

Functions of Code-switching in Young Moroccans' Facebook Comments

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Abstract

This study investigates, through a qualitative approach, code-switching practices of young Moroccans in their Facebook interactions. The purpose behind this research is to analyse the functions of code-switching in Facebook comments, that were extracted from 30 Facebook accounts, and find out whether the choice of switching between languages is a conscious act that serves certain communicative functions, or it is a random choice made by young Moroccan Facebook users to compensate for a linguistic incompetence. Functions were coded and analysed using a grounded theory. Results achieved through the analysis of code-switching functions that occurred in the participants' Facebook comments revealed that code-switching appeared, mainly, to serve notions of quotation, addressee specification, availability, principle of economy, indicating emotions, clarification, emphasis, habitual expressions, creativity and euphemism. Therefore, code-switching in young Moroccans' Facebook comments is considered as a communication strategy that aims at enhancing their interactions in Facebook and making them more fluid and vibrant.

Keywords: Code-switching, Facebook, linguistic incompetence, communication strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The current research is a sociolinguistic investigation of the phenomenon of code-switching, particularly among young Moroccans in their Facebook interactions. Given the multilingual nature of Morocco, and the importance of French as a language of modernity and socio-economic advancement, it is not surprising to find that code-switching, especially between Moroccan-Arabic and French, is a common behaviour of almost all Moroccans,

especially among the elites and highly educated people. With the advent of social media, this phenomenon has become even more widespread, as more instances of code-switching were observed in online interactions among the young generation, mainly those using Facebook, which is considered the most popular and the most visited of all social-networking sites among this category.

Previous studies on CS in Morocco were concerned more with studying CS in relationship with the topic of conversation. Salia (2011) is among the few, if not the only, studies on CS in Moroccan's conversations on Facebook, however her work sought to describe the occurrences of CS in some specific genres, without delving deep into the functions that these code switches serve, or the extra-linguistic motivations behind the choice of language.

Before the influential works of Gumperz, CS was considered as a corrupt form of language, representing "a deficient knowledge of language, a grammarless mixture of two codes" (Milroy & Muysken, 1995: 9) "an easy, lazy way out when people cannot be bothered to search for the words they need in a single language" (Cited in Gardner-Chloros, 2009: 14). Through his works, Gumperz tried to change this misconception, by asserting that CS or language alternation is "an additional resource through which a range of social and rhetorical meanings are expressed" (Gumperz 1982a, 1982b as cited in Milroy & Muysken, 1995: 9). He mainly focused on the social motivations and social correlates of code switching, trying to recognize why and under what conditions bilinguals may choose to code switch.

CS according to Gumperz is "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (Gumperz, 1982: 59). In contrast, Weinreich (1979) argued that CS is a "deviant behavior pattern", and "the ideal bilingual switches from one language to another according to appropriate changes in the speech situation (interlocutors, topics, etc.), but not in an unchanged speech situation and certainly not within a single sentence" (p: 73).

In his definition of CS, Gumperz (1982) highlighted the grammatical aspects of CS and stressed the fact that a switch can happen not only between two different languages - grammatical system- but also between dialects – grammatical subsystems – of one language. Many scholars criticized this definition by claiming that even fluent or balanced bilinguals switch from one language to another in the same utterance of speech without any change in the situation or the topic. This argument has also been fostered by Myers-Scotton & Ury (1977:5) who identified code-switching as the "use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction".

1.1. Background

Previous studies related to CS, have shown that this kind of language, in the entire world, and more particularly in Morocco, was considered as a corrupt form of language, that is performed by less educated people, and those who are unable to demonstrate a proper pride towards their Moroccan language (Bentahila, 1983). Although CS was found to be an indication of language loss (Myers-Scotton, 1998) many other studies have revealed the opposite, suggesting that CS is a conscious act, rather than a random choice, made by

bilingual speakers to serve certain communicative functions (Auer, 1984; Gumperz, 1982; Montes-Alcalá, 2007; San, 2009).

1.2. Research Questions

Q1: What are the functions of code-switching in young Moroccans' Facebook comments ?

