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## **ROLE OF LANGUAGE MIXING IN RELIGIOUS SONGS**

### **Abstract:**

Language mixing refers to "the merging of characteristics of two or more languages in any verbal communication" (Odlin, 1989, p. 6). It may be used as a cover term for the merging of languages in contact situations in general, which takes the forms of transfer, borrowings, code-switching and mixing (Odlin, 1989, pp.7, 140). Mixing languages in conversation is different than mixing languages in songs. In conversation, mixing languages is naturally used. Often speakers may not be aware of the fact that they are using and integrating two languages in their conversations. Whereas mixing languages within the songs' lyrics is conscious, and to some extent words are prearranged and typically composed and modified to serve certain purposes (Davies & Bentahila, 2008). The objective of this paper is to discuss the communicative functions of language mixing in religious songs, more specifically modern Islamic ones; those of Sami Yusuf. Sami Yusuf is a British singer-songwriter from Iranian Azerbaijani descent, recognized by The Independent as the "Voice of Islam". Amongst Sami Yusuf's hits songs this paper considers three particular songs: "Al-Mu'allim" "My Ummah" and "Healing". Findings indicate that mixing between two languages English and Arabic mainly occurred for two reasons. First reason is to address different audience from various linguistic backgrounds. Second reason is to draw the attention of the listeners (Malik, 1994). In the lyrics of these songs English and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) languages are presented alongside each other. Even though MSA is the formal written language and not the everyday spoken language, yet the language has a strong appeal among Muslims from different backgrounds. While English is as a lingua Franca, MSA is considered the language of the Islam religion as well as the way to understand Quran. Hence, Arab and Muslim people from non-Arabic background have the ability to fully understand the language. Nevertheless, mixing languages draws the listeners' attention and enhance their motivation to scrutinize the message sent

### **Keywords:**

language mixing, communicative functions, religious songs, English, Modern Standard Arabic.

## Introduction

Language mixing refers to "the merging of characteristics of two or more languages in any verbal communication" (Odlin, 1989, p. 6). It may be used as a cover term for the merging of languages in contact situations in general, which takes the forms of transfer, borrowings, code-switching and mixing (Odlin, 1989, pp.7, 140). In this paper language mixing and code switching are used interchangeably to refer to the systematic use of two languages during oral or written discourse (Myers-Scotton, 2006). Upon first glance, one might conclude that code-switching is nothing more than two or more languages uttered within the same conversation or speech situation. But is that true? Is code-switching really just a use of two distinct lexicons or linguistic varieties? According to Lipski (1985), the answer is no. Code switching is governed by a set of constraints which indicate a complex interaction between the two languages (Lipski, 1985).

The aim of this paper is to discuss the communicative functions of code switching in Sami Yusuf songs by examining the various reasons and motivations for code switching. Sami Yusuf is a British singer-songwriter from Iranian Azerbaijani descent, recognized by The Independent as the "Voice of Islam". Sami Yusuf songs resemble those romantic pop songs. Throughout his music, the singer played an import role in the promotion of modern Islamic music on a global scale. His success as modern Islamic artist is widely popular throughout the West and Islamic countries (Herding, 2014, p. 93). In this present paper the focus is on three particular hits songs "Al-Mu'allim", "My Ummah" and "Healing". In these three songs Sami Yusuf as a song writer deliberately used English as the base language; nevertheless, switching to Arabic language was always present.

This paper is regarded as an addition to the existing literature of code switching in written songs. However, to the knowledge of the researcher, no work has done a study on code switching in Islamic songs. This study will hopefully fill the gap in the literature.

## Literature Review

### *Mixing languages/code switching in songs*

The study of mixing languages in songs or code-switching has often been restricted to conversations in bilingual communities, where members use more than one language within the same conversation. The study of the public use of code-switching in discourse aimed at a mass audience is a very recent phenomenon Davies and Bentahila (2008) note "Code-switching, in addition to being a useful resource for the bilingual in everyday interaction with other bilinguals, may also serve a poetic function, contributing to the

aesthetic and rhetorical effects of discourse that is not spontaneous, but carefully constructed” (p.2). As such, code switching in natural conversation differs from code switching in songs. In conversation, code switching is spontaneously used and speakers may often be unaware to the fact that they are moving back and forth between the two languages. Whereas the code switching within the lyrics of the song is conscious, and to some extent the words are predetermined and typically composed and edited to serve certain purposes (Davies & Bentahila, 2006).

