

Arabic audiovisual advertising is too large a subject to be summed up in one hour, during a conference. I will therefore concentrate on the first part of this lecture on a linguistic point, The linguistic issue I want to tackle here is a notion that has been well studied by linguists ever since the 1970s and that is commonly referred to as « **code-switching** ».

This notion has been theorized and systemized by an American researcher and academic, John Gumperz (1922-2013), who studied language use in Norway, in India, and in the United States among immigrant communities, and Carol Myers-Scotton (1934-) who worked on African languages, in South Africa and Kenya.

Both are sociolinguists, in the sense that they wonder what are the rules that are followed and the motivations that trigger an individual to select a particular form of speech among all the grammatically correct virtual renditions of a same idea, according to the situation in which he or she is placed, according to the identity of the people who are engaged in communication with them, according to the effect that he is willing to produce. Sociolinguists are interested in variation in language, the rules of variation, the formal constraints, and the incentive for varying forms of speech. And although most copy writers and creative directors in advertisement agencies are not sociolinguists, they do use, consciously or subconsciously, and in order to entice a customer to buy a product or use a service, linguistic devices that have been theorized by linguists.

Gumperz and Myers-Scotton were naturally brought to interrogate the differences that exist between different varieties of a same language, and between different languages : what makes a dialect a dialect and a language a language, what are the borders, the frontiers, between what one refers to as two different varieties of a same language (tunisian Arabic / Emirati Arabic, Standard Arabic) and different languages (French and English, Arabic and Maltese). But then again, Arabic and Maltese, the official language of the Island of Malta in the Mediterranean, could actually be considered as a dialect of Arabic, for its grammar is quite identical to that of Tunisian Arabic, although the vocabulary has been, along the centuries, infused with borrowings from Italian to Spanish and English. Borrowing is by the way another notion we will have to specify. At any rate, the differences between a dialect and a language are political as much as they are linguistic, and we have to remember here the famous saying attributed to Max Weinreich : « *a sprach iz a dialekt mit an armey un flot* », a quotation that rightly underlines the relationship between a language and the State, and Power. This saying has even more profound meanings when applied to the Arabic language and its diglossic state, considering the sacrality of the “high” variety, Standard Arabic.

Arabic commercials can be perfect examples of extensive code switching, and require remarkable communicative skills.

This ad for a Saudi investment service called Deraya (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikscFKLkvOo>) is a particularly brilliant example of extensive code switching, actually juggling between various dialects and standard Arabic, and between what any speaker of Arabic actually associates with those various varieties.

Pompous Standard Arabic with rhymes, with almost no meaning

For you wish to shine, and veer away from flattery, You defy dissemination so as to be inspired by individuality. Challenge has its rules, and communication its limits, for your resisting ambition.

Egyptian Arabic of the Corporate voice actor : Guys, what's the nonsense I'm saying ? I can't understand a single word !

director : Man, just earn your money and do as you're told

Eg: so what are we selling ?

dir : an investment company

Eg, what does it have to do with the horse and individuality, and...

Leb creative director : Man, calm down, this is our work : an investment company means

strength and prestige (French accent), an eagle, a horse, a mountain...

Eg : I cant understand a word of what this guy is babbling

Gulf client : Friends, the subject does not need all this thought. It's simply the first finance company in the ME, grouping all investment funds and all markets, so u can invest from a same place and a same account.

Eg : of so they're like a supermarket ?

Gulf, yes, as a supermaket

Just say this from the beginning. What's their name ?

Deraya

with corporate voice and interdental th (istithmārī vs. istismārī)

The "corporate voice is such a cliché that this commercial actually decodes the usual habits of advertising, in an extremely metatextual ad (metatextuality is a form of discourse in which a text makes analytical or critical commentary on another text).

Each variety is here associated to a type of discourse : standard arabic to seriousness, credibility, but its formality is such that people might let themselves be rocked and cradled and lulled by its musicality (rhymes are here added) and not notice that cliches actually border sheer nonsense.

Egyptian Arabic has to do with humor, according to another cultural stereotype

But the final baseline is indeed delivered in the high-variety associated with credibility.

matrix language vs. embedded language, matrix languages supplies system morphemes, whereas the embedded language supplies lexical morphemes

ḥaṭṭēto fel freezer vs. *fī the freezer*

beddi check hal mawḍū' vs. *I beddi rūḥ 'as-sū'*

when it is impossible to decide which is the matrix variety and which the embedded, possibility of a "matrix turnover", either on the segment level either on the historical/chronological level.

2 other notions : marked and unmarked forms, and indexicality.

an unmarked form is the one that is expected, the marked one is the unexpected one, therefore immediately more striking

indexicality : the fact that a language or a variety of a language is associated with a particular use : therefore, any use of this variety is associated with this "index" (in Arabic, Standard with authoritative assertion, with truth, with seriousness".

> article about the variety of housewives and cockroaches by RB, only article linking study of advertisement to linguistics.

cockroaches ads, what Reem Bassiouny says, existence of original US

as for motivation :

- absence / linguistic competence
- economy, saving time
- feeling of belonging, ostentatiousness
- pragmatic and rhetorical uses linked to indexicality

examples of code switching in commercials :

Lebanon Buzz

Tunisian ads for Orange

France au Liban : code switching as part of national identity, not being ashamed of it, on the

contrary claiming it as part of the national DNA.

JTB bank

borrowing vs. code switching as technique : Renault Egypt

=====