Interactional Implications of Code Switching in Facebook Language as a Sociolinguistic Marker of Gender Identity: The Case of EFL Master Students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret.

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Summary:

This research paper aims at probing the sociolinguistic dimensions of using code switching/mixing on Facebook by EFL bilingual students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret in Algeria. It seeks to reveal whether there are any differences in gender identity construction at the level of attitudes towards code switching as well as students' motivations of employing code switching/mixing in their online written posts, comments and chats. To do this, a self-designed questionnaire was administered to 100 EFL bilingual students in order to assess their attitudes towards language use on Facebook. The findings of the study showed both males and females use code switching to a large extent on Facebook and prefer using ADA/Eng, as well as ADA/Fr code switching. Besides, they demonstrated positive attitudes towards Facebook language as well as code switching seeing both as more expressive, communicatively easier and more dynamic.

Keywords: Code switching; code mixing; Facebook language; gender identity, multilingualism.

1. INTRODUCTION

In various multi/bilingual communities like Algeria, many people tend to use more than one code in their day-to-day conversations in different social contexts with different meanings and functions which they intend to execute. The assortment of more than one language variety in a particular naturally occurring speech event has been referred to as code switching

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(hereafter CS) by early pioneering sociolinguists dealing the language contact phenomenon in multilingual societies. Surprisingly, it should be noted in this respect that much early renowned theories and research conducted to explain and understand the sociolinguistic dimensions of CS besides its structural, psycholinguistic, and pragmatic aspects were essentially done on the spoken form of language, while its written counterpart did not receive much consideration by such scholars for many reasons. However, with the advent of Communication and Information Technology (ICT) accompanied by the invention of electronic social network sites (SNSs), or simply virtual communities, by the beginning of the 21st century; the analysis of written code switching in online communication started to gather pace just recently in multilingual communities.

Interestingly, Facebook; being the most visited and popular SNS in Algeria and the whole world today; has tremendously influenced the way people see themselves and conceptualize the world around them. Hence, to communication feelings, ideas, and attitudes towards something on Facebook, the users of such SNS in the speech community of Tiaret in Algeria may either use one language variety namely: Modern Standard Arabic, Berber, Algerian Dialectal Arabic, French, and English, or mix more than one variety at three levels of online communication; text messenging, writing posts and comments. As far as the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria is concerned, the notion of Facebook language is used in this context to stand for the informal and hybrid linguistic style which is in fact a mixture of the spoken and written languages/dialects, and which is essentially characterized by the heavy use of slangs, acronyms, emoticons and transliteration as will be illustrated later. This paper seeks then to investigate the extent to which gender identity is constructed and negotiated through the use of written code switching in Facebook language and how our bilingual participants use such communicative strategy to define themselves as masculine and feminine in online communication.

2. Literature Review.

2.1. Defining Concepts: Code, Code Switching, and Code Mixing.

In multi/bilingual speech communities like Algeria, interlocutors tend to use and mix different codes or language varieties; either those which are genetically related (Arabic and its varieties) or genetically unrelated (in the case of French and Arabic) in the same naturally occurring communicative event, and which can take place at different structural levels of discourse such as words, phrases, and sentences. In the relevant literature, CS has been defined differently by different scholars since the year it was put under in-depth examination by the 1970s. Yet, mostly all those definitions emphasize one feature of this process, that is, the ability of the bilinguals to switch back and forth between different codes in a single exchange. In this respect, Myers-Scotton (1993a) defines CS as "the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded variety (or

varieties) in utterances of a matrix variety during the same conversation" (p.03). Moreover, Peter Auer (1998) says that it is the "alternating use of two or more "codes" within one conversational episode" (p.01). In a similar vein, it is conceptualized by Grosjean (1982) as a situation that comes about as soon as bilinguals switch back and forth between certain codes in which they are more competent in a particular conversation, and this alternation may occur at the level of words, phrases or the whole sentences.

