



Code-switching on Social Media Amongst Algerians in the UK

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Abstract: This paper overviews research regarding the use of code-switching within social media outlets. It aims at diagnosing some corpus of online speech for a group of Algerian users residing in the UK. A triangulation method was followed to categorize types and patterns of code-switching and assess the users' awareness towards generating these linguistic behaviors. A sample of online users was recruited to submit an online questionnaire to identify their identity profiles. Online activities were monitored for the data collection period. To ensure the accessibility to the users' activities, the researcher was friend and follower with the users on Facebook and Twitter, respectively. A small sample was interviewed for in-depth exploring the functions of the linguistic behaviors that have been detected. Gender was demonstrated to be an aspect of identity to investigate the potential link between language use and identity. This paper produces a newly established set of a datum to accentuate the pre-assumed perceptions of the multilingual background of Algerians within the Computer Monitored Communication (CMC).

Keywords: *Code-switching, social media, Algerians, gender*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, the terminology globalisation has been used to refer to the massive flows of people, commodities, discourses and images all over the globe. This shorthand definition has been changed by the driver of technological inventions and developments, mainly the computer-mediated communication [1]. From a sociolinguistic perspective, globalisation changed the typical notion of 'sociolinguistics' when it mutated from its classic distinctions and adopted a rethinking of the sociolinguistic mobile resources that focused on the frame of trans-contextual flows and networks [1]. Subsequently, this research portrays social media networks as one of the factors that have crucially contributed to the alteration of the connotation of globalisation to reach out to languages. This research attempts to tie the concept of globalisation to the relevance the practice at a sociolinguistic level in which it examines the linguistic online use of a group of Algerians who semi-permanently migrated for studies purposes. This research highlights what impacts are currently influencing the Arabic language within the UK

context on social media outlets. Thence, it provides an assumption of the changes in Arabic language development that could be predicted in the future. The transition to an Anglophone country like the UK may have a link to highlight an extensive use of English on social media. However, returning to the native country, Algeria, may suggest a reversion to previous activities to some extent at least. The opposite could be applicable to Arabic usage. A sociolinguistic discussion over a semi-permanent community of migrants essentially contributes to elaborate into the relevant literature around the language use among the Algerian communities abroad. At the online level, the online utterances of Algerians could be said to be uncommonly searched within similar contexts as this paper produces a newly established set of datum to accentuate the pre-assumed perceptions of the multilingual background of Algerians within the CMC.

A. Objective of the Study

- To explore how code-switching and mixing manifest amongst Algerian students using on-line media

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communication systems in the UK.

- To determine the age group and gender of the participants, to the type of code-switching and mixing that occurs.
- To identify the influences of individual identity construction on code-switching.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Multilingual Internet*

In recent years, scholars have turned their attention dramatically to search around language use and language choice on the internet. [2] explain that their perspective on multilingualism is classified as macro-sociolinguistic and micro-sociolinguistic. The latter has been fully addressed in their book 'The Multilingual Internet'. In other words, [2] introduce the micro-level types of language varieties' use as well as the combinations of language in digital media. The two researchers considered both language use and language choice as a primary tools in marking the cultural identity for individuals on the text-based CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication) that surpasses the frontiers of a certain geographical area where both social and physical cues are almost neglected. Simultaneously, online users' culture is totally separated from the CMC environment where a physical world is surrounded and an offline culture is grounded, and determined by an entirely boundaries such as: ethnicity, nationality, religion and so on. Further, [3] mentioned: "a social setting that acommunication takes place there may be significant in language choice of multilingual individuals [4, 5]".

[6] explored the macro-level distribution of language when he presented it as an interplaying of several components which are: goal, setting, topic and means (mode) of interaction (through writing, face-to-face discourse, broadcasting, structured discourse...etc.). The earlier elements are referred to be 'domains' of communication [7] Cited in [6]. [6] assumed that a stabilized multilingual context promotes the domain to be related with a certain language of communication so that speakers can easily adapt to the expectations that are linked to each domain.

B. *Bilingualism and Multilingualism*

Doubtlessly, being a bilingual speaker is practically beneficial in increasing the concept of globalised world. Researchers call an individual a bilingual if he/she can speak two different languages, but if he/she can speak more than two different languages they call them a multilingual.

