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Code-Switching in Saint Levant's Trilingual Music: Language, Identity, and Cultural Expression

Abstract. This study examines the code-switching (CS) practices in the music of Saint Levant, focusing on how these linguistic choices reflect his complex cultural identity and engage a multilingual audience. The research aims to understand the motivations behind these practices using Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model as a theoretical framework. A qualitative analysis of selected songs from Saint Levant's discography was conducted to identify both inter-sentential and intra-sentential CS patterns. The analysis was informed by interviews and contextual data, providing insights into the artist's cultural background and the sociolinguistic dynamics at play. The findings reveal that Saint Levant's use of CS encompasses both inter-sentential and intra-sentential shifts, serving as deliberate strategies for identity construction and audience engagement. The study highlights how these marked linguistic choices reflect broader intercultural dynamics and reveal the complexities of navigating multiple cultural spaces. Saint Levant's music exemplifies how artists navigate and articulate complex identities through multilingualism. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of language in constructing shared intercultural identities and emphasizes the significance of CS as a form of artistic resistance to monolithic identity narratives.

Keywords: code-switching, multilingualism, cultural identity, Saint Levant, intercultural dynamics

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, multilingualism has become a powerful tool for artists to express complex identities and navigate cultural diversity. For artists like Saint Levant, linguistic versatility goes beyond mere communication; it serves as a medium for shaping and conveying both personal and collective identities. Through his fusion of Arabic, French, and English, he captures the

fluid and evolving nature of cultural affiliation. His multilingual approach not only connects him with a diverse audience but also plays a crucial role in constructing his identity.

Saint Levant, born Marwan Abdelhamid, is of Palestinian and Serbian descent on his father's side and French and Algerian heritage on his mother's. Born in Jerusalem and now based in Los Angeles, his intercultural journey began in Gaza, where he spent his early years before moving to Amman, Jordan, during adolescence. This diverse background has significantly influenced his artistic vision, allowing him to draw from multiple cultural traditions while engaging a global audience.

Multilingualism, often defined as the ability to communicate across different languages (Grosjean, 2015), extends beyond functionality in the realm of artistic creation. For Saint Levant, it becomes a means of navigating and expressing his multifaceted identity. His music seamlessly integrates different languages, weaving them together to reflect both his personal journey and his connection to a wide audience. His distinctive trilingual style, evident in works such as *From Gaza, With Love* and *Deira*¹, explores themes of love, displacement, identity, and cultural heritage, resonating with listeners worldwide. Beyond personal narratives, his lyrics address broader issues, including the Palestinian experience and the universal search for belonging.

Marked by fluid CS and CM between Arabic, French, and English, Saint Levant's music serves as a key site for analyzing multilingual identity construction. These shifts are not arbitrary but deliberate linguistic strategies that mirror the complexity of his cultural identity while engaging listeners who navigate similarly layered affiliations. His songs invite reflection on how language can be used to negotiate multiple cultural spaces and build a sense of belonging in a multilingual world.

However, this linguistic fluidity raises important questions: Why does Saint Levant incorporate CS in his songs? What types of linguistic alternations are present in his work, and how do they shape his identity while resonating with a multilingual audience? These questions are central to understanding how his language choices reflect broader intercultural dynamics and contribute to both personal and collective identity construction.

This study examines CS in Saint Levant's music through the lens of Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model. By analyzing his linguistic choices, we seek to uncover how he expresses a hybrid identity and engages with a culturally diverse audience. The guiding hypothesis is that his CS practices are intentional acts of identity construction, allowing him to negotiate his place within multiple cultural contexts and challenge monolithic notions of identity.

¹ Homeland.

