DISTRIBUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CODE-SWITCHING IN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENTS BY FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

In modern academic environments, complex systems of interaction among people are more observable. Academic situations are institutional domains that require a prescribed form of talking, characterized by its professionalism and formal selection of codes. In educational environments, especially universities, students tend to change their code choice alternating between varieties according to the topic of discussion. Subject-related topics in conversations of college students are usually featured by high frequencies of code switched lexical items as opposed to personal topics. This paper attempts to investigate the linguistic behavior and code choice of university female students in Saudi Arabia, discussing the features of code choice and code switch across a vast variety of topics in their conversations. The data of the study is a collection of recorded conversations for female Saudi university students with a total duration of 130 minutes of uncontrolled topic flow. Twenty-eight participants took part in this study. The direct observation method and the substitute observer method were followed to obtain natural data. It has been concluded that academic and technical topics are featured by a high number of code switches between English and Arabic on the intra-sentential level, whereas personal topics, as well as gossiping, scored the least amount of code switches between English and Arabic. Code choice of the lexical level also varied from one topic to another. It is recommended that further investigation is carried out on a wider sample, including both male and female participants. Other domains of interaction need to be addressed, including formal and informal settings.

Keywords: Code choice, code switch, conversation analysis, inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, linguistic forms, topic

1- INTRODUCTION

Code choice or code- switching is a linguistic behavior performed by speakers in Multilingual communities (Danesi, 2016; Holmes, Wilson, 2017). In interaction, a speaker may decide to choose one verity of speech over another, alternating between codes. This process of alternation involves switching to another dialect, style or language for different reasons (Gumperz, 1982; Holmes, 2013). Speakers may or may not be aware of this behavior as it is mainly considered an act of solidarity or an act of identity representation. This indicates the complex nature of this linguistic phenomenon both psychologically and structurally (Wardhaugh, 2010). Several reasons and social factors are interrelated when it comes to the act of code-switching, especially among the youth. The performance of code-switching is linguistically described as a rule-governed act, having its regulating constraints that control its distribution and performance (Stockwell, 2007). A number of studies focused on analyzing two main types of code-switching that includes both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching (Saville-Troike, Muriel, 2003; Horasan, 2014). Topic is one of the aspects of the situation that affects the amount of Code-switch involved, and the place where a linguistic item might be switched. This paper discusses the alternation and switch between English and Arabic in academic environments, focusing on the influence of the

topic as a component of the situation. This paper is a case study that attempts to investigate and describe the linguistic items that might be switched from Arabic into English in the speech produced by female university students in Saudi Arabia in an academic setting. This study aims at examining the types of code-switches associated with different topics whether these types are inter-sentential or intra-sentential in a distributional manner. Central questions of this paper focus on asking; what are the distributions of different types of code-switching performed by college students? What is the most common type of switches that is more significant in the data? Is there an effect of topic selection on the frequency of code-switched instances of linguistic items? These are the central questions that this paper attempts to answer in the following sections.

2- THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

Code-switching is a linguistic behavior performed by monolingual or bilingual speakers on either a dialect or language levels. Its Importance stems from its complexity in which a number of social factors can trigger its existence or lack of. It is also a linguistic phenomenon that could be performed subconsciously or deliberately and might be regarded as a negative or a positive linguistic behavior based on the configuration of the social factors that interact and intersect at any communicative event (Stockwell,2007; Wardhaugh, 2010). Code-switching has its unique definitions, types, reasons, constraints and attitudes that control its existence. Switching and alternating between dialects and languages is a form of talk that can be noticed in the speech produced in academic environments, especially among colleagues. It can be seen as a linguistic variety featured by high frequencies of alternations (Saville-Troike, Muriel, 2003). Technology and science based topics, as well as the influence of academia as a domain of interaction and language use, have their effect on the linguistic behavior of interlocutors developed over the course of interaction. The switch of code is noticed to exist on both word and phrase levels (Bernstein, 1971). Code-switching has been mentioned and defined by Gumperz (1982) as a phenomenon where the mixing of codes within the same speech occur. These exchanges involve two different grammatical systems or subsystems. Meisel (1994) (as cited in Toribio, 2001) mentioned that Language Mixing is a combination of elements from each of the component languages. Code-switching is also viewed as a conversational strategy that might lead to obtaining group membership that takes the form of identity construction strategy especially among minorities (Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 2006).

