogs produced by Maghrebian influencers. The analysis of this corpus is based on Weber's method, which combines understanding, analysis, and explanation of any linguistic usage. The comprehensive-explanatory framework facilitated the development of a code-switching typology that might accurately represent the communication patterns found in the discourse of multilingual Maghrebian vloggers (influencers). The deliberate and alternate use of Standard Arabic, French, and English carries communication strategies with a well-defined purpose. Based on the corpus analysis, five types of code-switching including contextual and designative code-switching were identified.

Keywords: Code-switching, communication strategy, influencers, Maghrebian vloggers, multilingualism

Résumé :

Le multilinguisme maghrébin reflète l'identité linguistique de chaque pays et de toute personne appartenant à cette sphère géographique. Cette spécificité linguistique se manifeste dans la production orale et/ou écrite des Maghrébins, prenant la forme d'alternance codique, d'emprunts, etc. Plusieurs chercheurs ont tenté de travailler sur cette question, en se basant sur différentes problématiques de recherche et corpus. Ce travail se concentre sur l'utilisation de l'alternance codique dans le discours des influenceurs maghrébins, dans le but de déterminer comment elle se manifeste dans le discours des influenceurs algériens, marocains et tunisiens. Pour constituer le corpus, une méthode sélective a été adoptée, suivie de la transcription de trois vlogs produits par des influenceurs maghrébins. L'analyse de ce corpus est basée sur la méthode de Weber, qui combine compréhension, analyse et explication de tout usage linguistique. Le cadre compréhensif-explicatif a facilité l'élaboration d'une typologie d'alternance codique qui pourrait représenter de manière précise les schémas de communication présents dans le discours des vlogueurs (influenceurs) maghrébins multilingues. L'utilisation délibérée et alternée de l'arabe standard, du français et de l'anglais porte des stratégies de communication à des fins bien définies. Suite à l'analyse du corpus, cinq types d'alternance codique, dont l'alternance codique contextuelle et désignative, ont été identifiés.

Mot clés: Alternance codique, influenceurs, multilinguisme, stratégie de communication, vlogueurs maghrébins,

Introduction:

The multilingualism of the Maghrebi countries is a social, linguistic, and psychological reality that is explained by the geographical positioning and the different cultures and civilizations that have marked the history of this area, including Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Regarding the linguistic diversity of the Maghrebi countries, Algeria has two official languages (Standard Arabic and Tamazight), two foreign languages (French and English), as well as the varieties of Algerian Arabic and its dialects (Taleb Ibrahimi, 2004). The situation in Morocco is not that different, since several languages coexist making it a plurilingual country too. These languages are: standard Arabic, Amazigh, Moroccan Arabic, French, English, and Spanish (Moussafir, 2019). Besides, the language repertoire of Tunisian speakers is composed of standard Arabic, Tunisian Arabic, Berber, French, Italian, and Turkish (Bouziri & Chenoufi, 2011).

Standard Arabic is the first official language of these three Maghrebi countries. It is used in various formal communication situations, such as the oral and written speech of the president of the republic, extracts and files of the civil registry; while the dialectal Arabic is a non-standardized language form that individuals use in everyday's exchanges and is composed of different linguistic varieties that change from one country to another and from one city to another. Moreover, the status of Berber and Tamazight differs from one country to another.

In Algeria, French and English are considered as the first and second foreign languages of the country. That said, English language is becoming more present in primary and higher education. In short, the country is moving towards a process of Anglicization. As for Tunisia, it favors the French language; but the latter could be replaced by English, which is recognized as an international language of science, knowledge, and scientific research. French represents Morocco's language of prestige and is considered a foreign language present in the education system, the economic field, as well as at the level of radio productions (newspaper, chronicle, etc.) and television (program, news, weather, and series, etc.) In addition, the English language is beginning to be practiced by Moroccan speakers and to be introduced in certain areas. For Spanish, it remains a communicative language used by the inhabitants of the north.

