

Linguistic Constraints on Codeswitching and Codemixing of Bilingual Moroccan Arabic-French Speakers in Canada

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1. Introduction

The study of language contact has progressed since the earliest work of Haugen and Weireich in the early fifties. In many situations of languages in contact, constituents of one language can be found with the constituents of another language in a number of linguistic phenomena, namely lexical borrowing, transferring, interference, calquing, diffusion, reflexification, codeswitching and codemixing, etc. (Ennamalai 1989:48). Codeswitching and codemixing are the two linguistic phenomena claimed to be the most prevalent and common modes of interaction among bilingual speakers.

The earliest definition of codeswitching dates back to Weinreich (1953), who defines bilingual people as individuals who switch “from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in speech situation”. (Naseh 1997: 202). In recent literature, there has been some variation in defining this term in comparison to codemixing. Muysken (2000:1) refers to codswitching as “the rapid succession of several languages in a single speech event”, however, codemixing refers to “all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence”. For Annamalai (1989:48), switching is normally done for the duration of a unit of discourse, but “mixing is not normally done with full sentences from another language with its grammar”. As for Bentahila and Davies (1983) the “act of choosing one code rather than another must be distinguished from the act of mixing the two codes together to produce something which might itself be called a third code”. It is this second phenomenon that Bentahila et al. refer to as codeswitching, that is, “the use of two languages within a single conversation, exchange or utterance”, (Bentahila et al. 1983:302). In this paper, we refer henceforth to codemixing as the process of mixing of elements from two languages in one utterance, and codeswitching as the product of this mix. Two types of codeswitching have been recognized by most researchers: Intrasentential codeswitching used for switches within sentences, and intersentential codeswitching for switches between sentences.

2. Theoretical framework

Patterns of codeswitching are found to be different from one another because of several distinct processes such as ‘insertion’, ‘alternation’ and ‘congruent lexicalization’. These three processes correspond to dominant models, and approaches (Muysken, 2000:3). The approach associated with Myers-Scotton (1993) that departs from the notion of ‘insertion’ views “the constraints in terms of the structural properties of some base or matrix structure. Here the process of code-mixing is conceived as...the insertion of an alien lexical or phrasal category into a given structure” (Muysken, 2000:3). Another approach which departs from alternation is Poplack’s (1980) that views “the constraints on mixing in terms of the compatibility or equivalence of the languages involved at the switch point” (Muysken, 2000:4). However, the approach associated with Labov’s (1972) and Trudgill’s (1986) works departs from the notion of congruent lexicalization and focuses on the study of shifting, and language variation rather than on the use of bilingual language.

Based on these approaches, various models of constraints on codeswitching have been proposed and formulated (Bentahila et al. 1983; Blazi, Rubin and Turbio 1992, 1994; Di Sciullo, Muysken and

Sing 1986; Kachru 1977; Myers-Scotton 1993; Nishimura 1997; Pfaff 1979). These models of constraints mainly “fall into four major groups: language specific constraints, more general and universal constraints, theoretical constraints and matrix language approaches to the constraints” (Naseh 1997:202), and have been subject to controversy when applied to different language pairs. For the purpose of this study, only the three linguistic constraints (the ‘equivalence of structure’, the ‘size of constituent’, and the ‘free morpheme’) are considered.

The ‘equivalence of structure’ constraint advanced by (Poplack 1980) is one of the most influential constraints that has attracted much attention. According to Poplack:

“code-switches will tend to occur at points in discourse where juxtaposition of L1 and L2 elements does not violate a syntactic rule of either language, e.i., at points around which the surface structures of the two languages map onto each other. According to this simple constraint, a switch is inhibited from occurring within a constituent generated by a rule from one language which is not shared by the other” (Poplack 1980:586).

The ‘size of constituent’ constraint states that major and main constituents such as sentences and clauses tend to be switched more frequently than smaller constituents, for example, nouns, determiners, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives (Poplack 1980). The ‘free morpheme’ constraint, on the other hand, entails the forbidding of codeswitching “between a bound morpheme and a lexical form unless the latter has been phonologically integrated into the language of the bound morpheme” (Sankoff and Poplack 1981:5). The tendency to consider these linguistic constraints universal and valid for any pair of languages resulted in various research studies which focus on examining the structural principles that govern the patterns of codeswitching, and on investigating linguistic factors and constraints, that block switching to occur at certain points.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the validity of these three linguistic constraints discussed above by examining the syntax of the intrasentential codeswitching between two typologically different languages Arabic and French.

