

**Some Observations on the mismatch between Berber,
French and Algerian Arabic in the light of equivalence based perspectives to code switching.**

Lotfi Abdelkader BENHATTAB

Université d'Oran

Résumé:

Le présent article est une réflexion sur le chevauchement linguistique entre le berbère et l'arabe algérien sur le plan morphosyntaxique. Le problème de chevauchement entre langues en situation de contact a été au centre de plusieurs études ayant eu pour thématique le contact des langues. Cette problématique est particulièrement réminiscente dans le domaine de la recherche sur le code switching étant donné qu'elle est une source d'un débat passionné et de controverse au sein des spécialistes de l'analyse morphosyntaxique du code switching. On essaiera de nous concentrer sur la situation sociolinguistique des minorités berbères d'Oran.

The Equivalence Perspective in Code Switching Research

As the title of this paper indicates, our investigation is couched under an equivalence perspective. This perspective roughly considers code switching and related contact phenomena from an equivalence vein. Equivalence is used here to mean that contact phenomena need not to violate the morphosyntactic requirements of the languages being in contact.

We shall now deal with equivalence-based approaches with a little critical eye and illustrative examples from the original data of this approach, and with examples from our own corpus. The equivalence based approach is essentially an international trend. The basic premise of the equivalence based approaches to code switching stipulates that the languages contributing to code switching

are in a symmetrical relationship i.e. they contribute on an even scale, and there is no hierarchy between them. Proponents of this approach include for example, Poplack and her associates (2000), Auer (1995, 1998).

The Equivalence Based Approaches

The equivalence based approaches to code switching are said to have as their pioneers the researchers who studied Spanish English code switching in the United States during the 70ths and the 80ths. A considerable part of the research has been concentrating on the syntactic properties of code switching (Muysken, 2000:12). Areas that have been investigated include the possible places of code switching elements in a sentence, and the rules governing this phenomenon.

The quest for structural constraints to code switching was initiated with different studies on Spanish English code switching in the US. These studies culminated in Poplack (1980) two constraints on Spanish English code switching after the studies that she carried on the Puerto Rican community of the US. These two constraints are the free morpheme constraint and the equivalence constraint. Poplack and her associates claimed some kind of universal validity to these constraints. Let's start first by the equivalence constraint.

The Equivalence Constraint

This constraint is directed towards the issue of word order surface equivalence. The main premises behind Poplack constraint are linear equivalence and grammatical sub- categorization equivalence. The former principle means that switching is only possible in points where

there is no overlap between the surface structures of the languages involved in code switching, and the latter is related to the grammatical sub-categorization properties of these languages. Poplack (1980) put forward the equivalence constraint stating that:

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

This constraint seems to underlie an important principle which is the one of balance or symmetry between the languages involved in code switching. This principle is one of Poplack's main lines of thought. She seems to stick to it even if she has been overtly criticized for not taking into consideration the fact that code switching is not always an alternation between languages but also an insertion of elements of a language into longer stretches of another language as she states that:

*“Code Switching is the **juxtaposition**¹ of sentences or sentence fragments, each of which is internally consistent with the morphological and syntactic (and optionally, phonological) rules of the language of its provenance”* (Poplack, 1993:85):

A) balaak(B) adhamlay jiwən daeravən ad
afəy xiir-n-əl-qbajəl(C) bassaḥ allah yalab
əlwaldin(D) ur-hamlən ara

(Lit: May be I love one Arab he is good better than
the Kabyle but God is the strongest, the parents do not
want)

(May be I fall in love with an Arab who may be better
than a Kabyle but unfortunately my parents do not ac-
cept.)

The first part (A) is a discourse marker from Arabic. It is followed by (B) which is an independent clause from Berber. This independent clause is followed by a coordinating conjunction from Arabic (but) and (C) an independent clause from Arabic which is itself followed by (D) a verbal phrase from Berber. This example is a clear case of alternation as it involves the juxtaposition of elements as large as independent clauses in code switching. Another characteristic of the "Equivalence Constraint" is that it prevents or at least greatly inhibits grammatically incorrect utterances because of language differences in word order (e.g., adjective position with respect to their head nouns). The code switching may also not be possible in points where there is an overlap in lexical sub categorization between the languages involved. The position Sankoff and Poplack (1981:6) take is that in addition to the grammars of the two varieties involved there is an independent code switching grammar (code switching style) which draws from the two monolingual grammars. They (ibid: 11) state that:

“Ability to code switches results from Knowledge of the rules of grammars, their similarities, and their differences.” (Sankoff and Poplack, 1981, 6)

The evidence Sankoff and Poplack (1981:8) put forward is that switching involves no hesitations, pauses, or corrections, or other interruptions or disruptions in the rhythm of speech. Their position opposes to the idea that in code switching only one language is on during the process. This language acts as the base or matrix language of code switching utterances (Winford, 2003: 128). They (ibid: 11) give the example of Spanish- English multiple switched sentences in which it would be very difficult to state which language is the base language. Here is the example they give (Spanish in bold):

There was a guy, you know, **que he se monto** he started playing with **congas**, you know, and **se monto, y emprezo a brincar**

(Lit: There was a guy, you know, that he got up, he started playing with congas, you know, and got up and started to jump). (Sankoff and Poplack, 1981: 11)

Muysken (2000: 45) calls this type of frequent code switching “*congruent lexicalisation*”. He defines (ibid: 45) it as:

“A situation where the two languages share a grammatical structure which can be filled lexically with elements from either language...The rules used to construct code switching utterances may be drawn at times from one language and at times from the other.” (Muysken 2000:45)

Counter Evidences to the Equivalence Constraint from the Corpus of the Study

In the data under investigation in this study, we found a number of counter examples to the equivalence constraint. Some of them concern the issue of syntactic sub-categorization of certain syntactic categories such as nouns, adjectives, and prepositions. Another mismatch may reside in the gender assignation attributed to the verbs, nouns and adjectives in the languages involved in Code switching. A third mismatch may be in the neutralization of gender and number in the categories listed above. We will be dealing with the cases of mismatch that seem worth-analysing to us, as dealing with all the cases of mismatch between the languages involved in code switching in our study falls out of a the humble research work that we are conducting.

Mismatch in the positions of adjectives in relation to their head nouns (Ordinary adjectives, possessive adjectives, demonstrative adjectives)

We may for example mention the case of the overlapping between adjectives and their head nouns in NPs. Berber, being a member of the Chamito Semitic language family, is a language in which adjectives generally follow their head nouns. In Kabyle and Mzabi, the two Berber varieties under study here, the normal order is NP→N+ADJ whereas this order in French would be NP→ADJ+N. The equivalence constraint would predict that there would be no switch between these categories; in spite of this prediction we found many counter examples such as the ones listed below:

/nək ɥaml-ay/ **les chanteurs** /i-
ɣdid-ən am Kusayla/
 (Me like-1st sing accompl aff the singers nom aff-
 new-Plu aff like Kusayla)
 (Lit: Me I like the singers new like Kusayla)
 (I like new singers like Kusayla)(Berber-Algerian Ara-
 bic-French code switching)

The first example contains 'les chanteurs'/i-ɣdid-ən am/ Kusayla)(the singers new like Kusayla), an object NP, the Object NP is made up of a French code switched noun (Les chanteurs)(*singers*) followed by its Berber modifying adjective(/iɣdidən¹)/(new). The mismatch is in the position of the adjective which does not follow French syntactical paradigm but a Berber one.

The mismatch between French nouns and their possessive pronouns or adjectives may be used to further illustrate Noun/adjective mismatch in Berber-French code switching. French nouns normally subcategorize for prepositional possessive pronouns. E.g. mes etudes(my studies), tes amies(your friends) and not *amies tes(*friends your).

Berber is a language in which Nouns subcategorize for Post-positional possessive pronouns. The equivalence constraint would predict that there should be no switching between Berber and French for Nouns and their pos-

¹ This adjective is in fact made up of /ɣdid/ (new) an adjectival stem from Algerian Arabic, but the adjectival inflections are from Berber /i...ən/. We considered this adjective as a Berber one, for the aim of this subsection is not related to the analysis of the internal make up of words. Recall that the aim of this subsection is to investigate cases of mismatch between French and Berber in relation to nouns and their modifying adjectives.

sessive pronouns. Poplack et al(1981) predictions seem to be unpractical to the data that we have investigated. Below are some instances in which a French noun is combined with a Berber possessive pronoun.