Maghrebi vloggers mainly communicate and disseminate cultural content in addition to advertising. They rely on digital technology such as software applications (CapCut) and web browsers, in addition to written, oral, or musical productions (depending on the content of the video). The oral and written data of these latter are characterized by a plurilingualism that manifests itself in the form of code-switching that meets the communicative needs of individuals to express themselves freely.

Gumperz et al. (1989: 57) defined the coexistence of two or more linguistic codes in a single discursive production as "the juxtaposition within the same verbal exchange of passages where the discourse belongs to two systems or sub-systems of grammar". This linguistic cohabitation is summed up in the simultaneous use of words, segments, or propositions belonging to two different languages.

This research aims to show the movement of languages in the discourses of vloggers. In addition, we would like to highlight the different types of code-switching and communication strategies found in the vlogs. Based on the context and the literature, the following questions were formulated:

- How do Maghrebi influencers code-switch?
- What is the distinctive factor between the three influencers?
- Does code-switching convey a communication strategy?

Methodological considerations

Corpus definition

This study is based on a heterogeneous corpus. It consists of a mixed discursive production set emitted by three Maghrebi influencers, one Algerian, one Moroccan, and one Tunisian. To collect these verbal exchanges, we selected and downloaded the videos posted on YouTube and TikTok.

Transcription conventions

Table 1: Transcription symbols for Arabic

ا	a:	ر	R	غ	y	ي	j, i:
ب	B	ز	Z	ف	f		
ت	T	س	S	ق	q	ء	ʔ
ث	Ṯ	ش	ʃ	ك	k		
ج	dʒ, ʒ, g	ص	s ^ʕ	ل	l		
ح	H	ض	d ^ʕ , ð ^ʕ	م	M		
خ	X	ط	t ^ʕ	ن	N		
د	D	ظ	z ^ʕ , ð ^ʕ	ه	H		
ذ	Ḍ	ع	ʔ ^ʕ	و	w, u:		

Methodology and analysis approach

To analyze this corpus, we adopted the comprehensive-explanatory approach, founded by the sociologist Max Weber, which consists of understanding, analyzing, and explaining a social phenomenon (see Delas & Milly, 2015). Taking into account the citation below and the disciplinary field, this sociological approach was adopted to answer the research questions. According to Weber, the social world is an aggregation of social actions, which represent human behaviors to which the actor attributes a subjective meaning. These actions are guided by the intentions and expectations of the actor. The social dimension of an action implies that a behavior must be oriented towards one or more other individuals. For example, a discussion between friends is a social action, whereas a collision between two cyclists is not because the individuals did not deliberately direct themselves towards each other.

This method is based on understanding, interpreting, and explaining each act where the influencers change their linguistic code. According to Weber, it consists of understanding the reasons for this linguistic use by putting oneself in the place of the producer of the discourse. After that, we will try to identify the causes of this code-switching so that we can associate each code-switching with the communicative strategy that suits it.

Manifestation of code-switching in the discourse of our influencers

Based on the analysis of our corpus, we note that there is a predominance of Algerian, Moroccan, or Tunisian dialectal Arabic in the oral exchanges of our influencers. It is the primary linguistic code of this digital interaction.

The discourse of these Maghrebi influencers is characterized by the alternate use of Algerian, Moroccan, or Tunisian dialectal Arabic with French, standard Arabic, and English. Regarding the discursive practices of the Tunisian and Moroccan influencers, it appears that there is no Italian or Spanish. This is explained by the geographical belonging of the two YouTubers, one of whom is from Halk El Oued (Tunisia) and the other is a Moroccan from France.

In summary, the alternate use of codes is classified as follows:

- French, Algerian dialect, and English

A: eh ben wahad ki ykolkom hakmatni *crise d'angoisse* wala *a panic attack* maʃi laʔba. *Courage à toutes les gens* li yʔʃfoha li dʒihom *quotidiennement*.