Thus, this paper has two main objectives: to identify and categorize the types of CS present in Saint Levant's lyrics and to analyze the motivations behind these linguistic practices, particularly in relation to identity construction. By doing so, we highlight how these practices contribute to shaping a shared intercultural identity that resonates with both the artist and his audience. Ultimately, this study not only deepens our understanding of Saint Levant's work but also sheds light on the broader role of multilingualism in the contemporary music industry, emphasizing how artists navigate and articulate complex identities in a globalized world.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

CS is defined as the practice of alternating languages between distinct utterances or conversational turns. Myers-Scotton (1993) characterizes this phenomenon as a strategic response to shifts in context or topic, enabling speakers to adapt their language use based on their interlocutors' preferences. For example, a speaker may switch from French to English to clarify a point, depending on the audience's language background. This practice serves various functions, such as marking topic changes or emphasizing specific ideas (Bullock & Toribio, 2009). In contrast, CM involves the integration of linguistic elements from two or more languages within a single utterance or conversation. Poplack (1980) highlights that this phenomenon is common in multilingual contexts, where speakers fluidly incorporate multiple languages into their speech. This illustrates the natural fluidity of multilingual communication, allowing speakers to navigate their linguistic repertoire effortlessly. The distinction between CS and CM is further elucidated by Hudson (1996), who notes that the point at which languages change in CS typically corresponds to a shift in situational context. However, fluent bilinguals may also switch languages without any change in context, a practice referred to as CM. This highlights the varying motivations and contexts that influence language alternation. Both CS and CM reflect the linguistic competence of bilingual or multilingual individuals, enabling them to articulate and negotiate complex identities with flexibility and nuance. Ayeomoni (2006) emphasizes that CM often arises when speakers possess varying proficiency levels in different languages, allowing them to fill lexical gaps and convey meaning effectively. In the context of Saint Levant's music, these linguistic practices are not merely stylistic choices; they are integral to constructing and expressing his multifaceted cultural identity. Hoffman provides a comprehensive definition, stating that

CS is the alternate use of two languages or linguistic varieties within the same utterance or during the same conversation (Hoffman, 1991, p. 106).

This definition underscores the fluidity with which speakers navigate between languages, whether within a single sentence or across conversational turns.

The theories surrounding CM further emphasize the proficiency of bilingual speakers. Muysken (2000) notes that many bilinguals produce mixed sentences in everyday conversations with remarkable ease and fluidity. For some speakers, this practice becomes the “*unmarked*” code in certain contexts, indicating that their ability to mix languages does not stem from limited proficiency in either language. Supporting this, Poplack (1980) argues that fluent code-mixers are typically highly proficient bilinguals. Importantly, CM should not be interpreted as a sign of word-finding difficulties or as a response to specific cultural pressures, despite the cultural influences inherent in language contact. This study aligns with these observations, confirming that speakers who engage in CM are generally fluent in the languages involved, allowing for a natural and seamless integration of linguistic elements. In this framework, CS is recognized as a *marked* choice, where the singers’ transition between three languages as a strategic means to achieve specific communicative goals. In summary, understanding the interplay between CS and CM is essential for analyzing the linguistic dynamics present in Saint Levant’s songs. These practices serve as vital tools for expressing and negotiating cultural identity within a multilingual landscape.

However, Myers-Scotton advocates for using CS as an umbrella term to describe any form of linguistic alternation within a conversation, whether some scholars would refer to it as CS or CM. Her approach simplifies the terminology, eliminating unnecessary distinctions between the two categories. As she articulates:

CS is the term used to identify alternations of linguistic varieties within the same conversation. While some prefer to discuss such alternation under two terms, employing CM as well as CS, the single term CS is used here (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 1).

In this study, following this approach, CS will be used as a general descriptive term for any language alternation in Saint Levant’s trilingual songs. This inclusive framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic shifts that occur, whether these shifts take place across sentences or within them.

2.2. Typology of CS

CS occurs across various linguistic dimensions, from phonetic shifts to transitions within sentences and even across conversational turns. Poplack (1980) classifies CS into three main types: Tag-switching, Intra-sentential CS, and Inter-sentential CS. These categories offer a foundational framework for analyzing the fluid alternation between languages in the songs of Saint Levant:

► **Tag-Switching:** is a type of CS involving the insertion of discourse markers or tags, like “*okay*” or “*isn’t it?*” into sentences primarily in another language. According to Appel and Muysken (1987), tag-switches serve as emblems of bilingualism within otherwise monolingual utterances. This technique is often used to engage an active audience and invite immediate reactions, contrasting with pre-recorded songs, which lack direct interaction. However, in Saint Levant’s trilingual songs, significant instances of tag-switching are not observed, as the lyrics are more introspective and self-contained, diminishing the need for such interactive elements. Therefore, tag-switching is not a key focus in the theoretical framework of this study.