/ad-as-aʎ ar-wahran ad-
kaml-aʎ/ **les vacances** /ninu/

(Inaccompl aff-go- 1st sing aff to Oran inaccompl
aff-finish-1st sing aff the holidays-1st sing posse pron)
(Lit: I go to Oran I finish the holidays my)
(I will go to Oran to finish my holidays (there))(Berber-
Algerian Arabic-French code switching)

/tʂaama kimini tə-sɛi-d/
la famille /inam di- ʂtɪf/

(So You 2nd sing accompl aff-have-2nd sing aff
the family 2nd sing posse pron in Setif)
(Lit: So you you have(members of)the family your in
Setif)
(So you have members of your family in Setif)(Berber-
Algerian Arabic-French code switching)

/ħaml-aʎ ad-ruħ-aʎ ar-**les**
proches naʎ/

(Like-1st sing Inaccompl aff-go-1st sing aff to-the
near our/
(Lit: I like I go to the family our)
(I like to go(visit members of) our family)(Berber-
Algerian Arabic-French code switching)

The mismatch in these three instances of code switching is related to the position of the possessive pronouns /ninu/ (my), /inam/ (your), and/naʎ/ (our) in relation

to their French code switched head nouns that are respectively '**les vacances**' (the holidays), '**la famille**' (the family), and '**les proches**' (the family).

The position of the demonstratives (this –that) and their head nouns may also be mentioned as a case of mismatch between French and Berber. Berber is a left parsing language (the modifiers follow their head nouns in noun Phrases) Whereas French is a right parsing language in which the modifiers precede their head nouns in noun phrases. The equivalence constraint would therefore prevent any switching between a head noun from French and a Berber demonstrative (in a right position). Instead of that, instances of French head nouns followed by a Berber demonstrative abound. Here are some examples:

A: /aniwaat wagi/

(Who is this?)

B: **Bébé** d-Amira θ-agi

(Lit: baby Nom aff-Amira fem aff-this)

(This is Amira's baby.)

Mais l'année /agi urd ssawr-ar ara/ (French-Berber Code switching).

(Lit: but the year this neg picture 1st sing aff- neg)

(But this year I did not take any picture)(Berber-Algerian Arabic-French code switching)

In this example the French code switch '**bébé**' (baby) in line 2 is followed by the Berber demonstrative Pronoun /wagi/ (this). This represents a clear violation to the equivalence constraint in the sense that it (the constraint) would normally inhibit such instances of switching from occurring. The French code switchings in line 3 are the coordinator '**Mais**' (but) and the noun '**l'année**' (the

year). This noun is followed by its demonstrative Pronoun /agi/ from Kabyle. This is again a clear case of mismatch between French and Berber for this noun only subcategorizes for demonstratives in a left branching position e.g.

Cette Année, nous avons eu un nombre élevé d'étudiants. (This year, we had a big number of students)

Année cette, nous avons eu un nombre élevé d'étudiants. (Lit : Year this, we had a big number of students).

Below is another instance of French noun-Berber demonstrative code switching

/smani it-əsx-iθ/ tricot /jəni/

(Where buy-2nd sing accompl aff top demonst pron)
(Lit: Where did you buy top this)(Mzabi Berber-French code switching)

Another case of structural non-equivalence relates to the use of a French code switched prepositional phrase or clause with a Berber preposition:

Code switching patterns involving the sub-categorization of object accusative and dative clitic affixes

The position of the object dative clitic affix attached to the verb represents another case of mismatch between Berber and Algerian Arabic morpho-syntactic systems. Algerian Arabic Verbs subcategorize for clitic suffixes which are attached to it and which function as direct(accusative) or indirect object(dative) clitics; on the other hand verbs in Berber may sub-categorize for either prefixes or suffixes functioning as object accusative, or

dative clitic pronouns. Here are some examples from both Arabic and Berber.

gult-i-l-i hbib-i

(tell- 2nd sing fem accompl suf- 1st sing clitic object dative case suf love-1st sing possessive aff)

ini-ji-d (give-(to)-1st sing accusative object suf)(give me!)

aziɣ ut-θ-əsind-ara

(in fact neg aff- 3rd sing clitic object accusative aff-know-2nd sing inaccompl aff- neg marker)

(In fact you do not know it)

The two examples from Berber highlight two positions of the clitic accusative Object prefix. The clitic takes a suffix position in the first example and it takes a prefix position in the second example.

