Algerian Arabic and French Code Switching as a Linguistic Strategy in Algerian Manga

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Abstract

This research paper is a study which attempts to explore comic books in general and Algerian manga in particular where emotions and thoughts are conveyed through sequential art. Framed under Sociolinguistics, the inquiry lays on the social motivations for code switching in Algerian manga in maintaining group identity, showing solidarity, and / or creating stylistic effects (sarcasm, irony, realism, etc….). The data under investigation represent chunks of speech uttered by characters of Houma Fighter, our case study, an Algerian manga where code switching is prevalent. These data are linguistically analyzed using the Markedness Model of Myers-Scotton. In light of Myers-Scotton's model, it had been noticed that the author Said Sabaou not only delivers intentionality through his switches but, he also vehicles identity, social values and norms besides of providing accuracy and realism.

Key Words: Comic books, Houma Fighter, (Algerian Arabic/French) code switching, Markedness Model.

1. Introduction

Comic books[1] have contributed to provide joy to their readers from their early days, they were parts of news magazines all painted in rose. These rose pages were devoted entirely to comics and superhero stories, depicting the adventures of fictional characters and their escapades. Despite their growing popularity, comic books faced rude criticism; they were depicted as mindless stories perverting teenagers and child stories with no literary merit. In this vein, anticomics' crusaders aimed at discarding comics claiming that they were nothing but injections of sex and violence besides of considering them as pathologies.

Specialists claim that a comic book reading is an act of participation, as emphasized by Scott McCloud (1993:65), comics "is a medium where the audience is a willing and conscious collaborator." Readers often reference other texts, figures, events and the like from past, present, and future when reading; which is one aspect of participatory reading. This research paper investigates some possible reasons why language varies within panels and why the author, Said Sabaou, intends to use one variety instead of another. The study examines an Algerian Manga *Houma Fighter* authored by *Said Sabaou*, a 28 years old manga-ka where he portrays the Algerian society. *Houma Fighter* which was published in Mai 2012 is a glimpse to the well known video game 'S*treet Fighter*' created in 1987, in fact, *Houma Fighter* paints the portrait of *Sofiane Bekhti*, a kickboxing fighter disqualified from official conquests because of his violent temper and his non respect of the rules. This latter decides to leave his hometown and manages to save some money for 'El harga'[2] until he heard about the Houma Fighter i.e. the street fighter.

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1 The word comic books in is used as an umbrella term encompassing cave paintings, engravings, comic strips, comic books, graphic novels, bandes dessinées and manga.
2 Harga: A term used by Algerians denoting immigration by illegal ways.

No rules exist for these fights, all kicks are allowed and Sofiane adheres completely, he enters the ring and proves to be a talented kick boxer. The story depicts Sofiane's fights as the way of San-Goku[3] ones and describes the characters with an incredible sense of humor. The present paper is a sociolinguistic analysis of Algerian manga. It aims at relating aspects of language within sequential art and exploring the linguistic variation and the reasons leading to it, some questions are raised in this vein:

- Considering comic books as being *the mirror* of society and *past testimony*, why does the author in *Houma Fighter* ascribe each character a specific variety?
- Is linguistic variation in *Houma Fighter* considered as a linguistic strategy?
  In order to find reliable answers to these questions assumptions are put forward:
- It is assumed that speakers vary their styles according to factors (social, geographical…), and *Houma fighter* characters' are not an exception *per se*, where each one uses his/her own variety besides, the author uses specific varieties to provide realism and accuracy.
- The linguistic variations used in *Houma Fighter* may be strategic in the sense that the author chooses to *mark* some *short* passages, to create an effect (stylistic) mainly sarcasm or irony…and intend to express *intentionality* when delivering his own message.

2. Literature Review

Presented in a set of panels and employing sequential art too, Manga featuring characters with disproportional bodies and large eyes are becoming "…the new comic-book art format", Toni Johnson-Woods (2010:1). The word itself translates as 'irresponsible pictures' but the medium is acknowledged to be the most prolific one for it generates a great financial success and is appealing to a wide range of audience encompassing boys and girls (*shōnen and shōjo manga*), young adult men (*seinen manga*) and ladies too (*redikomi manga*), where a diversity of subjects are presented and a lot of topics are discussed ranging from sport to cooking. Exploring all aspects of Japanese society allowed manga own nearly forty (40) percent of the publishing industry.