For better understanding and explanation of the phenomenon of CS and its relevance to the context of present paper, the term code is worth defining. In sociolinguistics, the term is used to refer to whatever type, system or style of language used for communicative purposes. More importantly, it is elucidated by Wardhaugh (2006) as "any kind of system that two or more people employ for communication"(p.88). In other words, code is an umbrella and neutral term which covers all languages, dialects, registers and styles (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). In the case of Tiaret Speech Community (hereafter TSC), Arabic (Algerian Dialectal Arabic (ADA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Berber (Ber), French (Fr), and English (Eng) are all codes. Even the informal transliterated Arabic (i.e. writing Arabic words using Lain alphabet or the vice-versa) which has been used just recently by the modern generation in Algeria as a whole and TSC in particular when text messaging via SMS by means of mobile phones, or when communicating online through different social networking sites such Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc, is also considered as a code. In fact, such codes are innovative in the sense that they are morphologically and phonologically characterized by the use of unconventional abbreviations and acronyms. To illustrate this point, users of these mediums of communication usually spell some words by employing numbers instead of letters such as 'b**5**iir' = b**kh**iir i.e. fine; 'sa**7**a' = sa**h**a i.e. ok; 'b**1'** = b**ien** i.e. good, or abbreviated items such as '**cv'** = çava i.e. fine; '**slm'** = salam i.e. peace, '**cuz**'=because, etc. In brief, the notion of code is used in the present research to cover all the miscellaneous linguistic varieties used online by men and women in TSC in order to fulfil different communicative functions and which may be used also to signal their gendered identities when they mix them when interacting through Facebook.

When reviewing the literature related to CS research, one will certainly come across with a synonymous concept to CS referred to as code mixing (hereafter CM). The latter is defined by Bokamba (1989) as "the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses from two distinct grammatical systems or subsystems within the same sentence and speech event" (p.278). In a similar vein, Hudson (1996) writes that CM is "a kind of linguistic cocktail- a few words of one language, then a few words of the other, then back to the first for a few more words and so on" (p.53). It is worth pointing out, however, that some researchers

consider CS and CM as two sides of the same coin, that is, they used them interchangeably to refer to the process of language alternation. On the other hand, other linguists consider them as two separate linguistic phenomena standing on the idea that the first one occurs at the inter-sentencial level, while the second one arises at the intra-sentencial level.

2.1.1. The Structural Levels of Code Switching in Facebook Language

With the advent of social network communication over the past two decades, academic interest in the interactive occurrences of written CS in online communication through Facebook, SMS, E-mail, Messenger, etc; has started just recently when compared to its spoken counterpart. In the context of Algeria, little studies were conducted in this sociolinguistic area with respect to computer-mediated communication such as Zitouni (2013), Berrabah (2014), Abdelhamid (2018), and Achili (2019). In an attempt to apply a linguistic analysis of the structure of written CS in Facebook language, we should then review the three renowned structural levels of CS in the spoken discourse. From a linguistic point of view, Poplack (1980) has introduced three main types of CS. The first type is called the extra-sentencial (also referred to as 'tag switching') in which a tag, an interjection or an idiomatic expression from another language is inserted while the rest of the utterance remains in the base language such as 'c'est vrai yak' (Fr/ADA CS, i.e. 'it is true, isn't it'), or 'rana daymen n3ano mi:n yegat3o lma 3lina merde!' (ADA/Fr CS, i.e. 'we always suffer when they leave us without water damn!). The second type is referred to as inter-sentencial switching which occurs at the level of sentences and/or clauses in instances like 'j'ai enfn réussi mrc bqp mon frère rabi yehfadek' (Fr/ADA CS, i.e. 'I have finally succeeded thank you very much my brother may God preserve you'). In contrast to this type, intra-sentencial CS (sometimes referred to as CM) which entails the switch within the sentence or the clause boundary such as 'matensaʃ tji:b m3ak la carte national ghodwa ok' (Fr/ADA/Eng CS, .i.e. 'don't forget to bring with you the identity card tomorrow okay'), and sometimes the switch may take place at the word level (referred to as intra-word CS) such as the word 'lben3amism' (i.e. nepotism) which is composed of the morpheme 'ben3am' (cousin) from AA and the English suffix 'ism'. As a result, these instances reinforces the hypothesis that those bilingual who are able to code switch and mix when they interact verbally will do the same when engaged in online written conversations on Facebook.

2.1.2. The Sociolinguistic Dimensions of Code Switching

Apart from the structural analysis which is adopted to highlight the major linguistic rules and constraints that govern the morph-syntactic features of CS, scholars have shifted to determine what socio-cultural, pragmatic, and psychological factors provoke interlocutors to switch back and forth between the coexisting language varieties/codes when interacting with each other. In fact, the sociolinguistic analysis of CS consider it as a discourse strategy in the sense that it

attempts to identify the social meanings and the interactive functions that code-switchers intend to achieve such as solidarity, prestige, socioeconomic status, signalling group membership, showing off, reflecting one's linguistic potential/deficiency, etc. Moreover, many studies have also concluded that CS is significantly influenced by certain social factors such as the setting, addresses, topic, gender, occupation and the educational level. In other words, CS phenomenon became no longer deemed as a random and deviant process, but a rule-governed phenomenon inspired by socio-cultural, pragmatic and psychological factors.

