

A Sociolinguistic Study of the Outcomes of Arabic-French Contact in the Algerian Dialect Tlemcen Speech Community as a Case Study

Authors : R. Rahmoun-Mrabet

Abstract : It is acknowledged that our style of speaking changes according to a wide range of variables such as gender, setting, the age of both the addresser and the addressee, the conversation topic, and the aim of the interaction. These differences in style are noticeable in monolingual and multilingual speech communities. Yet, they are more observable in speech communities where two or more codes coexist. The linguistic situation in Algeria reflects a state of bilingualism because of the coexistence of Arabic and French. Nevertheless, like all Arab countries, it is characterized by diglossia i.e. the concomitance of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Algerian Arabic (AA), the former standing for the 'high variety' and the latter for the 'low variety'. The two varieties are derived from the same source but are used to fulfil distinct functions that is, MSA is used in the domains of religion, literature, education and formal settings. AA, on the other hand, is used in informal settings, in everyday speech. French has strongly affected the Algerian language and culture because of the historical background of Algeria, thus, what can easily be noticed in Algeria is that everyday speech is characterized by code-switching from dialectal Arabic and French or by the use of borrowings. Tamazight is also very present in many regions of Algeria and is the mother tongue of many Algerians. Yet, it is not used in the west of Algeria, where the study has been conducted. The present work, which was directed in the speech community of Tlemcen-Algeria, aims at depicting some of the outcomes of the contact of Arabic with French such as code-switching, borrowing and interference. The question that has been asked is whether Algerians are aware of their use of borrowings or not. Three steps are followed in this research; the first one is to depict the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria and to describe the linguistic characteristics of the dialect of Tlemcen, which are specific to this city. The second one is concerned with data collection. Data have been collected from 57 informants who were given questionnaires and who have then been classified according to their age, gender and level of education. Information has also been collected through observation, and note taking. The third step is devoted to analysis. The results obtained reveal that most Algerians are aware of their use of borrowings. The present work clarifies how words are borrowed from French, and then adapted to Arabic. It also illustrates the way in which singular words inflect into plural. The results expose the main characteristics of borrowing as opposed to code-switching. The study also clarifies how interference occurs at the level of nouns, verbs and adjectives.

Keywords : bilingualism, borrowing, code-switching, interference, language contact

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