The Role of Metaphors in Code-Switching: A Qualitative Analysis of Italian-Arabic Bilingual Speakers*

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Abstract:

The use of figurative language is a pervasive aspect of daily communication across languages and cultures. This study investigates the use of metaphors by bilingual speakers who alternate between two languages on a daily basis and the potential role of these expressions in bilingual utterances. Specifically, we examine the spoken language of Italian-Arabic bilinguals and explore how metaphorical expressions in a bilingual context interact with code-switching, a prevalent linguistic phenomenon in bilingual contexts. Qualitative methods were employed, including interviews with Arabic-Italian bilinguals and a corpus of colloquial language. Our analysis focuses on identifying and analysing code-switching involving metaphorical expressions from both the perspectives of code-switching and metaphor. Our results reveal a higher frequency of intra-sentential forms of code-switching when metaphors are expressed. The majority of metaphors are expressed in Arabic, despite the prevalence of Italian in the statements. These findings aim at shedding light on the complex interplay between figurative language and bilingualism and contribute to our understanding of cross-linguistic communication.

Keywords: *Bilingualism, Code-switching, Metaphor, Pragmatics*

1. Introduction

1.1 Code-switching and its Reasons

Code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon that involves the alternation between two or more languages during a conversation. Balanced bilingual and multilingual individuals are particularly prone to code-switching, as they possess the knowledge and mastery of multiple linguistic systems. Bilingual individuals, in particular, are constantly aware of the presence of two languages even when using only one of them (Grosjean 2008), which can lead to contact between the two linguistic systems and consequent switches between codes during speech. These switches are a form of linguistic variation and are considered one of the best-known manifestations of multilingualism.

In the existing literature, scholars often underline that the phenomenon of code-switching can be divided at least into two different types. Berruto (2009), for example, identifies two types of code-switching: "code-switching" and "code-mixing". Code-switching, also known as inter-sentential switching, involves switching between languages at an inter-phrasal level, resulting in a combination of utterances or propositions of different languages. For example, in an utterance as "I went shopping yesterday. J'ai acheté des chaussures et un sac à main" ('I bought shoes and a handbag'), there is inter-sentential code-switching because the speaker switches from speaking English to speaking French between two sentences. In contrast, code-mixing, also called intra-sentential switching, involves switching from one language to another within a single sentence, leading to sentences that combine elements from two or more different languages. An example of intra-sentential code-switching is: "I'm going to la fiesta tonight, pero primero tengo que ir al gym" ('I'm going to the party tonight, but first I have to to go to the gym'). In this example, the speaker switches between Spanish and English within the same sentence. This definition partly takes into consideration the one proposed by Poplack (1980), who, more generally, classifies the phenomenon of code-switching into three types: inter-sentential code-switching, when the switch from one language to another occurs between two sentences; intra-sentential code-switching, when the switch takes place within the same sentence; and tag-switching, which corresponds to the introduction of a single and autonomous noun or expression (i.e., interjections, fillers, tags, and idiomatic expressions) within a discourse entirely expressed in a different language. Tag-switching is often used when the speaker finds it easier to use a word or an expression from another language that is more difficult to translate into the language they are using.

The reasons behind the phenomenon of code-switching are debated. Fishman *et al.* (1972) argue that the lack of sufficient vocabulary in one language may lead bilinguals to turn to the other language, giving rise to language contact phenomena. In contrast, Baker (2001) claims that language contact phenomena rarely occur because bilinguals have not learned sufficient terms to express themselves in the language they are using. Rather, code-switching is often used by speakers of all ages to express thoughts and ideas in a subjective and efficient manner. Nonetheless, even Baker (2001) acknowledges that a lack of lexical terms can sometimes induce bilingual speakers to use code-switching. For instance, if a bilingual does not know a word or phrase in a particular language, they may replace it with a term or expression from the other language that they know. This non-availability of certain terms in one of the languages may arise because bilinguals tend to use different languages in various contexts of their daily life. As a result, they may have a less precise lexical repertoire in one of the languages for a specific context.

In addition to using code-switching to fill lexical gaps in specific semantic areas of each language, code-switching can also be used to emphasize the content of statements, reinforce their meaning, or simply be clearer. Gross and Kaushanskaya (2015) reject the idea of lexical incompetence and instead suggest that bilinguals have the propensity to use the most facilitating language during a conversation. They introduce the theory of lexical accessibility, which suggests that bilingual speakers make switches to the most accessible language – the one whose vocabulary allows them to immediately express the concept they want to convey. From a sociolinguistic perspective, code-switching can also take on additional meanings. It can be used to lower tension during a conversation, underline familiarity with the interlocutor, or exclude people who do not understand the language to which the speaker has switched. In these cases, code-switching may be voluntary, representing a conscious choice on the part of the speaker (Grosjean 2008), or it may not be. Dal Negro and Guerini (2007) emphasize that code-switching is always characterized by a component of communicative intentionality. They argue that the switch is deliberately and intentionally carried out by the speaker, in order to fulfill specific discursive functions.

Baldi and Savoia (2018) argue that multilingual utterances, whether intentional or unintentional, are not a random mixing of forms of different languages governed solely by functional and pragmatic factors. Instead, they follow specific criteria and present restrictions that govern the possibilities of combining elements from different language systems. Poplack (1980) suggests that code-mixing forms are governed by structural restrictions that allow certain possibilities of combination between elements of different languages, while excluding others. Two types of restrictions are distinguished in the literature: the "equivalence restriction", which occurs when the switch from one code to another occurs at points where the word order of the languages correspond, and the "free morpheme restriction", which occurs when the transition to the other language occurs at any point in the discourse where a free morpheme can be inserted.

During the use of two languages, there is a qualitatively and quantitatively dominant language, also referred to as the "base language" or "matrix language" (Grosjean 2008). The matrix language provides the morphosyntactic framework for language production and the majority of its morphemes, while the other language handles other constituents, such as prepositions or syntagms, supplying mainly lexical morphemes and playing a secondary role with respect to the former language (Dal Negro and Guerini 2007). However, the matrix language does not always correspond to the dominant language of the speaker, which complicates the analysis of how the two languages interact during code-switching, especially when bilinguals equally master both languages.