Among the major works conducted from this perspective is that of Bloom and Gumperz (1972) who identified two types of CS with reference to some external factors. On the one hand, the first type is termed as situational CS which takes places when a bilingual interlocutor shifts from one code to the other as soon as the situation changes. That is to say, such type is rather controlled by a sudden change in one component of the situation such as the topic, setting, and addressee. This type of switching is also referred to as diglossic CS where two genetically related language varieties such as ADA (the low variety) and SA (the high variety) are merged in the same conversation. However, it differs from Ferguson's (1959) classical notion of 'Diglossia' which sustains that such codes must be in a complementary relationship, that is, the local variety is used in informal contexts only such as streets, markets, talking with close friends, etc; while the formal variety is used only in formal contexts such as political events, religious speech, university lectures, etc. But due to the complex sociolinguistic situation of most Arab countries such as Algeria, the theory of diglossia was further extended by Fishman (1972) to include those genetically unrelated languages too, where the prestigious 'H' variety (e.g. French or English) is used in formal situations and the less prestigious 'L' variety (e.g. ADA) is used in informal settings.

On the other hand, metaphorical CS refers to those switches "where it is the choice of language that determines the situation" (Hudson, 1996, p.53). Said differently, metaphorical CS, or what was called later as conversational CS by Gumperz (1982), can be elucidated as a communicative discourse strategy exhibited by proficient bilinguals who switch back and forth within the same setting or situation of the conversation to achieve specific communicative purposes and/or discourse functions and rationale without any noticeable change in the physical setting, in order to to show disapproval or intimacy, giving emphasis to an idea, excluding an interlocutor from a conversation, solidarity, signalling ethnic belonging, expressing certain feelings and emotions, etc. Interestingly, metaphorical switching tends to be more individual and non-normative (Bouamrane, 1986). In other words, it is triggered by the speakers' intentional meanings where an expected variety is employed as a metaphor

(Belarbi, 2013), whereas situational switching is more social and normative in the sense that the choice of a certain code is linked to whom, where, and what the conversation is about.

In addition to Gumperz's interactional sociolinguistic dimension of CS that attempts to explain how social meanings and norms are interactively produced and negotiated by means of code alternation processes, Peter Auer (1984, 1995, and 1998) developed his renowned pragmatic approach, or simply a discourse-based analysis, to the study of CS instances in bilingual conversations. In fact, Auer's pragmatic approach emphasizes that "Any theory of conversational code-alternation is bound to fail if it does not take into account that meaning of code alternation depends in essential ways on 'its sequential environment'" (Auer, 1995, p.116). According to Auer, any interpretation of the social implications of code alternation should not be solely restricted to the situational context of the conversation as advocated by Bloom and Gumperz, but one should take into consideration the sequential environment of CS. That is to say, the general meaning of CS should be interpreted with reference to each foregoing and subsequent utterance. Thus, considerable concentration should be directed toward the way speech is systematized in interaction with a specific attention to the sequences where code alternation instances occur within bilingual talk.

For the sake of applying a discourse-based framework to securitize the socio-pragmatic functions and motivations of CS, Auer has employed a Conversational Analysis (CA) method with a particular reliance on Gumperz's theory of contextualization cues in order to describe the "sequential implicativeness of language choice" (Auer, 1998, p.162) at different phases in interaction. That is to say, researchers in favour of CA model to CS endeavour to determine the unique qualities of each code alternation case instead of attributing the same macro-sociolinguistic aspects to all cases. Likewise, Auer (1984) stresses that bilingual speakers do not necessarily organize their verbal behaviour with respect to the situation as put forward by Gumperz; nevertheless, they construct situations all the way through the way they interact with one another.

From a purely socio-psychological viewpoint, Carol Myer-Scotton (1993) brought in her Markedness Model (hereafter MM) as an attempt to elaborate the micro- and macro factors that push speakers to code-switch when interacting. According to Scotton (ibid), the essence of MM resides in the assumption that all speakers are naturally equipped with a cognitive capacity that allows them to make 'choices' concerning which of the two or more codes is the 'unmarked' or expected variety, and which one is the 'marked' or unexpected variety in a given conversational event. Thus, the MM is based on the inspiration that all interlocutors should be equipped with an instinctive 'markedness evaluator' that essentially permits them to make rational choices about which code is used as an unmarked or the marked one. Beyond this, interlocutors sometimes switch forth

and back unconsciously in interaction, without being aware that they have used more than one code in their utterances. From this vantage point, CS can be studied from a psycholinguistic perspective, standing on the fact that bilinguals often use more than a single code in their conversations without any conscious awareness, and which is then conditioned by some mental processes connected with language production operating in the brains of speakers.