In trying to find an appropriate terminology for the term bilingualism or multilingualism, [8] considered both terms as an umbrella term that indicates that individ-

uals have different language skills where no features of monolinguals are detected. The creative act of alternation between these languages is known as code-switching. At the sociolinguistic level, "code-switching is language behaviour indicating the sociolinguistic norms of speech communities to achieve some social the functions" [9, 10].

In the same spectrum, nations can be classified as bilingual if they use two official languages, be it regional, national or foreign [11].

[12] underlined the above through giving some vivid symbols of this phenomenon as in Canada where English and French are both considered as official languages. Accordingly, within multilingual communities, language choice can be used as a tool to predict a certain phenomenon within any of social life contexts [3, 13].

In regard to nations, [11] explained how most nations can be considered bilinguals or multilinguals despite the fact that this is not proven officially by the policy makers; nevertheless; it is not possible to raise a claim that each individual in a bilingual or multilingual speaking country is inevitably the same.

Actually, debates on bilingualism have been put forward in research over the last 50 years and more. Being a bilingual or multilingual country does not only mean to have two spoken languages across the country even so each of these languages has its own function which has been referred by [11] to be as 'configurational domains'. The Moroccan experience as introduced by [11] presented an example of languages of street or home (Moroccan Dialectal Arabic), French as the language of media and technology, Berber as a regional language among family or friends, and Modern Standard Arabic as used for education.

On the other hand, many nations can depict the concept of multilingualism such as India which has various languages, namely, English, Punjabi, Dravidian languages and Hindi [11, 14]. In this research, two sociolinguistic maps needed to be taken into consideration when approaching the research sample as both Algeria and the UK owe much multilingual history.

Globally, multilingualism was shown as a relative social skill that significantly impacts the intercultural skills for the worldwide talent in a globalized region. Thus far, it is deemed as a fundamental element to address the complexity of the worldwide issues [15]. The transferability of those multilingual features into the CMC domains could be of a linguistic value as the modern fashioned linguistic skills may be attached to the multi-use of languages.

III. METHOD AND MATERIALS

A. Sample

The research process is designed to work with a small number of participants that are assumed to be bilinguals because they are chosen as native Algerian Arabic speakers and yet are all studying through English in the UK and that are accessed by the researcher using a purposive sampling technique. In order to undertake the detailed analysis of social media interactions and the interviews, a small sample size was chosen in order that this can be completed within the timescale limitations of the research project and to ensure that a level of detail can be achieved from each individual analysis. A sample size of 15 students was selected, over a three-month period and their interactional activities through Twitter and Facebook accounts analysed. The two accounts are suggested to capture different elements of identity portrayal and the language use that may accompany it.

B. Data Collection

The research used three approaches to collect data from the participants: the first is a profile questionnaire to determine the background and linguistic profile of the participants, the second is an analysis of social media conversations and the third is a semi-structured interview that has been conducted after the other data had been collected. For the quantitative method, data from the questionnaires was collected online and then analysed using descriptive statistics calculated through Excel (SPSS was not required as the sample size was so small, $n = 15$). This provided a profile of individual identity including gender which will then be further explored in their subsequent use of code-switching if and where it occurs. On the other hand, the data gathered from social media context and the semi-structured interviews will be transcribed and then analysed to assess the type of language and dialects being used in code-switching incidents and to link to the themes or topics of the conversation. Specific examples of code-switching will be highlighted and marked separately. The focus of this research project is on patterns within participants' written communication and their links to cultural identity, especially gender differences. For these reasons the research needs to identify data collection techniques that are appropriate to the analysis of discourse, and which can also provide a background contextual analysis. The main research technique used in these types of research projects is known as discourse analysis.

C. Discourse Analysis

The study of language is such a large and all-encompassing aspect of social science research that it

is both a field of study and also a method within research. Discourse analysis is a data analysis approach that is actually quite a broad term, which can be linked to different types of speech analysis and their subsequent links to relevant theoretical frameworks [16]. One of the commonalities between the different forms of discourse analysis is the focus and attention given to high levels of detail [16]. As a method it can often fall in between quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques since it can in fact be more detailed than traditional quantitative techniques such as content analysis whereas the level of detail may not be picked up in qualitative techniques such as participant observation [17].