This paper aims to analyse the forms of code-switching present in each of the examples provided while highlighting the predominant language and sentence constituents involved in the switch. Additionally, we attempt to establish the most common reasons that lead bilinguals to choose one language over the other and to use code-switching specifically when expressing metaphors.

1.2 Metaphorical expressions and the case of bilingualism

The study of figurative language has ancient roots dating back to Greek culture and, in particular, the rhetorical tradition, where metaphor was viewed as a mere decorative device. Research in pragmatics has treated metaphors like other figurative languages (i.e., irony, hyperbole), focusing on the discrepancy between what is literally said and what is implicitly communicated. According to Grice (1989), similarly to other instances of non-literal language, the interpretation of metaphors can be attributed to a violation of the "Quality Maxim" (i.e., speakers should

only say things that they believe to be true and for which they have sufficient evidence). Along this line, when the speaker says something that is blatantly false, the listener acknowledges that the speaker cannot have meant what has been literally said, seeking an alternative interpretive solution for the speaker's intended meaning (i.e., the metaphorical meaning).

In modern pragmatics' view, it has been increasingly recognized the valuable contribution that figurative language provides to our conceptual system – the way we think and reflect on things – and, consequently, to our communication in any form of daily interaction. In this change of paradigm, the phenomenon of metaphors is treated differently from other pragmatic phenomena. Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 2008) made a significant contribution to this switch in the paradigm by changing the emphasis of metaphor theories from language to cognition. They propose that metaphors are not simply linguistic expressions but are integral to our conceptual framework and our way of thinking: metaphors organize our comprehension of abstract concepts by aligning them with more concrete domains. For example, the metaphor "LOVE IS A JOURNEY" highlights the similarities between the experience of love and the experience of embarking on a journey, because both involve a process of moving from one point to another, with ups and downs, obstacles, and uncertainties. "Theorists of Relevance" (Wilson and Carston 2007; Wilson and Sperber 2012) suggest that metaphors lead to what has been defined as "lexical broadening", which extends the meaning of an expression beyond its literal definition. This process is guided by the expectation of relevance and creates *ad hoc* concepts that are specific to the communicative context. If, thus, metaphor involves the perception of a complex thing ("topic") in terms of something else ("vehicle") that shares at least one characteristic with it ("common ground"), in order to interpret a metaphor like "The singer is a drill," the listener must adjust the concept communicated by the word "drill" by emphasizing certain properties (e.g., loudness, harshness, unpleasantness) and derive the intended meaning of the speaker in the given context (for instance, "The singer's voice is loud, harsh, and unpleasant, like the sound of a drill"), as proposed by Carston and Wearing (2011). This novel concept of "drill" is defined an *ad hoc* concept which is conventionally written in small caps and marked with an asterisk (e.g., DRILL*). Schematically, Carston and Wearing (2011: 288-289) analysed the metaphor "Writing a PhD thesis was a marathon" proposing the representational levels involved as follows:

Sentence uttered:	*Writing a PhD thesis was a marathon.*
Decoded content:	[X WRITE A PHD THESIS] WAS A MARATHON
Communicated content:	
Explicature:	[S WRITE A PHD THESIS] WAS A MARATHON *
IMPLICATURES:	S FOUND WRITING A PHD THESIS A LONG, HARD PROCESS; COMPLETING IT TOOK A GREAT DEAL OF DETERMINATION AND MENTAL EFFORT; S HAD TO SACRIFICE A NORMAL EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL LIFE IN ORDER TO DO IT; ETC.

(Carston and Wearing 2011: 288-289)

While there may be varying theoretical explanations for the mechanisms involved in comprehending metaphors, there is a widespread consensus that metaphors are pervasive in everyday life and that we often don't realize we are using them. According to Ervas, Gola and Rossi (2016: 121), although a metaphor is always a statement that is untrue in a literal sense,

its worth is assessed on the basis of how effectively and persuasively it communicates meaning. Some metaphors become so entrenched in language that they are considered "dead" or "lexicalized" metaphors and are catalogued in dictionaries as established language use. For example, the metaphor "TIME IS MONEY" has become a dead metaphor that is widely used in everyday language without any conscious awareness of its metaphorical nature (e.g., *time* can be invested, wasted, lost, possessed, etc.). However, metaphors can also be "creative" and "dynamic", with new meanings emerging over time. Distinguishing between lexicalized metaphors and creative metaphors can be difficult, and it's often better to view them as existing on a spectrum that ranges from the literal to the metaphorical, as suggested by Gola (2005) and Ervas (2015).

As just discussed, metaphorical expressions are not static; they are shaped and influenced by cultural variables. As language use and cultural norms evolve, old metaphors can lose relevance, and new ones can emerge. These sociocultural variables are also rooted in life experiences, communicative situations, and cognitive styles that are specific to the community of belonging. As such, metaphors are a complex product of both universal and cultural dynamics, reflecting the unique perspectives and experiences of the individuals and groups who use them (Deignan 2005; Kövecses 2005, 2006; Yoshimoto 2008). As expressed in Sopory and Dillard (2002), the "Communicator Credibility View" suggests that speakers who use metaphors are viewed as more credible than those who use literal language and that also Aristotle claimed that being a master of metaphors is a sign of genius; therefore, speakers who use metaphors are thought of positively. Indeed, an argument brought by authors is that metaphors reveal similarities between entities that were previously unknown, which can be interesting and pleasurable for the listener. As a result, the listener is impressed by the speaker's message and returns a positive judgment of the speaker's credibility (Gao *et al.* 2017). Since language is a fundamental part of our identity, being proficient in more than one language gives access to a wider range of linguistic resources, including different metaphorical expressions that can be both equivalent in the two languages but also very different. While research in the field of metaphor and bilingualism has focused on topics such as translation practices (a.o., Nida 1964; Dagut 1976, 1987; Kloepfer and Shaw 1981; Van den Broeck 1981; Ervas 2014; Mazzaggio 2016; Ervas and Gola 2017) and the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism in processing metaphorical expressions (a.o., Heredia and Cieślicka 2016; Jankowiak 2019; Jankowiak, Naranowicz and Rataj 2021; Wang and Jankowiak 2021), there is a lack of qualitative analyses on the use of metaphors in code-switching situations. To address this gap, the present study will analyse corpus data from Italian-Arabic bilinguals to explore how metaphors are utilized in code-switching situations. The methodology of the study will involve a qualitative analysis of the corpus data, focusing on the types of metaphors used, the cultural and cognitive factors that influence their use, and the communicative functions they serve.