According to these definitions, it can be inferred that code-switching is a case that occurs between two dialects or two languages governed by structural accommodation and equivalence between the two linguistic systems involved. It is regarded as a situational case that speakers mainly perform for certain reasons and functions triggered by the context. In this study, the term "code-switch" is used as a reference to this linguistic phenomenon. The concept of "code" is defined for the present purpose as a communicative system that has its structures (Wardhaugh. 2010; Holmes, Wilson, 2017). Early stages of second language acquisition involves some degree of dependency on the learner's first language (Fromkin, etal., 2003). Reasons related to lexical needs and second language learning are also considered to be reasons that trigger higher frequencies of code-switches especially in academic environments. Cahyani, Courcy & Barnett (2018) investigated teachers' code-switching in bilingual classrooms focusing on its pedagogical and sociocultural functions in Indonesian classrooms where the main language of instructors was English. They concluded that code-switching was frequently used by teachers to support students to gain understanding of unfamiliar concepts. The teachers' code-switching functioned as translanguaging in that it occurred as an intentional strategy for teaching, integrating the two languages (English and Indonesian) in order to achieve better communication and engagement in class. In a study on code-switching in EFL classrooms conducted by Horasan (2014), the amount of code-switching on sentential levels and initiation patterns, the discourse functions of code-switching, and the perceptions of the switchers were investigated. The results of the study showed that students' use of code-switching between English and Turkish was rather high, whereas teachers' code-switching was even higher than expected. In terms of initiation patterns, student-initiated code-switching was quite high, and inter-sentential level was observed a little more than intra-sentential level. The perceptions of all participants on code-switching overlapped in that they believed that it was a tool that fostered learning in beginner levels and could be used to attract attention or for jokes. Similarly, Lynn, Grant & Nguyen (2017) conducted a study on code-switching in Vietnamese university EFL classrooms and concluded that teachers practiced code-switching very commonly in their English instruction, for both pedagogical and affective reasons. They also concluded that code-switching, when done deliberately and selectively, can be a positive strategy to be used in the EFL classroom, but not if done habitually. Furthermore, Hammink (2000) mentioned in his study that switching might affect the tense endings that children might switch when they start to learn a second language, producing a

switch within negative verb formations.

Triggers for code-switching may involve the interference of the Arabic language, as in the present case, with the English language, especially that the English language is considered to be a dominant language in academic environments in many cultures. Other reasons for this linguistic phenomenon may focus on social aspects, situational conventions, multiculturalism, and ethnicity (Stockwell,2007; Wardhaugh, 2010). All of which may trigger speakers to code-switch from one language into another language. Since this linguistic phenomenon is complex and multidimensional, it has its structural classifications. Intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switchings are two structural types or categories of code-switching that have been presented by scholars to classify types of code-switching based on their structure and location within speech (Poplack, 2000). Since the structures and the functions of the code-switches can be situational, types like inter-sentential, and intra-sentential switching can be seen as useful tools of analysis (Poplack, 1981; Romaine, 1989; Stockwell, 2007). According to this classification, inter-sentential switching is one that involves a switch at a clause or sentence boundary; whereas intra-sentential switching is one that occurs within the clause or sentence boundary (Stockwell,2007; Wardhaugh, 2010; Holmes, 2013). The frequency of each type is also linked to cultural reasons and situational factors that would enable the speaker to code-switch. In this study, these categories are used to classify code-switching into these two main categories.

As a rule of code-switching developed by Cook (1991), a speaker may not switch between a word and its endings unless the word is pronounced as if it were adopted in the language of that ending or suffix. Code-switches can be investigated within the turn-taking system, using the topic as a trigger (Biber & Finegon, 1994). This system has a specific transition-relevance place that allows for topics to change (Hatch, 2000; Have, 2007). There is a connection between the turn-taking system and topic change as gender-specific patterns. The topic that is circulated within any communicative event has an impact on code choices participants make (Fasold, 1990; Bloor & Bloor, 2007; Holmes, 2013). We could consider the topic to be one leading situational component that triggers code-switches. Speakers may switch their codes for several reasons. They might switch for emphasis, solidarity, understanding of the situation, change of topic, the influence of participants, accommodation to others, identity representation as well as some other reasons (Edwards, 1995; Wardhaugh, 2010). The grammar of the languages involved has an effect on the nature of switches, types, and structure (Gumperz, 1982; Romaine, 2000). This linguistic phenomenon occurs in academic environments and can be triggered by the topic, resulting in the performance of different types of code-switches.

3- METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in an academic environment in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. The researcher collected the data of this study from conversations that occurred between Saudi female participants in an informal setting during their free time of their academic environment (Imam University). Participants were asked to discuss some topics according to their natural occurrences with no restrictions in their conversations. The length of these conversations was between 19 to 22 minutes for each group of participants. The total number of recorded conversations was seven sets. The overall duration of all recorded conversations was 130 minutes of open topic flow conversations.

3-1- Instruments:

Both the direct and the substitute observer methods were applied to gather the data needed for this study. Female participants were observed within their academic environments. After spending some time with each other, the tape recording started with the knowledge and approval of the participants who have sighed a consent form. The substitute observers were needed when there was no access to conversations that I couldn't observe in person. Substitute observers were also advised to follow the same procedures during data recording to ensure sufficient collection of data. Labov (1972) proposed two types of conversational styles, the casual style, and the careful style. To obtain data of a casual style, I focused on the middle and the end parts of the conversations where the most casual speech may occur. The segment that comes near the end usually constitutes more relaxed and spontaneous speech (Tagliamonte, 2006; Wray & Bloomer, 2006; Have, 2007; Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2009). Researchers widely adopt the participant observation methods in the study of multilingual interaction (Stockwell, 2007). The use of this technique was essential to avoid the formality of speech. The recordings were transcribed and analyzed.

3-2- Participants:

Twenty-eight female participants took part in this study. They were at close age differences (fourth-year students at the English department at Imam University, Riyadh), sharing similar social and educational backgrounds. A 'quota sampling' was used to select the participants, which is also known as 'judgment sampling'. Milroy and Gordon (2003) state that 'quota sampling' takes place when the researcher sets a particular criterion for sampling. It relies on the investigator's judgment in determining the structure of the sample. The sampling was of female peers, studying in a English department.

3-3- Data analysis procedures:

This study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. There were two approaches to data analysis that were implemented to analyze these recorded conversations. One approach was the conversational analysis approach that dealt with micro-level analysis. It was used to highlight detailed analysis of the discourse patterns and linguistic markers used in these conversations, including types of words and choice of topic involved. The second approach was the statistical analysis approach that dealt with analyzing the frequency of occurrences of both intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching instances. This study is qualitative in principle consisting of conversation recordings, transcriptions and note takings related to participants. The researcher reached some quantitative data from this study concerning numbers of occurrences of some linguistic units under investigation. The primary language of interaction was the Arabic language, and the switches that were recorded and analyzed were switches to English.

4- RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In academic environments, participants may share a linguistic repertoire of more than one language, in this case, they are English and Arabic. Switching codes might occur in a range of different frequencies, depending on the topic choice. Circulations of topics feature some choice of terminology, style, as well as code-switches that suit the matter under investigation. Understanding the dynamics of code-switches requires understanding the overall framework of the conversational structure as well as the turn-taking system adopted by interlocutors (Danesi, 2016). The ratios of code-switches to topic selection were calculated across all recorded conversations. The following tables (table 1 through table 7) explain the frequencies of both intra-sentential and inter-sentential switching, classified according to the choice of topic.

Table 1: Conversation 1

Topic	Inter-sentential switches	Intra-sentential switches
1- academic and subject related topic	9	61
2- activity planning- weekends	1	12
3- social issue	2	24
4- personal topic- storytelling.	-	2
5- movies	-	3
6- personal topics	-	2
7- technology	1	14
8- movies	4	18
9- activity planning	7	23
Total	24	159

Table (1) illustrates the data gathered from a conversation with a total number of 283 circulated turns. 24 instances of inter-sentential switches took place, mainly in academic as well as activity planning topics. This table also shows that there were 159 instances of intra-sentential switches taking place in this conversation. The highest number of this type of switching occurred in topics related to academic issues.

Table 2: Conversation 2

Topic	Inter-sentential switches	Intra-sentential switches
1- social issue	-	1
2- activity planning- weekends	-	4
3- movies	-	4
4- personal topic- storytelling	-	3
Total	-	12

In this conversation (table 2), there were 73 circulated turns. This conversation included no instances of inter-sentential switching across all circulated topics. The total number of intra-sentential switches was 12 instances. Most of these cases happened in topics related to activity planning and movies.

Table 3: Conversation 3

Topic	Inter-sentential switches	Intra-sentential switches
1- shopping	-	8
2- personal topic- socializing	-	7
3- activity planning- vacations	-	3
4- movies	-	18
5- personal topics	-	7
6- news	-	7
Total	-	50

In this conversation that (see table 3), speakers circulated 178 turns. Throughout this conversation, there were no instances of inter-sentential code switches regardless of the topic type. There were 50 recorded instances of intra-sentential switches that took place mainly in topics related to movies and personal issues, followed by an equal share of cases presented in topics related to shopping and news.