► **Intra-Sentential CS:** involves alternating between languages within a single sentence or clause, allowing speakers to incorporate linguistic elements from multiple languages, ranging from individual morphemes to entire phrases or clauses, within the same syntactic structure (Myers-Scotton, 1993). This type of switching requires a high degree of proficiency in both languages, as speakers must adhere to the syntactic rules of each while blending them seamlessly (Poplack, 1980). Here are some examples from the data collected in Saint Levant’s selected songs that illustrate the use of intra-sentential CS:

1. *Ya 3ini i can get you what you need*

Translation: My dear (or ‘my love’), I can get you what you need.

2. *I don’t think I’ll ever find someone like you ya bint ennas.*

Translation: I don’t think I’ll ever find someone like you, O daughter of the people. (In this context, “*ya bint ennas*” is an affectionate and respectful way of referring to a woman.)

3. *And even when you’re in a bad mood je t’offrirais la lune just to have you.*

Translation: And even when you’re in a bad mood I would offer you the moon just to have you.

In the three examples above, the artist employs intra-sentential CS between Arabic, French, and English, effectively blending languages to enhance emotional

expression and cultural relevance. For instance, the phrase “*Ya 3ini*” (My dear) captures a term of endearment that adds a personal touch, while “*ya bint ennas*” (Daughter of the people) conveys respect and affection, both of which may not translate directly into English. The use of “*je t’offrirais la lune*” (I would offer you the moon) integrates French into the English sentence to convey a romantic sentiment that emphasizes devotion. These switches illustrate how the artist navigates linguistic boundaries to convey meaning that resonates on multiple cultural levels, enriching the overall narrative while adhering to the syntactic structures of each language. This blending reflects the artist’s multilingual proficiency and enhances the emotional depth of the lyrics.

► **Inter-Sentential CS:** involves the alternation between languages at the sentence level, where the speaker completes one sentence in one language and begins the next in a different language. Appel and Muysken (1987) advocate that this type of CS occurs within a single discourse, with the transition taking place only after a sentence in the first language has been fully articulated before initiating a new sentence in another language. This form of switching occurs between fully-formed sentences, allowing for distinct language boundaries between utterances (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Consider the following examples from Saint Levant’s lyrics:

1. *J’ai tout donné pour te garder t’as pas idée. I put some weight up on my shoulders on the way*

Translation: I gave everything to keep you; you have no idea. I put some weight on my shoulders along the way.

2. *I’ll show you around. Bienvenue dans mon quartier.*

Translation: I’ll show you around. Welcome to my neighborhood.

3. *W biqoolu shayif halak. And I tell them yes I am.*

Translation: And they say, ‘You think you’re so great (or arrogant)’ And I tell them, ‘Yes, I am.’

In the provided examples, inter-sentential CS demonstrates the fluidity and versatility of Saint Levant’s linguistic expression, showcasing the interplay between different languages in his lyrics. This form of switching allows for clear boundaries between sentences, enhancing the emotional and rhetorical impact of the message conveyed. In example 1, the speaker conveys sacrifice and burden, using French for emotional expression and transitioning to English to highlight the weight of experience. In example 2, the artist showcases his pride in his neighborhood. This switch not only emphasizes inclusivity but also reinforces

the artist's identity within a multilingual landscape. Finally, in example 3, the artist asserts their identity, illustrating his personality and his confidence across languages. Overall, these examples highlight the emotional engagement and complexities of identity in a multilingual context.

2.3. Myers-Scotton's Markendess Model

In analyzing CS in Saint Levant's trilingual songs, Myers-Scotton's Markendess Model (1993) provides a framework for understanding the motivations behind his linguistic choices. Building on Grice's cooperative principle (1975)², Myers-Scotton introduces a negotiation principle, asserting that speakers select linguistic codes to define the rights and obligations (RO) they wish to establish with their interlocutors. Thus, all code choices can be seen as strategic moves to negotiate social relationships through language (Myers-Scotton, 1993). She notes:

This model is an explanation accounting for speakers' socio-psychological motivations when they engage in CS (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 75).