Manga or '*gekika*' (dramatic pictures) are described by Toni Johnson-Woods as

"… a visual narrative with a recognizable "sensibility". The term sensibility is intentionally vague in order to cover a multitude of options and embraces the stereotypical big-eyed, pointy chinned characters that many people consider the epitome of manga" (2010:2).

Manga as compared to pulp fictions is quite cheaper with issues published only in black and white and not unlike Western comics, the rising sun's versions resemble sometimes to *Victorian novels* because of their thickness where creators tell complex and sophisticated stories featuring serialized characters.

3. History of Comic Books and manga in Algeria

The history of the Algerian comic books can be traced back over the 1950's where artists and cartoonists like *Ismail Aït Djaffar* illustrated their comic strips on colonial (French) newspaper. It is after the independence (1962) that Algerians really started to publish their comic books. Indeed, post independence comics where mainly used as a tool to vehicle a sentiment of pride after the war. In this, artists such as *Haroun* and *Chid* begun to illustrate their strips in newspapers like *Algérie Actualité* or *El-Moudjahid* newspapers. In this vein, *Algérie Actualité* published *Mohamed Aram*'s *Naâr: une sirène à Sidi Ferruche*, (*Naâr: a siren in Sidi Ferruche*) where a superhero fights sirens.It is in this period that one of the most well known characters in the Algerian comics appeared namely *Mimoun* that was later renamed *Bouzid* created by *Slim.*

In 1969, *M'Quidech*, the first comic book published by the SNED (Société Nationale d'Edition et de Publication translated as The National Company for Publication and Diffusion) appeared. *M'Quidech* refers to a famous character in Algerian popular tales. These comics aimed to establish a national spirit by promoting characters speaking in Arabic, wearing traditional clothes, and narrating stories in a typical Algerian humorous way. Other artists also came into the scene like Rachid Aït Kaci, Mohamed Bouslah, Nour-eddine Hiahemzizou and Mohamed Mazari with works such as Tchipaze, Krikech, Zach and Tchalabi, respectively (Sid Ali Melouah 2009). The recurrent theme of most these comics was the history of the Algerian independence painted by artists whose age did not exceed 16 years old.

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3 A character of the well known manga 'Dragon Ball Z' created in 1989 by Akira Toriyama.

In 1972, the SNED decided to stop the publication of *M'Quidech* which led to a halt in creativity except for *Slim* who was still publishing strips in newspapers.If the post-war decade is acknowledged to be the period where comic books appeared, the 1980's is according to Melouah (1992) and Labter (2009) the most prolific and creative *era* with a festival dedicated to comics and caricatures held in *Bordj El Kiffan* in1986. This festival was characterized by a mass participation of new authors like *Masmoudi*, *Assari* and *Bouslah* among others and French ones namely *Jean Pierre Gourmelen* and *Claude Moliterni,* the infatuation of the medium was such that the authorities via the ENAL (Entreprise Nationale du Livre translated as the National Company of the Book) took in charge the publication of some comics and thus contributed to the popularity of talented authors.

Twenty (20) years later, the theme of colonialism and oppression was still present in the 1980's comics' and like *M'Quidech* stories, these new one were testimonies of the Algerian war and Algerian martyrs, but moreover, these new committed artists were Algerians' voices, they discussed political issues, especially the problem of democracy. In fact, 1988 demonstrations' witnessed an alteration in the Algerian Government where former President *Chadli Ben Djedid* (1929-2012) allowed freedom of the press which led starting from the 1990's to a myriad of publications and therefore the emergence of new gifted artists like *Daiffa*, the first woman to embark in comics' creation with strips illustrating women's struggles, positions and equality of genders.

