A Discoursal Study of Intersentensial and Intrasentential Code-Switching in Iraqi Arabic Online Chat

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Abstract

The current research concerns intersentensial and intrasentential code-switching as performed by Iraqi speakers who use Iraqi Arabic and English languages simultaneously as a means of communication in their interaction in online chat namely, Facebook messenger chat. The data were collected from a group of friends, acquaintances and relatives who have different educational backgrounds. These people were grouped according to the same- and cross-sex types of interaction. Some research questions are sought as to whether these types of code-switching are frequent in Facebook messenger chat, whether they are used consciously or unconsciously and the reasons behind using them. Certain hypotheses are raised such as intersentensial and intrasentential code-switching types are frequent, they are both consciously and unconsciously performed by speakers, they express different ideas and attitudes, and finally, intersentensial code-switching is more frequently adopted by females. Various results were obtained and all confirmed the hypotheses raised.

Key Words: *Code- Switching; Discourse Analysis; Intersentential; Intrasentential; Iraqi Arabic; Online Chat*

دراسة خطابية لظاهرة التناوب اللغوى بين وداخل الجمل فى محادثات الانترنت العراقية

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الملخص

يتناول البحث الحالي ظاهرة التحول اللغوي بين وضمن الجمل كما يؤديها المتحدثون العراقيون الذين يستخدمون اللهجة العراقية وتحديدا دردشة الفيس بوك. تم جمع البيانات من واللغة الإنكليزية في وقت واحد كوسيلة للتواصل في تفاعلهم في الدردشة عبر الإنترنت مجموعة من الأصدقاء والمعارف والأقارب الذين لديهم خلفيات تعليمية مختلفة. وقد تم تجميع هؤلاء الأشخاص وفقًا لأنواع التفاعل من نفس الجنس وكذلك الجنس المختلف.ويحاول البحث الاجابة عن بعض الأسئلة البحثية حول ما إذا كانت هذه الأنواع من ظاهرة التحول اللغوي متكررة في دردشة الفيس بوك، وسواء يتم استخدامها بوعي ام بغير وعي وكذلك معرفة الاسباب وراء استخدامها. تم طرح فرضيات معينة مثل ظاهرة التحول اللغوي بين وضمن الجمل تحدث بشكل متكرر ، ويتم إجراؤها بوعي ودون وعي من قبل المتحدثين ، وتعبر عن أفكار ومواقف مختلفة ، وأخيرًا ، تستخدم ظاهرة التحول اللغوي بين الجمل بشكل متكرر من قبل الإناث. تم الحصول على نتائج مختلفة وقد أكدت جميعها الفرضيات المطروحة.

1. Introduction

Code-switching has attracted the attention of most linguistics researchers, and different definitions and theories have been suggested. Generally speaking, these researchers believe that code-switching is the use of two or more languages or varieties of the same language within the same single oral or written discourse (See for instance, Baker, 1980, Gumperz, 1982, Redouane, 2005, Mahootian, 2006, and Alenezi, 2010).

For the study of code switching, Huang (2009:122) believes that spoken communication has been the fundamental focus, whereas the written communication, such as letter writing and diary writing, has been disregarded in the literature.

The current research aims at examining the frequency of adopting intersentensial and intrasentential code-switching in computer – mediated- communication, namely Facebook messenger chats. Besides, it tries to figure out the differences among Iraqi speakers, males and females, in adopting these types of code – switching in their same- and cross- sex interactions. Also, it tries to pinpoint whether the two types of code- switching are only performed by educated persons or they can be performed by those who have experienced them through practice. In addition, it traces whether Iraqi speakers use these types of code-switching consciously or unconsciously. Finally, it investigates the reasons behind using these types of code- switching.

2. Literature Review

Within computer- mediated communication (henceforth, CMC), which facilitates written interaction, code-switching has been more common and received much consideration by linguists who are interested in studying language use in bilingual societies (Huang, 2009:122). For his part, Androutsopoulos (2011:1) argues that code- switching in CMC is relevant not only because it is there, but also for the roles that can play in pragmatics, sociolinguistics and discourse studies. He argues that CMC participants use code-switching in order to achieve pragmatic work that would be accomplished by phonological variation, prosody, gaze, posture, and other cues in normal spoken conversations.

Hence, CMC as a discourse field challenges the supposition that spoken face-to-face communication is the main site of code- switching (ibid:1).