3. Empirical evidence

The literature abounds with research studies on codemixing and codswitching. Earlier studies that dealt with codeswitching as a major topic started in the 1960s with Gumperz 1964; Lehtinen 1966; and Clyne 1967 (Boumans 1998:9). In 1970s, most of the codemixing studies (e.g., Gumperz 1976, 1979; Pfaff 1976, 1979; Myers-Scotton 1989, etc.) drew on two interacting language systems Spanish-English to analyze the grammatical structures and syntactic rules of these two interacting language systems in codeswitched sentences. In the past decades, the study of codeswitching and in particular the investigation of the syntax of codeswitching has attracted considerable attention. Various studies have investigated different language pairs (e.g., Berk-Seligson 1986; Di Sciullo, Muysken and Sing 1986; Myers-Scotton 1988, 1993; Naseh 1997; Poplack 1980, 1981; etc) and looked at the linguistic factors that operate to constrain codeswitching, and the syntactic constraints that restrict the environments where switching can occur. These research studies have revealed controversial findings. For example, in his (1975) study investigating the syntax of Spanish-English codeswitching, Lance concluded that “there are perhaps no syntactic restrictions on where the switching can occur” (1975:143). However, other studies (e.g., Gumperz 1976; Kashu 1977; Lipski 1977; Pfaff 1976, 1979; Poplack 1980; and Timm 1975) argued that there are a variety of syntactic constraints that restrict the environments where codeswitching can occur, and that some rules can be valid only for some languages. For example, Timm, in his (1975) study on Spanish-English codeswitching, asserts that switching is not possible between the syntactic category (a verb and its infinitive complement). In addition, Pfaff in his (1979) study states that a switch is prohibited for a preposition to be in a different language from the items both preceding and following it. In addition, Kachru in his (1977) study claims that it is impossible for two sentences from one language to be linked by a conjunction from the other.

A considerable number of studies were also carried out dealing with codeswitching between Moroccan Arabic and other languages mostly French and Dutch. Worthwhile mentioning studies are Abbassi's (1977); Bentahila's (1983a, 1983b); Bentahila et al's. 1983, 1991); Boumans's (1998); Heath's (1989); Eid's (1992); Myers-Scotton, Jake, and Okasha's (1996); Nait M'barek and Sankoff's (1988); Nortier (1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1995); and Said's (1988). Findings of some of these studies with respect to the syntactic constraints will be referred to in the discussion section to compare them with our findings.

4. Background of the present study

In order to examine and identify types of patterns of switching in a bilingual setting and to address issues involving syntactic aspects of codeswitching, we conducted this small study involving Moroccan Arabic-French bilingual speakers residing in Canada. Our motivation in choosing this ethnic group stems from the fact that Moroccan community represents one of the largest groups that constitutes Arab Canadian population in Canada especially in Quebec province. Canadian population is made up of various immigrants from different nationalities (e.g., European, Spanish, Arabs, Asian, etc.). Arab immigrants come from various Middle Eastern countries (e.g., Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, etc.) and North African countries (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia).

Since 1980, a great number of Moroccans immigrated to Canada and especially to Quebec province. From 1980-1985, the majority of Moroccans who came to Canada were single young men and women who wanted to continue their study at different French universities (Quebec, Montreal, Chicoutimi, etc). In 1990, however, a great number of Moroccans came as landed immigrants from Morocco because of employment opportunities in different public sectors especially in Montreal city. Not only has the number of Moroccan immigrants increased from 1980 to nowadays, but the social makeup of this migrant group has also changed. In recent years, most immigrants comprise of young married couples, or families with children coming from most regions of Morocco (North, South, West and East), and who are native speakers of Arabic. A further motivation for this study stems from the fact that the phenomenon of shift from Arabic to French among Moroccan speakers in Canada is a common feature of these Moroccan immigrants' speech.

