A General Overview of Diglossia and Code Switching

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Abstract

The concept of diglossia was developed by Ferguson (1959). It describes a daily life situation where two languages or language varieties (i.e. dialects, accents, registers, pidgins or creoles) occur side by side in a community. Each of these languages or varieties has a clear range of functions. There is the H-variety (standing for "High"), which is adopted as the standard variety and is used in official situations such as government, broadcasts, religious services, teaching, and the like. On the other hand, the L-variety (representing "Low") is usually used in informal situations like local markets, conversations and chitchat between fiends.

1.1. Introduction:

The current paper presents a general overview on a sociolinguistic study of the phenomenon called "diglossia" in Duhok, a multilingual speech community. Further, code switching as a diglossic situation is studied in this paper, examining some cases of code switching in the speech of people who live in Duhok city.

1.2. Statement of the problem:

Code switching, which is considered a diglossic situation, exists in multilingual speech communities. Therefore, as an introduction to code switching, the current paper defines the term "diglossia" according to Ferguson (1959), Fishman (1967) and Trudgill (1979). The paper aims at describing the diglossic situation in Duhok speech community, examining some cases of code switching in the speech of people there. The study shows the fact that there are differences

in the use of any language, which are spoken and used in Duhok, in different situations there.

1.3. Scope of the Study:
The main purpose is to identify some reasons of diglossia and code switching in Duhok only. There are specific dialogues and conversations that reflect how people can change codes from one language to another. Here, the current paper deals with the languages, Kurdish, Arabic, Persian, Assyrian and English, which co-occur in Duhok. Language varieties such as dialects are excluded from the study.

1.4. Nature of the Data:
The study is based on analyzing a corpus of data collected from real conversations. The source of the data is part of some written conversations and dialogues from some friends in different social situations. The data are based on the idea of having code changes in the speech.

1.5. Value of the Study:
The study has great importance in linguistics because code switching, as to my knowledge, is very important in Kurdish studies. Furthermore, it discusses an important factors and reasons behind both diglossia and code switching in Duhok. This topic has not been tackled properly in regarding Duhok speech community. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will fill gab in Kurdish linguistic studies.

1.6. Outline:
The paper falls into four sections. Section (1) is a short introduction to the term "diglossia", shedding light on some introductory remarks about the subject, statement of the problem, scope of the study, nature of the data, value of the study and an outline for the contents of the paper.

Section (2) defines diglossia, studying the features of diglossia, its types, and the leading factors. Furthermore, this section is especially devoted to the study of diglossia in Duhok, presenting the factors that stand behind it.

Section (3) tackles code switching. It also defines code switching, summarizes its types, and differentiates between code switching and borrowing. In addition, this section summarizes the main reasons of code switching that is found in Duhok, giving many examples taken from daily diglossic situations.

Finally, the paper presents the main points and conclusions that have been reached through out our discussion.

2.1. Diglossia as a Sociolinguistic Situation:
Diglossia is one of the debatable subjects. The notion of diglossia is

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used in multilingual situations where the H and L varieties are spoken and heard clearly. Here, Charles Ferguson defines diglossia, as a sociolinguistic term, as follows:

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional dialects), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation (cf. Hudson 1980: 49).

Ferguson introduced this term, i.e. diglossia, into linguistics to describe situations in Greek, German and Arabic speech communities. He observed that in diglossic communities there is a superposed variety called the H variety. It is of a higher status or prestige. This variety has a large body of literature, which is written and spoken for most formal purposes. This definition also shows that the H variety, as opposed to the L variety, is not used for any common conversation. Focusing on the idea that both H and L varieties are from one language, Ferguson noticed that in Greece the standard dialect, that is, the H variety, Katharévousa, is used for formal purposes like religion, press, education, and so on, while ordinary or family conversations are spoken in Dhimotiki (L). In addition, in Arabic-speaking speech communities, the classical Arabic is considered a standard (formal and written) H variety, while the Colloquial Arabic, which is an L variety, is used by the common people to talk about their friendship and family affairs. These two varieties are genetically related.

Diglossia, as shown in the above definition, consists of genetically related codes, dialects. This idea was more distinct for Ferguson when he studied Chinese dialects and Tamil (Lyons 1977: 580).

Trudgill (1979: 117) refers to the phenomenon of diglossia stating that it is:

a particular kind of language of standardization where two distinct varieties of a language exist side by side through the speech community and where each of the two varieties is assigned a definite social function.

