

MULTILINGUAL PRACTICES OF ALGERIAN EFL LEARNERS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS: A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

Kamila Ammour

Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria

Abstract: *The recent academic discourse has been prominently centred on the scrutiny of the intricate relationship between language and emerging technologies. In this regard, the present study sets out to explore the multilingual practices of Algerian EFL learners in digital environments, taking students at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou as a case in point. The study targets three main objectives. First, it attempts to scrutinise the participants' use of different languages to fulfil different communicative functions. Second, it seeks to bring to light their motives for making choices among their linguistic repertoire. Third, it delves into the utilization of English as a foreign language within virtual environments. This case study draws on a theoretical framework of the sociology of language choice from a functional specialisation perspective (Jacobson, 1960; Halliday et al., 1964; Appel & Muysken, 2005). To this end, the mixed-methods research is adopted. A questionnaire was designed to collect data, which were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques and interpretive analysis. Findings highlight participants' subconscious language choice across different situations, indicating the transfer of their face-to-face communication skills to virtual contexts. Additionally, the findings suggest that social media platforms have a beneficial effect on the adoption of English within digital learning settings.*

Keywords: *Algerian EFL learners, Digital Learning Environment, Functions of language, Multilingualism, Sociology of language choice.*

About the author: *Dr Kamila Ammour is a senior lecturer at the department of English, Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. She holds a PhD in English Language with a specialisation in English Language Teaching. Her teaching areas include research methodology, writing academic research, general linguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and ELT. She is now investigating issues pertaining to English Language Teaching & learning, Web Didactics, Sociocultural Approach to Literacy, and Critical Discourse Analysis.*

e-mail: *kamila.ammour@ummto.dz;*

ORCID iD: *<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7100-7291>*

Copyright © 2024 Kamila Ammour

Article history: Received: 16 December 2023; Reviewed: 21 February 2024; Revised: 4 March 2024; Accepted: 18 March 2024; Published: 15 April 2024.



This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): Ammour, K. (2024). Multilingual practices of Algerian EFL learners in digital environments: A functional approach. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT*, 12(1), 27-43. <https://doi.org/10.46687/BORG9626>.

Introduction

In Algeria, like many communities in the world, multilingualism is a norm rather than an exception. Indeed, a glance at the Algerian historical background helps to understand the coexistence of several languages in the country. Those languages can be categorised into three groups: mother tongues, national languages, and foreign languages. Varieties of Berber and Algerian Arabic are the mother tongues spoken in different parts of the country. The classical Arabic and Berber are the two national languages as stated in the Algerian constitution. As far as foreign languages are concerned, French has a particular position in the Algerian linguistic repertoire as it has been described by Kateb Yacine as “butin de guerre” [the spoils of war]. In addition to French, English is increasingly gaining ground in Algeria as a second foreign language.

Nowadays, Virtual communication becomes an integrated component of our daily life. According to Duggan and Brenner (2013), two-thirds of internet users indulge into virtual communication through social networks and virtual communities. Algerian EFL students, like their peers worldwide, are increasingly engaging on social media platforms to exchange and share information. Being multilingual, Algerian EFL students face a double challenge when communicating online. The first aspect concerns the enhancement of online communication skills, while the second pertains to the selection of language within EFL communities during various communicative situations.

Exploring the link between multilingualism and the social networking sites is likely to lead to a better understanding of students’ digital literacy skills and would provide insights into the impact of new technologies on the Algerian EFL students’ academic achievement. In this regard, the overall aim of the study is to investigate the use, the choice as well as the reasons behind the selection of one language among several others to express different communicative functions in multilingual digital context. Accordingly, the research questions developed for the study are:

1. How do Algerian EFL students use their multilingual linguistic repertoire in virtual settings?
2. What are the reasons behind the participants’ conscious or subconscious choice of languages in online settings?
3. How do Algerian EFL students perceive the use of English in virtual communication?