Table 4: Conversation 4

Topic	Inter-sentential switches	Intra-sentential switches
1- academic subject	-	-
2- religion	-	-
3- academic subject	-	3
4- personal topics	-	-
5- dieting	-	2
Total	-	5

The total number of circulated turns in this conversation (table 4) was 79 turns. Again, in this conversation, there were no recorded instances of inter-sentential switches across all circulated topics. The overall number of intra-sentential switches that occurred was five switches. These cases took place in an academic topic as well dieting.

Table 5: Conversation 5

Topic	Inter-sentential switches	Intra-sentential switches
1- academic and subject related topic	8	62
2- activity planning- weekends	3	24
3- social topics	2	15
Total	13	101

As presented in table 5, participants circulated a total number of 183 turns in this conversation. There were 13 instances of intra-sentential switches that occurred, mainly in academic and subject related topics. There were also 101 instances of intra-sentential switches that happened across all circulated topics. The highest number of intra-sentential switches took place in academic issues where 60% of all intra-sentential switches took place.

Table 6: Conversation 6

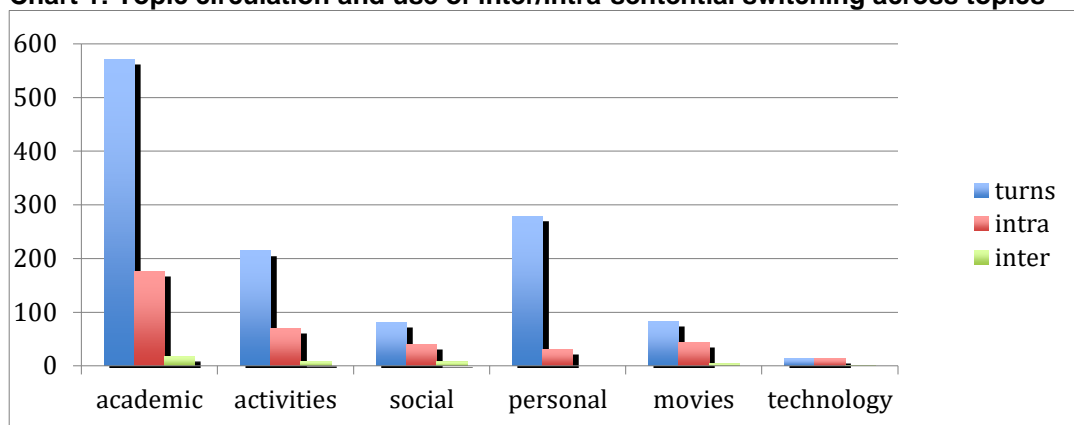| Topic	Inter-sentential switches	Intra-sentential switches
1- personal issues	-	-
2- academic and subject related topic	-	12
Total	-	12

The total number of circulated turns in this conversation (table 6) was 152 turns. There were no recorded instances of inter-sentential switches across all circulated topics. The overall number of intra-sentential switches that occurred was 12 switches, all of which took place in academi topics as being the most circulated topic.

Table 7: Conversation 7

Topic	Inter-sentential switches	Intra-sentential switches
1- academic and subject related topic	-	10
2- activity planning- weekends	-	3
3- academic and subject related topic	-	28
4- personal topic- storytelling	-	9
Total	-	50

Table 7 illustrates the data gathered from a conversation with a total number of 377 circulated turns. In this dense discussion, there were no recorded instances of inter-sentential switches, regardless of the type of the topic. This table also shows that there were 50 instances of intra-sentential switches taking place. The highest percentage of this kind of switching occurred in topics related to academic issues, where 76% of all recorded instances of intra-sentential switches took place. By carefully viewing and analyzing the above tables (table 1- table 7), it could be concluded that topic choice varied from one conversation to the other. The most circulated topics across all conversations were topics related to academic issues, personal issues, gossiping and planning. Other topics such as social issues, news, movies, technology, shopping, religion, and dieting were less frequent in this setting. Since the data was collected from university students chatting during their free time at their college, most topics that were circulated focused on discussing academic issues with a total of 571 turns that were taken within 130 minutes of recorded conversations. The second most circulated topic was personal issues and gossiping with a total of 279 turns throughout the 130 minutes of recorded data. The tables (table 1 to table 7) also illustrate the number of switches that occurred within each topic. Some topics reflected a higher rate of code-switching instances than others, while some reflected no cases of code-switching at all. Topics such as academics and assignments or ones related to technology and media scored the highest rate of code switches, mainly on the intra-sentential level. Other topics that are related to religious issues or more personal issues scored less or no occurrences of code switches. This distribution indicates that there is a significant relationship between the nature of the topic and the choice of code during an interaction. Chart 1 below illustrates the distribution of topics across the data and their duration and number of circulated turns. This chart also presents the use of inter-sentential and intra-sentential code switching across topics. Less significant topics were not displayed in the chart.