Danet and Herring (2007:340) suggest that there are two main approaches in studying code- switching within computer-mediated settings: 1) The study of code switching during a single communicative utterance and 2) Studying language choice or the division of languages used in a bilingual or multilingual community according to factors such as participants, topic and setting. They believe that typically, code- switching in CMC functions along with interactional sociolinguistics and conversational approach to bilingual interaction and is regarded as one of the resources for the management of interpersonal relationships and other interactional aims (ibid: 340).

3. Research Questions

This research addresses the following questions:

1. Are intersentential and intrasentential code-switching types frequent in Facebook messenger chats?
2. Do Iraqi speakers, males and females, differ in adopting these types of code – switching in their same- and cross- sex interactions?
3. Are the two types of code- switching performed only by educated persons or also by those who have experienced them through practice as well?
4. Do Iraqi speakers use these types of code-switching consciously or unconsciously?
5. What are the reasons behind the use of these two types?

4. Hypotheses

The research hypothesizes that:

1. Intersentensial and intrasentential code- switching are frequent phenomena in Facebook messenger chats.
2. Intersentensial code- switching is more adopted by females in their same- and cross- sex interactions.
3. These types of code-switching are both consciously and unconsciously performed by speakers.
4. Educated speakers widely use the two types of code-switching.

5. The two types of code-switching express different ideas and attitudes.

5. Methodology

Sixty chats were collected from Facebook messenger. They were collected from two types of groups, including 40 participants. The first group was asked to find out any chat (conversation) that they have made with their friends, acquaintances and relatives including the two languages. The second group was asked to converse with their friends naturally. Participants had not been told the purpose behind collecting the data to have more authentic chats.

Some of the participants work in a private school and the language they use is English, and others are friends and relatives. A group of these participants is educated having graduated from English department while others have acquired English through practice. So, both groups use Arabic as their mother- tongue language with an embedded language, viz. English.

The chats were about different topics. They were arranged on the basis of three types of interaction. That is, they were sorted according to same- and cross-sex interaction, viz. female-female, male-male, and female-male.

The analytical procedures are:

i. Taking screenshots and saving them in folders to be analyzed later according to the two types of code- switching in question.

ii. Dividing the data into conversational episodes, and they were analyzed according to word level, clausal level and sentence boundaries.

iii. Comparing the three types of interaction, as far as the types of code-switching are concerned, to figure out the frequency, gender differences and to see whether the two types of code- switching are only performed by educated speakers or also by those who experienced them through practice as well.

iv. Making a questionnaire of ten questions as a means of collecting speakers' views and ideas about the two investigated types of code-switching and about code-switching as a linguistic phenomenon as well. Basically, the questionnaire helps to find out the extent of situations in which the speakers will be able to switch from one language into another.

6. Results and Discussion

In the following subsections, a panoramic view is going to be presented about the investigated phenomena, including the way the samples analyzed and the discussion of the results. These procedures are accompanied with presenting a questionnaire for the aim of collecting speakers' views and ideas about the two investigated types of code-switching and about code-switching as a linguistic phenomenon as well.

6.1 Intersentential Switching

This type of switching occurs between speaker's turns. It involves a switch at a clause or sentence boundary. It is realized when the utterance of a participant is divided into sentences, so one of these sentences will be realized in one language whereas the other sentence(s) will be formed in a quietly different language.

In what follows, some examples of this type of switching, according to the type of interaction, are presented:

A. Female-Female Interaction

    A.That is good.
        I forgot, /ʔɪntɪ weːn tɪʃtɪɣliːn(?)/
              (Where do you work?)
    B. At Wallmart.
     / wɪntɪ weːn tɪʃtɪɣliːn?/
      (and what about you?)
    A. Do you work part time
    B. Part time but sometimes full time.
    A. /ʔahæː zeːn. ʔæːnɪ ʔaʃtʊɣʊl bɪl bʌnk/
     (That's good, I work at the bank)
     I work full time and when I go to college, I have those days off.

In the above example, the conversation takes place between two educated girls. They are talking and asking about each other's work. The switching takes place when participant A starts to ask and answer. It is obvious through their utterances that each one of them is trying to show her ability in using the two languages simultaneously and mostly this happens consciously because sometimes the speakers mix the two codes to fill the gaps of their mental ability. So, in this conversation, the two girls find it more prestigious to use the two languages since they talk in English most of their time.