It is clear that both "standardization" and "function" are two points reflected in the above definition. Here, the H variety is fixed, described and standardized in grammar books and dictionaries. Attitudes to the H variety are usually very respectful, but it does not mean that attitudes to L variety are not logical or beautiful. The L variety, for

instance, is highly valued in Arabic countries (Holmes 2001: 29).

Fishman (cf. Schiffman, 1999) points out that H and L varieties could be two genetically unrelated codes, i.e. languages. Hence, the scope of diglossic can be extended from varieties of one language to different separate languages. Linguistic genesis, here, is a good factor for having a variety of codes in one multilingual community. In India, the old language, Sanskrit (as H), is not genetically related to the language of the common people, Kannada (as L) (Schiffman 2004: 2). Thus, "the term diglossia is generalized to cover any situation where two languages are used for different functions in a speech community" (Holmes 2001: 30-31).

In a word, diglossia refers to a situation in which different codes, whether they are genetically related (dialects) or unrelated (languages), co-occur side by side in a speech community and each is used for a specific function.

2.2. Defining Features of a Diglossic Situation:

When linguists talk about diglossia, they usually talk about it in terms of H and L varieties. They are often vivid in diglossic communities. Diglossia, according to Ferguson (1959 cf. Schiffman 1999) and Schiffman (2004: 2-3), is characterized by a number of variables and features:

1. Function: It is the most important feature of diglossia. H and L varieties have different functions for various situations. H variety is that of serious literature, religious services, education and other formal occasions__ government, political speeches, seminars, media, university lectures, etc. On the other hand, L variety is used in folk literature, at home, with friends and other informal settings__ captions on political cartoons, television and radio serials, personal letters, shopping, and so on. Ferguson states, "one of the most important features of diglossia is the specialization of function for H and L. In one of the situations only H is appropriate and in another only L, with the two sets overlapping" (cf. McKay and Hornberger 2000: 55). H and L varieties are used for different purposes, and native speakers of the community would find it odd if anyone uses the H variety in an L domain, and vice-versa.

2. Prestige: The H variety, the dominant language or dialect, is more prestigious and more powerful than the L variety. Many speakers of H say that L-speakers cannot express important thoughts; besides, it is incorrect, less logical, less beautiful, broken, worthless, boring and vulgar. In our view, no variety is said to be more logical or more beautiful than any other one. The Colloquial Arabic (L) is as complex as the Classical Arabic (H); Spanish (L) in the United States of America is as complex as English (H). However, using the H variety in everyday-speech situations is sometimes felt to be artificial, pe-

dantic, snobbish and reactionary.

3. Literary heritage: In most diglossic speech communities, literature is usually written in the H variety. No written texts of L exist save for dialect poetry. Regarding Kurdish in the Kurdish speech community as H, Kurdish literature is written in folk literature. Holmes (2001: 48) states, "When the L variety begins to gain status, people begin to use it too". Therefore, linguists declare that any variety that has a body of literature is considered the language in the domain where that variety is used.

4. Acquisition: The L variety is that of child natural learning at home while the H variety is acquired at school. Therefore, some linguists insist that L should be primary, namely, it should be the standard language since it is the mother tongue. For example, the official language of Kenya, not English, which is standard and educational, should be regarded as the primary, standard language since it is used at home.

5. Standardization: The H variety as a superposed one is standardized, that is, it is written in grammars, dictionaries, canonical texts, etc. In contrast, the L variety has no grammar books or dictionaries. Stability: Diglossia is generally stable persisting for a long time. For instance, Kurdish and Assyrian are two languages that continue to exist side by side for centuries. However, one variety may replace another one through time. Latin was once the H language in Europe but now it is not; German was once the dominant language but now it is not; and the standard classical Arabic was merely a dialect of Quraish tribe before Islam but now it is not (Holmes 2001: 32).

6. Grammar: The grammars of H variety are more complex than the grammars of L variety. They have more complex tense systems, gender systems, agreement, and syntax than the L variety.

7. Lexicon: Lexicon is often shared, but actually, there is a difference between the lexicon of H and L varieties. The H variety may have some lexical items that the L variety lacks, and vice-versa is true.