In this research, there is a particular interest in the social and cultural analysis to discourse and so this is the definition that is deemed most appropriate to this project. This research mirrors [18, 19] and [20] approaches to discourse analysis. The data analysis required a clear understanding on definitions of code-switching in order to develop a series of codes that could be used across all the sample group. Therefore, Nvivo, which is a software used for the analysis of qualitative data in this project, has been used to assist in categorizing the data. The results were mapped to show identity profile and gender of participants linked to themes or topics where code-switching occurred. All the collected data revealed patterns of code-switching behaviour that can be compared across different types of identity. The type of phrase was also analysed and cross checked with the profile of the participant to link back to potential sources of the language being used.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Questionnaire Database

The data obtained from the questionnaire administered to Algerian students in the UK reveals that the sample is a mixture of males and females with the majority of females, reflecting the common anecdotal perception that it is more Algerian female students who tend to be involved in studies investigating language use. However, it is known that in the Arab World males are more likely than females to be involved in any online activities [21, 22, 23]), although these studies also show that amongst educated females' levels of online activity are higher. Given the nature of my participants, it can be assumed that these females will be more active online than would be the case with a non-university sample. Another finding from the questionnaires is that the participants are distributed across different parts of Algeria and they are all undertaking PhD studies in the humanities across different parts of the UK.

As regards participants' preferences for getting access

and using social media websites, Facebook seems to be preferable to the majority of them, because they confirm that Facebook has an important role in communicating with family, friends, and siblings. They stated that, via Facebook, they have the opportunity to have fun, share all kinds of posts, form group chats, expressing themselves freely, and significantly they are able to post unlimited number of words or visual ads without any restrictions.

Another point is that participants' use of language differs from the spoken use to the written use taking into consideration using more than one particular language to communicate either in speaking or in writing for some participants.

Finally, participants' acquisition of English has observed convergence as all participants started studying it in Middle school. Having this interesting point helps to give some consistency to the research project as all participants can be classified as being at the same level.

B. Social Media Database

The second part of the analysis will focus on the authentic spoken and written data which were extracted and transcribed from Facebook posts, private messages of Facebook, tweets, and the semi-structured interviews.

1) Types and patterns of code-switching and the level of grammatical constraints violation: A. Tag-switching

a) Sample from Facebook posts:

So powerful she is, machallah... (1)

In this example, the participant used English/Arabic pattern of code-switching. She was describing a girl using one particular type of code-switching, tag-switching, which is simply achieved through inserting a term from one language to a clause of another language. In the example above, the participant started in English and then she inserted one Arabic word (mashallah ماشاء الله) which means appreciation and praise.

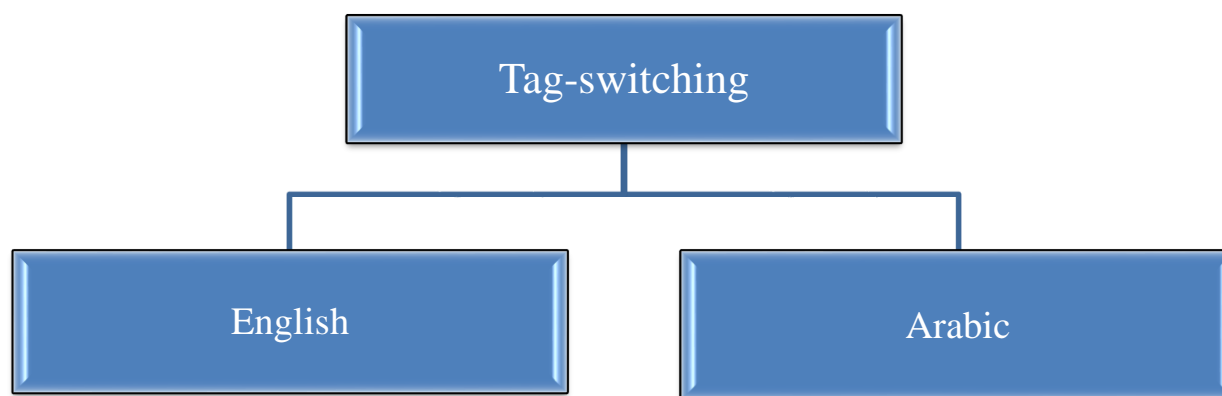


Fig. 1. Structural graphic of code-switching patterns

In the example above, the participant shifted from English to Arabic in linking to her Muslim and cultural identity as she was showing admiration towards a girl 'beauty' as the word mashallah was inserted to prevent the evil eye.

b) Sample from Facebook private messages:

Participant: Okay hbiba I'll call when I come (Okay dear I will call you when I come)...(a)

Third party: wakha hbiba safi! (It is okay dear!)

