

## Code-Switching from Arabic to English among TV Presenters as an Indicator of Linguistic Competence and Linguistic Dominance

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تاريخ الاستلام: 2026/04/01 تاريخ المراجعة: 2026/04/30 تاريخ القبول: 2026/05/13- تاريخ النشر: 2026/06/01

### Abstract

Code-switching between Arabic and English has become a noticeable feature of contemporary Arab T.V discourse. This paper is going to examine the use of English lexical items by television presenters and commentators in sport, cooking, and beauty programs, including *penalty, performance, carnival, pasta, contouring, highlighter, and serum*. Therefore, using a qualitative sociolinguistic approach and drawing on Baker's (2010) framework, the paper explores the functions of code-switching and its relationship to linguistic competence and linguistic dominance. The findings indicate that presenters and commentators frequently use English terms despite the availability of Arabic equivalents. Such language choices are often associated with professional expertise, prestige, modernity, and globalization. The paper concludes that code-switching serves as a communicative strategy for constructing professional identity while also reflecting the growing influence of English in Arabic media discourse.

**Keywords:** Code-switching, Arabic-English bilingualism, television discourse, sociolinguistic, linguistic competence, linguistic dominance.

### الملخص

أصبح التحول اللغوي بين العربية و الانجليزية سمة ملحوظة في الخطاب التلفزيوني العربي المعاصر. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى بحث استخدام مقدمي البرامج ومعلقو مباريات كرة القدم لبعض المفردات الإنجليزية في البرامج الرياضية والطهي والتجميل، مثل بلانتي و بيفرمونس و كرنفال و الباستا و السيريوم و كونتورنق و هايلاتر. وتعتمد الدراسة على منهج وصفي نوعي في إطار علم اللغة الاجتماعي، مستندة إلى نموذج بيكر (2010) لتحليل وظائف التحول اللغوي وعلاقته بالكفاءة اللغوية والهيمنة اللغوية. أظهرت النتائج أن مقدمي البرامج ومعلقو مباريات كرة القدم يستخدمون المصطلحات الإنجليزية بصورة متكررة على الرغم من وجود مقابلات عربية لها. وترتبط هذه الاختيارات اللغوية غالباً بإبراز الخبرة المهنية والمكانة الاجتماعية والحدثية وتأثير العولمة. وتلخص الدراسة إلى أن التحول اللغوي يمثل استراتيجية تواصلية تسهم في بناء الهوية المهنية لمقدمي البرامج و معلقو مباريات كرة القدم، كما يعكس التأثير المتزايد للغة الإنجليزية في الخطاب الإعلامي العربي المعاصر.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التحول اللغوي، الثنائية اللغوية العربية – الانجليزية، الخطاب التلفزيوني، علم اللغة الاجتماعي، الكفاءة اللغوية، الهيمنة اللغوية.

### Introduction

English is becoming more and more common in talk shows. Many TV hosts use a mix of English and Arabic when they present and talk to guests. This is not simply about the use of terms in specialized fields. English words and phrases are used even where there are clear Arabic alternatives. Hosts do this to show off their skills and to look more connected to modern media. Mixing languages is an attempt to look up to date and ware of trends, and to appear fluent in English. This is especially true for shows that appeal to people like sports, cooking and fashion shows. On the other hand, the growing use of code-switching raises important questions about its real motivations and its linguistic and cultural effect on Arab audiences.

In many instances, the employment of English vocabulary is not motivated by linguistic necessity nor by the lack of Arabic equivalents, but it acts as symbolic device that is associated with prestige, distinction, and the creation of a more modern media identity Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021). This phenomenon may also reflect the influence of cultural globalization and the dominance of English as an international language in media, technology and entertainment. Therefore, looking at code-switching in Arabic talk shows can provide a better understanding of the relationship between language, media and cultural identity. It also sheds light on the social and psychological factors that motivate media presenters to resort to English in Arabic discourse in cases when there are obvious and understandable Arabic choices that the audience can easily reach.