Q2: Can the use of CS among young Moroccans in their Facebook interactions be considered as a sign of language incompetence or as a communication strategy?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Attitudes towards code-switching in the Arab countries

In almost all the Arab countries, CS in fact, is among the aftermaths of colonialism, which is considered a bad memory in the minds of most of the Arabs. "CS between Arabic and a foreign language has been called by one Arab writer, according to Suleiman (2004) "linguistic prostitution", It can also be considered a form of 'colonial penetration', as some people still feel culturally colonized because of the use of this mixture of languages. (Suleiman, 2004: 227 as cited in Bassiouney, 2009: 29) Others consider those who code switch between the MA and French as "strongly marked by French colonialism, to the point where they are not able to express themselves without resorting to the colonizers' language; 'as they are still colonized'". (Bentahila, 1983: 37)

Regardless the different attitudes towards CS (be it favourable or unfavourable), many studies, on the other hand, (cf. Auer, 1984; Gumperz, 1982; Milroy & Muysken, 1995; Myers-Scotton, 1993) revealed that CS is far less to be considered as an indication of language incompetence, or a threat of native language attrition, but rather a conscious act, made by bilingual speakers to fulfill certain communicative needs.

Though CS might be considered as a corrupt form of language or even a stigma, many studies have revealed the opposite, suggesting that CS is a conscious act, rather than a random choice made by bilingual speakers to serve certain communicative functions. Among the most influential studies in this field, is Gumperz's (1982) conversational CS, where he addressed this issue and suggests different social functions that CS may serve in a bilingual interaction mainly quotations, addressee specification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization versus objectivization.

2.2. Code-switching in Morocco

CS is considered among the aftermaths of contact between languages in Morocco, especially between Moroccan Arabic and other foreign languages, mainly French. It is the use of two or more languages interchangeably at the same utterance of speech. Given the importance and high status of French in Morocco, it is not surprising to find that French-MA CS is widely spread in the country especially among the elites and highly educated people. French in Morocco is a symbol of modernity and socio-economic advancement; it is a language of prestige spoken by majority of Moroccans interchangeably with MA, whereas MA is usually linked to authenticity and national identity. Thus, in order to appear modern and highly educated, most Moroccans tend to use French as part of their daily verbal interactions mixed with the Moroccan language.

Regardless the efforts made by the government vis-à-vis the promotion of Arabic, people seeking a modern and westernized lifestyle are rather more eager to learn and speak French. Regarding this fact, French-Moroccan Arabic code switching becomes more common among the upper and middle classes. People belonging to middle and upper classes have more opportunities to get a better French education either in private or French schools “*les Missions Françaises*”. While MA is considered as the “in-group” (Gumperz, 1982) language, the language of authenticity and national identity, French in Morocco, on the other hand, is regarded as the ‘they code’ the ‘out-group’ language (Gumperz, 1982), the ‘language of authority’ (Myers-Scotton, 1993) and socio-economic advancement. It is a language of prestige used by Moroccans out of a desire to sound modern, classy and educated.

This mixture between French and Moroccan Arabic is more widespread among young Moroccans, who find themselves inside a circle of contradictory feelings, torn between two conflicting cultures, French culture represented through the adoption of French culture with all its aspects, and the Moroccan culture on the other side, which calls for the preservation of Moroccan language as well as the Moroccan cultural identity. French- Moroccan Arabic code switching in this case, as Myers-scotton has mentioned (Myers-Scotton, 1993) can be regarded as an unmarked choice, made by young Moroccans out of a desire to show two sides of their personality, two identities at the same time, the French and the Moroccan ones. They tend to sound more modern and classier through the use of French, but at the same time they seek to preserve their ‘Moroccanness’ through the use of MA.

2.3. Language use in Facebook

Facebook has become one of the most popular social networking sites and the most used among young people. People in such platforms can easily establish new friendships and relationships, keep in touch with old friends and family members, create group discussions and pages, triggering different subjects related to society, politics, religion, education, posting personal photos and information, even discussing subjects that are considered as taboos in their societies.

The easy access to Facebook via smartphones has made the process of chatting and browsing even easier and time saving, users can get logged in anytime and everywhere, at home, in class, etc. In general, Facebook “has opened new paths of communicating far from the real world where young people live, in addition, it has broken the barriers of distance, age, ethnicity and religion” (Kaid Slimane, 2014: 14). Therefore, People from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds have the possibility of meeting and talking via Facebook without giving much consideration to their differences (Kaid Slimane, 2014).

Apart from abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons, communication through Facebook has led to the creation and spread of many innovative expressions. These expressions have grown in popularity and become widespread among the young generation (Al Shlowiy, 2014). According to Thurlow (2003: 1), these newly established expressions compose a unique linguistic style that is “reinventing conventional linguistic and communicative practices” (cited in Al Shlowiy, 2014: 456).

In Morocco, this new language has become the ordinary way of speaking of many young people; it makes them sound cool, fashionable and open-minded. They have created words that only their generation can understand. Some words are derived from the jargon of the Internet and Facebook and adopted even to offline conversations, and others were created for the first time outside Facebook community but become widely spread due to their regular use on Facebook.