Third party: inchallah gheda (If God's willing tomorrow)

Participant: Okay dear Inchallah (Okay dear if God's willing)...(b)

As yielded in the conversation above which displays a part of speech between this participant and her friend agreeing how to meet up. The addressee person utterances are just given to preserve the context so that it

is not necessary to highlight any switching though the bystander seems to command both Arabic and English though the evidence of this can be clearly seen in how the participant engaged in the discourse with her friend. The use of English and Arabic has led the participant to use lexical items from both languages. In other words, Arabic/English pattern of code-switching was highlighted. In example (a), the clause highlighted almost English lexical items; however, an insertion of an Arabic word has been detected to notify that a tag-switching was recorded as a type of switching in this example. Likewise, the example (b) generated the same type of switches as the insertion of a tag was in Arabic (Inchallah which means if God's willing).

B. Inter-sentential switching:

a) Sample from Facebook posts:

!!!!!! ما هذه الجريمة waking up at 7:30 am is driving me

crazy...(2)

(What a crime!!!! waking up at 7:30 am is driving me crazy)

As it can be seen, the participant retained the same pattern English/Arabic code-switching though she has used the Arabic scripts. However, the participant tended to use in this post other types of code-switching when she switched outside the boundaries of the clause in which the inter-sentential code-switching occurred. In example (2), the participant used the inter-sentential code-switching in which she has used the switches outside the sentence but the structure of the sentence remained congruent.

b) Sample from Facebook private messages:

Third party: slm jabt valise (Hi I brought the suitcase)

Participant: Aya bien (That's good)...(c)

After reviewing example (c), utterances from French and the Algerian dialect were exposed, and so an Arabic/French code-switching pattern is produced to have a type of inter-sentential switching. The participant did not violate the constraints of the sentence because the switches occurred at points where there is no difference between the structures of the two languages as the surface structures of both Arabic and French in this sentence map onto each other.

Sample from tweets on Twitter:

Country means home and home means mother!
Happy Independence Day Algeria *يرحم الشهداء الله يحفظ الجزائر*
...(A)

(May god bless the martyrs. May God bless Algeria)

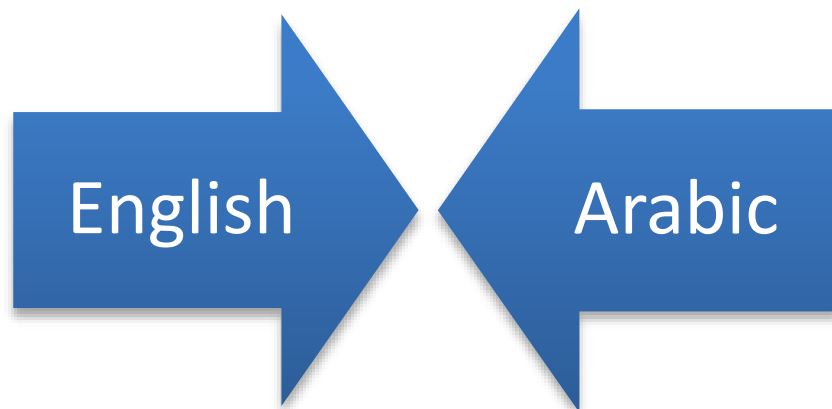


Fig. 2. Structural graphic of the use of the inter-sentential code-switching

Moving now to consider the participant inputs from Twitter, it can be clearly noticed that the participant has tweeted one clause per tweet. I assume that this is due to the limited number of letters Twitter offers to the users. In the Tweet (A), the participant greeted his country on its Independence Day. The total number of tweets for this participant is just two tweets during the three-month period of data collection. However, in his response to the questionnaire, he asserted to be more natural on Twitter rather than Facebook. In this tweet, the participant used Arabic letters rather than Latin letters as he usually tends to use. It might be a possibility that he used the Arabic letter because he wrote a part of the sentence in the Modern Standard Arabic. Example (A) generated an English/Arabic pattern of code-switching. As the participant used a mixed of utterances from two different languages in which each one has its own letters and characters as well as its own grammatical rules. The switches occurred outside the boundaries of the clause as the user

started with English and he finished with Arabic. Thus, an inter-sentential switching is achieved in this tweet.