## 2 Definitions of Code-switching

The concept of code-switching vary from scholar to another, linguist to linguist, according to their theoretical orientations and academic interests. It is seen by some scholars as a linguistic phenomenon, related to grammatical structure and syntactic patterns, while others emphasize its social, cultural and communicative dimensions. Despite the fact that these definitions are not identical, the majority of studies define code-switching as the change of language from one to another in communication between speakers, within on sentence or across several sentences in the same discourse. Code-switching is also seen as a communicative strategy employed by people to achieve various purposes, such as clarifying meaning, expressing cultural identity, showing social belonging, or influencing the listener. Therefore, this phenomenon should be understood not as a random alternation between languages but as a complex phenomenon of linguistic, social and psychological nature related to the

communicative situation and the participants. Code-switching has been defined by many theorists from deferent sociolinguistic views. Based on Grosjean (1982), code-switching refers to the alternate use of two or more languages within the same utterance or conversation by bilingual speakers. He argues that bilingual individuals naturally move between languages depending on the communicative context and their linguistic repertoire. Similarly, Gumperz (1982) defines code-switching as the juxtaposition of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems within the same interaction. He emphasizes that language alternation serves important social and conversational functions rather than occurring randomly. From a social perspective, Myers-Scotton (1993) views code-switching as a communicative strategy used by bilingual speakers to achieve particular social goals and negotiate social relationships. She argues that speakers switch languages to express identity, solidarity, status, or membership in a specific social group. Likewise, Gross (2006) explains that code-switching occurs when bilingual or multilingual speakers alternate between languages according to the communicative situation, topic of discussion, or participants involved in the interaction. This perspective highlights the influence of social and contextual factors on language choice. Furthermore, Baker (2010) defines code-switching as a switching from one language to another during communication for social, cultural or communicative purposes. The definition highlights that code-switching is not merely a linguistic habit but rather a purposeful communicative strategy employed by bilingual or multilingual speakers. Speakers may use code-switching to signal cultural identity, to reinforce social ties, to specify meaning, to accommodate an audience, or to construct some social effect, Baker says. For instance, a TV presenter may switch from Arabic to English while discussing fashion, sports, or technology in order to appear more modern, educated, or globally connected. In this sense, code-switching reflects the interaction between language, culture, and social communication rather than simple alternation between two languages.

## 4. Reasons of Code-switching

Code-switching is a common linguistic phenomenon among bilingual and multilingual speakers, which takes place for a number of social, psychological and communicative reasons. Code-switching often signals linguistic competence and the ability to strategically use multiple languages in response to the demands of a specific context, rather than a sign of linguistic deficiency. Baker (2010) in his discussion of bilingual communication identifies a number of factors that may motivate speakers to switch from one language to another in interaction. These factors show the great communicative and social functions code-switching serves and how it is

influenced by individual and contextual variables. The twelve common factors that trigger code-switching as identified by Baker (2010) are:

1. To emphasize a particular word or phrase
2. Because the speaker does not know a word or phrase in one language.
3. To express a concept that is easier or more suitable in the other language.
4. To clarify or explain meaning.
5. To show group identity and solidarity.
6. To fit a particular audience or listener.
7. To exclude someone from understanding the conversation.
8. To quote someone directly.
9. To express emotions, feelings, or attitudes.
10. To raise status, prestige, or formality.
11. To create a particular effect such as humor or emphasis.
12. Because switching has become a habitual part of bilingual speech.