Chart 1: Topic circulation and use of inter/intra-sentential switching across topics

In chart 1, the most frequent topic discussed by all groups was the topic of academic issues with a total number of 571 turns. This topic has also scored the highest frequency of both intra/ inter-sentential switching. Intra-Sentential switching was most frequent in academic topics with a total number of 176 instances of intra-sentential switching as opposed to 17 cases of inter-sentential switching that occurred on the same subject. Since the participants were English major students, it can be inferred that intra-sentential switching was triggered by the nature of the courses they were taking. Another frequent topic was the topic of activities and planning with a total number of 214 turns. This topic came third regarding turn counts and circulations; yet, it came second concerning intra/ inter-sentential switching with a total number of 69 instances of intra-sentential switching. Once again, inter-sentential switching was less frequent in this topic with a total number of 8 switches only. Discussion of social issues was also a topic that participants introduced, considered as a less circulated topic with a total number of 80 turns and a total of 40 instances of intra-sentential switching. Inter-sentential switching was less frequent within that issue with 7 cases only. A considerably frequent topic circulated in the recorded data was a topic related to personal issues and gossip. Although this topic was the second most circulated topic, it came fifth in frequencies of code-switching instances with a total number of 30 cases of intra-sentential code-switching and no recorded evidence at all of the inter-sentential switching. A topic that has a significant and marked outcome was the topic of religion and religiously related issues. It was the only recorded topic throughout the data where no instances of code-switching (both intra/inter-sentential) were recorded. This case indicates that in academic environments, the more education-related conversations you circulate, the more you tend to code-switch as illustrated in fig. 1 below:

Academics/high Code-switching

Personal and religious/ less Code-switching
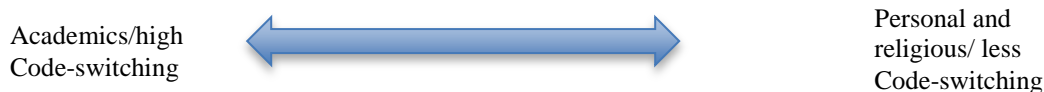
Fig. 1: Scale of topic to code-switching usage

Fig. 1 indicates that the type of topic influences the frequency of code-switching. Academic, activity planning and technical topics showed the use of a variety that reflects higher usage of terms and phrases taken from another code (in this case, it is the English language). The more participants move towards personal and religious topics, the less they use a variety that reflects code-switches to another language. This result shows that code-switching is associated with professionalism and formality more than intimacy, whereas solidarity is indicated by the use of one's native code.

4-1-Intra- sentential Switching:

This type of switching refers to switching from one code into another code within the sentence boundaries. It includes switches of code on the word or phrase levels, and mainly controlled by a set of linguistic constraints such as the Matrix Language Frame that focuses on the controlling language, and the equivalence constraint (Poplack, 1981; Muysken, 2000; Holmes & Wilson, 2017). It has been recorded that (91%) of all code-switches

that took place in this study were of this type. The use of the Arabic language highly motivates this type as a matrix and controlling language. One example of an intra-sentential switching that occurred is as follows:

Extract 1: Intra-sentential code-switching

Speaker 1: Weddi yehotoun *clasat lel seminar*

(I would like for them to prepare *classes for seminars*)

Speaker 2: Feyh *alactivities* bas akthar shai le *levels one* wa *two*

(they have *activities*, but mostly *for levels one* and *two*)

