
**Code-Switching and the Linguistic Identity in Ilias Khoury's
*Gate of the Sun***

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Abstract

Code-Switching is the capacity of a bilingual individual or a multilingual individual to utilize more than one language instantly to serve the current purpose. Though most sociolinguists see that the reason behind using code switching is the lexical need, i.e. to fit in, to get something, or because of lizard brain, it is the issue of identity that makes many speakers code switch. The present paper investigates the cases of code switching in Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* and the reason behind that is also to shed light on the translated version of the novel and the short comings of code switching in the translation. Hence, the present paper has devoted a reference to the mistakes found in the process of translating the text. The findings show that it is the case of the linguistic identity stands behind making many characters code switch, not because they miss the suitable word, but rather they are more likely to express their linguistic identity.

Key words: bilingual, code-switching, solidarity, speech community.

1. Introduction

Code-switching is the system of moving back and forth between two languages or between two dialects of the same language at one time. It is a conversational strategy used to establish group boundaries or to evoke solidarity among community.

Within the field of linguistics, code-switching was primarily studied, especially in the 1950s through the 1970s, by psycholinguists. Their hypotheses, however, about the “control system” of “single-switch mode” and “two-switch model” were easily compromised and were not sufficiently supported by concrete evidence. Sociolinguistics took over this field of study and, ever since the 1970s, has made rich contributions to its discussion and research. Early sociolinguists first supported the “lexical need” explanation for code-switching. According to this explanation, code-switching takes place between two language variations because of the lack of a precise equivalent in one variation that the other variation can remedy. This meant that some bilingual/diglossic communities are always in a kind of code-switching mode.

Language, which is composed of words that are basically no more than arbitrary signs, expresses its significance through individuals who use it. This shows the “way individuals situate

themselves in relationship to others, the way they group themselves, the powers they claim for themselves and the powers they stipulate to others” (Rosina, 1997:31). We manipulate language to refer to social allegiances, in other words, which groups such allegiances are members of and which groups they are not. Moreover, we manipulate language to bring about and maintain role relationships among individuals as well as between groups in such a manner that proves the fact that the linguistic variety by a community shape a sort of system that stands equally to the structure of their society. Brown and Gilman (1960: 253) on studying the semantics of pronoun address, came to a conclusion that there is “co-variation between the pronoun used and the objective relationship existing between speaker and addressee”. Although they focused on pronoun use, their argument can be made as a general rule to include any of a speaker's linguistic options. Speakers put themselves in a relation to other individuals through the use of specific linguistic forms through which they convey social information. A single word utterance is capable of revealing much about a speaker in terms of his or her background, place of birth, nation of origin, social allegiance, or if he or if she wants to be intimate or distant, familiar or unfamiliar, superior or otherwise. (Gumperz, 1972:220).

The present paper aims to answer questions such as: Why do people code switch? Do they use code switching to fill the lexical need? to express solidarity? To exclude others? Or to express identity?

In this paper, the researcher argues that code-switching into *amiyya* from *fusha* in *Gate of the Sun* happens in places when the issue of identity is at stake. In other words, language is manipulated here to reveal the identity of people in the novel.

2. Code-Switching: Definition and Examples

Gumperz (1982:56) defines Code-switching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two grammatical systems or subsystems”. This phenomenon takes place virtually within every bilingual or diagnostic community. The term “code-switching,” significantly, was first introduced as a specialized term in the 1940s by the field of Information Technology. Years later, it was adopted by the ambitious field of linguistics. The term is usually confused with a number of other terms, like “diglossia,” “code shifting,” “code mixing,” “style shifting,” and “borrowing.” This confusion still exists in spite of, or probably because of, the rich literature discussing these terms and the relationships among them. More recently, the term “language interaction’ was proposed as an umbrella term for all the above-mentioned terms (Coulmas, 1998: 78).