Review of the Literature

Multilingualism in Algeria

During the last decades, much scholarly attention has been oriented towards the study of multilingualism. The latter is an interdisciplinary phenomenon that can be analysed from different perspectives. To serve the purposes of the present study, two definitions of the concept are provided from an individual and a social perspective. According to Li (2008, p. 4) a multilingual individual can “communicate in more than one language, be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading)”. As regards societal multilingualism, it refers to the use of different languages within a group or a social community. Its scope is wider as it embraces issues related to language policies, the status of language users in society, etc. (Edwards, 2007).

As far as the Algerian context is concerned, Algeria is officially a bilingual country, but de facto multilingual. Indeed, Algeria was the target of a variety of invasions in its history leading to the coexistence of many language varieties.

Montagnon (1998, p. 21) asserts that Berber is the oldest language in the Maghreb region, used by the indigenous and most ancient population of Algeria. With the Arab conquests in the seventh century, much of the Algerian population was converted to Islam, despite resistance from some Berber groups, particularly in regions like Aures and Kabylia, where Berber remains the primary language for most individuals (Ammour, 2020, p. 78).

The Algerian constitution of 1963 designated Modern Standard Arabic, also known as Classical Arabic, as the official language. In April 2002, Berber was granted recognition as a ‘National language’, seen as pivotal to Algerian identity alongside Classical Arabic and Islam. Subsequently, in 2016, Tamazight was elevated to the status of a national and official language, rendering Algeria officially bilingual according to its constitution. However, it is important to note that Classical Arabic predominates in formal contexts, while Berber is predominantly utilized within certain educational spheres. In their day-to-day interactions, Algerians utilize a range of vernacular languages, including various Berber dialects (such as Kabyle, Chaoui, etc.), Algerian Arabic with its diverse accents, as well as French and English.

Multilingual Practices

In multilingual settings, mixing two or more languages is becoming a norm. According to Hudson (1996), code-switching is an immediate consequence of multilingualism. Multilingual speakers switch through different languages or different varieties or dialects of the same language within the same conversation not due to a lack of knowledge but to perform different communicative functions.

Trudgill (2002, p.81) states that “the same speaker uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes.”

Code mixing or code switching has been perceived and defined differently by different scholars. From a linguistic standpoint, scholars like Halliday (1978), Poplack (1980) and Romaine (1989) describe code switching according to the syntactic or morphological mixtures taking place within the conversation. Two main types are depicted. The first type relates to inter-sentential code switching. A speaker starts a sentence in one language, then utters another sentence in another language or dialect. The switch takes place at the sentence or clause boundaries. The second type of code switching is best illustrated in Poplack’s research title “Sometimes I’ll start a sentence in English y termino en español”. This type is called intra-sentential code switching; it occurs within the clause or the sentence. Halliday (1978, p.65) defines this type as “a process within the individual: the speaker moves from one code to another and back, more or less rapidly in the course of a single sentence”.

From a social standpoint, scholars (Gumperz, 1982; Hudson, 1996) categorise code switching into ‘situational’ and ‘conversational’, which is also known as ‘metaphorical’. The former is determined by the social situation. Put differently, different languages or different language varieties are employed according to the setting (home, school, work), the social activity (public speaking, formal negotiations, special ceremonials, verbal games, etc.) or the audience (friends, family members, strangers, social inferiors, government officials, etc.). This type of code switching is more apparent in diglossic situations (Blom & Gumperz, 1972 in Gumperz, 1982, p. 60). In this context, Hudson (1996, p.52) states: “language choice depends on the circumstances and thus the choice is controlled by social rules which members of the community learn from their total linguistic knowledge.”

Conversational or metaphorical code switching relates to a change in language without any change in the sociolinguistic situation. The reason of shift is more semantic-oriented. Gumperz (1982, p.162) explains this type as follows

The language switch relates here to particular kinds of topics or subject matters rather than to change in social situation. The semantic effect of metaphorical switching depends on the existence of regular relationships between variables and social situation of the type just discussed. The context in which one of a set of alternates is regularly used becomes parts of its meaning, so that when this form is then employed in a context where it is normal, it brings in some of the flavor of this original setting.