2. Methodology

Data collection for this study required two research work phases. The first data collection was conducted in 2019, followed by the second phase in 2021. In both phases, we recruited early Italian-Arabic bilinguals aged between 17 and 27 years, belonging to the second generation of Moroccan immigrants in Italy. These bilinguals acquired Arabic through their family environments and Italian through educational contexts during early childhood, making them simultaneous bilinguals. They have the ability to alternate between the two languages in daily conversations, using Arabic at home or with Arabic-speaking acquaintances and Italian in all Italian-speaking contexts.

To collect data, we adopted a qualitative and multi-methodological approach, with different methodologies employed in the two phases of the research. Specifically, during the first phase, we used semi-structured interviews, comprising targeted questions to obtain the necessary linguistic information and discursive questions to encourage participants to reflect on other linguistic aspects of interest. We conducted individual interviews in the Italian language with 11 Italian-Arabic bilinguals; interviews' durations ranged from 19 minutes to almost an hour, depending on the participant's willingness to elaborate on the topic of interest. Overall, the recorded materials used for the analysis consisted of 7 hours and 10 minutes.

The interviews were divided into two parts. In the first part, participants were asked identity-related questions, including their linguistic biography, and questions about their experiences with the languages and cultures involved in the study (i.e., Italian and Arabic). The second part aimed to evaluate the participants' levels of metalinguistic awareness, focusing on their appreciation of language-contact phenomena between the two languages they use. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed to obtain the desired linguistic data.

The second phase of the research involved five bilinguals who were identified among the 11 Italian-Arab speakers who took part in the first survey. A different methodology has been used in order to directly analyse specific linguistic phenomena taken from the bilinguals' spoken language. Specifically, we requested the participants to send us voice messages talking about any episode, anecdote, or aspect inherent to targeted contexts – i.e., family, friendship, university or work life, social media, leisure, mental operations, and religious contexts – imagining that the message recipient is an Italian-Arab speaker who can understand both Arabic and Italian languages. A fundamental aspect of this work is that the interviewer, as a matter of fact, was an Italian-Arabic simultaneous bilingual, making the communicative context more natural. The bilinguals were encouraged to use both languages as naturally as possible while recounting episodes, anecdotes, or aspects from the above-mentioned contexts. Although the participants were free to choose what to tell and how to do it, all the recordings were useful in creating a spoken language corpus that was manually transcribed, with 1 hour and 9 minutes of bilingual speeches collected. These linguistic data were then used to conduct studies on several linguistic aspects related to the way bilinguals use and alternate their two languages.

The present study aims to investigate the use of metaphors in social contexts where both Italian and Arabic languages are involved, mainly to understand how metaphors are used in code-switching situations.

3. Analysis

During the analysis of the corpora obtained from the audio recordings collected, the forms of language contact that have taken place between the two languages involved in this study emerged especially in terms of code-switching phenomena. In fact, there are several cases in which speakers switch from one language to the other one during their speeches. These linguistic alternations concern either single words of one language inserted within utterances expressed entirely in the other language, or broader conversational sequences.

The following analysis of the code-switching phenomena reported in this paper is based on the definition proposed by Poplack (1980), who distinguishes between tag switching (isolated words pronounced in the other language), inter-sentential code-switching (between two propositions), and intra-sentential code-switching (within the same proposition). Examining our corpora, although the data show a prevalence of Italian language over Arabic language, we found forms of code-switching both in terms of tag-switching, inter-sentential code-switching,

and intra-sentential code-switching. Therefore, the forms of code-switching found reveal that the speeches of Italian-Arabic bilingual speakers are characterized by switches from one language to the other one that does not necessarily occur between two utterances, but can also occur within the same utterance – and, in some cases, even within a single term (Moussaid, 2022) – involving different parts of the sentence as it will be shown by the examples analysed below.

Moreover, switching forms do not only vary from the linguistic point of view, but also from the semantic one. In other words, we found in our data several cases in which speakers use code-switching for content reasons or to convey a specific meaning by alternating the two languages. For this reason, in addition to analysing linguistically the types of code-switching found in the data collected, we aimed at investigating how the two languages are alternated by the speakers in order to express/communicate certain concepts and meanings. We analysed metaphorical and idiomatic expressions involving code-switching by using linguistic data extracted from corpora and transcriptions of interviews conducted during the research (see Section 2). These expressions were used by speakers to convey concepts beyond the literal meaning of the words used.[2] More specifically, we selected metaphors that were expressed by bilinguals using both Arabic and Italian (i.e., in a code-switching context) and then we described and analysed them, highlighting how code-switching interacts with metaphorical expressions and trying to figure out whether – and how – these expressions are influenced by (o interfere with) code-switching forms.

We begin the analysis with the excerpt in (1). Each example will be analysed by transcribing the Italian part of the statement in standard characters, the Arabic parts in italics (using transliteration), and enclosing in square brackets the same words in the Arabic alphabet. The analysed metaphors or metaphorical expressions will be highlighted in bold. All excerpts will be followed by an English translation.

(1)   [...] "Come fa a venirti bene *kīka bla bayḍ* [كيكة بلا بيض] ? Se vuoi *ǧarbī* [جربِي] ma secondo me ***maghādīš ṭlaʿ lik*** [مغادش طلع لك]." Alla fine, invece, è piaciuta a tutti e l'abbiamo mangiata tutti insieme.