As stated above, the MM is mainly grounded on the hypothesis that interlocutors make felicitous decisions, or choices, between the linguistic codes in their repertoires that correspond to their intentions and the social ends that they want to convey and transmit to their counterpart participants. More importantly, the 'Negotiation Principle', as put forward by Myer-Scotton (1983), emphasizes that all instances of code choice in bilingual talk should be eventually interpreted in terms of the interlocutors' social motivations and the pragmatic meanings they wish to negotiate. The principle highlights the following: "Choose the form of your conversation such that it indexes the set of rights and obligations which you wish to be in force between speaker and addressee for the current exchange" (Myer-Scotton, 1998, p.21). By this token, the principle asserts that talk is a rational dynamic practice entailing making key choices and/or switching of codes by bilingual interlocutors to negotiate the set of rights and obligations among them in a particular speech event. In this vein, Scotton suggests that the Negotiation Principle is used to explain the way social identities are negotiated or constructed in conversations.

2.2. Gender and Code Switching

It is worth pointing out that only few studies have been conducted so far to investigate the way CS intersects with gender identity construction although they have both experienced a great deal of scientific research as two separate sociolinguistic sub-fields. Since the feminist linguist Robin Lakoff published her ground breaking paper Language and Women's Place (1973, 1975), academic interest in how language is used differently by men and women started to gather pace.

While many early works in gender-linked language differences were based on the notion of 'essentialism' which sees gender as a rigid dichotomy, and a pre-determined set of socio-cultural traits ascribed to men and women because of biological factors; recent works have shifted to the more dynamic 'social constructivist' paradigm which views gender as a complex system and a socio-cultural performance negotiated, enacted, and produced in discourse (Butler, 1990). The latter approach stresses that gender identities are negotiated and constructed in various manners by taking into account other social parameters such as the speakers' age, ethnicity, level of education, etc. Moreover, researchers in favour of the social constructivist paradigm advocate that speakers are welcomed to use whatever linguistic recourses or communicative strategies

available to them in order to meet the needs of the social context in which single or mixed-sex exchanges take place. Hence, CS is considered in this study as one of the most apparent discourse strategies employed by Algerian Facebook language users to construct and negotiate their gender identities.

In a few Arab speech communities, it was found that gender plays a momentous part in Arab bilinguals' CS performance. In the Moroccan society, Sadiqi (2003, p.158) scrutinized women's spoken CS between Moroccan Arabic and French in mixed-sex interactions and concluded that women used higher degrees of such type of CS more than men in order to acquire social prestige and "to 'fight' for self-assertion". According to her, this type of CS in considered as a language skill associated with educated urban females more than males from the same social background in the Moroccan context.

Standing on her relative assumption that CS is correlated with women more than men, Sadiqi (2003) elucidates that Moroccan women's CS instances occur either between Moroccan Arabic and Berber or between Moroccan Arabic and French. Interestingly, Moroccan women's CS in reckon as a resourceful discourse strategy in a given socio-cultural milieu where the choice of a certain language variety over another symbolizes a certain social implication. Hence, women switch back and forth in face-to-face conversations in order to attain private satisfaction and to achieve social prestige and acknowledgment (Sadiqi, 2003).

The use of CS types mentioned above by Moroccan women are perceived as essential ingredients of their verbal repertoires and empowering communicative devices which give them more authority in a gendered community (Sadiqi, 2003). The main features of these empowering devices are briefly summarized as follow: to attract and maintain attention in conversations, to negotiate power by signalling their educational background to less educated men, to mark in-group solidarity as in the case of Berber women, a type of linguistic innovation which indexes modernity, determination and will, to create liveliness in conversations, and finally to impose themselves by snatching turns conversations (Sadiqi, 2003).

By analogy to the Moroccan case study, Babou (2012) investigated Algerian males' and females' spoken CS from a sociolinguistic perspective with much reference to Sadiqi's hypotheses. The aim of her qualitative study was to examine the ways men and women utilize different language varieties in their conversations to satisfy their communicative intentions, by regarding CS as communicative device to negotiate and construct significant identities in different communities of practice. Her qualitative findings revealed that women under her study code switched from AA to Berber to signal their ethnic belonging and solidarity, and they code switched from AA to Fr more than men to signal modernity, enlightenment, and social mobility (Babou, 2012).

The current study takes, however, a different path as it adopts a quantitative approach in order to delineate the motivations that cause our male

and female participants to code-switch by assessing their attitudes towards code choice/alternation when communicating online through their most visited social network, Facebook. Accordingly, the research questions of the present study are:

1. Do males and females attitudes towards the use of CS in Facebook language signal any differences in gender identity construction?