This kind of communication is useful for everybody (especially young people); given the fact that the language used is less formal and more familiar makes Moroccan Facebook users feel more comfortable and spontaneous in their interactions. Even though many scholars as well as ordinary people consider it as a poor-quality language, and nothing but a linguistic vandalism where linguistic rules and conventions are lost and considered as language destruction, it is still perceived by most young Moroccans as an opportunity to freely and creatively express themselves and talk about their concerns and problems. Thanks to virtual platforms such as Facebook, young Moroccans are now able to create a language of their own, via which they have transcended all the linguistic and social rules. They may find in such platforms a refuge from all their concerns.

Besides the introduction of a new urban youth jargon on Facebook, it is now also becoming a “rich site of multilingualism and CS” (Androutsopoulos, 2013: 187). The most widespread type of code switching in Facebook is that between French and Moroccan Arabic, sometimes with the insertion of some English words and expressions. However, not all Facebook users switch between languages in their interactions, some prefer to stick to only one language or variety (Nur Syazwan & Maros, 2014).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In order to find an answer to research questions, a qualitative online ethnography of Facebook comments were conducted. The aim behind choosing online ethnography as an instrument of research is to analyze the functions of code-switching in young Moroccans' Facebook comments, and find out whether their choice of language serves any communicative functions, or it is a random choice that they adopt in order to compensate for their linguistic inefficiency. The purpose behind this study is to investigate the phenomenon of CS among young Moroccan Facebook users, mainly through studying the functions of their code switches, and find out whether their constant use of CS in Facebook can be considered, as a communication strategy that serves some functional purposes, or it is a random act they adopt to compensate for their linguistic incompetence. Therefore, an online ethnography of Facebook comments was employed to answer research questions.

3.1. Instrument

As an instrument of investigation, a qualitative ‘nethnographic study’ (online ethnography is another name) of over 979 Facebook comments has been conducted, using observation and content analysis techniques. The motivation behind choosing this instrument is to try to trace the common patterns of CS, mainly CS functions among young Moroccan Facebook users, and find out whether code-switching among this category can be considered as a communication strategy, or it is a random act to compensate for their linguistic incompetence.

3.2. Participants

This study comprises a mixed purposeful sampling method which is a combination of two techniques of purposeful sampling: purposive and convenience, through which only the most reachable participants who accepted to take part in the qualitative research, and share their private data with researcher, were selected. Participants were purposively selected from the researcher's Facebook friend list. The sample size was 30 Moroccan Facebook users both males and females between the age of 14 and 25. All participants consented to take part in this research. To protect privacy of participants, an electronic message was sent via the Facebook inbox messaging service to the selected participants, explaining the purpose of the study, as well as asking for their permission to have access to their Facebook profiles, collect and study their posted comments. They were also asked to provide some basic background information mainly their age, level of education, name of their school, if they still go to school.

3.3. Data Analysis

The functions of CS were studied using a grounded theory. The rationale behind using grounded theory while investigating the functions of CS is to try to define all the possible functions that CS may serve in the participants' Facebook comments, and not to be restricted to only those mentioned in previous studies, so that new functions could emerge. Grounded theory in studying the functions of CS, therefore, is employed to allow for the development of new functions. Results obtained from the analysis of code-switching functions were displayed in numbers and percentages. The examples extracted for discussion were kept as they occurred in the participants' Facebook comments, to remain as faithful as possible even though they may contain grammatical, syntactical and spelling mistakes. An English version of the participants' comments was produced by the researcher and revised by some professionals.

4. FINDINGS

As previously mentioned, the comments extracted from the participants' Facebook profiles were coded for CS function themes using a grounded theory method. The analysis of Facebook comments showed that CS appeared in the comments mainly to serve notions of quotation, addressee specification availability, principle of economy, indicating emotions, clarification, emphasis, habitual expressions, creativity and euphemism.

According to findings, the most frequent function of CS occupying a percentage of 40, 55% (292 comments in total) in the participants' Facebook comments served the notion of habitual expressions, which were in general formulaic expressions and tags, often used by the participants to express different emotions ranging from admiration, to love, apology and even anger. CS for availability also appeared in the comments, as participants might, sometimes, insert expressions different from their language of interaction just to fill some lexical gaps; this function occupied a percentage of 20, 27 % of the total number of comments (N= 146).

Another function of CS seemed to be frequent among the participants was CS for the principle of economy, occupying a percentage of 17, 36 % (N= 125), including French and English abbreviations and acronyms, mainly in terms of CMC expressions. CS to indicate emotion is another function of CS that appeared in the participants' Facebook comments, forming a percentage of 6, 11 % (N= 44). Other functions of CS also appeared in the participants' comments but were less dominant mainly serving addressee specification 4, 16% (N= 30), quotation 4, 30 % (N=31), creativity 3, 47 % (N= 25), emphasis 1, 80 % (N= 13), clarification 1, 52 % (N= 11), and finally euphemism 1, 25 % (N= 9).

