

## ***The Multilingual Discourse Within the Academic Institutions: Facilitating or Complicating Communication***

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### **Abstract:**

The present study aims at evaluating the effectiveness of utilizing a multilingual discourse for communication within the academic institutional settings. A corpus of 100 announcements and notices from the routine work posted on two Algerian universities' websites addressing students is compiled. The descriptive and analytical approach was adopted. The Findings reveal the overuse of alternation of languages within the same document. This proves that the monolingual usage is impossible to be applicable within a discourse community whose members were saturated at an early age with a great linguistic diversity that comprises different language dialects, Arabic and French as two official administrative languages in addition to the English language which imposed its presence in Algeria by virtue of its global use.

**Keywords:** *Code-Mixing; Bilingualism; Multilingualism; Translanguaging.*

**ملخص:**

**الخطاب المتعدد اللغات داخل المؤسسات الأكاديمية: تسهيل التواصل أو تعقيده**

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم فعالية استخدام الخطاب المتعدد اللغات للتواصل داخل الأوساط المؤسسية الأكاديمية. ولأجل ذلك تم تجميع مدونة تتشكل من 100 إعلان وإشعار من العمل الروتيني المنشور على موقعين لجامعتين جزائريتين موجهة للطلاب؛ حيث تم اعتماد المنهج الوصفي والتحليلي في تحليل المعطيات. وقد كشفت النتائج عن وجود إفراط في استخدام تناوب اللغات في نفس الوثيقة؛ مما يثبت أن الاستخدام الأحادي للغة يصعب تطبيقه في مجتمع يتميز صانعوا الخطاب فيه بأن أعضائه مشبعون في سن مبكرة بتنوع لغوي كبير يشمل لهجات لغوية مختلفة ، العربية والفرنسية كلغتين إداريتين رسميتين بالإضافة إلى اللغة الإنجليزية التي فرضت وجودها في الجزائر بحكم استخدامها العالمي. الكلمات المفتاحية: مزج الكود؛ ثنائية اللغة؛ تعدد اللغات؛ التناوب اللغوي.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Algerian universities utilize both Arabic and French in official correspondence and administrative documents. For the sake of consistency, it is always recommended to use monolingual language within the same document. However, the breach of this writing standard can occur frequently when the correspondents belong to a multilingual background. To track this phenomenon, a study was conducted so as to elicit the main features that characterize administrative documents as far as the language is concerned. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

- How does the linguistic background of language users affect the written administrative documents in academic institutions?
- What consequences are likely to be produced by utilizing a mixed discourse within the same written academic document?

### 1. Monolingualism versus Bilingualism:

These two terms require a careful definition while describing monolingual and bilingual societies. In a globalized world, there is an orientation for constructing multilingual communities that will have the effect of producing multiculturalism, and then maintaining the spread of the linguistic tolerance that is the basis for any cultural tolerance.

#### 1.1. Monolingualism

Monolingualism refers to the use of a single language within a given community. 'monolingual' is a term that can be used as an adjective to describe a "person/community with only one language", also unilingual" (Crystal 1987: 425). The term is also used as a noun to mean 'a person who knows and uses only one language' or to refer to "a person who has an active knowledge of only one language, though perhaps a passive knowledge of others." Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards and Schmidt 2002)

Christ (1997: 221) states that populations of developed countries that enjoy a prestigious language as having the status of a language of international communication 'live with the impression that their own language is the normal case which speakers of other languages must adjust to'. This vision stems from the source of the strength that a given language maintains a privileged status resulted from its ability to conduct international affairs related to commerce, culture, economy and technology. A good example is the English language which spread all over the world to be the lingua franca. According to Pennycook (1994), monolingual English speakers often consider that the spread of their language is 'natural, neutral and beneficial'.

#### 1.2. Bilingualism

In fact, being monolingual society is not the case for many nations including the ex- colonized countries whose populations can never be monolingual. They have inherited the language of colonizers to be used in both informal and official settings. Algeria is not an exception where French is widely utilized informally and officially in administrations and as a medium of instruction of certain university branches.

