Bilingual Palestinians' Attitudes towards Code-Switching

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Abstract: Prestige is a matter that concerns everyone as an attempt to follow the high class. The way people speak is one of the most noticeable factors that are used to determine if they are prestigious or not. Code-switching helps to create a new level of prestigious speech which is what we are trying to test in this study in the community of Hebron-Palestine. The purpose of this study is to investigate participants' attitudes towards Code-switching (whether it is prestigious or not) and what reasons led to these attitudes. Data were collected from 80 members of the society from different educational levels and different age categories using a questionnaire that was sent to participants online. The study revealed that that code-switching is considered prestigious and it reflects the level of education of people in the society. Society turns out to believe that code-switching is a sign of prestige after the dramatic growth of the use of social networking. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 24. Theoretical and practical implications were discussed. Researchers hope that this study will help other linguists who are trying to search in this field.

Keywords: Attitude, code-switching, Hebron University

1. Introduction

Speaking more than one language is a must these days. If one wants to be up-to-date, he has to master at least two languages and one of them has to be English since it is the dominant language of technology and science. Palestinian curriculum focuses on English besides the mother tongue of Palestinians which is Arabic (Farrah & Halahlah, 2020). Bilingualism in Palestine is making a noticeable impact on the everyday conversations of speakers in almost every field. English is spreading its wings to the point that the curriculum in universities is all English. Code-switching is normalized among Palestinians, especially after the widespread use of social media that has expanded the vocabulary of the individuals until they have started communicating using two languages at the same time (Mkahal, 2016). Both English and Arabic are prestigious languages; Arabic because of its great history and English because of its modernization and constant updating.

It is considered critical whether it is prestigious or not to code-switch in the Palestinian society in general, and in Hebron in specific since it is a city that holds all kinds of social levels. There isn't much research that has been done discussing the phenomena of prestigious code-switching in the city. As a citizen of the city that hears everyday dialogues that depend heavily on shifting between Arabic and English, The researchers consider it helpful to conduct a study that discusses the sociolinguistic aspect in the city to make up for the lack of studies that has been done about this specific matter as it may be a good reference for other linguistic studies. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the community's view about the prestigious use of English terms within the Arabic everyday speech. Moreover, it aims to observe the language used by the citizens. Furthermore, the researchers aim to assess the impact of globalization and social media on a non-English speaking community.

This study is important because it will help the linguistic assessment in the city by testing the mentality of the participants who create varied samples forms different fields. Moreover, it gives a space for the uneducated to participate in a study which is unusual since most of these studies are usually done on campus. Besides, it will open the doors for future and more specific studies of the same type which is a significant improvement in the field of linguistic studies in a city that holds plenty of multilingual users of languages.

2. Literature Review

Many previous studies highlight the use of the English language. These studies have discussed the use of English in different fields: code-switching, code-mixing, the use of English in online interaction and prestigious languages. According to Rafael, Shohamy and Trumper-Hecht (2006), "English can better be called a 'non-foreign language'" (p.81). They added that English is a second language in most countries due to globalization. These days multilingualism is an important phenomenon. As a result of this phenomenon, code switching has seen the light.

Nowadays, people use two or more languages in their speech, not like in the past. Badran (2020) mentioned in her sociolinguistic study that using another language rather than the mother tongue nowadays is a result of a generation gap between the young generation and their grandparents. As the young generation has a new view of the world. She added that the case of teaching English to the children in their early years of study in Palestine also made a gap in the use of other languages.

Code-switching is a phenomenon that appears as a result of speaking two or more languages. Code-switching can be defined briefly as "to switch from one language to another while speaking". Many definitions of code-switching are given by different researchers. Bokamba (1989, as cited in Sharaf Eldin, 2014) defined code-switching as "the mixing of words, phrases, and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event" (p.78). Octaviyanti (2017) considered code-switching as a non-intentional activity that is applied by bilinguals or multilinguals. Myers-Scotton (2006, as cited in Rammal, 2012) said that code-switching is the process of using two different languages while speaking.

The view toward the phenomenon of code-switching has changed over the years. According to Weinreich (1953), this phenomenon indicates that the person who switches is considered as not well-educated. However, nowadays this view has changed. In 2009, according to Brice and Brice, code-switching was considered a normal act applied by bilinguals and multilinguals. In a study that was conducted by Amani (2021) code-switching was viewed as a sign of modernization. He stated the effect of gender on code-switching in his study. He found out that females switch to English in their speech five times more than males do. In addition, the study showed that youth switch to English more than adults (between the ages of 51 and 37) do. He said that this happened because of youth's exposure to social media, education, or modernization. Alkhawaldeh (2019) pointed out people's attitudes toward code-switching. He said that some people's views were positive toward code-switching. They pointed out that the person who switches is more knowledgeable and educated. On the other hand, some people have a negative attitude toward this phenomenon. This is in line with Sadighian and Rahimi (2011) who viewed the process of code-switching as a matter of prestige. They regard the person as if he is showing off.