8. Phonology: The H and L varieties share the same phonological elements, but the H variety may have more complicated morphophonemics. For instance, English (as H) in the United States has the /r/ sound pronounced at the end of words, but it is not pronounced when a word ending with /r/ sound is said by a citizen in the streets. Also, a word like "Zewdg" /zewdʒ/ [husband] is used in the Classical Arabic (as H); in contrast, the same word is not used in the colloquial Arabic (as L), hence, it is changed to "Gooz" /guːz/ in some Arabic dialects.

9. Difference between diglossia and standard-with-dialects: In diglossic situations, no one speaks the H variety as a mother tongue, only the L variety. For example, in Kurdish, the L variety is the mother tongue among the Kurds, and the H variety (the Northern Kurmanji dialect) is only used in formal occasions.

2.3. Types of Diglossia:

In any speech community, speakers may exhibit diglossic behavior in different situations. Diglossia has been divided into many types by many scholars, linguists and sociolinguists according to the functions it has.

2.3.1. Classical and Extended Diglossia:

Ferguson's (1959) definition of diglossia is classical. (A direct documentation of his definition of diglossia has been mentioned above). However, Ferguson himself pointed out that his original formulation of diglossia was not meant to cover all instances and situations of multilingualism. Here, Fishman (1967) introduced the notion that diglossia can be extended to encompass the situations where both the H and L varieties are but two genetically unrelated. For instance, Latin in medieval Europe was used almost all over Europe for religious, educational and literacy domains. In other words, Latin, not the other genetically unrelated European languages, was once the dominant language in Europe. Furthermore, Kloss (1966: 138) has proposed the terms "in-diglossia" for Ferguson's classical definition (the kind where the two varieties are closely related) and "out-diglossia" for Fishman's extended definition (the kind where the two varieties are genetically unrelated).

2.3.2. Macro- and Micro-diglossia:

Trumper (1977, cf. Auer 1998: 181-182) differentiates between macro-diglossia and micro-diglossia. He focuses on the number of languages that are used in various domains. Macro-diglossia means that the scope of diglossia is large. If two languages or more are used over a large number of domains, macro-diglossia is labeled. For example, in Duhok speech community, all the Kurdish, Arabic and Assyrian languages are used in the media, television and radio programs. Micro-diglossia refers to a language that can be used in very few domains. Arabic for instance is never substituted by Kurdish when saying prayers or reading the noble Quran.

2.4. Factors Leading to Diglossia:

Ferguson (1959, cf. McKay and Hornberger 2000: 56) mentions three factors that lead to diglossia in any speech community:

1. There must be a large body of ancient literature written in the H variety and studied at school. The English literature, for instance, makes English dominant all over the United Kingdom. In addition, the Kurdish literature in the Kurdish speech community makes Kurdish high and standard over Arabic, Persian and Assyrian.
2. Literacy (i.e. the ability to read and write) is usually restricted to a

small élite__ "a group in society considered being superior because of the power, talent, privileges, etc., of its members" (Hornby et al 1984: 280). The language of a group of powerful, educated people, for example, is superior to that of another group, which is less powerful or uneducated. Thus, there will be H and L varieties in the society.

3. A long period, even centuries, is needed to achieve the other factors. The Kurdish, English literature or any other literature has not been written within days. Hence, people are not born educated, talented or powerful. Simply, diglossia does not spring up overnight.

2.5. Diglossia in Duhok Speech Community:

In any speech community where diglossic situations prevail, various languages or language varieties can be used in different situations to have different functions. This situation is known as verbal repertoire (Trudgill 1979: 103). It is applied to bilingual or multilingual communities. Here, a person selects the appropriate forms like standard, non-standard, written, spoken, formal and informal varieties and so on (Corder 1982: 64 and Holmes 2001: 22).

Yes, I'm bilingual. I speak Spanglish.

A diglossic social situation is marked by a change in the actual language spoken, as in the light-hearted saying attributed to the Roman emperor Charles V:

I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men, and German to my horse.

(Aitchison 1987: 115)

In Duhok speech community, the diglossic situation includes genetically unrelated codes. The verbal repertoire in Duhok comprises Kurdish, which is the indigenous language, Arabic, Assyrian, Persian and English. The distribution of functions of these codes is vivid. Kurdish is used in literature, education, political speeches, seminars, radio and television programs, shopping and gossiping. Arabic, Assyrian, Persian and English are used for some other purposes like religious services, Christian identity, education at university, and talking to one another in the same group of people respectively.

Genetically related codes, dialects and registers, are also included in the verbal repertoire of Duhok. A Bahdini, for example, cannot

understand what a Gurani says and vice-versa; and a rural old man almost cannot understand the speech of a mechanic or a chemist.