Many scholars have investigated code switching manifested in different type of music such as hip hop and Rai music (Stølen, 1992; Sarkar, et al., 2005; Davies & Bentahila, 2006; Davies & Bentahila, 2002). In early examination, Stølen (1992) analyzed Danish-English code-switching in songs written by a female member one songwriter from the mid-western Danish-American community based in Seattle, Washington. Results showed that a conditioning effect of features of genre and social role on the exploitation of two codes in writing. Codeswitching was used as contextualization cues in occasional songs. Code switching was not only an expression of group belonging and ethnic distinctiveness, yet it was also a marker of the oral mode of interaction.

In a more recent study, Bentahila and Davies (2002; 2006) analyzed Arabic-French switching in the lyrics of Algerian rai music. The authors pointed out that switching is creatively used to add a rhetorical and aesthetic effect to the song’s lyrics because the switch pattern may interplay with elements in the lyrics, such as rhyme, line division, and stanza, reinforcing links and divisions and improving various types of patterning. The authors added that code switching is not addressed to one interlocutor, or to a small group known personally to the speaker as it is in conversation. Yet, it was addressed to wider and global audiences. The authors concluded that where there is code switching between Arabic and French, Arabic was the matrix code. In other words Arabic is the base language as most of the code-switches in the lyrics were embedded in Arabic “frame” (Myers-Scotton, 2000).

Sarkar, Sakar & Winer (2005) examined code switching in Montreal Hip-hop, the results showed that code switching has several functions: 1) to draw the attention of, or to identify, the addressee, 2) as a marker of social or cultural identity, 3) to facilitate internal rhyme.

### ***Communicative Functions of Codeswitching***

From a sociolinguistic point of view, codeswitching has been studied as an important strategy for establishing social relationships. It has been shown to be a personal communication device for enriching discourse (Koike, 1987; Scotton & Ury, 1977). In discussing communicative functions, Gumperz (1982) mentions the discourse function of code switching, which is also called the personalization function of language. To create a

conversational effect, speaker switch between the connotation of the “we” and the “they” code. That is, code switching is often accompanied by a change of propositional attitude attached to the linguistic utterance. According to Gumperz (1982) these attitudes depend on the status and functions of the codes in a particular speech community where distinction between in-group and out-group audience is always present. In this regards, the “we code” indicates a set of attitudes such as “personal”, “intimacy” and “subjectivity”. Whereas the “they code” implies a set of different attitudes like “, “distanced” “authority “and objectivity” (Gumperz, 1982, pp. 75-80). As such, code switching is seen as the medium to convey both social and linguistic meanings; that is accomplishing the referential and relational function of language. This results in communicating effectively and in unifying interlingually (Gumperz, 1982).

Furthermore, Gumperz (1982, pp. 75-80) provides numerous functions of code switching that convey communicative social meanings. According to him code switching is used for: 1) addressee specification, 2) interjection, 3) quotations, 4) reiteration, 5) message qualification, and 6) personalization vs. objectification. Code switching plays an essential role in defining an addressee as the recipient of the message, which is directing a message to a distinct addressee. This role is mainly exemplified in situations where the addressee is not immediately involved in the conversation. Thus, code switching acts as a means inviting the person to participate in the interaction. Another function for code switching is interjection or sentence fillers. That is to interrupt someone’s conversation .Furthermore, code switching functions as quotations when a person reports the speech of another speaker in a conversation. Another function of code-switching is to repeat a message from one language to another. Utterances are sometimes repeated to emphasize or clarify the message. Besides, code-switching is also employed to qualify a message. That is a subject is introduced in one language and explained in another language. The other use of code-switching is to distinguish the language selection. The language contrast of personalization vs. objectification relates to things such as: “the distinction between talk about action and talk as action, the degree of speaker involvement in, or distance from, a message, whether a statement reflects personal opinion or knowledge, whether it refers to specific instances or has the authority of generally known fact” (Gumperz ,1982, p.80).