2. What factors motivate male and female students to codeswitch and mix when communicating online via Facebook?

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Context of the Study

Seeing that Facebook is heavily used by modern and younger generations, we have chosen to collect the relevant data from (pluri) bilingual students of Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret at the department of English language. Our target population is first year Master students who are specialized in Didactics and Linguistics. In each of these subject matters, the category of female students outnumbers that of males. In the first one, there are 50 males and 83 females, whereas in the second speciality, there are 81 males and 165 females according to the headmaster of the English Language Department for the academic year 2020/2021.

Our decision of selecting the context of university as a case study is grounded on two reasons. The first one refers to the (pluri) bilinguality of the university students' linguistic repertoires which relatively consist of Arabic varieties (ADA, SA), Berber, English as a first foreign language, French as a second foreign language, besides Spanish or German as third foreign languages. Thus, our study is stimulated by our curiosity to work with ideal (pluri) bilinguals who are supposed to master at least three language varieties at varied proficiency degrees in their spoken as well as written discourses as in the case of EFL students participating in our investigation. Therefore, we hypothesize that they are likely to use more than one variety when interacting on Facebook and mix them in a single online written discourse such as posts, comments and text messenging, by surveying their motivations of using code switching and their attitudes towards language choice on Facebook as sociolinguistic markers of their gender identities. Secondly; we postulate that Facebook is the most visited and heavily used social network site by younger university students as a community of practice where they can negotiate different issues, either those related to their studies or external to them; a virtual community in which language use and choice are deemed to play central roles in social network communication.

3.2. Research Instrument

For the sake of collecting the data necessary to answer the above mentioned questions, we opted for a self-administered questionnaire in order to explore the motivations that push our bilingual male and female Facebook users

to code switch when interacting online, and to probe their attitudes towards the language contact phenomenon, CS, and how these attitudes reflect any differences and/or similarities in negotiating and constructing their gender identities.

3.3. Sampling Frame

In order to conduct our quantitative analysis, a random sample of 100 EFL Master Students at IbnKhaldoun University were selected out of a their total number 389 where 66.32% are females and 33.67% are males in the whole target population. However, we have received only 51 questionnaires out of 100, since some students did not bring them back during the survey period which lasted for one week. Thus, we would mention that our final sample consists only in 17 males and 34 females, as we found that the latter being more cooperative than male participants. The majority of them (86%) are aged between 16 and 31 while the rest of them are aged between 31 and 45. Concerning their place of residence, 59% of them live in the inner city of TSC, while 22% live in the surrounding Tiartian provinces, and the rest of the students (19%) live outside the Wilaya of Tiaret.

It is worth noting, however, that we have tried to include male students in our study as possible as we could, for the reason that they were neither available at the level of the English Language Department nor during their respective sessions in both specialties. This is surely due to do the pandemic of Corona Virus; a hard time period during which the research fieldwork was being conducted on one hand, and the health protocol adopted by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research which has not necessitated the presence of students at university, but promoted for online instruction instead. Because of this, it is impossible to formulate any kind of generalization of the findings at this stage, but it would be achievable only with an outsized sample and comprehensive inquiries that can be undertaken in due course.

4. Results

This part is devoted to sketch the main findings of the current paper and to analyse the data accumulated from our informants through survey questionnaires. In order to answer our research questions, the obtained data will be presented quantitatively by using numbers, percentages, tables and graphs where necessary. It is worth noting that findings related the first section, personal information, were used to describe our sample. Concerning the linguistic profile of our respondents, it is presented as follows:

Table 1: The Respondents' Linguistic Profiles

	Males					Females				
	AA	SA	Fr	Eng	Ber	AA	SA	Fr	Eng	Ber
Spoken Varieties	17	05	08	11	00	32	11	20	27	08
	100%	29%	47%	64%	00%	94%	32%	58%	79%	23%
Written Varieties	11	09	07	12	00	30	18	20	27	01
	64%	52%	41%	70%	00%	88%	52%	58%	79%	2%

The table above illustrates the current sociolinguistic situation is Algeria as a whole and TSC in particular. It also gives the impression that the Algeria linguistic repertoire is very rich and complex in the sense that genetically related and unrelated language varieties are spoken and written in different occasions, and sometimes mixed in a given interaction. Moreover, our female respondents claimed that they master some other foreign language to a certain extent such as Turkish, Japanese, Korean, German, and Portuguese. However, males did not provide any hint to this linguistic competency, which may support the common stereotype asserting that women are more proficient than men in acquiring foreign languages. The findings have also revealed that Berber variety is never spoken or written by males, while females showed a good deal of it. This may be associated with Sadiqi's (2003) statement that Berber is the language of females without implying that men do not make use of it, but it means that they use it to a lesser degree than women.