Baker states there is a range of communicative, social and psychological reasons for code-switching. People also switch languages to highlight a word or idea. To compensate for a lack of vocabulary in one language, or to express a concept better in another language. Code-switching may also be employed to make meaning clearer and to enhance the listener's understanding. Bilingual speakers also switch languages to signal group identity and solidarity, accommodate the linguistic preferences of their audience, or to exclude certain people from understanding the conversation. Other reasons for code-switching include using someone 'words' in their original language. It also helps to express emotions and personal feelings in a natural way. Some people switch languages to show status, prestige or to be formal. Baker notes that speakers may switch languages to be funny or to create a style. For people who speak two languages fluently code-switching can become a habit. They may not even realize they are doing it. This is a normal part of communicating in two languages every day. Therefore, these examples show that code-switching does not mean someone is not good at languages. Instead it shows that they are competent in languages. They can choose which language to use depending on the situation. Code-switching is a skill. Switching languages can be useful, in communicative situations.

### **5. Code-Switching among Football Commentators**

People have started to notice that Arab football commentators switch between languages a lot lately. These commentators often switch between Arabic and English when they are talking about football matches that are happening now. You can really see this when you listen to commentators like Essam Shaouali. He likes to use words that are related to football when he is speaking Arabic on BeIN Sports. For example he usually says *penalty* instead of using the equivalent word ضربة ترجيحية. He also says *carnival* instead of the Arabic word احتفال. Football commentators like Essam Shaouali use words like *penalty* and *carnival* to attract watchers when they talk about football matches. This is something that is happening a lot with football commentators and it is really noticeable when you watch football matches on BeIN Sports and listen to commentators, like Essam Shaouali. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through Baker's (2010) motivations for code-switching, particularly the desire to emphasize certain expressions, project prestige and professionalism, create a stylistic effect, and express emotions more clearly. Consequently, the frequent use of code-switching by football commentators demonstrates how bilingual linguistic resources can be strategically employed to enhance audience engagement and enrich the overall viewing experience.

### **6. Code-Switching among Arab chefs in TV Cooking Programs**

Code-switching is also frequently observed in television cooking programs broadcast on Arab television channels. Many chefs and presenters tend to alternate between Arabic and English

while explaining recipes, cooking techniques, and culinary concepts. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in popular cooking shows such as Top Chef Arabia, where English culinary terms are often used as a part of everyday discourse, even when equivalent Arabic terms are available. The increasing use of codeswitching in cooking programs may be attributed to the international nature of contemporary culinary culture, where many cooking techniques, ingredients, and professional terms originate from Western culinary traditions. As a result, chefs may perceive English terminology as more precise, prestigious, or professionally appropriate than its Arabic counterpart. Furthermore, the use of English expressions may help presenters project expertise and align themselves with global culinary practices. However, the frequent use of code-switching may also have negative consequences for some viewers. Excessive reliance on English culinary terminology can create comprehension difficulties, particularly among audiences with limited proficiency in English. In some cases, viewers may fail to fully understand the concept of the program, despite the availability of equivalent Arabic expressions. Consequently, while codeswitching may enhance professional communication and reflect globalization in the culinary field, it may simultaneously reduce accessibility and hinder effective communication with certain segments of the audience.

### **7. Code-Switching among Beauty Specialists in TV Programs**

Code-switching is also a common feature in television programs related to beauty, skincare, and cosmetics. Many beauty specialists and presenters frequently alternate between Arabic and English when discussing cosmetic products, skincare routines, beauty treatments, and makeup techniques. This practice has become increasingly widespread due to the global influence of the beauty industry, where a large proportion of product names, technical terms, and marketing expressions originate from English-speaking countries. During their presentations, beauty experts often use English terms such as foundation, primer, contouring, highlighter, serum, and peeling, even when equivalent Arabic expressions are available or can be easily understood by the audience. In many cases, these English terms are integrated into Arabic discourse and are used naturally as part of the specialist's professional vocabulary. Such language choices may be motivated by a desire to appear knowledgeable, professional, and familiar with international trends in the beauty industry. Furthermore, the use of English terminology may reflect the globalized nature of modern cosmetics and beauty practices, where English functions as a dominant language of communication and marketing. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this form of code-switching may serve several functions, including demonstrating professional expertise, emphasizing particular concepts, and aligning with international standards within the beauty industry. However, the extensive use of foreign terminology may also present challenges for viewers who have limited knowledge of English. Frequent code-switching can sometimes reduce the clarity of information and make it more difficult for audiences to fully understand explanations related to product use, skincare procedures, or cosmetic techniques. As a result, viewers may miss important information or misunderstand certain aspects of the content being presented. Therefore, while code-switching enables beauty specialists to communicate using internationally recognized terminology and project a professional image, excessive reliance on English expressions may negatively affect audience comprehension. Therefore, maintaining a balance between Arabic and English terminology is essential to ensure that information remains both professionally accurate and accessible to a wide range of viewers.