On the other hand, (Malik, 1994) presented ten communicative functions attributed to code switching according to the purposes that they try to achieve. These functions are 1) lack of Facility, 2) lack of register, 3) mood of the Speaker, 4) to emphasize a point, 5) habitual Experience, 6) semantic significance, 7) to show identity with a group, 8) To address a different audience, 9) Pragmatic reasons and 10) to attract attention. According to Malik (1994), code switching occurs when speakers cannot find an appropriate expression, vocabulary or particular word needed in order to carry on a smooth conversation. This is referred to as lack of facility. Lack of register refers to the incompetency of the speakers. That is when speakers are not equally proficient in two languages and when the speakers

are not familiar with the terms in two languages, thus codeswitching occurs. Mood of the speaker refers to the physical and mental status of the speakers. That is code switching takes place with a new dimension when the speaker is tired or angry. In other words, the speaker can find the right and appropriate words in the base language to express him/herself, when he/she is in the normal state of mind. However, when the speaker is emotionally agitated, at this point the other language in his/her repertoire might be more available (Malik, 1994). Furthermore, codeswitching is also used to emphasize a point.

Habitual experience refers to the fact that code switching often occurs in fixed phrases of greeting and parting, commands and request, invitation, expressions of gratitude and discourse markers. Semantic significance refers to the fact that sometimes code conveys semantically significant information. That is listeners interpret codeswitching as an indicator of the speaker's attitude, or communicative intents and emotions as code switching is a tool for conveying appropriate linguistic and social information. Code switching is also employed to show identity with a group as the speaker switches to another language usually to express his/her solidarity with a very specific ethnic or social group.

Code switching is also employed when the speaker intends to address simultaneously people coming from different linguistic backgrounds Malik (1994). The speaker uses part of the sentence in one language and the other part in another language. In this present case study it is the singer who uses a mixed discourse of English and Arabic. The part of his utterance in English is directed to globalized wider audiences and the other in Arabic is meant for Arabic/ bilingual audiences. More over code switching is used for pragmatic reasons. According to Malik (1994), sometimes code switching is highly meaningful in terms of the conversational context. This refers to the varying degrees of speaker's involvement in the conversation (Gumperz, 1970). Last but not least, code switching is used to attract attention. The use of two different languages grabs the attention of the listener when he comes across non-English utterance. The listener's attention is automatically drawn to depend on the language background he/she originates from (Malik, 1994). In similar vein, Sarkar, Winer & Sarkar (2005) point that grabbing attention is another function of code-switching, which was observed in Montreal hip hop. According to the authors rappers often use words with a vocative function at the ends of lines or as appositives in order to address the listener or as an apostrophe, addressing another character in the song's story (Sarkar, Winer & Sarkar, 2005).

In this paper, Malik's (1994) review on two out of ten reasons for code-switching will be used to discuss the occurrences of code-switching in these Islamic songs.

## **Methodology**

### ***Selected data***

Al-Mu'allim in Arabic means "The Teacher". This song was the title of Sami Yusuf debut studio album. The album was released in 2003. The theme of this song is the teachings of the prophet Mohamad (PBUH) ([www.samiyusufofficial.com](http://www.samiyusufofficial.com)).

"My Ummah" song which means "my community of believers" was also the title of his second album released in 2005. The theme of this song is to call for one's fellow believers to struggle, work and pray in order to themselves useful to the global community of Muslims ([www.samiyusufofficial.com](http://www.samiyusufofficial.com)).