Auer (1984: 47) believes that there are certain differences between situational and conversational code-switching. The former takes place when a change occurs (of speaker, topic, setting, etc.); to illustrate the above mentioned point, consider the following example: you would certainly speak to an employer whom you employ with a different tone of language than addressing a friend who is close to you. Accordingly, you might switch from common language to a professional- speaker in certain settings. To enrich the above said example, here is another example on how many African Americans describe exchanging different roles in different settings using different micro- cultures and exchange talk about being very careful when talking using an academic vocabulary or when speaking in any interaction with a formal officer. The latter, i.e., conversational code switching happens when a various conversational function is fulfilled without change (of speaker, topic, setting, etc.), for example when “activating” a connotative expression in language A into a conversation in language B. According to this classification, the code-switching may be marked, i.e., set by strict, conventional rights and obligations, or unmarked, i.e., set by the casual flow of exchange. For instance, in a classroom a teacher says:

- *Saweyti l-homework maltik?* (Did you do your homework?)
- *Imseho il board!* (Clean the board!)

3. Types of Code-Switching

Brice and Brice (2009:67) argue that there are three types of code-switching can be distinguished. Namely:

3.1. Inter-Sentential

In inter-sentential code switching, the speaker's switch is done at sentence boundaries, i.e. words or phrases that occur at the beginning or the end of a sentence. For example: an officer asked his clerk to bring the date, he says: jeeb el data.

3.2. Intra-Sentential

In intra-sentential code switching, the shift is done in the middle of a sentence, with no interruptions, hesitations, or pauses to indicate a shift. For example, a child asked his mother: Mami sawili banana (Mami I want some banana).

3.3. Tag Switching

This is the switching of either a single word or a tag phrase (or both) from one language to another. It involves the insertion of a tag from one language into an utterance in another language. For instance, a father blamed his son for being late: You are too late, mo? (You are too late, aren't you?)

4. Data Description and Analysis

Ilias Khoury is a Lebanese novelist, playwright and critic. He has written more than ten novels. His *Gate of the sun* which is published

in 1998 talks about the Palestinians in Sabra and Shatella camps. The novel was translated to many languages.

As translation of the novel taken into account, it no doubt presented to the current paper some clear vision about code-switching which will be discussed within the field of asserting identity. Although the main interest of the present paper is to show how interlocutors exchange talks to celebrate their social identities and their relationship to their communities, translation has been the tool to embody such allegiance.

Ilias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* is written in (Modern Standard) Arabic. So, most of the descriptions and conversations are related in what is called "fusha" Arabic. Nonetheless, there are many instances when "amiyya" (non-standard Arabic) is used. To illustrate the above mentioned point, consider the following example. When Umm Hasan went to visit her house in the occupied Palestine, the Jewish lady, after telling her that she speaks Lebanese Arabic, asks Umm Hasan where she is from. Umm Hasan's answer was "Lebanon."

حين سمعت المرأة اليهودية اسم بيروت، انتفضت وتغير كل شيء.
 ((من بيروت))؟! صرخت. وصارت كلماتها تتطاير من بين شفثتها. ودمعت عيناها.
 ((اسمعي يا اختي))، قالت اليهودية، ((انا كمان من بيروت، من وادي ابو جميل، بتعرفي وادي ابو جميل، حي اليهود يللي بيصير في وسط البلاد. جابوني لهون وانا عمري ١٢ سنة. تزكت بيروت وجيت على هالارض الحفرا النفرا، بتعرفي مدرسة الالينانس، على يمين المدرسة في بناية من ثلاث طبقات، كان يملكها واحد يهودي اصله بولوني، اسمه ايلي برون. انا من هناك)).