### **8. Methodology**

This paper adopts a qualitative descriptive sociolinguistic approach to investigate Arabic-English code-switching among television presenters. The qualitative method was selected because the study aims to explore the social and communicative functions of code-switching rather than measure its frequency statistically. The paper focuses on understanding why television presenters alternate between Arabic and English and how such linguistic choices may reflect linguistic competence, professional identity, prestige, and linguistic dominance.

### 8.1 Data Sources

The study looks at some examples of Arabic-English code-switching that you can often see on television shows. The examples were taken from three areas of television talk where you often hear English words:

1. Sports commentary programs
2. Cooking programs
3. Beauty and cosmetic programs

Therefore, the selected examples include English lexical items used by presenters despite the existence of clear Arabic equivalents. These examples include:

English Term	Code-switching	Arabic Equivalent	Television Domain
penalty	بلانتي	ركلة جزاء او ركلة ترجيحية	Sports
performance	بيرفورمنس	أداء	Sports
carnival	كرنفال	مهرجان / احتفال	Sports
pasta	باستا	معكرونة	Cooking
contouring	كونتورنق	تحديد ملامح الوجه	Beauty
highlighter	هايلايتر	مستحضر الإضاءة	Beauty
serum	سيروم	مصل البشرة	Beauty

Therefore, these examples were selected because they represent common instances of code-switching in contemporary Arab television discourse and provide suitable data for sociolinguistic analysis.

### 5.2 Sampling Technique

This study employs purposive sampling. Consequently, this sampling method was chosen because the selected examples directly related to the paper objectives and illustrate the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher intentionally selected lexical items that satisfy the following criteria:

- The term is originally English.
- The presenter uses the English term while speaking Arabic.
- An established Arabic equivalent.
- The example occurs within a professional television context.

Purposive sampling is appropriate due to the study seeks to analyze representative examples of code-switching rather than generalize statistically to all television discourse.

### 5.3 Analytical Framework

This discussion is based primarily on Baker's (2010) sociolinguistic functions of code-switching. According to Baker, speakers may switch languages for several reasons, including:

- Expressing prestige.
- Demonstrating expertise.
- Establishing professional identity.
- Creating social distance.
- Signaling group membership.
- Reflecting educational background.
- Accommodating audience expectations.

Each text was analyzed according to these functions in order to identify the sociolinguistic motivations underlying the speaker's linguistic choices.

### 5.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis was conducted in four stages:

#### 5.4.1 Stage One: Identification

The researcher identified English lexical items embedded within Arabic television discourse.

### 5.4.2 Stage Two Comparison

Each English term was compared with its available Arabic equivalent in order to determine whether code-switching occurred despite the existence of an Arabic alternative.

### 5.4.3 Stage Three: Classification

The examples of this study were classified according to established categories of code-switching. Since the data primarily involve the insertion of single English lexical items into Arabic sentences, most examples were categorized as lexical code-switching and intra-sentential code-switching.

### 5.4.4 Stage Four: Interpretation

The selected examples were interpreted using Baker's (2010) theoretical framework. The researcher examined how each instance of code-switching may reflect linguistic competence, professional identity, prestige, globalization, or linguistic dominance.