5. The Study

This study investigates the syntax of the intrasentential codeswitching of bilingual Moroccan Arabic-French speakers living in Canada. The main objectives of this study are:

1. to analyze the speech of these Moroccan immigrants in formal and informal situations;
2. to identify the types of patterns of switching in these situations;
3. and to examine whether the mixing and switching of the two languages (Moroccan Arabic and French) depends on the contrasting syntactic properties of the languages involved.

5.1 The Informants

Four adult Moroccans participated in this study. The multilingual linguistic situation in Morocco where these informants came from has impact on most Moroccans and accounts for having in most cases fluent and balanced bilingual or even multilingual Moroccan speakers. Moroccan Arabic language, with its different varieties, appears to be predominant. Other languages include Standard Arabic, a formal written variety, French, Spanish, and Berber languages. These four Moroccan participants are fluent bilinguals speaking the two varieties of Arabic (Moroccan Arabic as their mother tongue and Standard Arabic) and French. They also come from a middle class background, hold administrative positions, and work with the center for learning languages. Selection of these

subjects was based on the following criteria: the length of stay in L2 environment (between 5 to 10 years), only Moroccan speakers who had immigrated to Canada between (1992-1997) were considered; and those who do not speak Berber. Table 1 presents background information on participants.

Table 1: Distribution of the participants by gender, age, level of education, language background, date of immigration, etc.

Subjects	Gender	Age	Level of Education	Knowledge of other Languages besides Arabic	Date of Immigration	Length of Immigration	Age at Immigration
Subj.1	Male	34	University	French	1992	10 years	24
Subj. 2	Female	27	High school	French	1996	6 years	21
Subj. 3	Male	36	University	French/English	1995	7 years	29
Subj. 4	Female	28	University	French/English	1997	5 years	23

5.2 Procedure for data collection

Data were collected last summer. Participants were given a questionnaire comprising questions asking about personal information such as age, education in Morocco and in Canada, language use in the last few years in different domains, and attitudes towards maintaining Arabic over the years. Conversations of these 4 Moroccan Arabic speakers were tape-recorded in two different settings: First a formal setting which is the Center for learning languages where these four informants work. In this formal setting, the four informants were given the subject “immigration” as a topic of discussion and were told to talk about it in relation to their own experience. This conversation lasted one hour. Second is an informal setting, which consists of half an hour phone conversation between each of the two informants. For the phone conversation, each pair was involved in a casual and daily conversation. In both settings, the speakers were aware that their conversations were tape-recorded.

The speech of these four informants was transcribed and analyzed. The analysis aimed to examine the structure properties of the switches, and the kinds of knowledge that the emerging patterns reflect. Only items that are not phonologically, morphologically, and syntactically integrated into the base language are judged to be codeswitches. Because of the special language contact situation in Morocco between Arabic and French, many French words are morphologically adapted items, and fully integrated in the Moroccan Arabic lexicon. Words like /kaza/ “Casablanca” and /lkar/ “bus” are excluded from the data. Excluded also phonological switches like /blaka/ and /ottobis/ that are originally French words adapted to Moroccan Arabic. The original French spelling is /plak/ “plaque” and /otobus/ “autobus”. In /blaka/ and /ottobis/, the sounds /b/ and /i/ are substituted for the sounds /p/ and /u/ respectively because these latter do not exist in Moroccan Arabic. Specialized jargons in Moroccan Arabic which are adapted from French language morphologically and syntactically as well as personal names were also excluded. Examples of patterns of switching in both settings are identified and discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.3 Findings

The data generated about 249 switches (154 switches in the formal setting and 95 switches in the two phone conversations). In both settings, switches occur in two directions from either French to Arabic or Arabic to French, but the former was most frequent. Codeswitching practices among these Moroccan Arabic speakers vary from the use of either French or Arabic single words to larger sequences of words in single utterances. Data yield various instances of switches within noun phrases. Within this boundary, switches occurred between determiner and noun, noun and adjective. Also, the data include examples of switches between subject and verb, verb and object, verb and adverb in Arabic or French simple sentences. Moreover, instances of switches were also found in a clause boundary involving various types of subordinate clauses, namely adverbial, conditional, and relative.