B. Male-Male Interaction

    A. How is the weather?
    B. Nice.
    A./xallɪ zawdʒɪtak læː tɪktɪblak(!)/
     (Do not let your wife write for you).
    B. Hhhhha no she is just helping me(!)
     /wanta læː tɪstaxdɪm gɔːgɪl lɪʔan tdajjɪʕ wakɪt/
     (And you , do not use Google because it is a matter of
      wasting time).
    A. Hhhhhhhha (Laughing out loud)

In the previous conversation, the two males are trying their best to write and talk in English. Besides, it is obvious that none of them masters English well but they pretend so.

Participant A is asking about the weather and in return participant B answers in English as if he wants to challenge A by using some easy known words (mostly used). Participant A switches into Arabic as if he insists on B to stop asking for support from his wife because, as a fact, A knows that B is weak in English. However, B reveals what A is doing as he is using Google as a support and A's laugh is an evidence of his using Google as a support. Besides, in this speech, there is a topic shift and this could be a reason of the code-switching because of the incapability of the participants to use English more. In addition, it is understood that the two participants pretend to speak English and this is followed for showing off.

The intersentential switching is clear when A changes directly into Arabic as a means of transmitting the reply in an easy way. Then, B also switches into Arabic because he is not qualified in English; so the switching occurs for ease of communication. Participants explain that they code-switch when they are not able to find a suitable expression or when the language of conversation does not have the particular word needed to carry on the conversation easily.

C. Female-Male Interaction:

F. That is good…The important thing is your health.

M. Thanks.

F. An Indian proverb says /"taħdʊϴ mɪϴɪl hæðɪhɪ ɪlʔaʃjæ:ʔ
ɪlsaɣɪ:ra fi: hæ:ða lʕæ:lam ɪlkabi:r"/.
"Such little things like these may happen in this big world"

M. You are /warda/.
(Flower)

The two participants are talking about illness. The male is sick and the female reassures about his health. The female's utterance seems to be giving an important point in order to be taken into consideration by the male participant. Since he is talking to a girl, he answers in a way that makes him feel nice. So, his reply seems to be an appreciation. In the second part of the conversation, the female participant tries to emphasize a point by saying a proverb to show that her expression is an encouragement for the male participant to be strong because illness is a normally occurring incident. Eldin (2014:83) believes that a switch at the end of a conversation not only serves to end the interaction but it may be used to emphasize a point which indicates an addition of more force to the statement.

Finally, the male participant shows his kindness by switching into Arabic which may, for him, carries the exact meaning that he wants to show. He has the intention of assigning positive attributes to the female. Hence, it can be deduced, through the conversation, that each one of the two participants is showing his/her mutual feelings towards the other. The female expresses her attitude as being interested in what happened. On the other hand, the male reveals his feeling as being gentle and nice especially when he speaks with a female.

As regards the intersentential switching, it is clear in the female's utterance when she changes into Arabic by mentioning a proverb. Thus, this switching takes place or functions as a marker of caring. Then, the male switches into Arabic through using the word /warda/ (flower) in the place of a subject complement.

6.2 Intrasentential Switching

This type is performed within the clause. It contains the greatest syntactic risk because it needs creativity in combining two structures with correct grammar and may be avoided by all but not the fluent bilinguals (Romaine, 1995:123):

A. Female-Female Interaction:

    A. I think this is /ʔılħal ılwaħi:d/.

                (the only solution)

    B. /e: xɔ:ʃ fıkra le:ʃ læ:/

       (Yes, it is good idea, why not).

    A. /ʔe:/ we will see.

       (Yes)

    B. I am not looking forward to write my thesis…ohh it's such a

       pain.

    A. /sadqı/ it is interesting/bas/it needs a lot of work.

      (Believe me)   (but)

    B. Yeah, I know /bas ʔæ:ni: ʔakrah/ things that go over a long time

               (But I hate)

    like handing in assignments.

In the previous conversation, the two females are talking about studying and writing a thesis. Participant A uses two languages in the same utterance where the S (subject) and the V (verb) are in English but part of the O (object) is in Arabic /I think this is /ʔılħal ılwaħi:d/. This shows that this participant is fluent where she can mix two languages with correct grammar whereas she tries to convince the receiver of her idea. So, participant B strongly supports her through agreement. On the other hand, B is yet giving exceptions for herself by being not good at writing a thesis so for her it is such a pain. This style indicates that the participant's switching is a kind of having solidarity and at the same time it expresses feeling through using certain expressions. Hence, the reason of using code-switching is showing affection.

In the other part of the conversation, A uses the Arabic word /sadkı/ (believe me) , perhaps because it is a simple word that comes to mind and this shows the rapidity where the participant does not think of which word s/he uses but it is unconscious or impromptu. Moreover, B switches in the last sentence to reflect her creativity in mixing the two

languages. It is clear that this participant has a full capacity in creating structures with the two language systems.