The model is structured around three key maxims: the unmarked-choice maxim, the marked-choice maxim, and the exploratory-choice maxim. The unmarked-choice maxim reflects the use of expected codes in a context, reinforcing social norms. The marked-choice maxim involves selecting an unexpected code to challenge or redefine social roles. Lastly, the exploratory-choice maxim accounts for instances where speakers navigate unclear social norms by experimenting with identities and relationships. This framework allows for an analysis of Saint Levant's frequent switching between Arabic, French, and English as intentional strategies for negotiating identity and social connections. Each instance of CS reflects his personal and collective identities while engaging with diverse cultural spheres, interpreting his linguistic choices as tools for shaping and redefining social relationships across language boundaries.

Unmarked choices align with normative expectations, demonstrating speakers' awareness of their roles. In Saint Levant's songs, these choices reflect his community's linguistic norms, enabling listeners to engage without confusion and fostering social cohesion. In contrast, marked choices deviate from the expected RO set, signaling a desire for a different interaction dynamic to express unique identities or negotiate relationships. In his work, marked choices frequently ap-

² The Cooperative Principle, introduced by Paul Grice in 1975, posits that effective communication relies on participants in a conversation cooperating to achieve mutual understanding.

pear in CS, creating rhetorical effects and engaging distinct cultural references. By shifting languages, he invokes a bilingual identity and challenges audience expectations about the emotional weight of his message, navigating the interplay of solidarity and power in his narratives.

3. Research Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive analysis of CS in the trilingual songs of Saint Levant. The corpus consists of song lyrics from 30 selected tracks by the artist, whose work exemplifies a rich interplay of languages and cultural identities. Each lyric was meticulously transcribed, ensuring that the Arabic portions were converted into Latin script for consistency. To facilitate understanding, we utilized a free translation method to translate the Arabic and French lyrics into English, prioritizing the preservation of the original meaning and nuances as much as possible. The songs were chosen specifically for their abundant instances of CS, which serve as a crucial element for our analysis. Saint Levant's diverse cultural and identity background provides an enriching context for exploring the motivations behind his CS practices. Each song was listened to multiple times to accurately identify and extract instances of CS, followed by careful transcription to ensure precision in our data.

For the quantitative aspect of the study, we conducted a systematic count of the occurrences of CS, distinguishing between intra-sentential and inter-sentential switches. This allowed us to gain insights into the frequency and nature of this phenomenon in the lyrics. The qualitative analysis delves deeper into the motivations behind these instances of CS, utilizing Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model as a theoretical framework. Additionally, we examined the audience's perspectives and engagement by analyzing comments on YouTube, offering a window into how listeners feel represented by the trilingual songs of Saint Levant. This analysis of audience feedback enriches our understanding of the social dynamics at play and the impact of CS on identity and representation in contemporary music.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Frequency of CS in Saint Levant's Songs

This section provides a quantitative analysis of the frequency of CS instances in Saint Levant's song lyrics. By categorizing occurrences of intra-sentential and inter-sentential shifts, we aim to clarify how often these linguistic transitions occur.

Table 1. Occurrences and Percentages of CS in Saint Levant's Songs

Type of CS	Occurrences	Percentage (%)
Intra-sentential CS	58	≈ 60.42
Inter-sentential CS	38	≈ 39.58
Total	96	100

CS: Code-Switching

Source: Personal analysis of lyrics from Saint Levant's EP "From Gaza, With Love" (2023) and album "Deira"(2024)

The table summarizes the occurrences and percentages of intra-sentential and inter-sentential CS found in 30 songs of Saint Levant. The data indicates a predominance of intra-sentential CS, with 58 occurrences, which constitutes approximately 60.42% of the total instances. This pattern suggests that Saint Levant frequently blends languages within single sentences, possibly to convey complex emotions or cultural nuances that resonate with his diverse audience. In contrast, inter-sentential CS, with 38 occurrences representing about 39.58%, highlights a strategic use of language shifts between sentences. This approach may reflect intentional choices to enhance lyrical flow or to emphasize particular themes, further showcasing the interplay between his Palestinian, Algerian, and French identities. Overall, these findings underscore the significance of CS in Saint Levant's music as a tool for artistic expression and identity negotiation. The use of multiple languages not only enriches his lyrics but also reflects the multicultural dimensions of his artistic persona, inviting listeners to engage with his multifaceted cultural heritage.