One of the most striking findings found in the study is that these Moroccan speakers switched more smaller constituents (e.g., adjectives, adverbs, determiners, nouns, and verbs) than larger constituents. More importantly, nouns were the most often highly switched syntactic category among smaller constituents. **Table 2** and **3** present the syntactic categories of codeswitching in each setting.

Table 2: Types of Syntactic Categories of Codeswitching in Formal Setting

	French to Arabic		Arabic to French	
	N	%	N	%
Adjective	10	10.63	12	20
Adverb	7	7.44	7	11.66
Conjunction	8	8.51	6	10
Determiner	10	10.63	11	18.33
Noun	33	35.10	12	20
Preposition	4	4.25	1	1.66
Relative pronoun	2	2.12	4	6.66
Verb	20	21.27	9	15
Total	94		60	

Table 3: Types of Syntactic Categories of Codeswitching in Informal Setting

	French to Arabic		Arabic to French	
	N	%	N	%
Adjective	9	16.33	6	15
Adverb	6	10.99	4	10
Conjunction	3	5.45	2	5
Determiner	8	14.54	6	15
Noun	14	25.45	11	27.5
Preposition	2	3.63	3	7.5
Relative pronoun	4	7.27	2	5
Verb	8	14.54	6	15
Total	55		40	

The space and time do not allow us to present and examine all the instances of switches in every syntactic category, therefore, we will limit our examination to only typical examples of switches from Arabic to French or French to Arabic in both settings, and that occurred in major syntactic categories. Examples from formal data are represented by (F) and from informal data by (I).

Among the examples of French single or larger sequences of words in Moroccan Arabic utterances are the following:

- Single word

1 (F): ʃlabt wahdi l'immigration
'I asked alone (for) the immigration'

1 (I): ʒadda ʒannamshi le mall
'Tomorrow I will go to the mall'

- Larger sequences of words

2 (F): ʒi:t fi la fin du mois de décembre ka:n ljaw bared kti:r wttalj
'I came the end of the month of December, the weather was very cold and snow'

2 (I): ʒadi ntsenna:k vers 2 heures à côté du kiosque de l'information
'I will wait for you around 2 o'clock near the information booth'

Within noun boundary, switches occurred between determiner and noun, and noun and adjective. Among the examples of these types, notable are:

- Determiner:

3 (F): had la ville ṣamra belʔaja:nib
'this city is full of foreigners'

3 (F): shi jours
'some days'

3 (I): waḥed le programme lbareḥ
'one program yesterday'

- Adjective:

4 (F): Ṣesht ʔiyya:m difficile felʔawwal lamma: ji:t li Canada
'I lived difficult days the first time I came to Canada'

4 (I): ila ṣandek lʔiḏa:ṣa lṣarabiyya yamkellek tshufi bara:mij variés
'if you have Arabic channel you can watch varied programs'

Within sentence boundary, switches were found between subject and verb, verb and object, verb and adverb, and verb and a prepositional object. Typical examples from both data are:

- Subject and verb

5 (F): les cours taykunu mṣaṭlin fell:i:l
'the classes run late at night'

5 (I) ḥanut diyal ḥwayj se trouve fejjanb
'a clothing store is in the corner'

-Verb and object

6 (F): wajjet diplôme en relations internationales
'I prepared a diploma in international relations'

6 (I): nqalt recette dyal lḥalwa
'I copied recipe of a cake'

- Verb and adverb

7 (F) : lfaqi:r walla lḫani iṣishu ici kifkif
'the poor or the wealthy live here same'

7 (I): tamshi partout nna:s tshuffik
'Anywhere you go people stare at you'

- Verb and prepositional object

8 (F): liṣayshin au Maroc huma na:s lḫaniyyiin
'who is living in Morocco are the rich'

8 (I): kunt au café gaḏda
'I was in the cafe sitting'

- Auxiliary and verb

There were also cases of switches where an Arabic prefix is followed by a French verb. In example 9 (F), the prefix /ka/, the present tense marker, and /y/, the third person masculine singular marker used in the present tense in Moroccan Arabic, are added as prefixes to the French verb "expliquer". In example 9 (I), the auxiliary /ʔadi/, the periphrastic future in Moroccan Arabic, and /n/, the first person singular marker, are used with the French verb "visiter".