4.1. Habitual expressions / Formulaic Expressions:

Habitual expressions (Malik, 1994) are often used by participants in their Facebook interactions, usually in foreign languages (mainly French and English) different from their mother tongue language. They include formulaic expressions, and discourse markers (like shit, fuck, ptn (putain), top, nice, merci bcp (beaucoup), etc). They are often used to express different emotions ranging from admire to love, giving compliments, wishing a happy birthday, thanking someone, or even expressing anger.

1). *Ayoub lghzal happy birthday bro*

(Ayoub, the handsome, happy birthday brother)

Writing on somebody's timeline, to wish his/her happy birthday, is very common among young Moroccan Facebook users, as it is also common to switch to French and English in such contexts, even among participants who use MA as a dominant language. These expressions seem to be adopted by majority of participants as part of their Facebook jargon.

2). *wa fuuuuuuuuck, wllahila mrid;*

(Fuck, you are really sick)

Many French and English interjections were employed by the participants to refer to some swear words, used mainly to express anger, displeasure and other negative emotions. They are frequently used in other languages, than MA, as they might sound embarrassing and inappropriate if expressed in MA. CS at the level of these expressions might also be considered as euphemism.

CS for habitual expressions is widespread among the participants, especially the younger ones, between the ages fourteen and nineteen. Normally, the insertion of such expressions does not require a person to be highly proficient in the inserted languages, as they are most of the times formulaic expressions and discourse markers that can be added at the beginning, in the middle or even at the end of a sentence. This may somehow explain the high frequency of tag- switching among all participants.

4.2. Availability

Switching for availability (San, 2009) or to fill a lexical gap is another function that CS served in the participants' Facebook comments. Especially in terms of words and expressions that are heavily loaded with meaning, and could lose their significance if translated into another language. That is why this kind of switches frequently occurs in the participants' comments, for the simple reason that, the participants may not be familiar with

these terms in another language, like French or English, or they tend to keep the exact meaning of certain expressions, so they can have a strong effect on the addressee.

Young Moroccan Facebook users may also use other languages terms or expressions, because the dominant language in their Facebook interactions lacks this kind of expressions. Expressions from other languages, like French or English, are widely spread among Moroccan Facebook users, maybe because they find it easier to use them as gap-fillers. Especially in terms of CMC expressions, according to Bentahila & Davies (1995), a speaker may use CS to fill a lexical gap when s/he does not have the corresponding MA term at his/her disposal at all (P: 83). In other words, speakers, in a certain bilingual interaction, may use the most available code to well transmit their ideas and feelings.

During the analysis of participants' Facebook comments, many code-switches appeared to serve the function of availability, which were coded and classified into three categories mainly CMC expressions and Facebook expressions, religious expressions, and youth jargon terminology.

4.3. CMC and Facebook Jargon

Most of the comments under analysis contained switches that served the function of availability in terms of computer-related English and French vocabulary that is, generally, mixed with MA grammatical system, maybe because they are more available to Moroccan Facebook users in French and English than in MA.

3). *Ana magelt Walou w mataguit hed*

(I said nothing, and I tagged no one)

4). *inboxx nssbek shwiya, hhhhh*

(Go inbox so I can insult you a little bit (laughter))

5). *le7et wa7ed Statut Ctt Wlh mab9it Netkonikta B had conte*

(I have published a status update, that's all. I no longer get logged with this account, I swear)

This kind of expressions is frequently used by majority of young Moroccans not only in Facebook, but they have also become part of their everyday jargon. They were adapted to the MA language, to the point that one cannot recognize that they are originally foreign words. In other words, they have become loan-words and integrated in the Moroccan youth jargon.

4.4. Moroccan Youth Jargon

All young people over the world have their own language, which is considered as an identity marker. They develop a language that meets their communicative needs and makes them distinct from the rest of the society. The following expressions are frequently used by young Moroccans, which were first created inside the SNS and then become part of their face-to-face jargon as well. These expressions are considered as peer language, or as Gumperz's (1976) referred to as "we code", the young Moroccans use them as a symbol of peer group membership (as cited in Huffaker & Calvert, 2005).

Moroccan youth jargon can also be considered as a method of self-expression that allows young Moroccans to transcend all the cultural and linguistic boundaries mainly through creating their own language. Especially in terms of phrases and words for giving

compliments, young Moroccans are so creative in this field, maybe because in the Moroccan culture such expressions are considered as taboo expressions. For this reason, young Moroccans have created equivalents for this kind of expressions and integrated them in their own jargon, to better express themselves without feeling ashamed or embarrassed.