4.2. Motivations and Functions of CS Based on the Markedness Model

Language choice in multilingual contexts is rarely arbitrary; rather, it is shaped by a complex interplay of social norms and individual agency. Speakers, drawing on their awareness of which linguistic choices are perceived as typical or expect-

ed in specific social contexts, navigate this linguistic landscape with intentional and purposeful decisions. They recognize which language varieties or codes are seen as standard or expected ('unmarked') in certain situations and which ones stand out as unexpected or distinctive ('marked'). According to Myers-Scotton (1993), while norms provide a framework for interpreting these choices, the ultimate decision rests with the speakers. They carefully weigh the potential costs and rewards of different linguistic options, guided by shared cultural and social cues. This nuanced awareness allows for relatively consistent interpretations of the social meanings associated with specific code switches, enabling speakers to align with or deviate from norms in order to assert identity, signal solidarity, or negotiate power dynamics. In line with the Markedness Model, speakers tend to use marked code choices to fulfill various communicative functions. According to this model,

speakers resort to the use of the marked code choices to achieve the following communicative functions: to express anger and authority, express group solidarity and ethnic identity, for ethnic-based exclusion strategy, for aesthetic effects, as echoic, as the medium of the message, for structural flagging, and to reveal speakers as entrepreneurs (Kimaiyo, 2014, p. 50).

In our analysis of 30 songs by Saint Levant, we identified numerous occurrences of CS, each fulfilling the following communicative purposes:

4.2.1. CS as Identity Marker

CS serves as a powerful tool for identity construction and negotiation in multilingual contexts. Through strategic language shifts, speakers can signal their affiliations with specific social groups, cultural identities, or communities. Myers-Scotton (1993) posits that marked CS often reflects the speaker's attempt to assert their identity or position within a particular discourse. For instance, Saint Levant primarily uses Arabic to express his affiliation with his origins and identity as a descendant of the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa). He also switches to French to convey his dual identity from his mother's side and to English to reach a wider audience and express solidarity with listeners from distinct communities. Consider the following examples:

Ex 1: *"J'ai pas fait exprès Samihini, dziri w fi dami falasteeny."*

Translation: *I didn't mean to, forgive me. Algerian and in my blood Palestinian.*

In this example of inter-sentential CS, the artist begins with the French phrase, *"J'ai pas fait exprès"* (I didn't mean to) to convey a sense of courtesy and humil-

ity while asking for forgiveness. This choice of language highlights his respect towards the listener and reflects his French identity, emphasizing his ability to navigate multiple linguistic landscapes. He then transitions to Arabic with “*Sam-hini. Dziri w fi dami falasteeny*” (Forgive me. I’m Algerian and in my blood Palestinian), reinforcing his affiliations with both Algerian and Palestinian identities. This shift underscores a deep-rooted connection to his heritage, suggesting that these cultural ties compel him to be vocal against injustices. By blending French and Arabic, the artist effectively illustrates how his multifaceted identity fuels his passion for social issues, emphasizing the interconnectedness of personal history and socio-political awareness.

Ex 2: “*Je me sens chez moi nulle part, yeah. Fi aylti bil-sharq wa sahabi bil-gharb wa ummi bil-dhat mutamassika bil-ard.*”

Translation: *I feel at home nowhere, yeah. My family is in the east and my friends are in the west, and my mother, in particular, is clinging to the land.*

In this example, Saint Levant employs inter-sentential CS to express his feelings of displacement and longing for belonging. He begins with French reflecting his French identity to convey a sense of feeling lost despite traveling the world. The use of the interjection “*yeah*” in English adds a contemporary and international touch, highlighting the emotional weight of his message. He then switches to Arabic to emphasize his connection to his roots, mentioning his family in the East and his friends in the West, ultimately focusing on his mother, who “*is clinging to the land*”. This choice of language illustrates his struggle with identity and belonging, as he grapples with the complexities of his multicultural heritage. Through this linguistic journey, he poignantly captures the duality of his existence, torn between different cultures and places.