- Standard Arabic, French, Moroccan dialect

N: Sbah l'xir *on se retrouve les amies pour un nouveau vlog* f kanat djali had l'jamat ʔʃadʒbni hal j'ai *de l'énergie pour créer du contenu alors l'jom c'est une journée spéciale* ʔʃla hakaʃ ydi dʒi ʔʃandi *madame* Fatima li hija la *conseillère* djali djal *thermomix*. Had la *vidéo* ydi tkon un *vlog* mais aussi *une revue* ʔʃla had kobold hada waf *gadget*.

- Tunisian Arabic, French, and standard Arabic

F: Lmra tu:nsija hak *caractère* laʔʃiz lyali hak *les sauts d'humeur* li jaʔʃmlo lkif hak hormu :nat li yamlu:lek hjatek bahdʒa wa soru:r.

Code-switching types

Based on the typology proposed by Abbaci and Abbaci (2019), the types of code-switching found after the analysis are highlighted below, followed by a presentation of the different discursive and communicative strategies emitted by our influencers.

Contextual code-switching

Also called situational code-switching, this is when the YouTuber takes into account the context of oral production, the topic being discussed, and the target audience. The latter chooses its languages according to the elements mentioned above.

Amira is an Algerian influencer who currently lives in Dubai. In her vlogs, Amira uses French to target the Algerian population.

A: “Je suis là” can be translated as “ha:ni:” ou bien par “rani zit” and this is usually employed by Algerians to initiate a discussion.

A: “ʔhla: ʔhla:” meaning “welcome”. This greeting is mainly used by arabophones. Such usage targets the influencer’s community in Dubaï.

A: “Anxiety” to show knowledge of topic specific vocabulary.

Nouhaila, the Moroccan influencer, uses the Arabic greeting expression "Sbah l'xir" equivalent to "bonjour". She uses French, alternating with Moroccan dialect to target Moroccans from Nice.

N: sbah l'xir *on se retrouve les amies pour un nouveau vlog* f kanat djali .

Translation: good morning. Here we are again, dear friends, for a new vlog on my channel.

Fatma varies between French, Tunisian Arabic, and standard Arabic in her discursive exchanges to reach the Tunisian community.

F: lmra t u :nsija hak *caractère* laʔʕiz l'jali hak *les sauts d'humeurs* li jaʔmlo lkif hak hormu :nat li yamlu:lek hjatek bahdʒa wa soru :r.

Translation: the Tunisian woman, her character and her mood swings that lift your spirits as well as her hormones that fill your life with joy and happiness.

Representative code-switching:

This type of code-switching is extra-sentential and includes idiomatic expressions. It also consists of proverbs, sayings, and prayers. We chose the word "representative" because it represents and emphasizes the cultural origin and spiritual affiliation of each influencer.

This type of code-switching is absent in the discourse of the Moroccan influencer "Nouhaila" and is present in the exchanges of the Algerian (Amira) and Tunisian (Fatma) influencers.

- Invocation

The languages are constantly in motion in Amira's discourse. As shown in the passage below, this influencer goes from a simultaneous use of Algerian Arabic and French to the spiritual prayer borrowed from Standard Arabic. This linguistic choice is deliberately used to show that she has a certain mastery of the Arabic language and to create an atmosphere of spiritual serenity.

A: bon ana vol taʔʕi dorka *quelques minutes* hadi hiya astawdiʔokom Allah.

Translation: well, I have my flight now, in a few minutes that's what Allah entrusts you with.

- Qur'anic proverb

Fatma wanted to borrow an expression from Surah Yusuf to consolidate her position and opinion on the different moments of stress, pressure, and other that one can experience. However, she did not use the expression as it is cited in the Qur'an.

F: fi msalsal *confinement* li tawa la wfa karart naʔti hak l'jal w matansawf tkolu : jahada jahid min kawmihim

Translation: in the series of the lockdown that has not yet ended, I decided to give the men reason and do not forget to say a witness, of the family of the latter testified

Designative code-switching

This type of code-switching refers to the use of appellative to maintain contact with followers while designating the category of people targeted by this vlog. In most cases, the designatives belong to the Algerian dialect.