The *pseudo-political* tolerance gave birth to the satirical comic book *El Menchar* (translated as the saw) founded in 1990 by *Sid Ali Melouah* with the collaboration of *Dilem*, *Sour*, *Gyps*, *Ayoub*, *Nedjmedine* and many more.
El Menchar became a significant outlet for creators wanting their opinions to be heard and their voices to be raised, indeed, the fortnightly comic was printed in 200 000 copies that were all sold out the first week of their publication. Cartoonists shook conventions in *El Menchar* and satirized political figures. This burst of creative energy was interrupted in 1991 due to the civil war that lasted a decade (1991-2000) where some artists were victims of homicides and others fled the country. Few years after this fatal conflict, FIBDA (Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Alger translated as the International Festival of Algiers Comic Books) started in 2008 acting as a catalyst in the rebirth of Algerian comics. It also paved the way to the emergence of Algerian manga.

In fact, festivals like the FIBDA encourage creativity among comic's artists and help their works to be published; they also play a key role in developing the local market and increasing artists' talents by organizing workshops. Moreover, such enterprise acknowledges supporting new cartoonists' generations and thus promoting new publications. Another factor aiding in Algerian comics renaissance is with no doubt Belgian artist *Etienne Schréder* who gathered a series of workshops with Algerians and collected them in an omnibus called *Monsters*.
Labter in his *Panorama de la Bande Dessinée Algérienne 1969-2009* and *50 ans de Bande Dessinée Algérienne*, *Et l'aventure continue* by *Ameziane Ferhani* acknowledge that though, the history of Algerian comics went through hard times, it enjoys now popularity with all kinds of publications challenging American, European or Asiatic ones with new generation of artists following their predecessors' paths and willing to restore to comics their glorious days.

4. Research Design

4.1. Field work and the Markedness Model:

Sapir (1921) argues that language is variable, and scholars such as Milroy & Milroy (1992) and many others adhered to this idea. In fact, linguistic variation affects the phonology, morphology, and syntax of a given language when alternating varieties within the same conversational turn. Being a focal point of this present research paper, the inquiry lays on the social motivations of code switching and the strategic nature of this latter, for this Myers-Scotton Markedness Model is our analytical tool.

4.2. Data preparation, analysis and interpretation:

Sabaou considers that mixing languages (AA and F) is an integral part of Algerian Arabic Speaking way, to render this authenticity; he does not hesitate to ascribe to his characters such features. In this manga, characters display typical Algerian way of parlance with humorous tone specific to Algerians; Sabaou's attempt was mainly to "*Algerianize*" the manga and makes it fit the Algerian *style*. *Houma Fighter* exhibits characters inspired from everyday life, each with his/her own problem and all sharing this notion so dear to the author which is '*l'Algérianité*'[4].

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4 A term denoting the feeling of belonging to Algeria and the Algerian culture and way of life.

All written in French with instances of code switching in Algerian Arabic, *Houma Fighter* provides an authentic narrative where Sabaou draws the daily life of his young protagonist in a manga of one hundred seventy (117) pages, where along this journey, Sofiane Bekhti, the protagonist experiences all sides of life. The total of words displayed in this manga is of **6067** words, **131** words uttered in Algerian Arabic and **5936** words in French. The distribution of the unmarked variety i.e. French is of about **48.65** words per page whereas the distribution of the marked variety i.e. Arabic (Algerian Arabic) is of about **1.07** words per page. Accordingly, the percentage of the amount of unmarked variety used is of **97.84%** whereas the percentage of the marked variety is of **2.15%**.

It is considered that the most ubiquitous variety is the unmarked choice which is French, mainly used to sustain the narrative, the marked choice which is Algerian Arabic is the variety employed to create surprise for say or deliver a special message.

5. *Social Motivation for Code switching in Houma Fighter*

The present part is devoted to the social motivations leading to code switching; a glimpse to Myers-Scotton's overwhelming book (Social Motivations for Code switching: Evidence from Africa 1993), according to her and to the proponents of the Markedness Model, choosing one variety over another is a cognitive act or strategy which engenders rewards. These rewards might be considered as mental calculations enhanced by socio-psychological motivations of speakers. Being rational actors, speakers or writers engage in code switching in an act of "*accomplishing* more than the conveying of referential meaning" Myers-Scotton (1993:75). What makes speakers or writers use one variety over another is the central tenet of this paper and motivations for code switching will be displayed with regard to social impetus and motivations.