2.6. Factors Leading to Diglossia in Duhok Speech Community:
Four factors stand behind diglossia in Duhok speech community:

1. Existence of a language: The Kurdish language is existent in Kurdish community throughout history. Kurdish is the only indigenous language and used by the majority of people in Duhok. The Kurdish language, here, is genetically unrelated to the other languages that exist side by side to it.
2. Neighborhood: This very important factor makes the languages of neighboring countries affect one another. Such an effect has come from the contact of the Kurdish people with Arabs and Assyrians. On the other hand, the influence of Persian came from the Kurds who lived in Iran for a limited period.
3. Colonial Impact: Because of British colonization of Iraq in 1918, English was taught as a second language in education. Consequently, English is used by an élite.
4. An ancient supreme authority: The presence of the Assyrian language in Duhok belongs specially to the existence of the powerful Assyrian empire in ancient days.

3.1. Code Switching:
Code switching is very common in diglossic situations. It is restricted to speech communities in which two or more recognizable distinct languages or language varieties are regularly employed (Lyons 1977: 580 and Richards et al 1985: 43). People switch either from

one language to another, from one dialect to another, or from a dialect to a language and vice-versa systematically. This is quite different from describing code switching as being unconscious or random (McKay and Hornberger 1994: 57). It is not random but highly motivated, that is, people are aware that they have switched from one code to another. They switch codes when they need to. Simply put, code switching is a change by a speaker from one language or language variety to another. Usually in conversation when one speaker uses one language and the other participant answers in a different language.

The code a person selects often depends on the lexical need,

the topic and setting of the discussion, ethnic group, sex, age, level of education, or relationship-building. In other words, codes are switched when social functions are focused on.

Code switching is a very widespread phenomenon especially among multilingual speech communities. Duhok is a multilingual community since several languages are used in it.

In a word, code switching is the practice of changing from one variety to another in diglossic situations (Palmer 1981: 65).

3.2. Types of Code Switching:

Code switching is classified into three types (Hudson 1993: 56-57 and McKay and Hornberger 1994: 56):

1. Situational code switching means when there is a change in situation. This type happens between dialects, regional and standard, or between distinct languages (Holmes 2001: 245). In Duhok speech community, when two students talk about family affairs, they use Kurdish, but they often switch to English when they are in a university class.
2. Metaphorical code switching refers to changes in the speaker's language choice when the situation is remained the same, that is, to convey special communicative intent or purpose (Auer 1998: 156). The speaker should know what purposes are standing behind his/her switching. Furthermore, code switching may be used to signal a quotation, to mark emphasis, or to tell a joke, and thus to enrich communication. An educated Kurdish person may quote a proverb or saying from Arabic so that he/she can convey his linguistic message to the hearer clearly.
3. Conversational code switching means that there is a change in codes in a single sentence. This is a common mode of code switching called code mixing (Holmes 2001: 42). It suggests that the speakers mix codes indiscriminately. However, this is somehow not true because the speakers are quite aware of their switches. A person, for example, may use two languages or language varieties or more in his/her dialogue or even in one sentence. So, such a person switches between codes deliberately.

3.3. Borrowing:

Borrowing, which is another linguistic term, must be differentiated from code switching and code mixing. Borrowing refers to a word that is borrowed from a language (Hudson 1993: 1993: 56). Borrowing words are often used when people do not know some of the appropriate words in their mother tongue.

Holmes (2001: 42) describes borrowed words as being different from code switching in form and pronunciation. For example, words like "gilas" /gila:s?/, "qurnet" /kurnat/, and many others that are used

in Kurdish are English borrowed words, "glass" and "corner" respectively. The first two words are lexical items that are used in Kurdish and they are different from the other two words in both form and pronunciation. Other words are borrowed such as "kitêb" /kteb/ and "šemendefr" /ʃamandafr/ Arabic (kîtab) and French (chemain de fair) respectively. Likewise, there is a multiplicity of borrowed words__ Arabic, Persian, English, Latin, French words, and so on__ in the Kurdish language.

