

Embarrassment as a Trigger Factor of Code Switching From Arabic to English in Egypt: A Case Study in Sociolinguistic

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Abstract : This study is an attempt to investigate the phenomenon of code-switching that takes place between Arabic and English in social discourse among high, well-educated, and young people in Egypt. The study aims at digging deeper to extract the trigger factors of such occurrences, namely when people encounter embarrassing situations in their daily conversations. Nowadays, most young Egyptians tend to use English words in certain situations that might make them feel embarrassed. To disguise their feelings and soften the impact of these words in the context, they code-switch (CS) from Arabic into English. To obtain accurate results, the study utilized a quantitative analysis approach that combines personal observations and a questionnaire to examine the phenomenon appropriately. The questionnaire was designed to categorize different types of embarrassing topics to be evaluated by participants. These topics include certain parts of the human body, types of clothes, taboo words, and specific medical conditions. Many studies have examined the use of CS as a prestigious way of communicating and expressing solidarity between Arabic and English. Other studies have dealt with switches that take place in classrooms. However, not many studies have paid attention to this angle of CS, especially in Egypt. The results conclude that gender and the circumstances that surround the conversation are essential factors of CS since females tend to switch codes more than males in embarrassing situations. According to the study, CS serves the socio-pragmatic function in terms of helping young, well-educated bilinguals express themselves in a second language that would be distressing in the first.

Keywords : code-switching, embarrassment, Arabic, English

Conference Title : ICLLL 2023 : International Conference on Languages, Literature and Linguistics

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : June 19-20, 2023