        [...] "How does a sponge cake without eggs come out well? If you want you can try, but in my opinion it won't come out well." However, at the end everyone liked it and we ate it all together.

In this discursive context, which was excerpted from the recordings, the speaker is saying that he proposed to his mother to make a cake without eggs, and he is explaining her reaction to this request. At the beginning of the statement, he directly reports the question his mother asked him after his request. Then, in the following sentence, he goes on paraphrasing what he was told through an indirect speech. Finally, in the last sentence, he comments on the outcome

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[2] Metaphors and idioms are considered figurative language but differ in their structure and usage. A metaphor is a comparison between two things that are not literally related, while an idiom is a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal definition of the words. Metaphors are often used to create vivid imagery or explain complex ideas, while idioms convey a particular meaning or cultural reference. As we have seen in the introduction, idiomatic expressions arise from metaphors but their metaphorical origin is no longer perceived by speakers. When a metaphor is learned, it becomes idiomatic (Bambini 2017: 56). Thus, in the idiomatic utterance, the literal meaning is bypassed and the utterance acquires a new conventional meaning, which used to be metaphorical (*ibidem*, 22); due to their often-correlated meanings and for the sake of our paper's goal, we will treat both of them as metaphorical expressions.

of his request after having realized it. The first part of the question is pronounced in Italian, while the second part is in Arabic. In particular, the initial interrogative adverb and the first verb are in Italian while their object complement is in Arabic. The type of code-switching involved in this question is intra-sentential switching as the passage from one language to the other occurs within the same sentence. Moreover, the use of the two languages within this interrogative sentence seems to be rather equal, since almost half of the sentence was uttered in Italian and the other half in Arabic, and both languages were used to refer to some main parts of the sentence: the verb was expressed in Italian, while its object complement in Arabic. In the second sentence, however, the Arabic language seems to prevail despite the fact that it begins with Italian. In the sentence "If you want you can try but, in my opinion, it won't come out well", the verb "try" and the expression "it won't come out well" were expressed in Arabic, while the conjunctions and the complement "in my opinion (according to me)" were expressed in Italian. This is, therefore, another clear form of intra-sentential code-switching.

In the sentence just analysed, then, we can notice a second element of our interest, namely a metaphor. In fact, the Arabic expression *maghādīš ṭlaʿ lik* [مغادش طلع لك] literally means 'will not stand up'. The verb *ṭlaʿ* is the dialectal form of the verb *ṭalaʿa/yaṭlu*ʿu [طلع / يطلع], which in standard Arabic means 'to go up' and which in its spoken and more dialectal form also takes on the meaning of 'to rise/to lift'. Consequently, the meaning of this expression is metaphorical, as the speaker uses the phrase "if you want you can try, but in my opinion, it will not rise well" to say that the final result of the cake will not come out well. The metaphor is based on a similarity between the process of the cake rising and the upward movement conveyed by the verb.

After this expression, inserted in a sentence, characterized by intra-sentential code-switching which ends in Arabic, then the speaker moves on to the next sentence which is entirely pronounced in Italian. Therefore, the passage to the last sentence can be categorized as an inter-sentential switching since the switching from one language to another occurs between sentences and not within the same sentence.

Moving to the example in (2) there are some forms of code-switching that occur from Italian to Arabic language and which are forms of intra-sentential code-switching. As can be observed, the switches in this example involve short segments of Arabic words inserted in an Italian phrasal context and they perform different functions within the utterance. In particular, the first two code-switchings concern single words, while the last one involves a phrasal segment consisting of several units.

(2)   [...] sui social media non saprei cosa raccontare, a parte il fatto che ultimamente li uso pochissimo perché **non ho** mai **tempo** per starci. *ṣaraḥa* [صراحة] sono contenta così, *kayḍay'u* [كيضيع] **un sacco di tempo**, ma anche i contenuti non che mi facciano impazzire... È anche vero che negli ultimi due anni, da quando *glesnā fī dār* [جلسنا في الدار] praticamente, per quel poco tempo che ci ho passato, mi è parso che la qualità dei contenuti sia cambiata (positivamente) [...]

[...] About social media I wouldn't know what to tell you, except that I use them rarely because I never have time to stay online. Honestly, I'm okay this way, since they waste a lot of time and even the content doesn't make me crazy... It's also true that from the last two years, mainly since we've been at home, and judging from the little time I've spent on them, it seemed to me that the quality of the contents has changed (in better) [...]

The first Arabic word *ṣaraḥa*, which is the first code-switched term, is an adverb and means 'honestly', the second code-switched word is a verb, and finally the last code-switching occurs to express a verb and its object complement. The first verb expressed in Arabic, *kayḍay'u*, is the third person plural of the present tense of the verb *ḍaya'a/yuḍayi'u* [ضيّع\يضيّع], which means 'to lose' and which therefore can be translated as 'make lose' (in the sense of waste), while the second verb, *glessnā*, is the dialectal form of the Arabic verb *ğalasa/yağlisu* [جلس\يجلس] conjugated in the first person plural and literally has the meaning of the verb 'to sit'. Finally, *fī dār* is the complement of location of the verb *glesnā* and it means 'in the house'.

The verbs involved in the code-switching forms that appear in this example are part of a metaphorical expression. In the first case, the verb *kayḍay'u* – which was already mentioned as meaning 'to lose' – is used to express the meaning of 'to waste time'. This metaphorical expression has been pronounced partly in Arabic, as far as it concerns the verbal part, and partly in Italian, as concerns the object complement part. Moreover, the Italian following part of this expression presents another metaphor since the word *sacco* literally means 'bag', but here is used to mean "a lot (of time)". The metaphorical meaning of both *kayḍay'u* and *sacco* exists and they are used both in Italian and Arabic by using the corresponding word in each language.