There are many reasons that stand behind the use of code-switching. Al-Ahdal (2020) mentioned three factors that lead a person to switch codes: prestige, linguistic deficit, and particular situations such as speaking with a bilingual friend. Also, Malik (1994, as cited in Mkahal, 2016) listed situations that lead the speaker to switch such as the speaker's mood or habit, to attract the audience's attention, to emphasize a point, or to show identity within a group.

Code-switching is a universal case. Many studies are done about it, but a few numbers of them are done on prestigious code-switching. The first impression that was made about code-switching is for a prestigious purpose. Sadighian and Rahimi (2011) mentioned that code-switching for prestigious purposes was not the center of research, but the main reason to have social prestige in a certain country that sees the other language as a prestigious one.

Fergusons (1959) talked about a phenomenon that's called diglossia that appeared as a result of contact between different languages or dialects with different prestigious levels. Diglossia is a phenomenon that happens when the society uses a high prestige dialect or language in particular situations like: in literature, media (newspapers, television and radio), educational institutions (universities and schools) and religious ceremonies. On the other hand, they use a lower dialect or language for other situations like daily conversations, letters, and in their popular culture.

Code-switching is frequently used in language classes. This process has many advantages. Taha (2008) pointed out that code-switching between Arabic and English is a pedagogical tool that is used to motivate students. Likewise, Li (2008) pointed out the same point about switching between Cantonese and English. He said that this process achieves many benefits. For example, it helps students psychologically because it reduces the social gap

between languages. Also, it encourages students to expand their vocabularies or concepts thus enabling them to achieve their communicative goals.

Creating linguistic solidarity is a merit of code-switching. This especially happens when students have the same culture. Burenhult and Flyman-Mattson (1999, as cited in Al-Yasin and Rabab'ah, 2017) called these "affective functions" (p.11). In addition, Al-Yasin and Rabab'ah (2017) pointed out that even if this process creates solidarity between the teacher and his students that supports the environment of the class; it is not always a good process in favor of the teacher.

Social media is a place where code-switching is noticeably taking place. Octaviyanti (2017) conducted a study to investigate the use and the benefit of code-switching on social media, especially Instagram which was highly used by people that year. He realized that people switch -in their captions- to inform others that they speak two or more languages. He opined that the best way of mastering any foreign language is to practice it through social media since it has become people's lifestyle nowadays.

3. Methodology

This section represents three main parts. It represents people who participated in this study. It represents their ages and educational level. It also shows the instrument and its details that were used to indicate this study. Finally, it concludes the process of collecting the data.

3.1 Participants

As it was a community survey, participants were from different types and levels of society. There were 80 participants. Regarding their age, 12 people were less than 20 years, 62 were between 20-30 years, 5 ranged between 31-40 years, and one person was over the age of 40. That means that *81.3%* of participants were aged between 20-30. According to their educational level the majority "*83.8%*" has a Bachelor's degree. They are distributed as follows: 67 of them have a Bachelor's degree, 6 (high/ middle school), 6 have diplomas and one of them has higher education.

3.2 Instrument

A questionnaire was used in this survey study as the research instrument "see Supplementary information". In addition to the demographic data, the questionnaire consisted of 16 questions: 14 close-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions. These 16 questions were asked in order to collect people's opinions on the phenomena of code-switching. Participants had to point out if they *strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.* As it was a community survey, it was translated into Arabic for better understanding by the community.

3.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was conducted online with different types and levels of people from the society. We shared this questionnaire on Instagram where people could easily go to the link. All participants were shown the description and the aim of the study at the beginning of the questionnaire in both English and Arabic languages. They were supposed to tick the degree of their agreement or disagreement from these four scales: *strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree*. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to answer 2 open-ended questions. Participants were not obliged to fulfill the last two questions. 62 of them answered the first one and 55 to the last.

4. Results and Discussion

The following sections present the results of the demographic data in part one of the questionnaire as it appears in table 1 and 2.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the participants over their age. It is clear that the age of majority of the participants ranged between 20 and 30. Only one participant was more than 41-year-old.

Table 1. The ages of participants.

Age	Frequency	Percent
Less than 20	12	15%
21-30	62	81.3%
31-40	5	6.3%
41 or more	1	1.3%
Total	80	100%

Table 2. The educational level of participants.