Conversational code switching is generally used as a communication strategy to achieve specific communicative functions.

In EFL contexts, code switching is perceived as “the use of a first or third language within a stream of speech in the second language” (Brown, 2007,

p.139). Numerous studies documented in the literature have endeavored to examine code switching in EFL classrooms, primarily focusing on pedagogical aspects. These investigations analyze various facets such as teachers' discourse (e.g., Rabab'ah & Al-Yasin, 2017), the incorporation of the mother tongue in classroom interactions, or the effects of code switching as a teaching strategy on learners' academic performance (e.g., Kumar et al., 2021).

In contrast to previous research, this study aims to investigate EFL learners' utilization of multiple languages in diverse online communication contexts. The primary objective is to explore code switching as a multilingual practice and communication strategy among Algerian EFL students engaged in virtual interactions.

Language Choice: A Functional Approach

The present study draws upon an analytical framework related to the sociology of language choice from a functional specialisation perspective. At the core of the framework lies the idea that language use involves various functions of the language system. It integrates deterministic and person-oriented approaches to language choice within the same framework.

The functioning of languages in bilingual and multilingual settings, requires a particular set of norms for the speakers, and a functional specialization of the languages involved. Following the functional framework of Jakobson (1960) and Halliday et al. (1964), Appel and Muysken (2005) suggested a model to explain the switching between languages on the basis of the choice of a given language. Six functions are distinguished.

Within the domain of linguistic functions, language serves various fundamental roles. The Referential Function primarily involves the transmission of knowledge through language, often considered the cornerstone of language use (Appel & Muysken, 2005, p. 29). In multilingual contexts, specific subjects may be more appropriately discussed in particular languages. The Directive Function, on the other hand, is focused on influencing the behavior and actions of others and takes various forms, directly engaging the listener in interactions. It utilizes customary greetings, modes of address, questions, formal expressions, imperatives, and exclamations to establish and facilitate interaction among participants. The Expressive Function, on the other hand, is a means for speakers to convey their emotions and unique identities, although it may present challenges for monolingual individuals (Appel & Muysken, 2005, p. 30). The Phatic Function is primarily employed for social purposes, such as initiating or concluding conversations, confirming the connection between sender and receiver, and designating the in-group within the communication context. It relies on conventionalized openings, closings, and turn-taking signals to establish and maintain a communication channel. The Metalinguistic Function

uses language to reveal the speaker's perspectives and awareness of linguistic conventions. Finally, the Poetic Function focuses on the creative and playful aspects of language, aiming to emphasize information through various forms of wordplay and linguistic creativity, making the use of language enjoyable (Appel & Muysken, 2005, p. 30).

To explain the relationship between different functions of language and language choice, Appel and Muysken (2005, p. 30) state that "different languages may fulfil different functions in the lives of bilingual speakers, and in bilingual conversations a choice for one particular language may signal the primary functions appealed to at that moment".

Methods

Data Collection Procedure

This empirical study was carried out with 180 students from Mouloud Mammeri university of Tizi-Ouzou during the academic year 2021-2022. The study involved Master students enrolled in the Department of English. Convenience sampling was employed as the sampling method, which is a form of nonprobability sampling where individuals from the target population who meet specific practical criteria are included for study purposes (Dörnyei, 2007). The criterion of selection was the participants' participation in EFL chatting groups in social media.

In order to reach the maximum number of participants and ensure validity of the study, a questionnaire was designed as the most appropriate instrument. This research tool was used to yield two types of data: the students' multilingual habits in online conversations as well as their perceptions and opinions about their different practices. Consisting of 7 closed-ended items, and 6 open-ended ones, the designed questionnaire is based on two models of research: quantitative and qualitative.