Differently, the second phenomenon of code-switching found in this excerpt is characterized by the passage from the Italian language to the Arabic language to convey a metaphorical expression that is peculiar to the Arabic language and which is not present in the Italian language. The verb *glesnā*, as already anticipated, literally means 'to sit down', while, in this case, together with its object complement, which is also involved in the code-switching, it is used by the speaker with the meaning of "since we stayed at home" and not with its literal meaning "since we sat at home". The speaker is referring to a specific circumstance of national lockdown which was characterized by the impossibility of leaving home. Considering this context, the same expression pronounced in Italian – i.e., "da quando stiamo in casa", 'since when we stayed at home' – seems to have a less strong meaning and does not seem to precisely describe the necessity to stay at home given by that circumstance. On the contrary, the Arabic expression better conveys this nuance of meaning, since the expression "to sit at home" metaphorically implies a sense of physical confinement that aligns with the idea of being forced to stay at home and unable to leave. The Arabic expression more accurately captures this sense of constraint and the feeling of being confined to someone's residence. In other words, code-switching and metaphor seem in this case to have been used by the speaker for the same reason, namely the need to use an expression that is as representative as possible of the situation he is describing. Specifically, the speaker switched language and used a metaphor to be more explanatory during communication without interrupting the flow or structure of the sentence he had already started in Italian.

The same metaphor "un sacco di tempo", that we found and previously analysed in excerpt 2, was found even in another point of the collected recordings, as it is possible to notice from the sentences reported in the example in (3).

(3)   [...] Ci ha messo **un sacco di tempo** a fare un'operazione perché non riusciva. Il programma non le prendeva i dati tanto che *ḍay'at trān* [ضيعت تران] ha dovuto **prendere il treno** più tardi!

         [...] It took her a long time to do an operation because she could not do it. The program was not accepting her data, so she missed the train and had to catch the train late!

The first sentence of the statement is entirely in Italian, which prevails all throughout the example. On the other hand, Arabic language was chosen by the speaker only to express the verb and the object complement of the consecutive clause "tanto che *ḍay'at trān*". This is a form of intra-sentential code-switching from Italian to Arabic language, which occurs as the only point of switch within an utterance consisting of more than one subordinate.

The speaker describes an episode that happened to another person, explaining that she took a long time to complete an online operation because the website was not functioning properly. Consequently, she missed the train she had planned to take and had to catch the next one. What is remarkable in this excerpt is precisely the code-switching, since the point at which the switch occurs toward the Arabic language is the same point at which a metaphorical expression begins. The verb *ḍay'at*, which is conjugated in the third person of the past tense of the verb *ḍaya'a/yuḍayi'u* [دخل\يدخل], is a geminate Arabic verb that literally means 'to lose'. In other words, it can be translated as 'she lost' (the train). Therefore, since the meaning conveyed is not that of having lost something, it is a (lexicalized) metaphor that the speaker used to say that the person did not manage to get to the station on time to board the train she planned to take. This metaphorical expression exists with the same meaning in Italian; in the same situations, Italian speakers use the phrase "perdere il treno", where the verb "perdere" means 'to lose'. Both verbs have the same literal meaning of 'to lose', and in both languages, this verb can be used in the same expression and with the same metaphorical meaning.

A second metaphor is present in this excerpt. Unlike the first one, which was expressed in Arabic, the second metaphor is in Italian and its meaning is specular to the first metaphor's one. Specifically, 'taking the train' is the second metaphor, and the Italian verb *prendere* literally means 'to take'. Again, in this context, it does not mean physically taking something but rather boarding a train to move from one place to another. This use of *prendere* in Italian is a lexicalized metaphorical expression for taking a train or other means of transportation. Even in the Arabic dialect considered in this study, to express the meaning of the sentence "to take the train", speakers use the Arabic verb šadda/yašuddı [شدّ\يشدُّ] which literally means 'to take' as the Italian verb *prendere*. This happened even in example 2 with the expression "*kayḍay'u* [كيضيع] un sacco di tempo" which contains two metaphors, each one expressed in one language but they both have a correspondent metaphorical expression in the other language. Then, the question that arises is the following: if each of the metaphorical expressions has a corresponding one with the same meaning in the other language, why were two different languages used to express them, and why did the speaker code-switch to express the first metaphor? What is the function of the metaphor in this case, and what is the function of the code-switching that the speaker used? These questions highlight the complex interplay between linguistic, cultural and cognitive aspects since code-switching can serve various functions, such as playing with social and emotional expression, signalling identity, and filling lexical gaps. In this case, the speaker's code-switching may have been linked to her individual communicative/linguistic habits.

Another instance of code-switching occurring with the start of a metaphorical expression is reported in (4).

(4)   [...] però in questa relazione ci sono **wāḥd 'lḥudūd** [واحد الحدود]. Ci sono delle questioni personali che non necessariamente devono essere condivise e che l'altro può accettare [...]

          [...] but in this relationship there are boundaries. There are personal issues that do not necessarily have to be shared and that the person concerned can accept it [...].

Here we can notice that the metaphor coincides again with a phenomenon of code-switching and that the latter is another form of intra-sentential code-switching. The extract is taken from a longer utterance in which Italian predominates. The sentence of interest is the opening adversative clause, which is part of the extract containing both the code-switching phenomenon and the metaphor. The subsequent sentence is spoken entirely in Italian and serves to contextualize the preceding clause, clarifying the meaning of the first sentence. *Wāḥd 'lḥudūd* in Arabic means '[some] boundaries'. Consequently, the entire sentence which contains code-switching means: 'but in this relationship there are boundaries'. Once again, as underlined in some previous examples, the part of the sentence involved in the code-switching is that of the object complement which is referred to in Arabic in contrast to the rest of the statement. The meaning of "[some] boundaries" in this expression is also metaphorical, since a relationship does not have tangible boundaries. Rather, it is a figurative expression that the bilingual speaker used in Arabic to convey the idea that there are limits to what is acceptable within the relationship being discussed. Interestingly, the same metaphorical expression exists in Italian with the same terms and meaning, both literal and metaphorical. However, despite this, the speaker chose to switch languages to produce the metaphor. As previously discussed, the reason for code-switching may be to emphasize the meaning or content of that specific part of the sentence by expressing it in another language. In this case, the use of a metaphorical expression might serve to convey a complex idea concisely and vividly, while the code-switching adds emphasis and highlights the importance of the concept being conveyed. Another possibility is that, while speaking, the speaker had a relationship in mind with an Arabic-speaking person, which could have prompted the code-switching.