According to Bloomfield (1933:56), bilingualism is the 'native-like control of two languages. Haugen (1953:7) argues that bilingualism begins "at the point where a speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in the other language". Bilingualism is also defined as having a "complete mastery of two different languages without interference between the two linguistic process" (Oestreicher, 1974:9). According to Hamers and Blanc, bilingualism is the "co-occurrence of two or more languages (...) in society" (p. 368). They add that a bilingual individual is one

“who has access to two or more distinct linguistic codes” (p. 368). Bilingualism is required to conduct tasks that mainly depend on utilizing two language. It is useful for “those people who need and use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives”. (Grosjean, 2010:4). This can be applicable in the Algerian context mainly the academic one. Academicians have to master and use French and Arabic to conduct their ordinary tasks. They have to fill in or read many documents that are originally written in French. This is why the two languages are widely used in the Algerian university settings because they are involved in the “practice of alternately using two languages”. (Weinreich, 1968). This alternation in the practice of bilingualism is also signaled by Mackey (1970:555) when he defined bilingualism as “the alternate use of two or more languages”.

Concerning the degree of proficiency of the two languages mastered in a bilingual context, Christopherson (1948:4) states that a bilingual individual is “a person who knows two languages with approximately the same degree of perfection as unilingual speakers of those languages”. The varying degree of the language mastery is also described by Brice & Brice (2009) when he defined bilingualism as having “the ability to speak, listen, read, and/or write in more than one language with varying degrees of proficiency”.

## **2. Plurilingualism versus Multilingualism:**

Plurilingualism, multilingualism and many other related terms are closely related to the phenomenon of the linguistic diversity that exists within a given country or a community. The countries enjoying a variety of languages or even dialects are considered as multicultural countries; this will produce cultural openness and cultural richness.

### **2.1.Plurilingualism**

According to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, plurilingualism is:

the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency of varying degrees, in several languages, and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw.

Council of Europe, (2001: 168)

### **2.2. Multilingualism**

Multilingualism’ refers to the varieties of languages that exist in a geographical area. It is debatable whether the term “translanguaging” could be an all-encompassing term for diverse multilingual and multimodal practices, replacing terms such as code-switching, code-mixing, code-meshing, and crossing. (Li 2018,9).

Cenoz and Genesee (1998:17) clarified that the multilingual individual can use “several languages appropriately and effectively for communication in oral and written language”. Accordingly, this shift from one language to another in a single communicative act is not a sign of a linguistic deficiency but rather a complete mastery of the ‘how to do well’ in a multilingual context.

### 3. Code-switching /Code- Mixing /Translanguaging:

The three terms are related to the varying degrees of alternation in using the languages among bilingual and multilingual individuals.

#### 3.1.Code-Switching

Code-switching is defined by Bhatia and Ritchie (2013) as “the use of various linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses, and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems across sentence boundaries within a speech event” (p.376). This special use requires creativity and special competence as it is a complex phenomenon. Bhatia and Ritchie (2013:376) state that “creativity and complexity are the two salient features of code-mixing and code-switching”.

#### 3.2.Code-Mixing

Halmari (2004) defines the code mixing as ‘the mixing of two or more languages within the same conversational episode’ (p.115). According to Gumperz (1982), the code mixing is ‘the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems’ (p.59). This mixture is most of the time bound by social and linguistic conventions

#### 3.3. Translanguaging

‘Translanguaging’ is a term used to refer to the use of different languages in a single communicative event. According to García (2009: 140) Translanguaging is “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential.

Sembiante (2016) clarifies that, “translanguaging recognizes speakers’ hybrid use of language in alignment with a variety of social purposes and communicative settings and acknowledges the inability to adapt to these diverse sociolinguistic situations” (p. 48). The translanguaging is then a way to achieve certain social purposes and ‘to get things done’ through the use of multiple languages. Those who belong to these communities have to be adapted to such a way of utilizing the linguistic competences that are closely related to the social situations.

## II. Methods and Materials:

This section is devoted to present the methodology adopted by the present researcher so as to generate and analyze data. Hence, information about the corpus, the investigation tools and the data analysis procedure are clarified.