"Healing" is the last track on Wherever You Are album. The song is a call to revive the caring aspect of human beings. "Healing" is a chance to vindicate all those best hopes one has about oneself and about humanity. It is an attempt to honor the small acts of kindness. It is a tribute to those who sacrifice and stand up for good even when it's hard, even when it's tough -- it is an embodiment of gracious generosity in practice ([www.samiyusufofficial.com](http://www.samiyusufofficial.com)).

The success of these songs lies in part in their simple message that the song writer/singer wants to deliver, as well as in their musical sounds that seem to invite listeners to open their hearts. All these songs are categorized as modern Islamic song reflecting themes related to Islamic themes, practices and messages.

The research design of this paper is descriptive qualitative. Data of this paper is in the form of written lyrics collected from three popular songs "Al-Mu'allim", "My Ummah" and "Healing". The body of lyrics constituted a useful sample of convenience of English-Arabic code switching. This sample includes only transcribed instances of code switching occurrences within the lyrics. Arabic verses are illustrated alongside their transcription in English (using English alphabet) which are in *Italic font*. Translation of verses is presented between parentheses.

## **Findings and discussion**

### ***Communicative function of the songs***

As mentioned earlier two main motivations for code switching in are to be discussed. First motivation is to address a different and wider audience in this sense code switching is

attributed to the interlocution motivational aspect. The second reason is to capture attention, code switching in this case acts as an emphasis motivational aspect, where emotions has been emphasized, thus attracting attention.

### **Address wider Audience**

In this section a sample of verses selected from the three different songs including code switching occurrences are presented and discussed. Let us start with Al Mu'allim song.

Al Mu'allim code switching verses:

Muhammad, mercy upon Mankind

أبا القاسم = Abal Qasim (one of the names of the Prophet)

يا حبيبي يا محمد = Ya Habibi ya Muhammad (My beloved O Muhammad)

يا شفيعي يا محمد = Ya Shafi'i ya Muhammad (My intercessor O Muhammad)

خير خلق الله محمد = Khayru khalqillah Muhammad (The best of Allah's creation is Muhammad)

يا مصطفى يا إمام المرسلين = Ya Mustafa ya Imamal Mursalina (O Chosen One, O Imam of the Messengers)

يا مصطفى يا شفيع العالمين = Ya Mustafa ya Shafi'al 'Alamina (O Chosen One, O intercessor of the worlds)

He prayed while others slept

While others ate he'd fast

While they would laugh he wept

Until he breathed his last.

In Al Mu'allim song as shown in the above sample the singer reminds his audience of the Prophet Mohammed's teachings that have been forgotten by many. The theme of Arabic verses describes the singer's love for the prophet (PBUH). In the first verse he used one of the names of the Prophet "Abal Qasim", which is mostly known to Muslim listeners. In the following verses he praises his love to the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). The Muslim's faith cannot be complete unless he loves the Prophet (PBUH) and until the Prophet (PBUH)

is dearer to him than his father, his son, his own self and all the people as Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 15; Muslim, 44. This love and affection is shown in the Arabic lyrics. This also stands as a reminder for Muslims to never stop loving the Prophet (PBUH). The verses in Arabic are in Modern Standard Arabic. The MSA shares its morphology and syntax with the classical language of the Quran and canonical literature of Islam, thus it is fully understandable among Muslims from different backgrounds. Muslim people have full access to the Quran. This includes knowing how to read the Quran, regardless the people's first language which might not be Arabic. It also includes, most importantly, understanding the language of the Quran; understanding the meanings of what they read. Thus, listeners are able to understand the verses in Arabic as the words are derived from Quran.

In the last verses the singer switches to English. The lyrics reflect the Prophet Muhammad's mercy, compassion, universal benevolence and concern, self-sacrifice and world transforming legacy. This stands as reason for why he composes the lyrics in English. That is to address a wider audience and to introducing those teachings to the audiences / listeners living in non- Muslim countries. These lyrics also stand for bilingual audiences who understand English as well.

In "My Ummah" song the selected verses below reflect the contemporary da'wa (calling for) practice and goes hand-in-hand with the functionalist version of Islam.