Examples (6) and (7) are two different ways to say to a girl that she is beautiful 'titiza' and 'lfssoūria' is the noun of 'Fessra' which according to the Moroccan youth jargon refers to beauty or beautiful. The participants in these examples chose to switch to Moroccan youth jargon to freely express their admire maybe as a strategy to avoid feeling embarrassed or simply to identify themselves as young and cool.

In example (8), the word "ʕniba" occurred in one of the comments, which is equivalent to the English word 'gay'. Here again CS served two functions availability and euphemism. The participant was making fun of one of his friends' pictures describing him as 'gay', and in order to mitigate the effect of this word he used an equivalent of the word which is less shocking.

6). *titiza diali, you are so cute*
(my babe, you are so cute)

7). *Lfsouria.com tjr*
(Gorgeoaus as usual)

8). *Hhhhhh you look so ʕnibaaa in this picture*
(laughing) You look so gay in this picture.

4.5. Idiomatic Expressions

Similarly, idiomatic expressions or culturally bound expressions in Facebook interactions are often inserted in MA, simply because they are difficult to translate and sometimes lose their real meaning when translated to another language. Many idiomatic expressions are used in Facebook in MA to keep their real meaning, as well as their effect on the addressee. Each community has its own culture, and uses certain specific terms to refer to certain cultural expressions, which are difficult to translate into another language. For this reason, speakers usually use their native cultural terms even when interacting in other languages, as they may feel that the language of interaction will not be able to convey the intended meaning. (Basudha Das, 2012:12)

In Example (9), a participant inserted the expression "mamfa mʕak bass" in her French-dominant sentence, which happened to be a MA idiomatic expression often used in circumstances of death, and when someone loses one of his relatives, people often tell him/her "labaraka frassek" equivalent to the English expression "please accept my condolences or I am sorry for your loss". While an American or French native speaker would reply with a simple 'thank you', Moroccans reply with complex expressions like "mamfa mʕak bass" or other similar expressions may be as a strategy to show more politeness and affection, and to not sound cold. Expressions like these are often used in MA since they have no equivalents in foreign languages.

9). « *Merci Zennouba mamcha mʕak bass ma chérie* »
(Thank you Zennouba darling)

10). « *vraiment c'est que du lʕiss lkappa tu penses que si tu mets le drapeau de la france tu vas éliminé le terrorisme du monde* »

(You are really a lickspittle, do you think that if you put the French flag you will eliminate terrorism from the world).

In Example (10) « *lkappa* » is a French loan word that has been borrowed from French and established as a loan word, it is derived from the French word ‘*capot*’ which means the hood or ‘car hood’. ‘*Lhiss*’, is a MA word meaning licking or to lick, the whole expression literally means ‘to lick the car hood’. It is an equivalent of the English idiom ‘to lick the spittle’ or ‘Lick-spittle’ which according to the Cambridge English Dictionary means : « a person who praises and tries to please people in authority, usually in order to get some advantage from them in the hope of promotion or a pat on the head ». (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lickspittle>). The insertion of this idiomatic expression in a French sentence may be considered as a strategy adopted by the participant to provoke his addressee, and describe him as flatter and lick-spittle by sharing the French flag on his profile to support France during the terrorist attacks.

4.6. Religious Expressions

Religious expressions are another kind of idiomatic expressions that are frequently used by young Moroccans in Facebook, especially in circumstances of death, religious ceremonies, and other similar events. These expressions are often used in MA or even Standard Arabic to express solidarity and ethnic identity.

11). *3id Moubarak, ma chérie*

(Happy 3id, my Darling)

12). *Omar Chkoune mate* 🤔?

Ouma Le grand Pere de ma meilleure Lah yra7mo 🤔:(

(Who has died? (Emoticon symbolizing surprise and shock)

(Ouma The grand-father of my best friend, may God bless his soul)

In extract (12), it seemed that Ouma’s dominant language in the comment is French. The participant resorted to MA, and inserted the religious expression “*lāh yrahmou*” equivalent to the English expression “Peace be upon his/her soul” an expression that is commonly used by Moroccans in such circumstances.

4.7. The Principle of Economy

The participants also employed CS for the principle of economy (cf. San, 2009), as many of them inserted some French, sometimes English abbreviations and other short forms of language in their MA Facebook interactions. In general, the MA lacks this kind of expressions; that is why most of Moroccan Facebook users insert such code-switches in their interactions, since they save time and reduce the typing task.