((انت من بيروت))؟ سألت ام حسن بتعجب
 ((أيوه، من بيروت)).
 ((وكيف؟))

((شوف كيف، انا يللي مش عم بفهم، انت ساكنة ببيروت وجايي تبكي هون، انا يللي بدي ابكي، قومي روعي، قومي يا اختي روعي، ردي لي بيروت، وخذي هالارض المقطوعة)).
 (Gate of the Sun, 109)

Brown and Gilman (1960: 258) state that solidarity is a scale of perceived like-mindedness or similarity of behavioral disposition between a speaker and addressee. Solidarity can also be achieved in which interlocutors share fairly a number of common attribute such as attendance at the same school, work in the same field of profession, membership in the same offspring and family, etc.

Instances of solidarity abound in *Gate of the Sun*. A clear example of solidarity mentioned in *Gate of the Sun* is that the instance which took place between Umm Hasan and Dr. Khalil when Dr. Khalil wanted to pick up the orange from the orange tree that Umm Hasan had brought from Palestine and planted it:

-د. خليل: سأقطف البرتقالة من الشجرة
 - ام حسن: لا يا خيي هيدي البرتقال مو للاكل،،،، هيدي فلسطين!
 (Gate of the Sun, 189)

The most prominent instance of linguistic solidarity, however, when Umm Hasan went back to Palestine to visit her occupied house. She is accompanied by her brother, Fawzi, who speaks Hebrew. When they knocked the door, the new “lady” of the house came to answer the door and Fawzi began speaking to her in Hebrew. “Why are you speaking to me in Hebrew?” asked the lady, speaking in noticeable Lebanese Arabic, “Speak to me in Arabic.”

فوزي: اعتذر سيدتي، الخواجا هون؟
اليهودية: الخواجا ليس هنا.
ام حسن: هي بتعرف عربي، انت عربية، مو هيك؟
اليهودية: كلا انا لست عربية.
انا تعلمت العربية

(*Gate of the Sun*, 104)

Only after the (de facto) more powerful lady asked them to communicate with her in Arabic, did Fawzi and Umm Hasan switch into Palestinian Arabic to communicate with her and to and represent themselves as Palestinians/Arabs.

The researcher has found this example quite fascinating. However, if we take a look at the officially published English-language translation of *Gate of the Sun*, we would be disappointed to notice that the code-switching and its immensely suggestive significance are not represented in the translation done by Humphrey Davies. I personally respect Davies’ diligent translation, but I strongly object to his inattention to rendering a lot of significant code-switching instances. If I restrict myself to the above example, the first thing to notice is that *Khawaja* is simply (and simplistically) translated as “husband,” instead of the less-than-perfect, but still closer and more suggestive, “Mister.” *Khawaja* is a term used by Muslim Arab speakers to refer to a (usually non-Arab) non-Muslim person. Mister, I think, captures some, and by no means all, of the “distal” connotations implicated by *Khawaja*.

“Sorry, madam, is the Mister here?” Asked Fawzi

“No, my husband is not here. What’s up? Come on in!” and she opened the door

“She knows Arabic.” Umm Hasan murmured as she entered.
“You are an Arab, sister, right?”

“No, I’m not an Arab”

“You learnt Arabic?”

(*Gate of the Sun*, 106)

The translator also overlooked probably one of the best opportunity to render into English an instance of code switching. Umm Hasan asks the Jewish lady “You’re an Arab, right?” (translated as “You’re an Arab – aren’t you?” in Davies (106)). The researcher thinks the translator could have rendered the tail question “mo hayk?”

into the casual expression “right?” instead of using the more formal, if not artificial, tail question “aren’t you?” The translator chose to prioritize the pragmatic structural equivalent and the researcher believes this was a bad choice. (The translation abounds in such confusing structural equivalents, for instance, in the exchange cited above, we are not immediately sure, in Davies’ translation, if the Jewish woman spoke, “with a strong Lebanese accent” (Davies, 106), Hebrew or Arabic.)

ام حسن: يا الهي!!!
 شو هاد يلي عشنا، وشفنا
 شو بتمنى ما عشناه ولا شفناه!!!