Educational level	Frequency	Percent
High school/Middle school	6	7.5%
Diploma	6	7.5%
Bachelor degree	67	83.8%
Higher education (Master degree, Professional degree, Doctorate degree)	1	1.2%
Total	80	100%

Table 2 shows the distribution of the participants over their educational level. It is clear that the of majority of the participants have bachelor degree. Only one participant has a postgraduate degree.

The Following Sections Presents the Results of Part Two of the Questionnaire:

Table 3. The attitudes of participants towards Code-switching.

No	Attitudes	M	SD
6.	Social media helps to increase the use of code-switching.	3.43	.591
13.	University classes must involve code-switching for a better understanding of their English curriculum.	3.34	.615
4.	I think code-switching happens unconsciously.	3.19	.677
1.	I use some English words in my everyday conversations.	3.14	.707
9.	As a Bilingual, it is sometimes more convincing to use both languages in my speech to deliver my message more clearly.	3.00	.827
8.	There are certain times and certain places where code-switching can be used.	2.96	.724
7.	There is a relationship between the level of education and the frequency of code-switching.	2.94	.769
2.	My level in English allows me to use it in my speech.	2.93	.883
12.	It is not acceptable to code-switch everywhere or at any time.	2.89	.914

10.	Code-switching affects the quality of speech of Arabic speakers.	2.65	.713
3.	I think using code-switching (English-Arabic shifting) is prestigious.	2.57	.689
5.	It bothers me if the person I am talking to has overused English in his speech.	2.56	.912
11.	Those who do not code-switch are weak users of the second language	1.98	.746

As table 3 reveals, 86% of the participants are speakers of both English and Arabic and the other 14% are not. There was a 60% agreement among the participants that they code-switch (use some English words in their Arabic speech as I formulated the statement). A great number of participants (almost 87%) believe that code-switching happens unconsciously. The percentage of those who believe that code-switching is prestigious is relatively close to those who believe that it's not, which is not surprising. Almost 66% of participants agreed that it bothers them when the speaker overuses code-switching. Most of the participants believe that it is not acceptable to use code-switching at any place and anytime and there are certain times and places where this switch of languages can be used. The causes of code-switching that are stated in the questionnaire seem to be convincing to the participants of the study because there is an obvious agreement among them regarding the level of education, social media, and the English curriculum that is offered to university students and their effect on code-switching. As for the level of education, 75% believe that the higher the education level is the more code-switching is likely to be used. Moreover, social media caused a dramatic increase in the use of code-switching from the point of view of 95% of the participants. Besides that, 92% of the participants agree that the English curriculum in universities plays an important role in the growing use of code-switching.

At the end of the questionnaire, two open-ended questions were asked. The researchers asked the participants to express their point of view about the reasons that make people use English codes in their speech. Among 62 responses to this question, there were various reasons that they expressed. There were certain reasons that were repeated many times by different participants. They said that people switch because: it's a kind of prestige, it's more convincing, it happened unconsciously, it's a sign of weaknesses in the use of one of the two languages, it's a habit and it is easier to explain an idea in English. Some participants agreed upon a few points when it comes to what makes people code-switch, such as practicing the language, delivering a clear message, or because social media and the environment surrounding them are full of bilinguals.

In the last question, the researchers asked the participants to list a few English words that they often hear on social media and are commonly used. There was a huge amount of words that they listed. Fifty-five participants replied to this question. These are some of the words that were repeated among the participants: "ok, done, already, anyway, whatever, omg, mention, meeting, feminism, literally, sure, thank you, hi, sorry, hide, block, delete, comments, sent, maybe, deal, please, obsessed, handmade, skincare, sold out, feedback, outfit, and influencer".

5. Discussion

Code-switching is a practice that is widely studied all over the world due to its great spread. Code-switching can be simply defined as the shifting between two languages in the same conversation. Collecting opinions about how all levels of society view code-switching helps to investigate how much this globalization aftereffect phenomenon is accepted not only at the high-level periphery but also among the commoners. Participants are from Hebron in Palestine where gaining social prestige is associated with speaking a prestigious modern language. Due to the western classification of the region as a third-world country, we are trying to follow the -first-world countries-prestigious evaluations.

5.1 Social media's effect on code-switching

This study took Place in Hebron-Palestine as a community survey. An online questionnaire was used and it was sent online to 100 participants but only 80 answered it. Respondents were various from all educational levels and all ages. They believed that social media has a major effect on using code-switching and considered it prestigious

based on what was found in the results when they were asked about social media's effect on code-switching in addition to two other open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

In the first open-ended questions, some reasons that stand behind using English codes in the speech provided by participants are also mentioned by other researchers. Some participants announced that people switch because it is easier to explain an idea in English. According to others, it is a sign of weaknesses in the use of one of the two languages. This is also connected to Karen (2003, as cited in Mkahal, 2016) who pointed out situations that make the person switch between two languages. She said that this is a mark that the person lacks words in one of the two languages. She added that there are some expressions that are easier to say in one language than the other.