## 5.5 Reliability and Validity

To make the analysis more accurate each example was looked at in terms of what it sounds like. The situation it was used in. The English words were compared to their equivalents to make sure that the code-switching that was seen was not because Arabic did not have the right words. The study also used known ideas, about language and society and previous studies on speaking two languages and code-switching to help understand what was found. The code-switching was examined closely to see how English and Arabic were used together. The study of bilingualism and code-switching was important to understand the results of the analysis of code-switching.

## 5.6 Limitations of the Study

There are some things we need to think about. First we only looked at a number of television shows instead of a lot of them. Second, the analysis concentrates on lexical code-switching and does not examine phonological or syntactic aspects of bilingual speech. Third, the findings are limited to television discourse and may not necessarily apply to other forms of media communication.. Therefore, with these limitations the television shows we looked at give us some good ideas about why Arabic-English code-switching is used by television presenters and help us understand how English is becoming more popular in Arab media today. Arabic-English code-switching is a thing to study and our findings can tell us more, about Arabic-English code-switching and how it is used in television.

## 6. Discussion

### Text 1: Beauty Programs – Contouring

Presenter's Utterance -code-switching	Arabic Equivalent
استخدمي تقنية <u>كونتورنق</u> لإبراز عظام الخدين	استخدمي تقنية <u>تحديد ملامح الوجه</u> لإبراز عظام الخدين

### 6.1 Analysis

This text represents intra-sentential code-switching, where the English lexical item *contouring* is inserted into an otherwise Arabic text. The presenter chooses the English term despite the availability of a comprehensible Arabic equivalent, namely تحديد ملامح الوجه. Therefore, from a sociolinguistic perspective, the use of the English word *contouring* reflects the influence of the global beauty industry, where English functions as the dominant language of professional communication, product marketing, and cosmetic training. The presenter's use of the English term may indicate familiarity with international beauty trends and professional identity. In this context, the presenter's choice of *contouring* helps construct an image of professionalism and modernity. The English term may also be perceived by viewers as more authentic due to it

corresponds directly to terminology commonly used by international cosmetic brands and beauty influencers.

**Text 2: Beauty Programs - Highlighter**

Presenter's Utterance -code-switching	Arabic Equivalent
ضعي هايلاتر على أعلى الخدين	ضعي مستحضر الإضاءة على أعلى الخدين

**6.2 Analysis**

The term highlighter is frequently used in beauty programs across the Arab world even though the Arabic equivalent مستحضر الإضاءة is available. This represents lexical code-switching in which a single English word replaces an Arabic expression. One possible explanation is the greater frequency of the English term within professional cosmetic discourse. International cosmetic products are typically marketed using English terminology, causing consumers and presenters to become more familiar with the English expression than with its Arabic translation. Baker argues that speakers may switch codes to demonstrate expertise and align themselves with a particular social group. In this case, the presenter aligns herself with the global beauty community and projects an image of specialized knowledge. The use of هايلاتر also reflects the symbolic prestige associated with English expression may be perceived as more fashionable and commercially recognizable than its Arabic counterpart.

**Text 3: Beauty Programs – Serum**

Presenter's Utterance - Code-switching	Arabic Equivalent
يفضل وضع السريوم قبل استخدام المرطب	يفضل وضع مصل البشرة قبل استخدام المرطب

**6.3 Analysis**

the insertion of the word السريوم into Arabic discourse constitutes lexical code-switching. Although the Arabic expression مصل البشرة accurately conveys the meaning, many beauty presenters continue to employ the English term. This preference may be explained by the internationalization of skincare discourse. Most skincare products are manufactured and advertised globally using English terminology, making English terms highly recognizable among consumers. Consequently, from Baker's point of view, the presenter may use code-switching to signal professional competence and establish credibility. The use of السريوم can also be interpreted as an attempt to create a specialized discourse that distinguishes professional authority within beauty-related media discourse.