C. Intra-sentential switching:

a) Sample from Facebook posts:

I watched a video about Brexit referendum man3rf 3la other European countries t9albou against uk...(3)

(I watched a video about Brexit referendum I don't know why other European countries became against the UK)

(3: refers to the Arabic letter ع . It is pronounced as breathless A)

(9: refers to the Arabic letter ق . It is pronounced very similarly to Q)

Apparently, the participant is still following the same pattern of code-switching (English /Arabic) with the use of only the Latin scripts in this example. Contrary to example (2), example (3) is noticeably more complicated as the participant shifted from English to Arabic then from Arabic to English. That's to say, switches in this

clause occurred within the sentence boundaries. Some scholars classified code-mixing to be one of the types of code-switching particularly the intra-sentential switching Sridhar and Sridhar, 1980, [24]. Congruent lexicalization is one of the code-mixing types which belongs to the inter-sentential switching as the speaker can use two languages by filling the sentence with elements that maintain the grammatical structure correct. Therefore, the languages being switched require to be structurally congruent [25]. In example (3), participants used an intra-sentential switching as she was expressing her opinion about a political event so that she three utterances as she converted utterances from English to Arabic then going back to the first language she started with (English).

b) Sample from Facebook private messages:

Participant: Dear Jabti la valise te3ak? (Dear did you bring your suitcase?)...(d)

Having this nested clause showed that the intra-sentential switching dominated the discourse. The example (d) presented switches between three different languages which do not share the same grammatical rules, particularly between English and French since the former differs from the latter when it comes to the structure of sentence that includes adjectives. French tends to use the post-nominal adjective but English uses the pre-nominal one. In this example, the use of three different languages violated the grammatical structure of the clause at some point as in the object of this sentence (la valise te3ak: your suitcase: ta valise) the switch occurs between the possessed and the possessor where in French the possessor comes very often after the possessed, however, Arabic presents the contrast of this phenomenon. Therefore, the participants chose words that cannot still obey the grammatical and syntactical rules for each language.

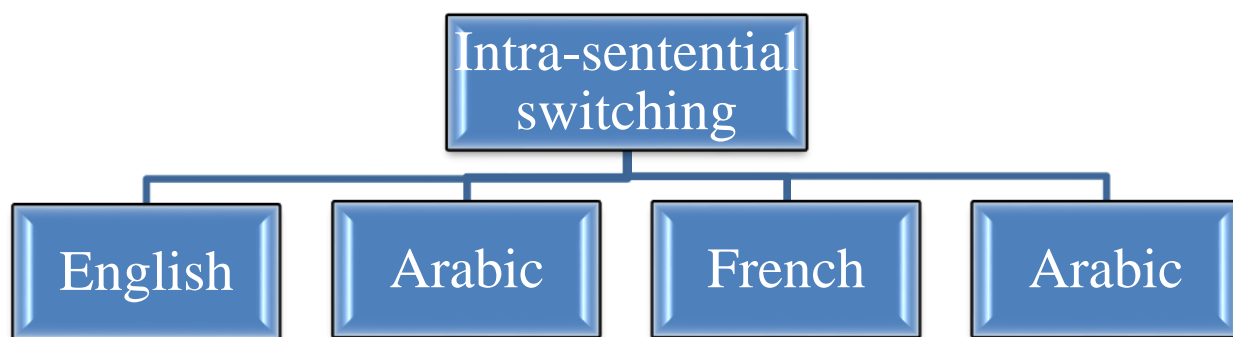


Fig. 3. Structural graphic of the use of the intra-sentential code-switching

D. Intra-word switching:

a) Sample from Facebook private messages:

Participant: ENA maandish connexion a rani b 3 g Fel portable c non nversilek Non l vol te3na 3la 2

(I don't have network I am using 3G in my phone otherwise I would send you money and our flight at 2)...(e)