Ex 3: “*Ya Gaza ya deera wal-dhikrayat al-qadeema faites-moi visite ce soir.*”

Translation: *O Gaza, O homeland of old memories come visit me tonight.*

In this context, we observe intra-sentential CS, where the speaker transitions from Arabic to French. The phrase “*Ya Gaza ya deera wal-dhikrayat al-qadeema*” (O Gaza, O homeland of old memories) serves as an invocation to Gaza, framed in Arabic the language of his heritage expressing a deep yearning for his homeland and its cherished memories. This opening statement establishes an emotional connection, underscoring the significance of Gaza as a symbol of identity and nostalgia. Following this poignant expression, the artist switches to French with “*faites-moi visite ce soir*”, (come visit me tonight) signaling a shift in linguistic and cultural identity. This transition not only reflects the bilingual nature of the speaker’s identity but also serves as a metaphor for longing and connection,

and as a way to visualize the physical distance from his homeland, emphasizing his current separation from the familiar environment and community he once knew. By inviting Gaza to “*visit*” him, the artist encapsulates the complexities of diasporic experience, where physical distance does not diminish the emotional bond to one’s homeland. This interplay between languages enriches the emotional texture of the message, illustrating how CS can be a powerful tool for conveying multifaceted identities and sentiments.

Ex 4: “*And even though I traveled the world mish malaqi zay Filastin.*”

Translation: *And even though I traveled the world, I haven’t found anything like Palestine.*

In this example, the singer employs intra-sentential CS as a powerful identity marker that emphasizes a profound connection to their cultural roots. The phrase “*mish malaqi zay Filastin*” (I haven’t found anything like Palestine) serves as a poignant reminder of the speaker’s attachment to their homeland, despite having traveled extensively. By integrating Arabic into the English sentence, he not only underscores their identity as part of the Palestinian community but also evokes a sense of longing and nostalgia for a place that embodies their cultural heritage. This strategic use of CS creates a juxtaposition between the global experience of travel and the singularity of the Palestinian experience, highlighting the unique emotional and cultural significance of Palestine. Through this lens, CS acts as a mechanism for the speaker to assert their identity and share their personal narrative with a broader audience, inviting listeners to engage with their sense of belonging and cultural pride.

4.2.2. CS as a Tool for Social Group Identification

According to Cashman (2005), CS functions as a crucial tool for social group identification, enabling speakers to express cultural affiliations and assert their belonging to specific communities. This practice not only legitimizes hybrid identities but also facilitates the assignment of social categories such as group membership and ethnicity, illustrating the intricate connections between language and identity. In Saint Levant’s lyrics, this phenomenon serves as a strategic means of engaging with his audience and fostering a sense of community, reflecting the dynamics of social interactions.

Ex 1: “*All I know is to be falasteeny is to always rep where you come from.*”

Translation: *All I know is to be Palestinian is to always rep where you come from.*

In this line, Saint Levant explicitly addresses Palestinians, highlighting the significance of representing their heritage. The phrase “*all I know*” serves as a relatable

entry point for listeners, establishing a personal connection. This line underscores the expectation for Palestinians as a specific social group to take pride in and honor their cultural identity. By emphasizing the importance of “*repping*” their origins³, the artist fosters a sense of solidarity among listeners who share this cultural background, reinforcing their collective identity and connection to their roots.

4.2.3. CS as a Strategy for Ethnic-Based Exclusion

Myers-Scotton with her Markedness Model emphasizes that speakers often engage in marked CS, utilizing their ethnic languages as a calculated risk in the presence of others. This practice can result in the exclusion of individuals who do not comprehend the language, potentially causing offense and reinforcing ethnic boundaries. When making this choice, speakers must carefully weigh the costs and benefits (Myers-Scotton, 1993). In specific contexts, the perceived advantages of asserting cultural identity or fostering in-group solidarity may outweigh the risks associated with alienating those outside the group. Similarly, Gal asserts that CS

is a conversational strategy used to establish, cross, or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke, or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations. (Gal, 1988, as cited in Wardhaugh, 2010, p. 98).