In the last open-ended question, the words that are provided by participants are commonly used. If we were asked this question, we would answer in the same way because of the effect of social media on us. These words became very popular which makes the majority of people use them in their speeches. Social media nowadays is affecting people's lives in a way that it is what defines and shapes prestigious acts and prestigious words. The influencers of social media are really influencing those who watch them since their followers take them as role models. That means, since these influencers all code-switch, they brainwashed their followers that this is one of the factors that makes a member of the high society.

5.2 Universities' English curriculum effect on code-switching

Since there are many university students that have answered our questionnaire, there was a noticeable agreement among them that university classes must involve code-switching for a better understanding of their English curriculum. University students are the ones who face Code-switching the most since it happens daily between students with each other and students with their teachers. The curriculum is in English although it's an Arab country that requires practicing the English language constantly for mastering English and making it applicable to their Arabic reality. Code-switching, when it's education-related, isn't practiced for prestigious purposes but for the sake of the quality of education. This part of our survey can be related to the results of another part of the study when we said that as a Bilingual, it is sometimes more convincing to use both languages in my speech to deliver my message more clearly. The effectiveness of code-switching in universities made it a must to use it for both teachers and students away from social evaluations related to prestige. Many studies pointed out the importance of code-switching in classes. For example, Li (2008) said that the process of code-switching in classes encourages students to gain more vocabulary, expressions and concepts that help them achieve communicative goals. In addition to what Taha (2008) said, this process is considered as a pedagogical tool that motivates students.

5.3 Code-switching as an unconscious process

While 71 of the respondents actually code–switch, 69 respondents out of 80 agreed that code-switching happens unconsciously. When someone usually uses English as their second language, words stick in his mind and he starts using them without even realizing he is code-switching. That's what makes code-switchers hard to judge sometimes since they do not control that habit. When code-switching happens that way, it can sound prestigious to those who hear it but it is not intended for it to sound like that. This result goes directly with the definition of code-switching by Octaviyanti (2017) who regarded it as a non-intentional activity that's practiced by bilinguals or multilinguals. In addition to Brice and Brice (2009) considered this phenomenon as a normal act applied by bilinguals or multilinguals.

Although code-switching is used commonly, a lot of participants think it is not acceptable to switch whenever and wherever. There are certain times and places where code-switching can be unreasonable to use. When using code-switching, one has to take into account the level of comprehension of the person one is speaking to. Some people use code-switching with others when they know they cannot actually understand the English codes they are using which makes them sound bumptious and selfish since they make the listener feel less, incapable to keep up with them, and uncomfortable. Prestige can be gained that way but respect won't be well-deserved.

5.4 Code-switching effect on the Arabic language

Much less agreement was noticed when we asked about whether code-switching affects the quality of speech of Arabic speakers. Almost half of the respondents disagreed with us which means code-switching can be polluting the original Arabic language, but this pollution can be controlled by emphasizing the authenticity of the Arabic language in the Arabs' minds focusing on the fact that Arabic is a sophisticated and prestigious language. The great heritage of the Arabic language makes it a leading language that serves its speakers in every field which makes the competition with the English language a very strong one.

5.5 Code-switching as a prestigious phenomenon

The number of those who think that code-switching is prestigious is close to those who think it is not. Those who think that it is actually prestigious exceeded a little. The evaluation of such phenomena depends on the acceptance of the community of new additions to their culture, and according to my experience in my community, they do not accept new phenomena that fast. This is usually the case that people's attitude toward code-switching is divided into either positive or negative. This was also the conclusion of Alkhawaldeh's study (2019) who said that some people see code-switching as a good process that marked them as knowledgeable and educated. On the other hand, some of them regarded it as an activity of showing off and a matter of prestige. In addition, Al-Ahdal (2020) mentioned prestige as a factor that led people to switch codes.

6. Conclusion

This study aims to collect opinions about code-switching as a prestigious matter in Hebron-Palestine. After observing the phenomenon in the city, we come to the conclusion that the evaluation of code-switching (whether it is prestigious or not) depends on the situations that code-switching is used in and on the people, it is used with. In universities, people do not think of code-switching as something that happens on purpose or can be judged. However, in public, the situation is different since it's not always suitable or appropriate to code-switching. Those who code-switch must pay attention to the other part of the conversation to make sure they can keep up with them or not, if they cannot, it's not preferable to keep using code-switching. Moreover, there was an agreement about the reasons for code-switching, which are three reasons: high educational level, social media, and the English curriculum in universities.

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Conflict of interest
The Authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.