The equivalence constraint would predict that switching of Algerian Arabic verbs would only be possible in cases where the object dative clitic pronoun follows its head verb. This is not always true in the sense that in some instances we found Algerian Arabic verbs which subcategorize for a prefix object clitic dative pronoun. Here are some examples:

amak i-s-xadma-ɣ zik

(like 1st sing aff- obj clitic accusative pref-work- 1st sing accompl Aff in the past)

(like(the same way as) I did her in the past)

/at-id-zabda-d aθ-antara-d θura waltma-m
θ-attə-s/

(2nd sing obj clitic accusative pref- 2nd sing aff-
take-2nd sing you will pay(You will be beaten) now
your sister is sleeping)

(If you take the radio I will beat you. Your sister is
now sleeping)

/wali wali amək id-iji-t-aqraħ-an-t/

(look look how 3rd plu aff(my legs)- 1st sing obj
clitic accusative pref- 3rd plu fem inaccomp aff- hurt- 3rd
plu fem inaccomp aff)

(look look how my legs are hurting me) (Kabyle Berber-
Algerian Arabic switching)

/aaj dagi aθən-t-xadma-d jadija aaja
mama aεfas fəl-asən/

(interj- here obj clitic accusative pref- 2nd sing fem
inaccomp aff- do- 2nd sing fem inaccomp aff my hands
come on mum press on them)

(interj here here put your hands here come on mum
press on them)

/ih saħa sa-ħmu-ji axatəf i-qarħi-ji/

(Lit: Yes ok obj clitic accusative aff- warm- 1st sing clitic
object clitic accusative suff because obj clitic accusa-
tive aff- hurt- clitic object accusative aff)

(yes(mum) warm me(my legs) because they are hurting
me)(Berber-Algerian Arabic code switching)

/aʃu ik-mi-qalq-ən
ak-agi/?

(What that-2nd sing obj clitic dative aff- hurry(verb)-3rd
plu inaccompl aff like-that)
(Lit: What(who) is hurrying you like that?)(Kabyle Berber-
Algerian Arabic code switching)

/i-kam waka im-d-isawl-ən/?

(And-you, who 2nd sing clitic object accusative aff-
ask- 3rd plu accompl aff)
(And, who asked for you again?)(Kabyle Berber-
Algerian Arabic code switching)

/θ-abɣi-d

aji-də-s-natqad/

(2nd sing fem accompl aff-like-2nd sing fem accompl aff
1st sing object accusative aff-talk)
(You want to make me talk again)(Kabyle Algerian
Arabic Code switching)

/wali wali amak idi-ji-t-aqraḥ-an/

(Look look how they-1st sing object accusative aff-
3rd fem plu accompl aff-hurt-3rd plu accompl aff)
(Lit: look! Look! How they (my legs) me hurted) (Kabyle
Berber-Algerian Arabic code switching)

In these examples Algerian Arabic code switched verbs
are preceded by Berber clitic object accusative prefixes.
The examples that we have listed are a sample of a recur-
rent process i.e. the affixation of a clitic accusative object
prefix to a code switched verb from Algerian Arabic.
This represents a clear violation to the equivalence con-

straint principle. The Berber clitic accusative object pronoun is not supposed to precede an Algerian Arabic verb since this represents a violation to the Algerian Arabic morpho-Syntactic system. These counter examples may be partly interpreted using the dominance configuration principle as Myers Scotton (1997: 65) put it forward. This perspective will be explored in future research.

Conclusion

The present paper has been a trial to explore the mismatches between Berber, Algerian Arabic and French in the speech of Mzabi and Kabyle minority speakers in Oran in the light of the equivalence based model as it has been advocated by Poplack and her associates. The analysis of the data before hand in this paper indicates that there are mismatches between French and Berber at the morphosyntactic level. These findings were somehow predictable in the sense that these languages are genetically unrelated. We also noticed that there is mismatch between Berber and Algerian Arabic throughout our investigation of the data. This seemed unpredictable in the genesis of this paper as thought that since Berber and Algerian Arabic are genetically related languages, they would have little mismatch. Our application of Poplack's constraints revealed that the equivalence constraint does not seem to hold water with Berber-French and Berber-Algerian Arabic code switching. Kabyle and Mzabi speakers seem to display patterns of code switching that clearly violate the predictions made by scholars working within the equivalence perspective. The languages present in the Kabyle and Mzabi minority groups of Oran seem to be in a hierarchical relation rather than being in a symmetrical relation. This perspective seems to be

an interesting alternative to the equivalence perspective; we thus shall explore it in future research.

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