This perspective underscores the multifunctional role of CS in shaping social dynamics, illustrating how language can serve both as a mechanism for inclusion within ethnic groups and as a means of exclusion for those who lack the linguistic competency to engage in such discourse. Saint Levant's lyrical choices reflect on their turn a strategic negotiation of identity and social boundaries, as he frequently switches between languages to express his multifaceted cultural affiliations. His work exemplifies how CS functions as a means of self-expression and a tool for navigating the complexities of belonging and exclusion in a multilingual context. Let's examine this example:

Ex 1: “*Et je taf ap pour un minimum, khamssa fi aynihum.*”

Translation: *And I hustle hard for the bare minimum. Five in their eyes*⁴.

³ Representing their origins.

⁴ In Algerian culture, the phrase “*خمسة في عينهم*” (*Khamssa fi 'aynihum*) literally translates to “*Five in their eyes*”. It refers to the practice of using the “*khamssa*” (the number five) as a protective symbol to ward off the evil eye (envy or harm from others). The “*khamssa*” often represents the hand, specifically the open palm with five fingers, which is a common symbol in North African and Middle Eastern cultures to protect against bad luck or curses.

In this example, we observe CS as a strategy for ethnic-based exclusion and cultural signaling. The switch from French to Arabic with the phrase “*khamisa fi aynihum*” (Five in their eyes) serves multiple functions. First, it reinforces ethnic identity by drawing on a culturally specific expression used in Algerian and broader North African contexts. The phrase, invoking the *khamisa* (five) or hand, is a protective gesture against the “evil eye,” symbolizing defense against jealousy or ill will. By using this deeply cultural phrase, the speaker creates a sense of solidarity with those who share his cultural and linguistic background, while potentially excluding those who are unfamiliar with its meaning.

The *khamisa* metaphor operates not only as a cultural marker but as a tool to exclude “outsiders” from the deeper layers of the message, thereby reinforcing in-group boundaries. The use of French, on the other hand, reflects a broader cultural identification, particularly with those who struggle with economic hardship. The phrase “*Je tafap pour un minimum*” (And I hustle hard for the bare minimum) references the experience of working tirelessly for low wages, akin to earning a minimum wage (often referred to as *SMIC* in French). This resonates with the experiences of many listeners who relate to this economic struggle, making the speaker’s journey both personal and collective. Additionally, by using this phrase, the artist may be addressing other immigrants in France, who often face similar challenges in their pursuit of stability and success in a foreign land, thus fostering a sense of solidarity among those navigating the complexities of their new lives. Despite the reference to barely scraping by, the speaker takes pride in his efforts, symbolized by the use of “*khamisa fi aynihum*”, as though to ward off any ill will or envy. Even if the rewards are modest, there is a sense of dignity in the fight. This feeling of defiance and protection resonates with listeners who are proud of their journey, regardless of external validation or material gain. Thus, through this strategic CS, the artist simultaneously connects with a broader French-speaking audience and reaffirms his connection to his cultural roots, using language to navigate the complex dynamics of identity, belonging, and resistance.

4.2.4. Marked CS Through Structural Flagging

In multilingual settings, marked CS often stands out when it is structurally flagged, meaning the switch is intentionally highlighted by linguistic cues that signal a change in language. These switches serve to emphasize a particular segment of speech, drawing the listener’s attention to the marked choice. Structural flagging can occur through changes in tone, pacing, or repetition of key phrases, clearly demarcating the switch. This technique is often used by artists like Saint Levant to signal shifts in theme or to introduce culturally significant phrases, enriching the song’s meaning through the interplay of different languages:

Ex 1: “*Fadalkom i7koo mish sami3. Continuez à parler on vous entend pas.*”

Translation: *Please keep talking, we can't hear you. Continue to speak, we can't hear you.*