A further example of a metaphor in a code-switching context is (5).

(5)   L'ho ascoltata poche volte, infatti ***bāqa madakhltš liya l-rāsī*** [باقى مدخلتش لي لراسي], ma sono sicura che come tutte le altre, dopo un po' la imparerò a memoria come tutte le altre canzoni sue. Sono sempre belle e orecchiabili, è *wāʼr* [واعر] proprio a livello musicale [...].

        I've listened to it a few times and I still haven't learned it but I'm sure that like all the others, after a while I will learn it by heart as happened with all his songs. They are always nice and catchy, he is great musically talking [...].

This example features two instances of code-switching. The first code-switching occurs in the explanatory coordinate of the sentence, where the speaker switches from Italian to Arabic. The second code-switching involves a single adjective expressed in Arabic instead of Italian in the latter part of the utterance.

The speaker is discussing a song and mentions that they have only heard it a few times, so he has not yet learned it. However, based on his experience with other songs by the same singer, he expects to learn it soon because he considers the singer's music to be beautiful and catchy. *Bāqa madakhltš liya l-rāsī* is the expression the speaker uses to say that he has not learned the song yet, but literally means: 'it has not entered my head yet'. It is a common idiomatic expression that is used to describe a situation where someone is facing an overwhelming or challenging task that they cannot handle. *Madakhltš* is the negative form – negated through the prefix of negation *ma* – of the Arabic verb *dakhala/yadkhulu* [دخل\يدخل] conjugated in the third person singular of the present tense which means 'to enter'. It is, therefore, a metaphorical expression since the speaker uses the expression "still does not enter my head" to say that he has not learned the song by heart yet. This expression exists also in Italian ("non mi è entrata in testa") but it might have a slightly different connotation.

Both the Arabic and the Italian expressions use metaphorical comparisons to convey the idea of not understanding something. However, the Arabic expression uses a metaphor of entering a situation without one's head to convey the idea of being unprepared or lacking knowledge, while the Italian expression conveys the idea of not registering or making an impression on the mind. This might be linked to the fact that in Arabic culture, the head is associated with wisdom, hierarchy, and power (Pietrăreanu 2017). Therefore, the metaphor of not entering a situation with one's head carries a powerful symbolic meaning that conveys the idea of being unprepared. The Italian expression "non mi è entrata in testa" might draw on a different metaphorical comparison, which is based on the idea of the mind as a receptacle for knowledge and information. In Italian culture, the head is also associated with knowledge and intelligence, and the specific metaphor used in this expression emphasizes the idea of something not entering the mind, as if the mind were a container that could be filled with knowledge or emptied of it. So, while both expressions share the same overall meaning, the specific metaphors used in each expression are slightly different due to the cultural and linguistic differences between Arabic and Italian.

Another interesting code-switching occurrence is analysed in the example (6) below.

(6)   [...] Invece, aver applicato quello che avevo studiato in ambito lavorativo, per me è stato proprio... Come si dice *bi-al'arbiya: **'l-harba**!'* [بالعربية: الهربة]. Non so se hai presente, ma è un'espressione per dire "una meraviglia" [...].

        [...] Instead, having applied what I had studied in the field of work, for me it was just... As they say in Arabic: 'an escape!' I don't know if you are familiar with it, but *'l-harba'* is an expression used to say '[what] a wonder'.

This example showcases not only the code-switching phenomenon and the metaphor, which are the main focus of our analysis, but also a metalinguistic reflection made by the speaker. During the interviews collected for the first survey (see Section 2), metalinguistic reflections were more frequent, as the questions asked to the interviewees specifically addressed the characteristics of their bilingualism. Conversely, in the recordings collected for the creation of our corpus during the second survey, bilinguals' linguistic and metalinguistic reflections were rarer. The metalinguistic reflection presented in this example is one of the few instances found during the analysis of the corpus. We find it noteworthy as it not only contains a metalinguistic observation but also a code-switching phenomenon and a metaphor.

Following the first sentence, which is entirely in Italian, the speaker begins a linguistic reflection in Italian, then switches to the original language of the Arabic expression they are reflecting on. The Arabic expression "bi-al'arbiya: l-harba!" literally translates to 'in Arabic: an escape!'. The word quoted by the speaker is a peculiar idiom that exists in Moroccan Arabic and which is used to indicate a feeling of wonder, a turn for the better, or a positive breakthrough. Actually, the speaker uses this word in correlation to the content of the previous sentence and hence in reference to the application of what he has studied in a working environment. However, the term *harba* is a noun that literally means 'escape' and it comes from the Arabic verb *harabal yahrubu* [هرب\يهرب] which means 'to run away'. Consequently, *harba* means 'escape', but it does not refer to concrete action: it is rather a metaphor used to indicate a positive feeling. This expression reminds the Italian metaphorical meaning of *si vola* which literally means 'we are flying', but which is used – colloquially and informally – to indicate a positive feeling, something that makes us feel exhilarated. Linked to *si vola*, in Italian is also common for the

younger generation on social media to use the expression *volo!*, 'I fly', when something particularly ridiculous or trashy (i.e., vulgar, tasteless, or of poor quality) has occurred. This expression is often accompanied or replaced by the airplane emoji, which serves as a metaphor for the idea of taking off or escaping from a situation that is seen as ridiculous or embarrassing. The use of *volo!* in these trashy contexts can be seen as a form of satiric detachment, where the speakers are acknowledging the absurdity of the situation while also distancing themselves from it. This expression is often used in informal and colloquial contexts, such as online chats and social media comments, and is typically associated with a sense of humour and light-heartedness.