B. Male-Male Interaction:

A. I am sorry to be so /maslaħtʃiː/ this morning but I need you to
 (exploiter)
 translate something for me.

B. hhhha /ʕaːdɪ ʕaziːzɪ(.) tɪdallal Mr. Pablo /ʔaːniː bɪlxɪdma bʔeɪ
 wakɪt/.
 (Laughing, It is okay dear. You are welcome Mr Pablo I am at
 your service any time).

The above interaction shows that intrasentential switching takes place within participant A's utterance. The whole sentence is said in English which is the second language and only one word is written in Arabic for it carries the exact meaning that the participant wants to convey.

The word /maslaħtʃiː/ (exploiter) is used by the participant precisely to express feelings or to show the participant's intended meaning because the participant knows that he has not phoned B for a long time. Thus, it appears that he realizes it is not suitable to call him just when he is in need of. That is why, the word he uses expresses his feeling and he admits of being disappeared for a period of time. Here, it is the switching itself (because of using the word /maslaħtʃiː/ (an exploiter)) that plays an essential role in transmitting the accurate meaning and it is a tricky way to persuade the receiver in a nice way. This is what happened exactly with B when he willingly agreed to help A.

C. Male-Female Interaction

M. /læː tɪnsiːn læːzɪm tɪmʃiːn ʃwajja kʊl sæːʕteːn/
 (Do not forget, you must walk every two hours)

F. / saħ. but kɪnɪt waħdɪ bɪlbeːt wmæː tɪlaʕɪt/
 (Yes right). but (I was alone at home and I did not go out)

M. God bless you

F. Thanks[1]

M. De nada.[2] / Bas hassa ræħ tɪstariːħiːn muː(ʔ)/
 (And you are going to take rest, right?).

F. /ʔiː ʃwajja relaxing, wbaʕɪdha ʔakamɪl ʃʊɣl ɪlmadrasa,
 hhhhhhha tɪʕrɪf ɪʃʃʊɣʊl dajɪrkʊd waræːja/,work work work
 and I am running and I hope the work not to catch me, lol/.

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[1] Sometimes there is an intersentential code- switching within intrasentential or vice
 versa.

[2] De nada: a Spanish word stands for "nothing" (it is okay) and as an interjection, it
 means "you are welcome" (en.wiktionary.org).

(Yes a little bit of relaxing and then I will complete the school
work (laughing), you know the work is going after me)

The chatters are talking about a daily routine. The male is giving some advice to the female to have a rest whenever she feels tired. She agrees and switches into English by using the conjunction (but) between the first clause (agreement) and the second clause (excuse).

The male switches into English where he considers it to be more stylish to use the phrase (God bless you). At the same time, the female expresses her gratitude and, as a reaction, the male uses a Spanish word "De nada". The male uses this word perhaps for the reason that it carries the precise meaning that he wants the female to notice. He switches into Arabic as if he is consciously mixing between the languages that he knows. The female participant switches at the sentence boundary when she starts with Arabic and ends with English. Linguistically speaking, the female switches in the first clause by using the noun (relaxing) within the sentence which can also be said in Arabic because it is placed in the position of the noun. It seems that this participant is professional in using the two languages correctly.

The findings suggest that most of the Facebook messenger code-switched chats are made consciously since participants have gained English language and they practice it every day in their online interaction**.** Sometimes, however, both types of code- switching are made unconsciously. This is reflected in the rapidity of the participants in not thinking of which word(s) to use while interacting with others. Hence, participants were shown to be creative in conveying the intended message they want to convey and to avoid any type of misunderstanding or pragmatic failure. Moreover, participants tend to use these types of code-switching not because they are aware of them as academic linguistic phenomena but as a routine or frequent phenomenon of using two languages when they are able to use it.

Furthermore, these types of code-switching are performed to fill gaps and as a means to express better the chatters' ideas and to convey the exact meaning they intend to show.

To affirm the validity of our findings, the researcher used a questionnaire of ten questions as a means of collecting participants' views and ideas about the two investigated types of code-switching and about code-switching as a linguistic phenomenon as well. Basically, the questionnaire helps to find out the extent of situations in which the participants will be able to switch from one language into another. The participants did answer the ten questions and accordingly, the results were as follows:

Q1. Do you know what is meant by "code-switching" as an academic
linguistic phenomenon?