13). « *chama diali lpb* »

(my Chama is the most beautiful)

This comment is basically written in MA with the insertion of French abbreviation « *lpb* » which stands for the expression ‘la plus belle’ equivalent to the English expression ‘the most beautiful’.

14). « *jiti wa3ra bae* » babe= attractive girl

(you look amazing babe)

15). « *a5oya Wlh ma Ana Lii kanef7e Lfb* »

(I swear Brother I am not the one who gets connected with this facebook account.)

16). *db ntwal mdr*

(I will become taller (laughing out loud))

In example (16), 'Mdr' is a French acronym of the expression: 'meurt de rire' which is the equivalent of the English acronym 'lol' which means 'laughing out loud'. « *db* » refers to the MA word '*daba*' which means right now, this expression was extracted from the comments to show that the principle of economy also applies to MA expressions, it is no longer a French or English CMC feature. Due to the constant use of French and English abbreviations, Moroccan Facebook users are now inventing MA abbreviations to serve the same function mainly economizing time and minimizing the typing efforts.







4.8. Indicating Emotions and Affection

17). « *hbiba diyali tu sais deja a tel point je t'aime, ikhelik lili et on aura sûrement d'autre souvenir meilleur* »

(my darling, you already know how much I love, may God always keep us together and we will certainly have other good memories to share.)

18). « *Merci kbida*           *love you* »

(Thank you, sweetheart, I love you)

19). « *Hbibati mes belles allahyfdkom wynjkom je vous aime bcp*       »

(My darlings, my beautiful girls, May God bless you and keep you, I love you so much (emoticons))

Love or affection words are often expressed in MA to transmit their user's deep feelings of love and admire, usually accompanied by emoticons symbolizing love and affection. Some expressions are culturally bound, and some participants preferred to express them in MA, so they can have a strong effect on the addressee. For example, the expression "*khellik lili*" is very frequent among female participants, they often say it to their female peers to express their affection or admire. This expression is less frequent among male Facebook users, who rarely use such expressions, except when commenting on some of their female friends' pictures; in such a case they prefer rather to use foreign language expressions instead of Moroccan ones, as mentioned in example (20), maybe as a strategy to avoid feeling embarrassed, since Moroccans are quite reserved in such subjects.

20). "*jiti lyoum hyper belle*"

(You look stunning today)

4.9. Quotation

As noticed in extract (21), one of the participants shared a comment in French but when he wanted to report the speech of another person, he switched to MA to emphasize the fact that it is quoted from another person and not his own words.

21). *Quand l'encgiste te dit « awel salaire diali hadi ykoun minimum 15 000dh »*

(When the ENCG student tells you: my first salary will be minimum 15 000 MAD)

22). *Vraiment c'est du n'importe koi, comme le dit toujours nora: « he is such an asshole»*
(This really does not make any sense, as Nora always says: « he is such an asshole»)

As mentioned in extract (22), a participant wrote a statement in French and reported another person's statement in English. The reported statement is a swear word, maybe for this reason, she wanted to keep it in English as her friend said it, in order to mitigate the effect of the word "asshole"; that is, if translated to the Moroccan Arabic, will sound embarrassing and socially inappropriate. In this example CS served two functions: quotation and euphemism.

4.10. Addressee Specification

23). *Je veux remercier mn dieu ! En quoi sa peut vs deranger !! :d Khadija (lhdra fbalek a douja)*

(I just wanted to thank my God! Why do you seem worried? :D (Symbol of laughing) Khadija (you know what I mean douja))

To address a specific audience means also to exclude another one, and this exclusion as mentioned in (example 23) is intentionally done, and is marked by the switch from French to MA. In this case, the participant excluded the other addressees and directed her message to only one of her friends "Douja" by tagging her name in the message and putting Douja's message to her between brackets to emphasize more that the message is addressed to « Douja » only.

4.11. Creativity

Another function of CS appeared in the participants' comments and appeared in the comments of different participants, especially those studying in the secondary and high school levels. Especially in terms of emotion words, some new expressions emerged « to bring a dramatic effect, in order to attract the listeners' attention »: (Basudha Das, 2012: 13). This kind of expressions is inventive; they are made of a mixture of the MA grammatical system and a lexical item from another foreign language (mainly French).

24). *ohhhh la titization*

(Wow, what a beauty!)

In example (24), a participant used a hybrid of MA term "titiz" which means beautiful according to the Moroccan youth jargon, and the definite French article "la" as well as a French suffix "ation" to form a new expression "la titization". This expression seems to be widely spread among participants, especially those between the age of fourteen and nineteen (as it occurred in many comments of different participants belonging to this group age).