- **Data Gathering Tools** : The corpus compiled to serve as a material for this study comprises 100 announcements and notices from the routine work posted on two Algerian universities’ websites or official faculties’ facebook pages and addressing students. The 100 documents were posted by the departments of English studies at the universities of El-Oued and Sidi Bel Abbes during the academic year 2020/2021. The table (1) on the next page illustrates the distribution of documents according to universities.

**Table (1): Source of Documents**

University	El-Oued University	Sidi Bel Abbes University
Number of documents	40	60
Total Number	100	

- **Data Analysis Method:** both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the data were utilized. The quantitative method provides statistical realities and the qualitative one provides in-depth knowledge about the issue under study.

### III. Results and Discussion:

This section provides the main results obtained from the study. It is also concerned with providing a discussion that will enrich the findings.

The Findings reveal the existence of translanguaging in 80% of the documents under analysis. There has been an alternation between English and Arabic; English and French or English, French and Arabic. Only 20% of the documents are monolingual. The table (2) below presents the different degrees of translanguaging found in the documents under study.

**Table (2): Language Mixture within Documents**

Language Mixture	English	English/Arabic	English/French	English/ French/Arabic
Number of documents	20	10	40	30
Percentage	20%	10%	40%	30%
Total number	100 (100%)			

The translanguaging utilized in the documents are done purposefully to achieve certain communicative goals. The alternation of languages found in a single document aims at:

- Highlighting important information.
- Focusing on important deadlines.
- Attracting students' attention on specific kind of information such as timings, rooms...etc.
- Drawing students' attention to sudden changes.

The translanguaging is adopted due to some reasons which are listed below:

- Readers are much more attentive to a multilingual document.
- International students are well informed by varying languages.
- A special category of students are much more attentive to notices written in their mother tongue.
- Composing documents that are multicolored and that utilize specific typographical features draws maximal attention.
- Disclaimer of responsibility of senders for the arguments of some receivers who pretend the misunderstanding of the content that is written in a monolingual mode.

Basing on the above mentioned results, we can deduce that the multilingual discourse within the academic Institutions is facilitating communication among senders and receivers. The translanguaging found in the notices and announcements managed to eliminate any sort of ambiguity, complexity or misunderstanding found in messages especially for those receivers who mastered the different languages utilized in the documents. Accordingly, the translanguaging is beneficial in multilingual societies that contain multiple communities of practice. This utility is signaled by García (2009: 140) when he stated that translanguaging is used to "maximize communicative potential.

The results come to answer the research questions mentioned earlier. Hence, it was recognized that the written administrative documents in academic institutions are closely affected by the linguistic background of language users. It was also agreed that utilizing a mixed discourse within the same written academic document can maximize both its comprehension and acceptability among receivers.

#### **IV. Conclusion:**

The Present research was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of utilizing a multilingual discourse in the academic institutional settings. The Findings reveal the overuse of an alternation of two or even three languages within the same document. This proves that the monolingual language usage is impossible to be applicable within a discourse community whose members were saturated at an early age with a great linguistic diversity that comprises different language dialects, Arabic and French as two official administrative languages in addition to the English language which imposed its presence in Algeria by virtue of its global use. Results then confirm the absence of the mere dependence on a single language in the same institutional academic document. While many consider mixing languages in the same communicative event as inappropriate and can complicate the comprehension, bilingual and multilingual users see it as a facilitating approach to transmit the meaning.

The study ends up with recommendations to implement well planned pedagogical code-switching and code mixing strategies for multilingual language users. Suggestions were also made to confine language to a template that simulates the use of a multilingual mode within the same academic institutional document.