The questionnaire is divided into three main Sections. The first section consists of information about the respondents including their mother tongue(s), the foreign language(s) they speak, and their participation in online EFL chatting groups. The second section is devoted for the participants' multilingual practices online to explore the languages they use to fulfil different communicative functions. In addition, some open-ended questions are asked to request details of the participants' awareness and their motives for choosing a specific language for a specific situation. The last section is composed of two items aiming to get insights about the participants' use of English in online conversations.

Data Analysis Procedure

To analyse the data collected from the questionnaires, it was important to start by categorising them into quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were analysed by means of descriptive statistics to describe the frequencies and the means. As regards the qualitative data, they were interpreted by means of content analysis. Both types of data were interpreted on the basis of the theoretical framework. The findings as well as their interpretation are presented in the next section.

Results and Discussion

This empirical study was conducted to explore the way Algerian EFL students make use of their linguistic repertoire in online settings. As the main aim of any research is to give answers to research questions, the findings are grouped and discussed according to the issues raised at the outset of the research.

Participants' Profile

In order to circumscribe the profile of the participants and ensure that they meet the criterion selected for the empirical study three questions were asked:

1. What is/ are your mother tongue(s)?
2. What is/are the foreign language(s) that you speak?
3. Are you a member of any group of EFL learners in social networks?

A common feature among all the participants is their foreign languages repertoire; all of them speak French and English. Regarding their mother tongues, they can be categorised into three categories as follows

Table 1. *Participants' Linguistic Repertoire*

Participants	Mother tongue (s)	Foreign Language (s)
73%	Berber	
19%	Algerian Arabic	French and English
8%	Berber & Algerian Arabic	

As regards the second question, all the participants participate in online conversations within EFL groups. Accordingly, all of them meet the criterion of selection to participate in the empirical study.

Online Multilingual Practices across Different Communicative Functions

In order to account for the online multilingual practices of the participants, 7 questions were asked. The first item of this section was

What are the languages that you use to communicate online with EFL students?

In addition to their mother tongues, all the participants stated that they use different languages in online conversations including: French, English and Classical Arabic. This confirms the multilingual character of the Algerian society. Moreover, it seems that the Algerian EFL students transfer their linguistic abilities from real face-to-face communication to virtual contexts.

The next five items aim to exactly determine the targeted communicative functions of each language used online.

- Tick the communicative function(s) in which you use English online.
- Tick the communicative function(s) in which you use Berber online.
- Tick the communicative function(s) in which you use Algerian Arabic online.
- Tick the communicative function(s) in which you use Classical Arabic online.
- Tick the communicative function(s) in which you use French online.

the participants were asked to tick among a list of functions the ones in which they respectively use Berber, Algerian Arabic, Classical Arabic, English, and French.

- Specific topics
- Sharing knowledge
- General truth
- Greetings
- Imperatives
- Expressing feelings and emotions
- Asserting identity
- Focusing on important points of the conversation
- Discussing issues related to language
- Riddles, jokes, puns, etc.

The following table summarises the findings of the five items

Table 2. *Language (s) Used for Different Functions*

Communicative Events	Corresponding Communicative Function	The Language(s) Used	Frequency (the cumulative percentage of all communicative events corresponding to the function)
Specific topics Sharing knowledge General truth	Referential Function	English	71 %
		Classical Arabic	58%
		French	51.7 %
		Algerian Arabic	32.1%
		Berber	25.8%
Greetings Imperatives	Directive Function	English	82.3%
		Berber	81.1%
		Algerian Arabic	79.5%
		French	52%
Expressing feelings and emotions Asserting identity	Expressive Function	Berber	94%
		Algerian Arabic	91.5%
		English	42%
		French	13%
Focusing on important points of the conversation	Phatic Function	All languages	100%
Discussing issues related to language	Metalinguistic Function	English	100%
Riddles, jokes, puns, etc.	Poetic Function	Berber	92%
		Algerian Arabic	91.2%
		Classical Arabic	85%

The above table displays results related to the participants’ use of different languages in different online communicative events. Of the six functions, the only one expressed exclusively in one language is the metalinguistic function expressed in English. Being EFL learners, this result is not surprising. To improve their linguistic abilities, EFL learners engage in real communication in English to discuss issues related to language as a system like the peculiarities of the foreign language, grammatical structures, the use of idiomatic expressions, etc.