3.4. Reasons of Code Switching:

The analysis of a number of conversations or cases of code switching in Duhok indicated that the most important reasons for code switching could be summarized in the following points:

- To show a nationalistic image
- To indicate intimacy and solidarity
- To entail a religious identity
- To show an educational image
- To show up
- To keep secrecy
- To quote
- To change the serious mood to the ridiculous mood
- To express oneself better

Probably the most significant cases of code switching that happen in Duhok are conversational. For instance:

Example 1
- Xizî! ev wereqe b'tulî ĉêke u tekbîr ke.
  [Look at me! Enlarge this paper.]
- Li hîvyê be.
  [I will not do it.]
- Mexe la gîzin îlla ewzittê.
  [I am not leaving unless you do it.]

The above example of conversational code switching shows that switching from Kurdish to Assyrian indicates a nationalistic image. Besides, the two speakers do not have a perfect control on Kurdish; therefore, they switch to Assyrian to express themselves better.

Example 2
- Bi xatra te.
  [See you]
- Serĉava, bixêrhatî.
  [You welcome]
- Puŝ b'ślama.

[Good day]
- Rîŝ eynê, p'ŝêne sêlux.

[Good day, welcome]

In example (2) C and B switch from Kurdish to Assyrian to show that they are from the same ethnic group, Assyrian.

In Duhok speech community, both Arabic and Assyrian are used to show religious identity. Here, example (3) indicates an Islamic image when switching from Kurdish to Arabic saying "el ĥemdulîla":

Example 3
- Ĉi ĥalê teye?

[How are you?]
- El ĥemdulîla.

[Praise God]

The Assyrian language, on the other hand, is highly used to show Christian identity. Example (4) focuses on the idea that the speaker is Christian because he switches from Kurdish to Assyrian even in one-sentence speech:

Example 4

Ha, we ĉi gut? Lêmtewlutu vulîbol?

[So, what have you decided? Will you not play volleyball?]

Switching from Kurdish to English mainly occurs to show an educational image, as shown in the following example:

Example 5
- Mamusta bes ez di mewzu'i nagehim.
  [Master but I don't understand the subject]
- Means [that] there are social differences….
- Differences!
- But I don't think that there is social distance in Duhok. There are no social classes.

Example (5) shows that B has an educational purpose behind switching from Kurdish to English. Hence, A is obliged to switch to English too.

Example 6
- Tu dê êye xarê?
  [Are you coming down?]
- Why not.
- Dê pa were.

[Then come on]

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- Ok, Ok, hatim.
[I am coming]

Example (6) shows that B knows English so he wants to show up. He shows his English educational background, using words like "ok" and phrases like "why not".

Switching from Kurdish to Persian or from Kurdish to Assyrian is sometimes used to keep secrecy. In example (7), B wants to keep the dialogue secret; therefore, he suddenly switches from Kurdish to Persian:

Example 7
- Tu buçî dihî ne hatî?
[Why didn't you come yesterday?]
- Oh! Qusîryê efuke. Men xêlî kardaŝtem.
[Oh! Sorry. I was very busy]
- Xub, emruz esrê on ca baŝ.
[Well, today be there in the evening.]
- Bisyar xub.
[Allright.]

Quotations from sacred books, proverbs, famous speeches, parts of plays or lines of poems, and so on, also fulfill a diglossic situation. To quote a speech is said to be more powerful and influential. In example (8), B switches from Kurdish to Arabic, quoting a part of verse from the holy Quran, to refer to the idea of completeness of the message.

Example 8
- Dê bêje min.
[Just tell me.]
- Ez nizanim, "we ma elal resulî îllal belaxul mubîn"
[I don't know, "And nothing rests on the Apostle but clear delivering".]

Switching from English to Kurdish sometimes indicates the change from seriousness to derision. The following example shows that B suddenly breaks the silence of the lecture making the students all laugh:

Example 9
- You know the subject is very easy…. If you read daily, it will be easier than ABC
- Babu b'xudê piç piçe ya sar dibit.
[O my God it is getting cold gradually.]

CONCLUSIONS

Studying the sociolinguistic phenomena of diglossia and code switching in the current study, we have reached the following conclusions:

1. Diglossia prevails in Duhok speech community, depending on three leading factors: literature, literacy and time.
2. The Kurdish language in Duhok is considered the H variety because it is used by the majority of people. Besides; Kurdish is learned at schools to be standard and used for a wide range of functions such as politics, journalism, media, and so on.
3. Code switching, as a diglossic situation, takes place when people want to change codes. That is, people are conscious of their switches.
4. Switching from one language to another in Duhok may show a nationalistic image, solidarity, religious identity, and educational image, secrecy, quoting a speech, or changing from seriousness to derision.

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