As far as language use and choice section is concerned, it seems that gender has little influence with respect to the language the Facebook user prefer logging into his profile in. As shown in table 02 beneath, English language is obviously favoured by our participants (64% of males and 67% of females). We do not take this for granted since this may be due to the sampling frame which was limited only to ELT students, while students of other Departments (mainly Arabic and French) were ignored.

Table 2: The Major Languages Used to Log in Facebook

	Arabic	French	English	Others
Males	52%	23%	64%	05%
Females	47%	29%	67%	02%

Both genders have nearly expressed positive attitudes towards English. That is, they use it in order to practice it and improve their skills and competencies, mainly in writing, speaking and to enrich their lexical catalogues,

standing on the fact that most of their online friends are simply English language learners. Apart from this, some female students stated that they use English because it is the language of modern technological developments as it reflects modesty and easy to express their ideas, feelings and emotions; or simply because they 'love it'. Regarding the Arabic language (SA), both males and females have expressed diverse positive viewpoints seeing it as a reflection of their socio-cultural identity and the mother tongue of most Arab native speakers, although this view is problematic due to the complex diglossic linguistic situation of most Arab speaking communities. Besides, they assume that Arabic (AA) is used for casual and daily speech which is the common variety shared and understood by the whole speech community. Interestingly, only low percentages (23% of males and 29% of females) prefer using French to log in Facebook. Some males, on the one hand, said that they use French because it is easy to write, used in daily interactions and to enlarge their lexical repertoires. Some females, on the other hand, stated that they became familiar with using French (i.e. a habit), standing on the fact that most Algerians use it frequently and in their day-to-day interactions; believing also that it is easy to use abbreviations and acronyms in it. Moreover, table 03 below highlights the processes of language use and choice at the level of the macro Facebook activities reviewed earlier.

Table 3: Language Choice on Facebook

Language varieties	Males						Females					
	MSA	ADA	Fr	Eng	Ber	Others	MSA	ADA	Fr	Eng	Ber	Others
Writing a Post	58%	47%	17%	64%	00%	00%	29%	32%	29%	70%	02%	02%
Writing a Comment	52%	82%	23%	70%	00%	00%	35%	55%	26%	55%	02%	00%
Chatting with Friends	29%	82%	11%	64%	00%	00%	11%	76%	29%	70%	02%	00%

We have already reported that both genders favours logging into their Facebook profiles in English for different reasons. When it comes to the local Arabic variety (ADA), it appears that our 47 % of males and 32% of females avoid using it to write posts, but favoured to a large extent by 82% of males and 55% of females to write comments, while it seems to be used profoundly by 82% of males and 76% of females to chat with friends via Messenger. Interestingly, they seem aware of the fact that the high variety (MSA) is rather suitable to write posts, especially formal ones which they publish on their official Facebook groups and pages dedicated for to discuss diverse issues linked to their studies. However, it is less used by males (29%) and even females (11%) to make online chats with friends, and which may be in turn due to the informality of the topics of their

conversations. In this respect, we may deduce that the more the respondents' conversations are private, the more the language is informal.

On the basis aforementioned state of affairs, we would take for granted that our male and female respondents are likely to mix different language varieties when interacting on Facebook. The observations obtained from the groups and pages devoted to tackle their educational concerns demonstrated the heavy use of CS and CM in their posts, comments and observed also in our online conversations with students via Messenger to some extent. In consequence, graph 02 below shows that 82% of males and 94% of females use CS when interacting on Facebook.

Graph 2: The Use of CS on Facebook according to Gender.
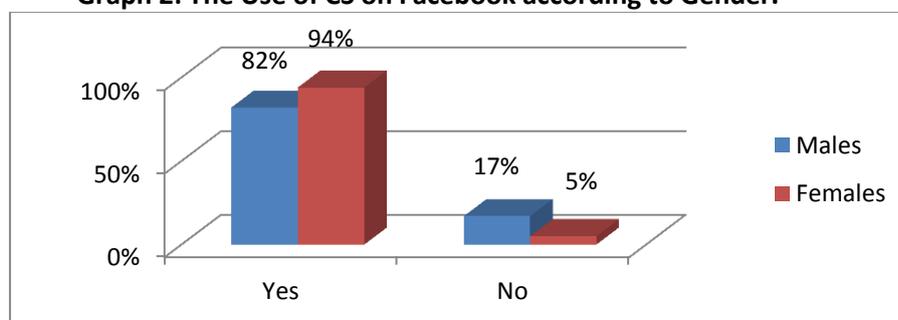
Intentionally or unintentionally, both genders revealed that they employ CS to a large extent when interacting on Facebook. The researchers' observations of CS and even CM practices on this social network site deduced that the 'Algerian Facebook language', an online informal hybrid variety, is chiefly characterized by the habitual switching and mixing of genetically related and unrelated language varieties, either by inserting larger stretches such clauses and sentences, or integrating just single foreign units such as words, suffixes, etc. Interestingly, graph 03 underneath brings to light the types of CS with reference to the major linguistic varieties shaping the verbal repertoires of the target Algerian university students of English.