In the discursive production of the Algerian vlogger, we note that she addresses her followers using the word "rakom" which belongs to the Algerian dialect, the equivalent of "you are". She designates people with this psychological problem by using the appellative "wahad" which refers to a person.

A: wahad ki ykolkom hakmatni *crise d'angoisse*.

Translation: when a person tells you that I had an anxiety attack.

In the example below, she addresses herself using the syllable "ti:" which refers to her own self.

A: moanati:

Translation: my suffering

In the end, this influencer launches a general appeal to anyone suffering from anxiety by using the phrase "to all people."

The Tunisian influencer addresses the issue of problems faced by Tunisian couples during the lockdown. To do this, she designated the Tunisian woman and man in turn.

F: lmra tu:nsija

Translation: the Tunisian woman

F: naʔti hak lɾjal

Translation: I agree with men

Then, she identified herself with the word "Lani": which means "I am not", while indicating and advising couples to consult with specialists.

F: ana lani: *psychiatre wala fasmu: psychothérapeute lani: experte f les relations de couple*

Translation: I am not a psychiatrist or what is it called? Psychotherapist, I am not an expert in couple relationships.

The Moroccan specifies that her speech is intended only for her subscribers who are interested in the Kobold device.

N: *les amies* golte likom ghadi ndir likom *retour d'expérience* f dar *par rapport* l kobold

Translation: dear friends, I told you that I will give you a feedback on the Kobold at home.

Lexical code-switching (reiteration)

This type belongs to the inter-sentential type and is explained by the fact of introducing a free lexeme belonging to another language than that of the discursive production. Based on this explanation and on the examples below, we cannot say that each Maghrebi influencer uses this type of code-switching.

The Algerian uses this strategy of using words in French and English even though they have their equivalent in standard and dialectal Arabic. It can be considered as a syntagmatic strategy so that the discourse has more meaning and that their followers take it seriously while trying to reach their sensitivity by amplifying the topic.

A: .rani nakra f *les messages* taʔskom

Translation: I am reading your messages

A: wala raho jdir *depression* wala ʔando *anxiety*

Translation: or he is depressed or has an anxiety

Fatma uses a French word in her Arabophone statement for the social, cultural, and habitual value conveyed by her words in Tunisian society.

F: Imra tu:nsija hak *caractère* laʔziz lyali

Translation: the Tunisian woman with her dear and precious character

F: ana lani: *psychiatre*

Translation: I am not a psychiatrist

Stressed code-switching

This type of code-switching, also known as reiteration, is characterized by the use of a word or phrase in one language and then repeating it in another language.

A: *crise d'angoisse* wala a *panic attack*

N: ljom *c'est une journée spéciale*

As shown in Nohaila's speech, this type of code-switching can also be used to explain or clarify a subject or a product for her followers.

N: *il est très encombrant* fih bazzaf djal *les pièces* djal *les têtes*.

Communicative strategy of each mixed use:

Any interaction takes place in a certain framework set from the beginning, and brings together in a given situation given people, with certain properties, and maintaining a particular type of relationship. Within this framework, a certain number of events will take place, and a certain number of signs will be exchanged, which are obviously largely determined by the contextual data. (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992)

Verbal interaction takes place in a defined context and consists of the opening sequence, the body of the topic, and the closing sequence. Its components maintain a linguistic interchange relationship while discussing current affairs. Based on the genres identified above and based on the words of Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1992), we can say that the code-switching used by our influencers conveys a strategic use of language.

This means that the influencers use code-switching strategically to achieve their communicative goals. They use different types of code-switching for different purposes, such as reaching a wider audience through the use of French or English words and phrases. Through the strategic use of code-switching influencers can add emphasis to a point or to highlight a particular emotion. Finally, they also create a sense of identity using a dialectal word or phrase that helps the influencers connect with their audience and create a sense of shared identity. Based on the genres identified above and on the words of Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1992), we can say that the code-switching used by our influencers conveys a:

Phase of salutations

In this phase, influencers use polite greetings and expressions to establish a connection with their followers. They also use code-switching to create a sense of familiarity and belonging (Boubaya, 2020). This sequence of discourse conveys a strategy of linguistic politeness from which influencers take the time to check in with their followers. To capture their attention, they use the phatic function to establish a friendly bond with their subscribers.