**Text 4: Sport Commentary – Penalty**

Commentator's Utterance -code-switching	Arabic Equivalent
بلانتي في الدقيقة التسعين	ركلة ترجيحية في الدقيقة التسعين

**6.4 Analysis**

Sports commentary provides one of the most visible contexts for Arabic-English code-switching. In this text, the commentator employs the English term بلانتي may be attributed to the international nature of football discourse. Sports commentators frequently consume English-language broadcasts, sports journalism, and international tournaments, which reinforces the use of English terminology. Based on Baker (2010), code-switching can serve as a means of demonstrating expertise and membership within a professional community. The commentator's use of بلانتي may therefore function as a marker of professional competence and familiarity with international football culture.

**Text 5: Sport Commentary – Performance**

Commentator's Utterance -code-switching	Arabic Equivalent
بيفر ومنس اللاعب مميز طوال المباراة	أداء اللاعب مميز طوال المباراة

### 6.5 Analysis

the use of *بيفرومنس* instead of *أداء* reflects lexical code-switching motivated by prestige and professional style. Unlike certain technical sports terms, the Arabic equivalent is widely known and frequently used. therefore, the speaker's choice cannot be explained by the absence of an Arabic term. Rather, the switch appears to be motivated by symbolic considerations. English terminology is often associated with modernity, education, and professional competence. The commentator may believe that the English expression contributes to a more sophisticated broadcasting style. Therefore, this text supports the argument that code-switching may reflect not only linguistic competence but also linguistic dominance, where English expressions gradually replace Arabic equivalents in professional discourse.

#### Text 6: Sport Commentary – Carnival

Commentator's Utterance -code-switching	Arabic Equivalent
نشاهد اليوم <i>كرنفال</i> كرويا رائعا	نشاهد اليوم <i>مهرجانا</i> كرويا رائع

### 6.6 Analysis

The borrowed word *كرنفال* is frequently employed by sports commentators to describe a festive sporting atmosphere. Although Arabic equivalents such as *احتفال* or *مهرجانا* exist, the English term is often preferred. Therefore, this preference may stem from the emotional and cultural associations carried by the English word. Through code-switching, commentators create a more internationalized style of discourse that resonates with contemporary sports media. Baker's framework suggests that such language choices may help speakers project sophistication and establish social distance from ordinary language use. The term therefore serves both communicative and symbolic functions.

#### Text 7: Cooking Programs - Pasta

Presenter's Utterance -code-switching	Arabic Equivalent
سنستخدم اليوم <i>الباستا</i> مع صلصة الطماطم	سنستخدم اليوم <i>المعكرونة</i> مع صلصة الطماطم

### 6.7 Analysis

Cooking programs constitute another domain in which English lexical items frequently appear. The borrowed word *الباستا* has become widely accepted in Arabic culinary discourse despite the existence of the Arabic equivalent *المعكرونة*. The popularity of the English term is closely connected to globalization and the internationalization of culinary culture. Television chefs often learn recipes from international sources, attend professional training programs, and interact with multinational food industries where English predominates. According to Baker, speakers may switch codes to signal expertise and establish membership within a specialized professional community. the use of *الباستا* therefore reflects the chef's alignment with global culinary discourse. The text further demonstrates how repeated exposure to English terminology can contribute to linguistic dominance, whereby English words gradually become more common than their Arabic counterparts in specialized fields.

### 7. Findings

The findings support Baker's (2010) argument that code-switching is a meaningful communicative strategy rather than a random linguistic phenomenon. In television discourse, English functions as a symbolic resource through which presenters and commentators construct expertise, modernity, and professional credibility. Simultaneously, the widespread use of English terminology may indicate the growing dominance of English within contemporary Arab media.

### 8. Conclusion

Across sports, beauty, and cooking programs, the analyzed examples reveal a consistent tendency toward lexical code-switching from Arabic to English. The presenters' language

choices cannot be explained solely by lexical necessity, since Arabic equivalents exist for all the examined expressions. Instead, the switches appear to be motivated by sociolinguistic factors such as prestige, professional identity, globalization, audience expectations, and linguistic dominance.

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