All the other functions are expressed by using different languages. However, it is clear from the displayed results that not all the languages are used in the same way, for the same purposes, or in the same rates. “The fact that speakers select different languages or varieties for use in different situations shows that not all languages / varieties are equal or regarded as equally appropriate or adequate

for use in all speech events”. (Romaine, 2003, p. 517). So, we can, safely, claim that the participants have a variety of languages or language varieties with different functions at their disposal; they switch among languages across different communicative events.

What can be concluded from the analysis is the Algerian EFL students’ perception of their mother tongues and foreign languages. Unlike what was expected, the participants perceive Algerian Arabic and Berber in the same way as a symbol of their identity and of their ‘Algerianity’. The results have shown that both are used for directive, expressive, phatic, and poetic functions with almost the same rates whatever the mother tongue of the participant is. They are used to hold everyday conversations, to express feelings like happiness and sadness, and to assert their identity. As Holmes (2001, p.35) suggests, “a speaker may similarly switch to another language as a signal of group membership and shared ethnicity with an addressee”.

Classical Arabic’s use, even though it is an official language in Algeria, is confined to two different functions ‘referential’ and ‘poetic’. As far as French and English are concerned, the two languages are still perceived as languages of science and knowledge. They are mainly used for ‘referential’ function to discuss or debate content-related issues. It is worth noting that a slight difference is noticed between French and English. Since the participants are EFL students, English is exclusively used for the metalinguistic function.

In a nutshell, the participants classify their languages according to the context in which they are used. In other words, communicative objectives imply a certain functional separation.

Conscious and Subconscious Practices

In order to understand the functional separation of languages, and better explore the reasons behind the code switching among languages as well as reasons for the classification established by the participants, two questions are asked:

- Could you explain why and how do you make choices among your linguistic repertoire when communicating online?
- Are you conscious of the selection of languages when you chat online? why?

Some of the answers given by the participants for the first item were:

- “Switching among languages is inevitable. We use different languages in our daily life. It is the same thing online”.
- “Since we speak different languages, we cannot limit ourselves to the use of a single language. I think that using different languages is something that we should take profit of”.

- “Sometimes I switch to other languages because I don’t find the correct word or expression in English”.
- “The mother tongue is very important for my identity. Whenever I chat online, I feel the need to express and show myself as a unique individual by expressing my identity”.
- “There are things that I cannot explain but I think that each language should be used in a specific situation. I cannot tell jokes in English; I cannot speak about religion in French or English; I should use classical Arabic”.
- “Telling jokes in Berber or Algerian Arabic is not as nearly as expressive as telling them in English”.

As far as the second item is concerned, here is a summary of the collected data:

Conscious	Unconscious
26.8%	73.2%

When asked to explain their degree of awareness about their practices, the participants’ answers can be grouped into two categories. The first category relates code switching to the status of each language in their daily life. As it has been said earlier, the participants are transferring their face-to face practices to virtual settings. Switching among the mother tongues in addition to French, which has a particular status in Algeria, is unconscious among Algerian students in this area of the country. Belmihoub (2018, p. 2) holds that “code-switching using a Berber variety, Derja, and French is common among Berber speakers”. Similarly, Gumperz (1982, p. 61) explains the unconsciousness of speakers when using different codes within the same conversation as follows

participants immersed in the interaction itself are often quite unaware which code is used at any one time. Their main concern is with the communicative effect of what they are saying. Selection among linguistic alternants is automatic, not readily subject to conscious recall