25). *la beauty, vrm ma3ndi man9ol*

(what a beauty, I am really charmed)

Example (25) is another invented word combining two languages: French and English.

26). *jiti bogoooooss, bro*

Nta abgass, 3chiri

(You look very handsome, brother)

you are more handsome, homie)

In Example (26) 'Abgass' is derived from the French expression « beau-gosse » or as most of the Moroccan Facebook users spell it 'bogoss', which refers to a very attractive man, mixed with the grammar of Modern Standard Arabic.

4.12. Emphasis

To emphasize a point is another function that CS served in the comments under analysis. Sometimes, when a speaker needs to stress a particular statement, he or she will code switch to the other language.

27). *c la dernière fois que je vais le dire: matpublili walou fl mur diali*

(This is the last time I will say it: do not share anything on my Facebook wall.)

Here again another participant wrote her comment in French, and in order to accentuate her anger, she switched to MA, so that her statement could have a deeper effect on her addressee.

28). *vrm dartna chouha f lycée, Wllah que c'était un vraiiiiii scandale*

(She has really made us a scandal at school, it was a real scandal, I swear!)

CS in example (28) served two functions both emphasis and reiteration. CS for reiteration is defined in Gumperz's (1982) as: 'conversation CS', which means that a message might be written in a certain language, and reiterated in another one to put more emphasis on its content. As it is obvious in example (28), a participant is telling one of her friends a story about the girl who made a scandal at school, and to put more emphasis on this incident, she reiterated her statement in French.

4.13. Clarification

29). *jiti waaa3ra (c la vérité et non pas un compliment)*

(You look gorgeous (this is the reality, I am not flattering))

CS for clarification appeared in some Facebook comments, through which the participants tend to make their ideas clearer; and for this reason, they switch to another language to mark this clarification. As demonstrated in example (29), a male participant commented on one of his female friends' picture in MA, saying that she looks gorgeous; he resorted to French putting his statement between brackets to explain that he is telling the truth and not flattering her.

4.14. Euphemism

CS for euphemism was prevalent in many Facebook comments, by which the participants tend to switch to French and English when referring to some taboo expressions, such as swear words, and that most Moroccans consider as socially inappropriate. The strategy of switching to another language other than MA is adopted by most of the participants, to mitigate the effect of such expressions and avoid feeling embarrassed. The use of foreign words may, in some instances, seem less offensive compared to their MA equivalents (AlKhatib & Sabbah, 2008).

30). *“sahabi li bgha y3awen wa7ed l3a2ila msaken kay3icho f chari3 w 3ndhoum wlidat sghar mal9awch bach ykhlssou lkra, mabghach bahoum y3té wladou l khiriya, 9alek il a peur qu'on les viole car lui meme a subi plusieurs violes mnin kan 3ayech temma.”*

(My Friends, is there anybody who wants to help a homeless family, they have small kids and could not afford paying their home rental. The father refuses to give his kids to the orphanage out of fear of being raped as he himself said that he suffered several rapes at the orphanage where he lived when he had their age.)

In example (30), the switch from MA to French served the notion of euphemism. A participant was asking his friends on Facebook to help a homeless family in MA, and when he triggered the subject of “rape” he switched to French. Subjects like these might, somehow, be considered as taboo subjects, or may sound hurtful, this is may be why he preferred to use French instead, to better explain the hard conditions that this family is living, and that the father preferred, rather, to see his children suffering in front of him, than to hand them over to the orphanage and running the risk of getting raped.

In short, and based on the analysis of functions that CS serves in the participants’ Facebook comments, and as an answer to the first research question, it appeared that almost all switches that were performed by the participants generally served certain functions; either on the linguistic level as in availability, habitual expressions, principle of economy; or on the social level as in creativity, quotation, clarification, euphemism, emphasis, addressee specification; though in some extracts different functions seemed to overlap with others, and some switches may serve more than one function. Therefore, and as an answer to the second research question about whether CS is a random choice of language among young Moroccan Facebook users, or it is conscious act that serves certain communicative intents, it seemed that CS is, in fact, a conscious behavior performed by young Moroccan Facebook users to fulfill certain communicative needs, through which they attempt to facilitate their Facebook interactions and make them more creative and stylish.

5. DISCUSSION

This section portrays a summary of the findings along with their link with results achieved from previous studies, as well as their implications in the field of socio-linguistics and CMC research. As mentioned in the introduction section, the aim behind this study is to explore the use of CS among young Moroccan Facebook users, trying to trace the different functions that their code switches serve in their Facebook comments. The primary goal behind conducting this study is to find out whether the increasing use of CS among young Moroccan Facebook users can be considered as a communication strategy that serves certain communicative intents, or it is an indication of language incompetency. It is a qualitative research where an online ethnography of Facebook comments was conducted to answer research questions.