When analyzing *Houma Fighter*, a feeling of deep routed Algerian culture is palpable, the author vehicles feelings of '*Algérianité*' as he likes to emphasize, pride typical to Algerians and belonging to a united and multilingual speech community at the same time. Indeed, Sabaou, in his manga lays social motivations of code switching, choosing the marked variety which is Algerian Arabic that might be considered as a strategy through which the author aims to reshape the existing Right and Obligation set in order to express solidarity, group membership and exhibit social norms and Algerian values. Through our analysis, it has been noted that CS id used as:

Indexical of social negotiations :

The Markedness Model accounts for implied messages in code switching. It argues that the choice of a marked variety means more costs as opposed to the unmarked one which is favored because the cognitive calculations of speakers are economically biased. This notion of intentionality is encompassed in what Myers-Scotton calls *negotiation of the Right and Obligation set*, indeed, whenever a speaker or a writer whishes to emphasize something or deliver a special message to the hearer or to the reader, she/he makes use of the available choices that he/she has in her/his speech repertoire. By shifting varieties in *Houma Fighter* between marked and unmarked, Sabaou aims to signal 'otherness' as put by *Auer* (1992:31) when discussing contextualization cues, the author uses intentionally words in the marked variety i.e. in Algerian Arabic to express solidarity, group membership and "…shared ethnicity within an addressee" (Holmes 2000). Table (1.1) shows chunks of passages in the marked variety illustrating what has been previously said.

AA Words	Transliteration	Page	Gloss
Lazem nrohoharraga	/la:zəm nrɔ :hɔ: ħaraga/	6	We have to go illegally
Rani sa3edtek	/rani: sa:ʕətˤk/	7	I helped you
Ya khi mareg	/ja X: ma:reg/	19	He is smart
Bent familia	/bənt familja/	31	A good girl
Ya jeddek	/ja: jədək/	53	Damn
Hanouni	/ħanʊ:ni:/	90	My dear
Ma fhamna wallou	/ma: fhamna wa:lʊ:/	103	We understand nothing

Table 1.1: Instances of Code switching indexing social negotiations.

The vehicle of social norms:

David Hume was the first to attest that norms are the corner stone of social order. In this, norms define property rights or who is entailed to do what. Individuals in a given community are aware of their roles and conscious of what to do, how to behave and what to speak depending on factors.

In this, speakers have a natural theory of markedness, "…any code points to a particular interpersonal balance. It is partly because of their indexical qualities that different languages, dialects, and styles are maintained in a community" Myers-Scotton (2000:127). Such identification is translated by the use of words having a connotative meaning, tightly linked to the habitus[5] of the Algerian speech community. These *non translated* words reflect the conservative nature of the Algerian society. The author makes sure to use words shared and understood by the readership, in this, such utterances are performed by the old authoritative figure which is represented by the father of the protagonist's neighbor, table (1.2) illustrates this.

AA Words	Transliteration	Page	Gloss
Eddoukhli le dar	/əddʊ:Xli: l da:r/	87	Come home
Wlid el hram	/wli:d əl ħra:m/	87	Bastard
La hchouma	/ləħʃʊ:ma/	88	Shame
Taht dari	/taħt da:ri:/	88	Under my roof

Table 1.2: Instances of Code switching denoting social norms in *Houma Fighter*.

Transmission of social values

Social values in any community are said to be norms directing the *general* behaviors of humans, following *Jennifer Trusted* view (2002:1) "we all have moral values and we all make moral judgments." In any literary work, writers engage in transmitting values (respect, tolerance, family…), by doing so, they manage to negotiate the actual Right, and Obligation set. Indeed, signaling social values needs to establish a *discursive* writer or speaker / reader or listener contact, this whole process does not entail the chosen variety but as Rodriguez-Yànez (1994:74) expresses it, it is rather "…the fluctuating choice of the degree of code fluctuation" that allows the vehicle of such concepts.