The second category relates to participants who are aware of their switching depending on the aim and the topic of the conversation, in addition to their mastery of the language. They reported that they switch to Classical Arabic whenever they want to discuss religious-related subjects. In addition, they switch from foreign languages to mother tongues as a consequence of their lack of knowledge. Conversely, they switch from mother tongues to foreign languages to discuss knowledge-related issues. This type of switching relates to metaphorical code switching to fulfil the referential function. The same results are reported in an empirical study in real interaction by Appel & Muysken. They state

this type of switching [referential function] is the one that bilingual speakers are most conscious of. When asked why they switch they tend to say that it is because they do not know the word for it in the other language, or because the language chosen is more fit for talking about a given subject. (2005, p. 118)

The Use of English in Virtual Contexts

The final section of the questionnaire aimed to uncover the participants' perspectives regarding the utilization of English in virtual communication. Two specific questions were posed:

Do you notice any difference when using English in face-to-face communication or online communication?

As an EFL student, how do you feel when using English to communicate online?

As reported by the participants, they acknowledged a disparity between using English in physical and virtual environments. They mentioned that they feel less anxious online as they have enough time to think. In addition, conversations with their classmates online are more beneficial, motivational and helpful in sharpening their linguistic skills as they do their best to use English. This result is in line with what was reported in the literature on the topic in relation to anxiety and online communication. In their study, Huang and Hwang (2013) found that virtual settings represent less stressful environments for learning. Similarly, according to Al-Qahtani (2019) learners are likely to improve their communication skills in virtual settings.

In a nutshell, the participants admitted that virtual communication improves their communicative competencies in several languages in general and in English in particular.

Conclusion

The growing integration of digital devices in our daily life calls for an exploration of how people engage in digital events and socialise through virtual interaction. Algerian EFL students, like their counterparts around the world, have embraced the modern technologies to help them transfer and share knowledge. Indeed, they are increasingly engaging in technology-mediated interaction.

Although multilingual communication has been widely studied through spoken data analyses, research on online communication is relatively recent. The present study has attempted to determine the way Algerian EFL students make use of their linguistic repertoire in online conversations. It has been found that they transfer their face-to-face practices to virtual settings. In addition, they unconsciously set a classification of languages across a variety of language

functions. As regards English, it was found that the online context provides Algerian EFL learners a new opportunity to freely and fluently practise their English for the sake of improving their linguistic skills and overcome their anxiety.

The present study suffers from a methodological limitation which is common among survey studies. The data collection tool is a questionnaire; accordingly, the results are highly dependent on the participants' answers and opinions. A corpus-based study, in the future, would deepen the scope of this area of research and bring to light the use, rather than the perception, of different languages in online conversations.

References

- Al-Qahtani, M. H. (2019). Teachers' and students' perceptions of virtual classes and the effectiveness of virtual classes in enhancing communication skills. *Arab World English Journal*, December (1), 223–240. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/efl1.16>
- Ammour, K. (2020). *Algerian EFL students' reading practices in the digital era: A sociocultural approach* (unpublished doctoral thesis), MMUTO, Algeria.
- Appel, R., & Muysken, P. (2005). *Language contact and bilingualism*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789053568576>.
- Belmioub, K. (2018). English in a multilingual Algeria. *World Englishes*, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12294>.
- Brown, H.D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. London: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. New York : Oxford University Press.
- Edwards, J. (2007) Societal multilingualism: Reality, recognition and response. In P. Auer & W. Li (Ed.), *Handbook of Multilingualism and Multilingual Communication* (pp. 447–467). Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110198553.4.447>.
- Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611834>.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold
- Halliday, M. A., McIntosh, A., & Stevens, P. (1964). *The linguistic sciences and language teaching*. London: Longmans.
- Holmes, J. (2001). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.