A: "ʔhla: ʔhla: waʔrakom" ("Hello hello, how are you?")

N: "Sbah lxiir" ("Good morning")

The authors argue that these greetings use the phatic function of language, which is the use of language to establish and maintain social relationships. By using these greetings, influencers show their respect for their followers and create a sense of familiarity and belonging.

The body of the interaction

In this phase, influencers use code-switching for a variety of purposes.

- Enunciation strategy:

As shown by the examples below, this code-switching strategy uses enunciation to provide a certain assurance to the people who follow their vlogs. It is a way of telling followers that we share our life experiences with you, we feel and live the same things as you, and we are looking for the best for you. Code-switching is a strategic tool that influencers use to achieve a variety of communicative goals. The enunciation strategy through the use of the first person singular pronoun and emotional statements builds trust and rapport with followers.

A: nahkilkom mʔsati: wa moanati: *Alors barah vol taʔi*

N: *je l'ai utilisé et réutilisé [...] Alors le Kobold ana dʒarabto et honnêtement j'ai adoré*

A: kanat ʔʕandi *l'angoisse. Eh ben wahad ki ykolkom hakmatni crise d'angoisse wala a panic attack maʔi laʔba [...]* Rani nakra f *les messages*

F: ana lani: *psychiatre lani: psychothérapeute lani: experte f les relations de couple baʔ nahki ʔʕla l'expérience tʔi.*

These statements use the first person singular pronoun "je" to create a sense of intimacy and connection with the audience. They also use emotional statements to express empathy and understanding for their followers' experiences.

- Argumentative strategy

The argumentative strategy encompasses all the genres of code-switching, including intrusive code-switching, which is aimed at consumer followers who buy everything that is advertised on YouTube. In the context of collaborations, influencers are called upon to present the quality, the usefulness of the products they receive as gifts or at half price.

In order to make good advertising, it is necessary for the influencer to be multilingual, to have a rich linguistic repertoire of sales terms, and to have the right method to attract follower and consumers. The use of code-switching to highlight the benefits of a product or service is shown in the extract below.

N: *Alors le Kobold ana dʒarabto et honnêtement j'ai adoré le point négatif djalo anaho ʔali déjà de un tani haja il est très encombrant fih bazzaf djal les pièces djal les tetes. anaja kan xassni naxwi lih toute une partie f débarras djali tani haja howa c'est vrai que j'aurais préféré kou kan sans fils wa lakin rah avec le fil rah la puissance djalo xajaliya je préfère lokan taxdo la version b le fil ʔʕla lokan taxdoha sans fil parceque kima golnalkom yallah daba f la vidéo la batterie mabaʔd kataʔja w un aspirateur qui coute environs deux milles euros majamkanʔ tbadlo kola ʔʕamajan safi c'est un investissement...*

Conclusion

In this paper, we tried to shed light on some Maghrebi influencers who use code-switching, while explaining the functions and purposes of this linguistic function. Based on the results obtained from the corpus study, we can say that digital multilingualism is manifested by the use of languages in the discursive productions of Maghrebi vloggers. These languages are constantly in contact with a predominance of the Maghrebi dialectal Arabic in the speeches of the studied influencers. The function of alternating between French, classical Arabic, Maghrebi dialectal Arabic, and English reflects the linguistic reality of our influencers, their countries, and their followers.

Moreover, each type of code-switching conveys a communicative strategy and a discursive purpose through which the influencer tries to attract the attention of her subscribers. Each influencer uses the type that suits her and that meets her communicative needs. Finally, influencers use code-switching for a variety of purposes, including: reaching a wider audience, building trust and rapport with followers, and persuading followers to take action. Each influencer uses code-switching in a unique way that reflects her own individual style and communicative needs.

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