(*Gate of the Sun*, 101)

This is what Umm Hasan says to people whenever she recalls her two visits to her house or sees the recording of these visits. Not only does Umm Hasan’s social allegiance is indicated (by the “author”) through code-switching, but her “choice” of amiyya vocabulary and structure is inclusive in the sense that her listeners feel much closer to her and it seems that her experience is an epitome of the calamities of the refugees in Shatila Camp. That Umm Hasan “died grieving over her house” (*Gate of the Sun*, 101) is very significant. Her linguistic community members also die grieving over their lost homes and they also seem to wish “what we’ve lived through and seen, [we] wish that we’d never lived through nor seen!”

When linguistic units are selected in compliance with the traditions of a society, so it follows that social knowledge about the speaker is transferred through the use of those linguistic units. Brown and Gilman (1960:276) argue:

So long as the [linguistic] choice...is recognized as normal for a group, its interpretation is simply the membership of the speaker in that group. However, the implications of group membership are often very important; social class, for instance, suggests a kind of family life, a level of education, a set of political views and much besides. These facts about a person belong to his character.

Interlocutors shape their identities by careful choice of the suitable linguistic features which will eventually convey the specific social information that identifies them as part of a particular speech community.

When linguistic options must be made in accordance with the “orderings of society,” so those choices carry social information about the speaker. Consequently, Gumperz reasons that the “communication of social information presupposes the existence of regular relationships between language usage and social structure” (Gumperz, 1982:220) Based on such assumption that this regular relationship between language and society, the linguistic varieties achieved by the

speech community constitute a system that goes in a harmony with the structure of society.

Dr Khalil keeps reminding Younis that he is a “farrari.” Younis came back to Ain Al-Helweh Camp and yelled at the people there that “we are not refugees. We are fugitives. We fight, kill, and get killed. We are not refugees.” (*Gate of the Sun*, 20)) Dr Khalil vividly remembers Younis emphasizing that they are all “ferraris.”

دكتور خليل: انت “فراري” يا يونس

يونس: انا لست لاجيء،،،، انا هارب،،، نحن نقاتل ونقتل،، ثم نقتل

It is quite fascinating to notice how Khalil quoted, out of many other words and expressions, a word from Younis’s recalled encounter and decided, maybe unconsciously, to keep it in its Palestinian form. One can say that this implies two important aspects. One, the word is the only irregularity and thus of most prominence in the story in the sense that the whole story is related in fusha Arabic and this is the only instance here where Khalil code-switches to Palestinian amiyya Arabic.

The second implication for using this specific word is more personal. Khalil used ferrari not necessarily as a stable label than to avoid the shame inherent in being called a (Palestinian) refugee—“refugee is a shameful word,” (*Gate of the Sun*, 20) said Younis. The sympathetic Lebanese officer is well aware that Younis is a ferrari, but he secured Younis’ release only by recording that he was a “crazy” refugee. If he had described him as a (crazy) ferrari, Younis would have not been released. This instance of conviction/acquitting through naming is itself beguiling. The conflict over labeling a certain person as a gorilla rebel or a freedom fighter is a classic example. The issue takes a much more interesting dimension in translation; translators prefer not to deal with these and like confusing formulas. What is fascinating about this issue is that a kind of interlanguage code-switching takes place here that finds expression in the target language. It is a code-switching that adheres to the locality of the conceptions and connotations imbedded in language.

This brings us to another important issue. It is worthy to note that each speaker in a community has several groups with which s/he might want to identify at any given time. Saville-Troike refers to this as a person’s “repertoire of social identities.” Each identity that a person takes on is “associated with a number of approximate verbal and nonverbal forms of expression” (Saville-Troike, 2008:20) There are certain linguistic forms that will convey each identity.