9 (F): kutta:b ktiri:n kayexplique lhijra mazya:n
'he explains immigration'

9 (I): ʔadi nvisiti gaḥabti ʔadda
'I will visit my friend tomorrow'

In the data, many switches were also found in clause boundary. Switching occurred between a main clause and a subordinate clause expressing different meanings. In examples 10 (F) and 10 (I), and 11 (F) and 11 (I), switches occurred in conditional and co-ordinated clauses respectively.

- Conditional clause

10 (F): ila jaw lmʔarba kti:r on fera une force ici
'if a lot of Maghrebian people come we 'll have a force here'

10 (I): ila bʔiti ntlaqaw ʔadda je vais être au mall.
'if you want us to meet tomorrow I will be in the mall'

- Co-ordinated clause

11 (F): ʔadna bezza:f dya:l lmasha:kil et tanjawzuha
'we have a lot of problems and we overcome them'

11 (I): ntlaqaw ʔadda et nemshiw nshurbu shiḥaja
'we met tomorrow and we go drink something'

In the case of co-ordinated clauses, there were instances where the switched co-ordinating conjunction is in different language as the two clauses, or in different positions either at the end of the first clause or at the second as in examples 12 (F) and 13 (I).

12 (F): tanxdam fe nha:r et tandrus fe lli:l
'I work during the day and study in the evening'

12 (I): ila bʔiti ndu:z ʔlik et nmshiw ensemble
'if you want me to pass by you and we go together'

13 (F): j'avais souffert tout seul au début wa tjawujt
'I have suffered alone in the beginning and I got married'

- 13(I): ġalsa buhdi fda:r w Mustafa est sorti rencontrer des amis
 ‘je suis toute seule and Mustafa went out to meet some friends’

Data also revealed cases of switching in clauses of purpose and reason as in the following examples:

- Clause of purpose or reason

- 14 (F): Il faut s’aider bash najhu
 ‘we have to work hard in order to succeed’

- 14 (I): xassni nxruj tout de suite pour prendre le bus
 ‘je dois sortir now in order to catch the bus’

Switching was also possible in relative clauses as in examples 16(F) and 16(I).

- Relative clause

- 16 (F): ji:na hna bash nħassnu ħyatna qui est ġi:ba fel maħrib
 ‘we come to make our life which is difficult’ in Morocco’

- 16(F): bezza:f dyal mħarba lli n’arrivent pas à s’intégrer
 ‘a lot of Moroccans could not integrate’

- 16 (I): l ħiħa:ħa qui tadu:z fe tħ_u:d talli:l
 ‘the channel which is aired at 9 o’clock at night’

- 16 (I): lqahwa li au coin
 ‘the café which is at the corner’

6. Discussion

In this study, data revealed that codeswitches consisted of smaller constituents (adjectives, adverbs, determiners, nouns, prepositions, and verbs) and larger constituents (e.g., sentences and clauses). This finding lends support to Bentahila et al.’s study (1983) on the same language pairs in which it was also revealed that switches occurred in various syntactic environments (Bentahila et al. 1983:318). Data also revealed that nouns constitute a large number of switches. This finding corroborates the findings of various studies involving different language pairs, for example Berk-Seligson’s (1986) study on Hebrew-Spanish; Pfaff’s 1979; Poplack’s (1980, 1981); and Timm’s (1975) studies on English-Spanish where nouns were found to comprise the highest number of switches (Berk-Seligson 1986:314). The findings of Gumperz (1976) and Poplack (1980) studies, however, run counter to this finding. In these two studies, sentence was found the most highly switched constituent. The finding that switches between an Arabic determiner and a French noun was possible within noun boundary is in line with Bentahila et al.’s (1983) and Abbassi’s (1977) investigating the same language pair. The non-occurrence of the opposite, that is switching between French determiner and an Arabic noun does, however, corroborate the claim made by Abbassi (1977) who states that this type of switching is not permissible.