The last example (e) presents different phenomena in the linguistic behaviour of this participant. Moreover, the switches reviewed per the previous examples occurred between the free morpheme constraints but in this example, another linguistic behaviour is found as some switches in this sentence showed different types of switching. The dominant type of switching is the intra-sentential switching with an Arabic/French pattern of code-switching. Yet, another type of switching revealed within the sentence. As we look at the word “nreservilek”, it is clearly noticed that there is a violation of the constraints but the phonology of lexical item is integrated with the language of the bound morphemes “*nek*”. The word “nversilek” or I send

you contains two bound morphemes from Arabic with the root which is a verb French “verser”. This phenomenon is a different type of switching called the intra-switching which occurs within the morpheme boundary not the clause boundary. Another intra-word switching generated in this clause is “Fel portable” and “l vol” where the participant used the bound morpheme from Arabic “Fel” in the and “I” as a determiner which means ‘the’, but she kept the same pronunciation of all the words as they are in their original phonological system for each language when one turns the words into their phonetic transcriptions. The participant violated the free morpheme constraint as she switched between the bound morphemes of Arabic and nouns in French. Also, within each intra-word switching there should have been a pattern for code-switching; therefore, as the general pattern is Arabic/ French code-switching which is detected within the clause, an Arabic/French switching pattern is detected within the free morpheme. Semi-structured interviews database:

This part is performed to summarise the interviews feedback that pointed out how the participants linked the use of more than one language with the setting and the place of residence as they claimed that the use of more than one language goes back to the origins and the ethnicity of the speaker. This has correspondence with [26, 27] findings. Participants confirmed that her use of more than one language is due to purposes of prestige. This could be a concrete evidence of [28] caption: “Code-switching carries a hidden prestige which is made explicit by attitudes”. Facebook is highlighted to be a space where participants can use different languages as they have relatives and friends from different countries so using more than one language is always a tool to convey the meaning. Therefore, the audience has played a crucial role in the use of the language of the speaker [29]. Also, the target sample emphasized that the topic is considered to be one variable that controls the use of more than one language in the same discourse (Curlin, 2015, [30]). Thus, participants linked the percentage of being natural to the event someone is introducing; the participants asserted that they tend to use more than one language in anger, expressing the feelings, and in events where some provocative topics are discussed such as: political ones. Likewise, it is important to announce that the participants’ use of more than one language is linked to the situation and the context whether within or outside the social media frame.

In symmetry with what we had in the findings of the semi-structured interviews, the use of mixture Arabic/French is linked with the natural way of the Algerian speakers or how they stereotypically speak as their vernacular is presented as a mixture of Arabic with an insertion of French codes. Another point is that our respondents tend to use Arabic/French pattern when chatting with their family, friends, and relatives back home.

Prior literature identified that one of the components of the distribution of a language is the domain ‘mode’ of communication ([6]. In accordance with what has been introduced per previous literature and the findings, it may be possible to assume that the mode of communication influences the use of code-switching as what may occur in face-to-face interaction (traditional oral form) can be identified within a written form (online mode). Thus online activity may be better understood as a form of oral communication than as a form of written communication (and thus more susceptible to code-switching activity).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper describes and debates briefly the processes that theoretically, methodologically and analytically underpin this research. In general, this project has proven

that the use of one language across social media sites using participants based within the UK has been influenced by other languages. Hence, this technology has expanded the exposure to other dialects and languages, specifically through code-switching, code-mixing, and migration of language (mixing and shifting between Arabic with other dialects and languages). The striking point is represented in the use of CS was not confined to pair languages. Instead, findings revealed the distribution of lexical items from three different languages within the same segment of speech. Arabic and English, however, were heavily deployed within these trios. It has been highlighted that different patterns and types of code-switching have been detected to distinguish between gender and linguistic behaviour. Furthermore, results demonstrated that female were more in favour of practicing different types and patterns of code-switching rather than males. Also, it has been observed that different contextual variables are identified to shed light on religious/ethnic identity, audience/correspondent (perceived linguistic competence), topic, residence (Algeria/abroad), emotion/mood/tone and the prestige.

Overall, findings from this study revealed that the target population have more preferences towards Facebook rather than Twitter. Feeds from the former showed the involvement of languages used by Algerians students (Arabic as a mother tongue, French as second language and English as a language of the host society) and explored how the code-switching phenomenon and the social media influences on spoken Arabic.

The implementation of online and social media outlets adds a stronger international application to the findings. However, the reactivity can be considered as a validity risk for this research since the online conversations are being accessed and can have influenced how participants interacted with one another or how they use different forms of language since they become more conscious of the research.

Further work is needed to diagnose a similar cohort to this research project on a deeper level, this could be through investigating the types of CS and the use of English online within both the UK and Algerian context. This could be perhaps established by conducting a longitudinal study for a precise analogy.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

We, the authors of this manuscript, hereby declare that there are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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