Differences in socialization lead to differences in speech communities resulting from such differences. According to Bernstein (2008:62), socialization is “the process whereby a child acquires a specific cultural identity and his responses to such an identity”. This

identity “[emerges] from [a child’s] transactions...within...[his/her] socio-cultural and historical context,” which is all of a person’s experiences within his/her culture(s), community, schools, family, media, and jobs (Lanehart, 2006:323). Over time, socialization limits possibilities for the child creating a “sense of inevitability of a given social arrangement” (Ibid.). In exposing to a culture by using language, a child learns to be male, or female, or English, or Japanese, or African-American, or Muslim, or Jewish, or to align himself/herself with any of the other social roles and statuses which are available to him/her in that culture. Hence, language learning becomes a means of identifying one’s identity in varying social environments (Saville-Troike, 2008:230-235).

اليهودية: تكلمو معي باللغة العربية؟
 انا درست العربية وتعلمتها ولكني لم انسى اللغة العبرية!
 فواز: هل انت عربية؟
 اليهودية: انا يهودية ولكني ولدت هون وبحكي عربي.

(*Gate of the Sun*, 144)

The example of the Jewish lady whom Umm Hasan called upon, in her second visit, to see her house in Palestine is a good example to illustrate this. The former moved into an occupied Umm Hasan’s house because she is a Jewish Israeli. And to either ascertain or comply with that part of her Jewish identity, she indulged in studying Hebrew in order to “learn” it. However, when she saw Umm Hasan and Fawzi, she instantly asked them to code-switch and speak to her in Arabic. ‘I learnt Hebrew,’ she told Umm Hasan, “but I didn’t forget Arabic.” She wanted to make prominent, out her “repertoire of social identities,” the Arab side of her identity, and not her Jewish identity. Zentilla(1997:197) believes that the constraints imposed on this lady by post-1948 catastrophes have left her in dilemma and an unfortunate identity problem. She is a Jewish Israeli young woman, and not an Arab even if this is something that she might not have desired to be under normal circumstances. It is an identity dilemma that, in many ways, characterizes *Gate of the Sun* as a whole.

Conclusion

The present paper concludes that code-switching in this novel does not take place for the sake of lexical need, but to assert the role of language variation in the construction of an identity: You are what you speak! If nothing, what telling (a story) and constructing (an identity) have in common is that they are both a form of fiction. In other words, code-switching takes place here not to hide the identity, but to celebrate it.

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التناوب اللغوي والهوية اللغوية في رواية الياس خوري الموسومة "باب الشمس"

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ألملخص

التناوب اللغوي هوقابلية المتحدث بلغتين او اكثر في كيفية استخدام لغة واحدة او اكثر من لغة بشكل مباشر لغرض خدمة الهدف الذي يبتغيه المتكلم. وعلى الرغم من ان اغلب المتخصصين في علم اللغة الاجتماعي يرى ان السبب الذي يكمن وراء اللجوء الى التناوب اللغوي هو الحاجة لاحلال مفردة تعبر عن مضمونها ومعناها ما استطاع المتحدث سبيلا الى ذلك، أي ان المفردة تكون مناسبة للحصول على شيء ما او بسبب نسيان المفردة. انها مسألة الهوية هي التي تجعل الكثير من المتحدثين اللجوء الى تغيير المفردة في الحديث . تبحت هذه الدراسة في حالات اللجوء الى التناوب اللغوي في رواية خوري الموسومة "باب الشمس" والسبب وراء ذلك هو لتسليط الضوء ايضا على النسخة المترجمة للرواية ونقاط الضعف لعملية تغيير المفردة عند الترجمة، ومن هنا فقد اشارت هذه الدراسة الى الاخطاء الموجودة عند ترجمة النص. وقد اظهرت نتائج الدراسة ان مسألة الهوية اللغوية والتي تجعل الكثير من شخوص الرواية يلجئون الى التناوب اللغوي ليس لانهم يفتقرون الى ايجاد الكلمة المناسبة بل لانهم يميلون اكثر الى التعبير عن هويتهم اللغوية.

المفردات التعريفية: ثنائي اللغة، التناوب اللغوي، تضامن، مجتمع الكلام.