As concerns the code-switching, even in the case just presented, the switch occurs from the Italian language to the Arabic language and is an intra-sentential code-switching. More specifically, the switch to the Arabic language takes place as soon as the speaker starts reflecting on the Arabic expression he wanted to explain, so he switches in order to describe that expression by using the language to which it actually belongs (Arabic), instead of continuing to use Italian. In other terms, the purpose of the switch, in this sentence, seems to occur due to the speaker's need to use the original language to which the idiom belongs and he made the switch evident by saying *bi-al'arbiya*, which means 'in Arabic'. By choosing to use an Arabic metaphor within an Italian sentence, the speaker is not only demonstrating his proficiency in both languages, but also highlighting the intercultural connections and influences that exist between these two linguistic traditions and exploiting his communicative advantage. The last example of code-switching is found in the excerpt in (7).

(7)   Il mio tempo libero mi piace passarlo con gli altri, infatti *had l'*ām [هد العام] ho sentito la differenza rispetto agli anni precedenti [...] Quando eravamo *fī 'd* ār [في الدار] e non si poteva uscire, s'è provato un po' a **ricreare la stessa atmosfera**, lo stesso ǧaw [جو] insomma, anche per mantenere una continuità, e per carità un po' *fawǧnā 'la rāsnā* [فوّجنا على راسنا], ma non era la stessa cosa [...]

I like to spend my free time with other people, in fact I felt the difference this year compared to the previous years [...] When we were at home and couldn't go out, we tried a bit to create the same atmosphere, also to maintain continuity, and for goodness sake we had a bit of fun, but it wasn't the same [...]

Although the Italian language predominantly features, the speaker uses Arabic for certain segments of the sentence. In this passage, the speaker switches to Arabic to express i) a temporal complement, ii) a place complement, iii) an object complement, and iv) a verb and its object complement, before continuing with an adversative clause entirely in Italian. The first code-switching occurred to specify the time of the explanatory coordinate clause, with "had l'ām" meaning 'this year' and indicating that the speaker felt a difference compared to previous years. *Fī 'd ār* is the second code-switching to Arabic, it is a temporal expression, and it means 'at home'.

The third code-switching, which is also a metaphor, involves an object complement and it is a reinforcing code-switching since ǧaw is a noun meaning 'atmosphere' and this term was already used by the speaker in the previous sentence (in Italian). "Ricreare la stessa atmosfera"] is an Italian metaphor that translates to 'recreating the same atmosphere' in English. This metaphor is often used to describe the act of trying to recreate a specific mood or feeling that was present in a past experience or environment. In the context of this excerpt, the speaker is discussing how he enjoys spending his free time with others, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected his ability to do so. He talked about feeling the difference in his social life during

the pandemic compared to previous years when he was able to be together with others in person. The phrase "ricreare la stessa atmosfera" is used here to describe the attempt to recreate the same atmosphere or vibe of being together with others through the use of social media and technologies, even though they were unable to physically meet, due to lockdown restrictions. The speaker mentions that they tried to create the same ǧaw or feeling of being together, in order to maintain a sense of continuity and connection with their friends. However, they also acknowledge that it was not the same as being together in person, and that they had to make do with the situation they were in. The bilingual speaker in this excerpt switches between using the word *atmosfera* in Italian and ǧaw in Arabic because he is trying to convey the same idea in both languages; using both words, however, may also help the speaker to more accurately convey the nuances of the feeling or mood he is trying to describe, as well as reinforcing the message.

Finally, "[...] per carità un po' *fawǧnā 'la rāsnā*, ma non era la stessa cosa", represents the last form of intra-sentential code-switching that we can observe in this excerpt. This code-switching involves a verb and its complement that were pronounced in Arabic within a sentence expressed in Italian. In particular, this code-switching occurs to convey an Arabic idiom that is common usage in the Arabic language and that in English can be translated with 'we have amused our heads'. However, when considered from the perspective of the meaning it conveys, it can be seen as a metaphorical expression, as the literal meaning of *fawǧnā 'la rāsnā* does not have the same meaning as *svagarsi*, 'having fun', that the speaker intended to convey. *Fawǧnā* comes from the standard Arabic verb *fawwaǧa/yufawwiǧu* [فوّج\يفوّج] which takes on the meaning of 'having fun' and here is conjugated in the first-person plural of the past tense. One of the examples given by the Arabic dictionary (standard) to explain the meaning of the verb *fawwaǧa/yufawwiǧu* [فوّج\يفوّج] used in this utterance is the phrase *fawwaǧa 'an nafsih* [فوّج عن نفسه] whose meaning is '[he] amused himself'. In the dialectal Arabic form, used by the speaker in this statement, a similar but different expression is used to convey the same concept, since in our excerpt the speaker uses an expression that literally can be translated as 'we have amused our heads' to convey "we have amused ourselves". It is not clear whether "our head" in this case is used to mean "our mind" or to mean "ourselves"; *rāʾs* [رأس] in standard Arabic only has the meaning of head, whereas in dialect – in addition to this meaning – it is also used with the meaning of "oneself", as is happening in expressions like "kantkallam 'la rāsī" [كنتكلّم على راسي] which is a common way to say 'I speak of/about me' and does not mean 'I speak of/about my head'. In this case, the code-switching allows the speaker to use the Arabic idiom to express a specific and precise concept that might be difficult to translate or express equivalently in Italian.

4. Conclusion

Figurative language possesses a suasory advantage over literal language; using metaphors can increase the persuasiveness of a message by leveraging the audience's prior knowledge and experiences. This familiarity with the subject matter can lower the cognitive load and enhance the ease of processing, ultimately making the message more attractive and comprehensible (Sopory and Dillard 2002). It also provides us with the necessary tools to effectively communicate our thoughts, emotions, and experiences to the others. As reported in Bambini (2017: 16-17), a study by Graesser, Mio and Millis (1989) conducted on television debates in the late 1950s estimated that a new metaphor was used every 25 words, with 4% of television communication being figurative. These significant percentages suggest how non-literal language offers communicative benefits, allowing for the communication of more than what is explicitly stated, with cognitive, social, and emotional effects.