-About (75%) of the participants knew the meaning of code- switching as
mixing two languages and they gave explanations about how they use it
in their interactions.

However, as an academic linguistic phenomenon, they were not aware of.

Q2. Do you use code-switching mostly in written or spoken language?

-About 65% answered that they code-switch mostly in spoken language because it becomes part of their job as teachers and sometimes they need to switch to make a sentence more understandable. However, the rest of the participants informed that they use code- switching mostly in their written language especially in an online chatting with friends and relatives.

Q3. Do you always code-switch or it is just experienced when it is necessary?[3]

-About 80% of the participants assured that they code-switch whenever it is necessary especially they sometimes forget a word in one of the languages they know and complete it by a word from another language.

Q4. Do you think bi- or multi-lingual society makes you obliged to know the other languages besides your native one?

-90% of the participants confirmed that it is important to know the other languages for better communication since the world has developed and people are so curious about that; that is why they have started to learn different languages for their needs and they.

Q5. Do you think that English has impact on your native language "Arabic"? Why?

-75% of the participant agreed that English has impact on their native language since they have used it in their businesses, schools and even in the Internet.

Q6. Are you influenced by the English language?

-About 90% claimed that they are really influenced by the English language since it becomes the first international language in the world and their works and needs demand learning and acquiring English. Some of the participants reported they are interested to know more about English.

Q7. Are you able to use two languages simultaneously and with the correct grammar?[4]

-About 60% of the participants claimed that they make it possible to have

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[3] Questions (3- 6) concern the research question of intersentential and intrasentential code-switching as frequent phenomena in Facebook messenger

[4] This question concerns intersentential code- switching

a correct grammatical sentence (since some of them are teachers of English) and sometimes, such sentences need to be consistent. The rest of the participants negated the idea because English for them is a gained habit.

Q8. Is it important to use two or more languages in one sentence?[5]

-50% of the participants revealed that it is important if it suits the situation they would face. While others claimed that it is not important since we convey the idea in one language but sometimes it is unintentionally made, almost like an acquired habit .

Q9. Why do you code-switch from Arabic into English or you use Arabic within an English sentence or vice versa?[6]

-About (90%) of the participants confirmed that they use English in an Arabic sentence or vice versa because English has become part of their daily language communication as they are practicing it daily.

They also reported that it is easier to use two languages together for they facilitate the way of communication.

Q10. Do two languages help you transmit your ideas in a better way or it is just a matter of a habitual action of using two languages?

-All the participants (100%) claimed that using two languages helps a lot in conveying and completing the idea they want to form or expressing certain attitudes.

7. Conclusions

Based on the results obtained, the present study concludes that:

1. Most of the code switching participants are not aware that code-switching is as an academic linguistic phenomenon. So, for them, the phenomenon is just used as a means of communication through mixing two languages together since they are able to use the two language systems perfectly. Most participants do not know or realize that they do this either in their conversations or their written interaction perhaps because this linguistic phenomenon is used as a habit. So, any society of two or more languages makes its people practice and use the languages they know. In such a case, the Internet is a community where different languages are used for interaction and different terms come to be part of the basic languages whether Arabic or English. People are making their own language that fits the community and the situation. Therefore, it is not only that the world develops but also people make the change

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[5] This question concerns intrasentential code-switching

[6] Questions 9 and 10 concern the research question of the reasons behind using intersentential and intrasentential code-switching

they desire according to their creativity and needs.

2. Participants, via the Internet interaction, feel free to write and use more than one language because the guest languages have occupied a large amount of their mentality to the extent that they are eager to learn different languages to escort the world development. It is found that code-switching is a phenomenon which might not occur only in everyday speakers' speech, but also it is very common in their electronic discourse. About 75% of participants use code-switching in Facebook messenger interaction. Hence, code- switching as a linguistic phenomenon has taken an extremely big part of the participants' interactions; it becomes part of their daily life and an important part in the virtual community as a result. Although this community is small as a program, yet it forms a world as a whole.

3. Intersentensial code- switching is more adopted by females in their same- and cross- sex interactions.

4. Intersentential and intrasentential code-switching types occur consciously and unconsciously.

5. Educated participants who are especially graduates of the Department of English mostly use the two types of code-switching in their utterances.

6. There are reasons that lead both types of code- switching to occur.
   Thus, they are experienced for expressing certain ideas and aims.
   These are related to the mastery in the second language in question, having more prestige in society, showing off, inability to find a suitable word in the original language, showing mutual appreciation, solidarity and feelings, and emphasizing a point.

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