Graph 3: Types of Code Switching Used on Facebook
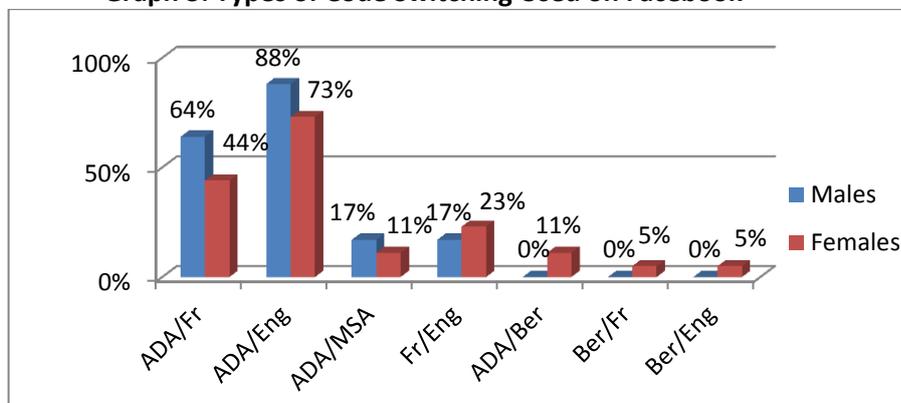
As expected, 88% of males and 73% of females made obvious that they tend to use ADA/Eng type of CS/CM; often mixed with some French words and phrases on Facebook. In the second place, we can notice that ADA/Fr type of CS/CM seems also apparent among EFL students. Hence, 64% of males and 44% of females reported that they inevitably use this type of switching and described it simply as a 'habit'.

When surveyed about the reasons of using these two types of switching and mixing, most males reported that those types become the most widespread components of their daily linguistic behaviour on Facebook which principally consists of three different language varieties, namely ADA, French and English. They have also reported that using a mixture of these varieties is easy to write, being the most dominant ones among their online friends, and can be understood by the readers of their posts, comments and messages. On the other hand, females stated that ADA is their mother tongue language, English is the language they love to practice and French is used to fill in lexical gaps, mainly in writing abbreviations and acronyms. In brief, a mixture of these varieties is, according to some females, 'common, understood, expressive and reflects linguistic competency'.

As far as the reasons and motivations of using CS when communicating online on Facebook, our informants were provided with five main options selected on the basis on previous findings related to CS research from a sociolinguistic perspective as shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Students' Motivation of Using Code Switching on Facebook

Factors Motivating Students to Use CS on Facebook.	Males	Females
To fill in speaking/writing gaps.	52%	64%
To signal linguistic proficiency and competence.	29%	17%
For prestige.	23%	23%

To attract others' attention and create energy in communication.	47%	26%
When there is a shift in topic and participant.	29%	26%

To begin with, 52% of males and 64% of females state that they shift back and forth between different language varieties 'to fill in speaking/writing gaps'. This may be due to the lack of some specific words in the first language as some males believe, or because there are some words that are more powerful when used in a second language as some females think. As a matter of fact, the online informal 'Facebook language' variety created by Algerian Facebookers is rather unique in the sense that its users do prefer using the most convenient and the easiest expressions that save their time and efforts, even if this requires shifting partially or completely to another variety. For example, instead of employing the dialectal expression 'wachrak?' to ask someone about his state, one would merely favour using the French word 'cv?', which is more dynamic and timesaving for the interlocutors. Standing on the idea that CS is psychologically motivated, our informants seem very keen to use whatever linguistic device like emoticons, abbreviations, acronyms, CS, CM, borrowing, etc in order to facilitate online communication via Facebook.