Within sentence boundary, the finding of switches between the subject and verb, and between the main verb and its complements (e.g., between verb and object, and between verb and adverb) lends support to Bentahila et al.’s (1983) study where various switches occurred between French subject and Arabic predicate or vice versa. Also the finding that switches between the Arabic auxiliary and French verb supports Bentahila et al.’s study (1983) where the data show evidence of switches where a main

verb in Arabic introduces a French complement verb (Bentahila et al. 1983:314). However, Abassi 's (1977) claim runs counter to this finding. Also Timm in his (1975) on Spanish-English codeswitching, and in his (1977) study on Russian-French finds that this type of switches is impossible.

Evidence was also found for switches in clause boundary where the co-ordinating or subordinate conjunctions in different positions in a clause, and in the same or different language as the first or second clause. These types of switches are in line with Bentahila et al.'s study (1983) where various examples of switches at various types of clause boundary also occurred. Gumperz, however, does not support the finding that the conjunction can be in different language as the first or second clause by claiming that the conjunction must always be in the same language as the second clause when a switch occurs between the two conjoined clauses (1976:34). Similarly, Kachru in his (1977) study, investigating Hindi-English codeswitching, advances that when a switch occurred between two clauses it is impossible that the conjunction be in a different language from both the clauses it conjoins.

Moreover, there is evidence in the data of instances of lexical items that consist of morphemes from both Arabic and French. Switches occurred mainly across word internal morpheme boundaries involving an inflectional morpheme from Arabic and a root morpheme from French. This finding is in line with Bentahila et al.'s studies (1983 and 1992) where instances of switching between a root morpheme and an inflection were found in Moroccan Arabic-French corpora. For example, in their (1992) study, Bentahila et al. reports a number of examples that consist of French verb stems inflected with Arabic affixes. Also, in Berk-Seligson's study (1986) investigating Spanish-Hebrew codeswitching, there were instances where the free morpheme constraint was violated. One of the instances in this study is the use of the Hebrew stem *talfén* 'phone, call' which was attached to a Spanish verb ending (Berk-Seligson 1986:333).

The findings of this study have demonstrated, on the one hand, that the speech of these Arabic-French bilingual Moroccans contained varied switches between French and Arabic in both formal and informal situations, and on the other hand, that a considerable number of cases of switching occurred even though the surface structure of the two languages is not equivalent. This violation of the syntactic rules and structures of either language can be used as evidence to refute the validity and universality of the three linguistic constraints. In the following paragraphs, counter examples of the 'equivalence structure' constraint where switches occurred within syntactic structures that are different in both languages, resulting in violating the surface form of either language will be discussed.

It has been argued (Poplack 1980) that switching is possible only within structures, which have the same surface form in both languages and if it does not violate the surface syntactic rules of the languages involved. Worthwhile mentioning examples of non-equivalence structures of Arabic and French where the codeswitching occurred are the following. First is the case of switching between subject and main verb. In Arabic the required ordering of constituents in declarative sentences is mainly VSO (verb-subject-object), however, in French declarative sentences, the required order is SVO (subject-verb-object) where the subject must precede the verb. The data include instances of switching between subject and verb in an Arabic surface structure (VSO) as in examples 5(F) and 5(I). Bentahila et al. (1983) strongly supports the findings of this study. Bentahila et al. (1983) found that their French-Arabic codeswitching data exhibited a number of violations of this constraint. Codeswitches occurred between subject and main verb in cases where French declarative sentences require a SVO order of elements and Arabic sentences require a VSO ordering.

Another counter example of 'equivalence structure' constraint is the case of switching between adjectives and nouns. Although, in both Arabic and French the place of adjectives is after the nouns they modify, in French, however, there are some other adjectives that must precede their nouns. In this study, there is evidence of switches by these Moroccan speakers between adjectives and nouns in cases where French adjectives normally precede a noun, and where Arabic requires the opposite order.

Another worth mentioning difference between French and Arabic structures is the use of a definite article before an adjective. Arabic requires that an adjective within a definite noun phrase to be accompanied by a definite article, for example, in Arabic, we have /lmalik lmagbut/, literally 'the king the happy'. In French, however, the adjective is not preceded by a definite article. Yet switches were found in the data in both directions .