In being bilingual or multilingual, you can elevate your communication game by tapping into multiple linguistic resources and individuals might have access to a wider range of cultural experiences and knowledge, which can further enhance their ability to use metaphors effectively in communication. Bilingual speakers often switch languages in a process called code-switching. Code-switching allows individuals to effectively communicate with others who share their linguistic background and cultural references, creating a sense of connection, identity, and understanding.

This study explored the role of metaphors in code-switching in the speech of Italian-Arabic bilinguals. To collect data, we employed a qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews and voice messages in two experimental phases. Our analysis of the audio recordings revealed several instances of code-switching, where participants alternated between Italian and Arabic. Interestingly, we observed that metaphors were commonly expressed through code-switching, particularly through intra-sentential code-switching. Even though Italian was the dominant language in the conversations, participants tended to use Arabic when conveying metaphors. Code-switching was common in the bilingual participants' speech, even when statements predominantly utilized one language, with insertions of the other language. More specifically, the examples examined in paragraph 3 were made up of sentences characterized by a prevalence of Italian language and insertions of short phrases in Arabic language. Actually, except for example no. 5 (see paragraph 3), where almost a whole proposition is pronounced in Arabic, all the other examples are characterized by a general prevalence of Italian language and a direction of switching from Italian to Arabic language rather than the reverse. Therefore, the forms of code-switching identified concern especially brief phrases and single lexical items inserted within utterances expressed in another language. Furthermore, according to the distinctions made by Poplack (1980) (see paragraph 1.1), all the code-switching phenomena found in our examples are forms of intra-sentential code-switching. In all the utterances, the switch always takes place within the sentence, except for example 4 (see paragraph 3), where the first proposition ends in Arabic language and the following one starts in Italian language, making it an inter-sentential code-switching.

We have examined the interplay between code-switching and metaphorical expressions, and considered the motivations behind its usage by bilinguals, although the rationale for each instance of code-switching may not have been always evident. While some instances of code-switching appeared to be intentional, as suggested by Dal Negro and Guerini (2007) and exemplified in example 3 where the speaker used code-switching to emphasize his message, our analysis revealed that not all instances of code-switching were intentional. Instead, bilinguals often used code-switching to be more direct, clearer or to express themselves subjectively. Interestingly, our analysis suggests that when bilinguals have a high level of proficiency in both languages, code-switching becomes more automatic and less intentional, allowing for greater expressive freedom in terms of linguistic and cultural identity, which is one critical aspect of code-switching.

For many speakers, code-switching can be a way of expressing diverse aspects of their identity, such as their ethnic background, their fluency in multiple languages, or their sense of belonging to a particular linguistic or cultural group; at the same time, it can also be a way of negotiating and navigating different social contexts and adapting to the linguistic and cultural expectations of different interlocutors. For example, code-switching can be used strategically to achieve specific communicative goals, such as building rapport with interlocutors, conveying humor or irony (Scotton and Ury 1977), or persuading (Sopory and Dillard 2002).

Metaphors are also tightly linked with language and culture and the fact that not all metaphorical expressions are universally shared underscores the importance of considering the translational equivalence of metaphors in the study of code-switching contexts. The discipline that mainly considers a concept like "metaphorical equivalence" is Translation Studies, which delves into the intricacies of how metaphors are transferred across languages and cultures. This field primarily focuses on scrutinizing written materials and exploring innovative techniques to effectively translate phraseological units from one language to another. The concept of equivalence has been a central focus of translation theory, with two types of equivalence identified: semantic equivalence, which is based on the idiomatic meaning of linguistic units, and communicative equivalence, which is based on pragmatic aspects such as the communicative situation, register, style, and more (Navarro 2008: 79-80). Several classifications of equivalence have been developed over the years; Navarro (2008) identifies five degrees of equivalence. Total equivalence refers to cases where the same image, semantic value, and lexico-syntactic congruence are maintained in two languages. For instance, biblical, historical, or mythological phrases are often examples of total equivalence. Maximum equivalence refers to cases where the phrase in the original text and that in the translated text do not maintain the same image but have the same denotative meaning and communicative value. Partial equivalence covers metaphors that have the same idiomatic meaning but undergo variation in cultural reference, those that possess the same image but have a different breadth of meaning, and those with the same morphosyntactic structure that differ in vocabulary. Minimum equivalence occurs when there is a translation error. Finally, zero equivalence occurs when an equivalent metaphor cannot be found in the target language, and other translation techniques such as semantic or pragmatic paraphrasing, compensation, substitution, addition, or elimination must be used (Mazzaggio 2016). To sum up, Translation Studies have typically concentrated on written materials like texts and translations. However, nowadays, there is an increasing curiosity in exploring the part played by translation and language switching in spoken communication, particularly in the context of code-switching. Examining how bilingual individuals create metaphors in code-switching situations can provide a deeper understanding of the connection between language, culture, and the use of metaphorical language. This perspective is valuable for the field of Translation Studies and can also help us better comprehend how language is used in everyday communication, as well as its impact on our perspectives and life experiences.

In conclusion, this paper takes a unique approach to examine the usage of metaphors in code-switching scenarios among Italian-Arabic simultaneous bilinguals. Our analysis showed that metaphors played a significant role in these code-switching scenarios, and that their forms were influenced by cultural and individual factors. In this respect, it is worth considering that the experimenter's own Italian-Arabic bilingualism may have had a significant impact on the participants' comfort levels and willingness to engage in code-switching. Indeed, by sharing a common linguistic background with the participants, the experimenter could have created a more conducive environment for the participants to express themselves freely and confidently. For example, the participants may have felt more at ease and less inhibited when communicating with someone who shared both their languages. This comfort level could have encouraged them to use more metaphorical expressions in code-switching contexts than they would have with a monolingual experimenter, as they may have felt more confident in their ability to convey their intended meanings. Further research is needed to explore the potential impact of the experimenter's linguistic and cultural background on bilingual speakers' use of language.

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