My brothers, my sisters, in Islam

Let's struggle, work, and pray

If we are to

Bring back the glory of his way

يا الله يا رب العالمين = Ya Allah ya rabbal 'alamin (O Allah Lord of the Worlds)

يا رحمان يا رحيم = Ya rahmanu ya rahim (O Merciful and Beneficent)

يا يرب = Ya rabbi (O my Lord)

Let the Ummah rise again

Let us see daylight again

Once again

In "Healing" song the code switching verses are:



Seek only to give and you'll receive

So, heal and you will be healed

قلب بين يدي قلب = Kalbon Bayna Yadayyi Kalb (Hearts in the hand of another heart)

و اللهييد كل قلب = Wa Biyadi Allahi Kollou Kalb (and in God's hand are all hearts)

عينا ترعى عين = 'Aynon Tar'a 'Aynan (An eye takes care of another eye)

وعين الله ترعى = Wa 'Ayno Allahi (and from God's eye nothing hides)

كلمة طيبة صدقة = Kalmiton Tayibaton Sadaka (good word is charity)

تبسمك لأخيك صدقه = Tabasomooka L' Akheeka Sadaka (smile to your brother is charity)

كل معروف صدقة = Kollou Ma'rouf Sadaka (every good deed is charity)

As it is shown in the verses above that the singer alternates large chunks that are full clauses and sometimes at least stretches of language that represent some degree of grammatical construction. Using English and Arabic here is meant to restate the theme of the song and familiarize the listeners.

In sum, the song-writer/ singer intention was to address to global and perhaps an international audiences' base. It seems that the singer acknowledge that monolingual non-Arabic speakers are characterized by having good commend of understanding words related and/or derived from Quran. Similarly, in terms of using English verses, the purpose here is to primary address to monolingual English speakers and secondly multilingual speakers. Thus, Code switching in these verses is performed intentionally, which supports the writer/singer objectives to reach wider audiences, from different linguistic backgrounds.

### ***Grabbing attention***

Another function of code switching is to draw the attention of the addressee. This can be seen through all the verses provided above. In all these examples the base language is English and the switch is into a standard variety of Arabic. Code switching attracts grab the attention of the audiences/listeners thus it enhances their motivation to carefully scrutinize the message presented. Once the attention is drawn the singer is more able to reach the goal of his song and more capable to reflect a certain message.

## Conclusion

In this paper, the phenomenon of code switching in three Islamic songs was analysed by using Malik's only two of ten reasons approach to code switching. This paper shows that the use of two languages English and Arabic and switching between these languages serves to address to wider audiences, that is going global outside the local context, as the singer tries to ground the increasingly internationally recognized of his music 'in the local context. These results correspond with Davies and Bentahila (2002) study, where in this study findings show that code switching has two main functions globalization and localization (p. 206). The study suggests that performers demonstrate their links to the global culture and try to link their links to the global culture and try to increase internationally the recognition of the 'rai' music. The alternation of both English and Arabic serve the singer well to achieve his communicative objectives. Code switching serves another function which is attracting the attention of the audience/ listener. This result corresponds with Winer & Sarkar (2005) findings that point out that in Montreal hip hop songs code switching played an important role in grabbing attention.

It can be concluded that code switching in songs does not resemble the natural code-switching phenomenon that occurs in bilinguals' speech. Code switching in songs is predetermined and used to convey particular message. Code switching in Islamic songs is not only apparent in spoken discourse but also in written lyrics discourse and the reasons for switching codes are similar to those of natural verbal communication. The paper also shows that there are two reasons why code switching takes place in particular situations. Addressing wider audiences and attracting attention are contributing factor for code switching. In the lyrics of these songs English and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) languages are presented alongside each other. Even though MSA is the formal written language and not the everyday spoken language, yet the language has a strong appeal among Muslims from different backgrounds. While English is as a lingua Franca, MSA is considered the language of the Islam religion as well as the way to understand Quran. Hence, Arab and Muslim people from non-Arabic background have the ability to fully understand the language. Nevertheless, mixing languages draws the listeners' attention and enhance their motivation to scrutinize the message sent.

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