In a narrative uttered totally in French, Algerian Arabic might be considered as a bypass to signal social values and enhance feelings of tolerance, spirituality, and love of others. Sabaou's major aim is to promote authentic Algerian values encompassing love of the country and a special tribute to the Algerian *veiled* woman, who is regarded somehow as weak from Western societies. In this, the author ascribes to her a special martial art consisting of hiding powerful weapons under her veil.

In choosing to insert cognates of Algerian Arabic, the manga-ka seeks for more reward; table (1.3) illustrates this.

AA Words	Transliteration	Page	Gloss
Hadjoubisu	/ħaʒʊ:bi:tsʊ:/	57	A martial art special to veiled women
La hchouma	/ləħʃʊ:ma/	88	Shame

Table 1.3: Instances of Code switching indexing social values.

Echoic

To create 'stylistic effects' and deliver the 'authorial message', writers use instances of code switching in their literary works but, what makes such mixture works is "…the unexpectedness or markedness of the choice" Myers-Scotton (1993:140). In fact, authors try to make their works, more realistic, more accurate and especially more interesting, for this marked and unmarked choices are available to them. These authors try to take the best outcomes from their choices and make them *echoic* as Sperber and Wilson (1982) establish it. By echoic, authors refer to effects of irony which under the Markedness Model implies a change of the Right and Obligation set. In this, Sabaou's narrative is not an exception *per se* for the author displays irony and sarcasm through the black cat "words" (table 1.4).

AA Words	Transliteration	Page	Gloss
T3ayyi wesmek	/tʕaji wesmek/	71	You are tiresome
Jmi3 wahed ma yeslah lwallou fi bladou	/ʒmi:ʕwa:ħəd ma: jəslaħlʷwa:lʊ: fi: bla:dʊ:/	76	All person that is good for nothing in his/her country
Hseb rouhou fi film handout	/ħsəb rɔ:ħɔ: fi: fi:lm həndʊ:/	88	He thought he was in a Bollywood film
Telfet ga3	/təlfət ga:ʕ/	111	•We don't know what to do

Table 1.4: Instances of Code switching as echoic

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5 A term largely spread in the field of sociology among scholars as Marcel Mauss and especially Pierre Bourdieu which is defined as a structure of the mind characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and taste.

In such enterprise, the focus is more on the writer than on the reader; thus, the author is constantly making calculations as to get the best outcomes of his choice. Choosing a marked variety is then *gambling* while the expected effect is *innovating*.

Indicator of Folkloric speech

Folklore happens everywhere. Because everyone experiences and lives folklore differently, it is often difficult to confine the diversity and fluidity of folklore into a set of rigid definitions. As the study of folklore evolves, so do the definitions. Under the Markedness Model assumptions, folklore is linked with the variety chosen by the writer (in the present context); moreover, folklore is equated to the *dialect* use as Pound (1945:151) stresses it

Folk and folk songs and the peculiarity of folk speech of dialect start in many ways, from sources among many classes, and in many regions, and they should no longer be defined by hypothetical anonymous beginnings among the lowly.

Though in this study, the words *variety* and *choice* are privileged, it is worth to note that most of the time folklore rhymes with dialect and popular culture and the author adheres to this view by ascribing to one of his characters a popular *chaoui* song. Table (1.5) explains what was previously said.

AA Words	Transliteration	Page	Gloss
zawali we fhel	/za :wa:li :wᵉfħəl/	112	Needy and worthy
manahmelche del	/ma:jaħməlʃəDlə/	112	Does not support contempt

Table 1.5: Instances of code switching as folkloric speech.

6. Conclusion

The paper's core inquiry is to demonstrate the strategic nature of code switching when used in Algerian manga with the attempt to answer whether these linguistic alternations are purposive. Analyses showed that following the Markedness Model predictions', the writer is doing mental calculations when switching to *optimize*.

In Myers-Scotton words', under the Markedness Model, code switching is predictable and is indexical of social negotiations, meaning that speakers are driven to choose the *right* code in their Right and Obligation set to arrive "at the relational import of a conversation" Myers-Scotton in Li Wei (2005:127). In light of these analyses, it has been determined that in fact, the speaker or more precisely the writer in our case is doing *mental calculations* to echo *intentionality* and thus deliver the authorial message. Code switching in this case is *strategic*.

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