Last but not the least is the difference of number of determiners in noun phrases between the two languages. In French, a noun is only preceded by a single definite or indefinite determiner. While this is true in Arabic, there are cases where a noun may contain a sequence of two determiners as the indefinite determiner /waħed/, and the demonstratives /had/ and /dak/ that must be followed by a definite article. In this study, there were instances of switches between Arabic determiner and French noun and vice versa in an Arabic surface structure as in examples 3 (F) /had la ville/, literally ‘that the city’, 3 (I) /waħed le programme/, literally ‘one the program’.

Different studies involving different language pairs such as Berk-Seligson’s study (1986) on Hebrew-Spanish, Bokamba’s (1988) study on Lingala-French and Swahili-English, and Myers-Scotton’s studies (1988,1993) on Swahili-English also revealed counter-examples of ‘equivalence structure’ constraint that violate the two languages syntax. For example, in Berk-Seligson’s (1986) study, the Spanish structure was violated when a Spanish noun was followed by a Hebrew lexeme for ‘another’, *gwenga axeret* (language another) ‘another language (1986:332). Also, in Myers-Scotton’s (1988), one of the cases was that for noun phrases, a noun and a modifying adjective followed Swahili order not that of English even though both the noun and adjective are English (Myers-Scotton 1988: 74).

7. Conclusion

In this present study, I have attempted to test the validity and universality of the three linguistic constraints ‘the equivalence of structure’, ‘the free morpheme, and ‘the size-of-constituent’ by examining some instances of codeswitching between the syntactically divergent languages Moroccan Arabic and French. Our data revealed that restrictions predicted by these constraints and which have previously been claimed to hold for codeswitching were ruled out by these Arabic Moroccan-French codeswitching. Instances of switching such as between verb and object and between noun and adjective that occurred despite the syntactic difference between the two languages result in ungrammatical sentences in either Arabic or French. The data also revealed that the size of constituent constraint has been violated. Contrary to the claim that major constituents such as sentences and clauses tend to be switched more frequently than smaller ones such as nouns, determiners, verbs, etc., these Arabic Moroccan-French bilinguals favor smaller constituents. Moreover, it was found that switches occurred across word internal morpheme boundaries consisting of inflectional morphemes from Arabic and a stem morpheme from French.

Although this study provides useful information about codeswitching among Arabic-French speakers, the generalizations that we arrive at should be considered with care since this study involves only 4 speakers. More research studies should be conducted involving more speakers, for example adult Moroccan speakers with different levels of education, age, and length of immigration. More research should also involve young Moroccan or children who have immigrated young to Canada.

Moreover, more research is needed involving other syntactically divergent language pairs in order to generalize the claim of supporting or refuting the universality of the equivalence of structure’, size-of-constituent, and free morpheme constraints. The study should also be repeated using other data collection procedures. Most studies that investigated syntactic constraints on code-switching, (e.g., Gumperz 1976; Kachru 1977) have depended on elicitation experiments where examples of code switching patterns are presented to bilinguals who are requested to evaluate and judge their acceptability. According to Bentahila et al., this procedure was argued to lack objectivity because rejecting some patterns of codeswitching by respondents cannot be always based on syntactic reasons. Rejecting some patterns can, however, be motivated by various factors notably “availability of vocabulary, the connotations of particular items, and special stylistic effects” (Bentahila et al. 1983:308). Other studies have used recorded conversations of speakers who were told that they were being recorded and in some cases were told about the goal of the investigator. This procedure of collecting data has also been criticized as being not advisable. Since the speakers are aware of the goal

of research, they may have been conscious and careful about their speech and have tended to modify it in order to please the researcher. (Bentahila et al. 1983:307)

This study only focused on the syntactic patterns of Arabic-French code switching and on the language typological factors that contribute to codeswitching and lead to variation in codemixing patterns. Further research should investigate other factors and issues that account for Arabic-French codeswitching in particular and other languages pairs such as degree of bilingual proficiency, different social class, ethnic origins, topics, type of different interactive settings, and language attitude.

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