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- **Appendices**
- **Appendix 01: French/English document**

Niveau : 1<sup>ère</sup> Année Master

Spécialité : Linguistique

Semestre : 2/ Vague 2

UNIVERSITE DJILLALI LIABES DE SIDI BEL-ABBES

Faculté des Lettres, des Langues et des Arts  
Département de Langue Anglaise*Emploi du Temps***2020 / 2021**

	Dimanche	Lundi	Mardi	Mercredi	Jeudi
8 : 30 - 9 : 30		Dialectology G:1 Prof. Mostari Salle 7	Semantics G: 4 Dr. Benyelles Amphi 3	Data Analysis G:3 Prof. Mostari Salle 7	
				Semantics G: 2 Dr. Benyelles Amphi 3	
9 : 30 - 10 : 30		Dialectology G:2 Prof. Mostari Salle 6	Language Policy G:4 Mrs. Zahaf Salle 7	Data Analysis G:2+4 Prof. Mostari Salle 8	
		Language Policy G:1 Mrs. Zahaf Salle 7	Semantics G: 5 Dr. Benyelles Amphi 3	Semantics G: 1+3 Dr. Benyelles Amphi 3	
		Dissertation Writing G:3 Dr. Amari Salle 5		Dissertation Writing G 5 Dr. Amari Salle 7	
10 : 30 - 11:30		Dialectology G:3 Prof. Mostari Salle 5	Research Methods G: 4+5 Dr. Zoulim Amphi 3	Data Analysis G:5 Prof. Mostari Salle 7	
		Language Policy G:2 Mrs. Zahaf Salle 6	Language Policy G:5 Mrs. Zahaf Salle 6	Linguistic Theories G1+2+3 Dr. Zoulim Amphi 3	
		Dissertation Writing G:1 Dr. Amari Salle 7		Dissertation Writing G 4 Dr. Amari Salle 8	

- **Appendix 02: French/English/ Arabic document**





UNIVERSITÉ DJILLALI LIABÈS DE SIDI BEL-ABBÈS

Faculté des Lettres, des Langues et des Arts  
Département de Langue Anglaise

Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## **REMINDER**

تذير

**Dear Students at 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Licence and  
1<sup>st</sup> Year Master !!!**

**Tomorrow SATURDAY the 19<sup>th</sup> of June is the  
first day of the Second Semester Exams.**

## **Best of The LUCK**

Chef de Département

Dr. GUMACI Asst. Abdellah  
Chef de Dept. Langue Anglaise





UNIVERSITÉ DJILLALI LIABÈS DE SIDI BEL-ABBÈS

Faculté des Lettres, des Langues et des Arts  
Département de Langue Anglaise

Monday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**URGENT**

**مستعجل**

**Dear Students having already held their Vivas  
or submitted their Dissertations to be evaluated  
!!!**

**You are called to get in touch with your  
supervisors to sign for you the Thesis  
Authorisation Deposit of the PDF version  
burned on a CD at the Faculty Library .**

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> of July is the very last deadline .**

**Best of The LUCK**

Chef de Département

Dr. OUMMAI Azziz Abdelillah  
Chef de Dept. Langue Anglaise




Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued

Faculty of Arts and Languages

Department of Arts and English Language

**PLANNING OF THE FIRST SEMESTER RESIT EXAMINATIONS**  
(29/06/2021 - 01/07/2021)

DATE	TIME	FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	MASTER I
Tuesday 29/06/2021	08h00- 9h00	Linguistics		Civilization	Re. Methodology
	9h00- 10h00	Written Expression	Grammar		Academic Writing
	10h00- 11h00		Linguistics	Didactics	British Civilization
	11h00-12h00	S.H.S	Written Expression		
Wednesday 30/06/2021	08h00- 9h00	Phonetics		Linguistics	ESWL
	9h00- 10h00	Literature	Literature		Translation
	10h00- 11h00		Phonetics	Cog. Psychology	Literary Theories
	11h00-12h00	French	Language Culture		
Thursday 01/07/2021	08h00- 9h00	Grammar		Literature	Cont. Br. Lit
	9h00- 10h00	Language Culture	Translation		Computing
	10h00- 11h00	Oral Expression All groups R18	French	French	Literary Theories
	11h00-12h00		Oral Expression All groups R18		

ملاحظة : هذا الجدول للاختبار الاستدراكي للمداسي الأول يخص فقط الطلبة الذين اتموا امتحانات تعويضية خلال المداسي الأول ولم يستفيدوا من الامتحانات الاستدراكية.