The analysis of Facebook comments using content analysis method showed that CS is highly frequent among participants, which may explain the spread of this phenomenon among young Moroccans in majority of SNS mainly Facebook. This finding is in agreement with many previous studies on CS among young Facebook users around the world (cf. San, 2009; Halim & Maros, 2014; Khadim, 2014), as they found that CS is highly frequent among the subjects as well. Such findings may support Blommaert's hypothesis (1998) that “CS could be considered as a code of its own for particular groups” (Cited in B. Smieja, 1999: 9). In other words, CS is no more considered as the process of switching between languages in

the same utterance of speech, but rather a “language in its own right” (Schmid, 2005: 139), and sometimes young Moroccan Facebook users could not even be aware of the fact that they are switching between codes or languages, simply because this kind of language has become their new own jargon on Facebook.

Findings also revealed that CS among participants is considered as a conscious act that serves some communicative functions, either on the social or linguistic levels. For example, on the social level, it appeared that many switches occurred to serve certain social purposes mainly the exclusion of other speakers by specifying a certain addressee (example 23), CS for euphemism was also common among the participants where, for example, participants tend to switch to a foreign language as a strategy to mitigate the effect of some swear and taboo words, and make them sound less shocking (examples 22 and 30).

On the linguistic level, some switches served the function of availability, through which the participants use the most available code in certain interactions. For example, religious and idiomatic expressions are used in MA even among French-dominant bilingual participants, which happened to be the expected choice for this kind of expressions. The same case for CMC jargon that is used by most participants in French and English, simply because these foreign words are more available in French and English than in MA, as they are commonly used in their Facebook community more than their equivalents in MA. Other switches also appeared to be common among the participants, notably, CS for the principle of economy where most of the inserted foreign expressions, in MA comments, included French and English abbreviations and acronyms that are considered as a common feature of CMC. Expressions like *lpb* (*la plus belle/ le plus beau*: the most beautiful), *bae* (*Babe*), *lol* (*laugh out loud*) are very widespread among Moroccan Facebook users, and as suggested by San (2009), by the use of these short forms of language, bilinguals tend to use “the least effort in their language production and select the less intricate forms of the two languages as opposed to the ones that are more cumbersome” (Cited in Nur, Syazwani & Maros, 2014).

These findings give credence to results from previous studies on the use of CS among young Facebook users (Nur, Syazwani & Maros, 2014; Khan Khadim, 2014) where CS appeared as a communicative strategy to enhance Facebook users' interactions. In the same regard, Alfonzetti (2014) argues that the use of CS among young people, especially in social media, helps them break the conventional rules of language, which allows them to employ “whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best as they can, regardless of how well they know the involved languages” and “without regard to norms of linguistic purity” (Jørgensen et al. 2011, pp.32, 34 Cited in Alfonzetti, 2014: 10).

These findings are also in the same line with results from previous studies on the functions of CS in face-to-face verbal interactions. Crystal (1987), for example, found that bilingual speakers use CS in their everyday conversations as a communication strategy, to index solidarity and affiliation to a specific social group, claiming that CS should be regarded as an effective tool of communication, rather than an obstacle to communication or an indication of language incompetency. This finding may explain the prevalence of French-dominant code switches among participants in their Facebook comments; especially those attending high-level tertiary institutions; maybe as a strategy to mark their high level of education and make it more obvious to their Facebook community.

In light of these findings, and according to the multiple functions CS serves in the analysed Facebook comments, the present research implied that CS is a conscious act made by young Moroccan Facebook users, by which they tend to break all linguistic and social norms, and create a new language of their own that fulfils their communicative intents; rather than a random choice that may be considered as a sign of language incompetency or language attrition.

6. CONCLUSION

This study came with the conclusion that CS among young Moroccan in their Facebook comment is considered as a conscious act that serves many communicative functions, either on the social or linguistic levels. Furthermore, the reason why CS is more frequent among them is simply because it is an imitation of their real-life face-to-face interactions. All in all, there are no rules governing the language used by young Moroccans in Facebook, as there are no limits for their creativity. Thanks to CMC platforms such as Facebook, young Moroccans have now the ability to freely and creatively express themselves by creating a language of their own, via which they have transcended all the linguistic and social rules, a language that they can manipulate, and play with as they wish. They can create new expressions, make new combinations, and the process of code-switching is only part of this game. Young Facebook users may write whatever comes to their minds and then it will spread to their entire community, until it becomes an integrated part of their everyday jargon.

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