- Huang, P., & Hwang, Y. (2013). An exploration of EFL learners' anxiety and e-learning environments. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(1), 27–35. <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.4.1.27-35>
- Hudson, R. A. (1996). *Sociolinguistics* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139166843>.
- Kumar, T., Nukapangu, V., & Hassan, A. (2021). Effectiveness of code-switching in language classroom in India at primary level: A case of L2 teachers' perspectives. *Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction*, 11(4), 379–385. <https://doi.org/10.47750/pegegog.11.04.37>
- Li, W. (2008). Research perspectives on bilingualism and multilingualism. In W. Li & M. Moyer (Eds.), *The Blackwell handbook of research methods on bilingualism and multilingualism* (pp. 3-17). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Montagnon, P. (1998). *Histoire de l'Algérie des origines à nos jours*. Algiers: Pygmalion Editions.
- Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en espanol: toward a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics*, 18(7/8), 581–618. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling.1980.18.7-8.581>.
- Rabab'ah, G., & Al-Yasin, F. N. (2017). English-Arabic code switching in Jordanian EFL teachers' discourse. *Dirasat, Human and Social Sciences*, 43(2), 313. <https://doi.org/10.35516/0103-044-004-019>.
- Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Romaine, S. (2003). Multilingualism. In M. Aronoff & J. Rees-Miller (Ed.), *The handbook of linguistics* (pp.512-532). Oxford: Blackwell Publisher. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756409.ch21>.
- Trudgill, P. (2002). *Sociolinguistic variation and change*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Appendix

The Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of an empirical study investigating Algerian EFL students' multilingual practices in online interaction. You are kindly requested to answer all the questionnaire items by ticking off the appropriate box (es) or by providing a full answer when necessary. We promise to keep all the questionnaires anonymous, so, please answer honestly. We thank you in advance for your collaboration.

The Participants' Profile

1. What is/ are your mother tongue (s)?
2. What is/are the foreign language (s) that you speak?
3. Are you a member of any group of EFL learners in social networks?

Online Multilingual Practices across Different Communicative Functions

4. What are the languages that you use to communicate online with EFL students?

5. Tick the communicative function (s) in which you use English online.

- Specific topics
- Sharing knowledge
- General truth
- Greetings
- Imperatives
- Expressing feelings and emotions
- Asserting identity
- Focusing on important points of the conversation
- Discussing issues related to language
- Riddles, jokes, puns, etc

6. Tick the communicative function (s) in which you use Berber online.

- Specific topics
- Sharing knowledge
- General truth
- Greetings
- Imperatives

- Expressing feelings and emotions
- Asserting identity
- Focusing on important points of the conversation
- Discussing issues related to language
- Riddles, jokes, puns, etc.

7. Tick the communicative function (s) in which you use Algerian Arabic online.

- Specific topics
- Sharing knowledge
- General truth
- Greetings
- Imperatives
- Expressing feelings and emotions
- Asserting identity
- Focusing on important points of the conversation
- Discussing issues related to language
- Riddles, jokes, puns, etc.

8. Tick the communicative function (s) in which you use Classical Arabic online.

- Specific topics
- Sharing knowledge
- General truth
- Greetings
- Imperatives
- Expressing feelings and emotions
- Asserting identity
- Focusing on important points of the conversation
- Discussing issues related to language
- Riddles, jokes, puns, etc.

9. Tick the communicative function (s) in which you use French online.

- Specific topics
- Sharing knowledge
- General truth
- Greetings

- Imperatives
- Expressing feelings and emotions
- Asserting identity
- Focusing on important points of the conversation
- Discussing issues related to language
- Riddles, jokes, puns, etc.

10. Could you explain why and how do you make choices among your linguistic repertoire when communicating online?

11. Are you conscious of the selection of languages when you chat online? Why?

The Use of English in Virtual Contexts

12. Do you notice any difference when using English in face-to-face communication and in online communication?

13. As an EFL student, how do you feel when using English to communicate online?

Thank you