Extract 1 took place while participants were involved in an academic topic triggering the tendency towards using English words within their Arabic structure. These English words, underlined in extract 1, were used following the rules of the Arabic grammar as a predominant language, the matrix language in this case. The word (clasat) is taken from the English word (classes), but was adopted and formulated according to the Arabic plural form to be an English code switched word with Arabic structure. The noun, in this case, was the English word (class); yet, it has been grammatically adopted into the Arabic language by the addition of the Arabic plural suffix, following the equivalence constraint. The word (seminar) came as it is with the same exact English structure; yet, it has been preceded by the definite Arabic article (Al-) and treated as an Arabic noun. The noun in this example was not an Arabic one; instead, the speaker switched it to an English noun following the equivalence constraint. The same case applies to the word (alactivities) by the second speaker, which is an English word used in an Arabic structure preceded by the definite Arabic article (Al-). The phrase (le *levels one* wa *two*) includes code switched items from English to Arabic. According to the Arabic grammatical rule of prepositional phrase formation, a proposition (*le,* (for) in colloquial Arabic, in this case) needs to be followed by a noun. The noun was code switched to English on a phrasal level, meeting linguistic constraints that would signal this transition within systems. The phrase (one *wa* two) represents another case of intra-sentential switching. The word (wa) in the Arabic language is a conjunction meaning (and) that connects two nouns or phrases. Such examples were common across the collected data and varied in quantity across topics.

4-2- Inter- Sentential Switching:

n inter-sentential switching, a whole sentence/phrase is used in one language, and another full sentence/phrase is used in another. Toribio (2001) illustrated some of those syntactic aspects starting with the case of Tag-switches saying that those tags can be used between two languages. By reviewing the results of the investigated data, inter-sentential switching on the phrase and sentence levels formed 9% only of all recorded cases. The following extract (2) shows some examples:

Extract 2: Inter-sentential code-switching

Speaker 1: yghoul lek, *it can be defined as*…….

(It says here, *it can be defined as*…….)

Speaker 2: khalas. *It's enough* (Fine. *It's enough*)

Extract 2 is taken from a conversation between two college students working on a project related to one of their courses. The main code of interaction was the Arabic language. In this extract, speaker 1 started her turn using a sentence in Arabic saying, "yghoul lek" meaning "it says here." This sentence is an introduction to a quote or a chunk of talk to be followed. In normal situations, the following stretch of talk was more likely to be continued in Arabic as it started. The speaker decided to switch into English to end the conversation by saying, "it can be defined as …." The definition was produced using the English language. Due to the nature of this academic topic, the inter-sentential switch to English was licensed and accepted within this domain of language use. This action caused the second speaker to carry on following the same pattern. Speaker 2 started her turn in Arabic using a filler "khalas" meaning "fine" that reflects assurance. Then, she completed her turn by switching to English accepting the use of this code as an academic code that best suits the current topic. Both speakers, in this case, accepted this choice of code and cooperated together in developing an inter-sentential switch.

5- CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper examines the situational switching of codes in academic domains. The data reveals that code-switches in this study were affected by the topic choice as a primary variable that triggered the direction and type of code-switches. Specific topics required the use of one code over the other; where the codes involved in this study were the Arabic and the English languages. Participants tended to switch their code from Arabic into English in specific topics, mainly ones related to Academia. These switches included both full-sentence switching (inter-sentential switching), as well as single word switching (intra-sentential switching). A total of 389 instances of intra-sentential switching were recorded with a percentage of 91% of occurrences, whereas inter-sentential switching on the phrase and sentence levels formed 9% only of all incidents. The topic that showed the highest score of switches that occurred across the data was related to academia and university in both intra/ inter-sentential switching. Personal topics and activity planning also represented a high frequency of switches to English. Some topics reflected a minimum or no switches to the English language such as religious topics. This could be due to the nature of this issue that is mainly discussed using the mother tongue as a means of reflecting solidarity and social identity.

This paper adds to the overall knowledge of code-switching in academic environments. Its importance stems from its focus on the educational domain in Saudi Arabia, paying more attention to female informal dialogues. The Saudi culture is known to be monolingual with the Arabic language used as the primary language of communication. English is considered to be a foreign language. Therefore, code-switching is not performed as a reflection of identity or need, but performed based on the influence of topic as a trigger. This indicates that the nature of code-switching could be affected by the culture involved. This paper adds to the overall knowledge of both inter and intra-sentential switching between Arabic and English in relation to topic choice. This paper is limited to studying code-switching in an academic environment that is performed by female participants. Expanding the range of research to include other domains of social interaction might suggest the circulation of other topics not discussed in the data. This might reflect different results that indicate otherwise. Further research needs to focus on why is it that inter-sentential switching was less evident than intra-sentential switching in the data. Similar data needs to be discussed applying interactional sociolinguistics approach to answer questions related to the effect of the participants and the setting on code-switching.

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