However, 29% of males and 17% of females assert that they codeswitch and alternate from one variety to another 'to signal their linguistic proficiency and competence' and to demonstrate their mastery of the codes they utilize most when interacting on Facebook, especially when the switch is to English since only few male and female respondents stated that they use it for the sake of enhancing their skills and broadening their lexicon. In addition, only 23% of each gender category believes that CS carries social significance with it, mainly 'prestige'; and considers it as a discourse strategy and a boosting device to negotiate social power and status on Facebook. As for the fourth choice, 47% of males and just 26% of females think that they codeswitch 'to attract others' attention and create energy in communication' when communicating via Facebook. Unlike oral discourse where women use CS to attract and maintain attention and produce liveliness in conversations (Sadiqi, 2003), it seems that males are more aware of the importance of using CS in written online discourse on Facebook, especially if their posts, comments and conversations tackle their educational problems and affairs. Thus, men seem relatively exhibiting a kind of leadership and control in a mixed-sex Facebook community (i.e. groups or pages), while women appear a little bit not aware of this, at least in this context.

Last but not least, the final choice given to our informants is related to situational switching, that is, 'when there is a shift in topic and participant'. In this respect, low percentages from both gender categories (29% of males and 26% of

females) believe that the use of CS on Facebook is triggered by a change in the topic and the person addressed. We have noticed that most posts and comments appearing in our informants' Facebook group are largely written in English, while French and ADA are also apparent to some extent either integrated inter-sentencially or intra-sentencially, although the contents of most written posts were related to their English language studies. Concerning their comments, they also varied between monolingual, bilingual and multilingual ones.

5. Discussion

In an attempt to scrutinize whether the use of CS and/or CM shapes gender identity among EFL students when communicating online on Facebook, the findings obtained through our self-administered questionnaire revealed that CS has got a sociolinguistic significance to a certain degree. In fact, both male and female respondents have at least demonstrated positive attitudes towards the implementation of CS as a central linguistic feature of 'Facebook Language' characterized by certain manifestations of morpho-phonological adaptation of foreign words once introduced in the informal written discourse. Therefore, the respondents' opinions are not fully surprising since this new hybrid variety is 'linguistically innovative'. While oral CS is seen as a "linguistically skilful practice, which is motivated by individual intention" (Sadiqi, 2003, p.258), the use of CS in written posts and comments on Facebook is rather motivated by the individual's preference of using the easiest and most timesaving and expressive code where necessary.

As far as gender differences in using CS as a communicative strategy to negotiate some social ends is concerned, no clear-cut differences were found, but instead, our male and female respondents demonstrated similarities in using CS on Facebook. Seeing the latter as the most heavily used and visited SNS in their daily life as young university students of English, their common 'Facebook language' is described as being a mixture of three main different language varieties, namely ADA; their mother tongue variety, French; being deeply rooted a large extent in the daily speech events of most Algerians due to its long history of colonialism in Algeria, and English; being the language of their educational careers which they seek to improve their communicative skills and competencies in. Moreover, the aspect of anonymous identity on SNS whereby some Facebook users prefer not to display their real information on their profiles including their names, age, gender, profession, etc. would be a good advantage for those who may feel uncomfortable in face-to-face interaction to express themselves freely through any code they find more communicative than other in written discourse. In this respect, the findings demonstrated that CS is used by both males and females on Facebook to fill in speaking/writing gaps, make the communication more dynamic and smooth, negotiate social prestige and signal proficiency in mastering several languages/dialects.

The analysis of the qualitative data obtained in light of an open-ended question designed to probe our respondents' opinions about the new term 'Facebook language' has revealed constructive attitudes. Some males, on the one hand, consider it as informal in the sense that it consists of a mixture of different codes. In their views, it is the language created chiefly by Algerian teenagers on social media to meet their purposes, and flexible in the sense that the play with the grammar and lexicon of different codes and using certain symbols to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings more effectively. However, few male respondents demonstrated negative attitudes towards 'Facebook language' seeing as lacking authenticity and deficient at the level of body language. On the other hand, some females shared nearly the same view in regarding the term as more recent and non-standard due to the intentional or unintentional heavy manifestations of CS and/or CM besides the use of conventional abbreviations, acronyms, slangs and emoticons. Hence, becoming familiar with using this hybrid variety on Facebook in their daily lives, our female respondents stated that when chatting with friends, people do not pay great attention to the spelling mistakes and the grammatical errors, since most interlocutors are able to grasp the meaning of the certain hybrid expressions without any must to write well-formed and coherent phrases and sentences. In this context, one would prefer using David Crytal's (2006) notion of 'Netspeak' which may refer also to the unique linguistic characteristics and the written conventional norms created and shared among Algerian Facebook users.

6. Conclusion

As an indispensable linguistic feature of hybrid online communication, written CS seems to be largely motivated by the Facebook users' communicative needs and intentions more than to negotiate their gender identities, since both male and female participants consider it as part of their day to day spontaneous online communication. Besides that, the non-standard text-based Facebook language is in fact loaded of written CS/CM instances; mainly the one used by younger educated bilingual university students who are no longer caring about the standards of formal discourse.

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