In this example, we observe a clear instance of CS that is structurally flagged through repetition. The artist begins with a phrase in Arabic, “*Fadalkom i7koo mish sami3*” (Please keep talking, we can't hear you), and then immediately repeats the same sentiment in French, “*Continuez à parler on vous entend pas*” (Continue to speak, we can't hear you). This repetition serves as a flagging mechanism, drawing attention to the switch between languages. The shift from Arabic to French is not only stylistic but also highlights the dual cultural and linguistic spaces the speaker navigates. By repeating the phrase in both languages, the artist emphasizes a sense of exclusion, directed toward those who speak either language but may not be fully part of the intended in-group. The structural flagging here reinforces the themes of identity and communication across multiple linguistic frameworks, while underscoring the idea that, regardless of the language used, the speaker remains intentionally distant from external chatter.

Ex 2: “*Gotta bring you back to my town. Tayyara dughri 'ala biladi.*”

Translation: *Gotta bring you back to my town. A plane straight to my country.*

In this inter-sentential instance of CS, the switch from English to Arabic is a marked choice that is structurally flagged by the change in language at a key point in the sentence. The English phrase leads up to the switch, signaling a shift in meaning and context. The pause or natural break between the English and Arabic lines structurally flags the switch, drawing attention to the change. This CS can be interpreted as marked because it emphasizes a change in the speaker's focus from the general, globalized expression in English, to the specific, personal reference to “*my country*” in Arabic. The shift adds depth to the message, signaling a move from a broader, perhaps international context (using English) to a more intimate, cultural connection with his homeland (using Arabic).

4.2.5. CS to Express Anger and Authority

Myers-Scotton (1993) emphasizes that marked CS is frequently utilized to convey emotions such as anger and to assert authority. This phenomenon is clearly reflected in the lyrics of Saint Levant, where the artist strategically switches languages to reinforce power dynamics and express intense emotions like anger. The following instances illustrate this use of language effectively:

Ex 1: “*Shafou forsa w hakou. Fuck it, we're not leaving.*”

Translation: *They saw an opportunity and they spoke. Fuck it, we're not leaving.*

In this example, Saint Levant employs inter-sentential CS as a marked linguistic choice, transitioning from Arabic to English to convey a powerful emotional narrative. This switch not only enhances the intensity of his expression but also reinforces the emotional weight of frustration and authority within his songs. The use of strong language serves to assert his stance and connect with listeners on a visceral level. This revision clarifies the type of CS used and emphasizes the emotional impact of the language choices made by Saint Levant.

This use of taboo language aligns with the observations of Bousfield and Culpeper (2008), who explain that swearing serves to express the speaker's emotional state and communicate this sentiment to listeners. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*,

to utter a form of oath irreverently, as an expression of anger, vexation, or other strong feeling; to use profane language (OED, 1989, p. 367).

Thus, through this strategic language choice, Saint Levant not only emphasizes his emotional intensity but also reinforces his authoritative presence in the song.

Ex 2: “How immature *wlak Maru bmsah al-ard fikum.*”

Translation: *How immature Maru (nickname for the singer Marwan) will wipe the floor with you.*

In this example, Saint Levant utilizes a sharp expression to convey a sense of frustration and assert dominance. The phrase “How immature” sets a critical tone, indicating disapproval of the subject's behavior. By saying “Maru will wipe the floor with you”, the artist employs a vivid metaphor that implies overwhelming defeat or humiliation, further reinforcing the intensity of his anger. The use of Arabic in this context deepens the expression, as it resonates with listeners who share this cultural background, enhancing the emotional weight of the message. This intra-sentential CS not only underscores his emotional state but also connects with listeners through relatable and powerful imagery. The use of his childhood's nickname adds a personal touch, further emphasizing the singer's connection to his identity and the message he seeks to communicate.

Ex 3: “In the friend zone *w dallak fīha.*”

Translation: *In the friend zone and you'll stay there.*

In this example, Saint Levant employs intra-sentential CS, switching to Arabic with the phrase “*w dallak fīha*” (and you'll stay there) to convey his anger and assert authority. This switch serves to emphasize his decision to keep the addressed individual in the friend zone, rejecting any intimate relationship. The use of Ara-

bic not only amplifies the emotional weight of his message but also reinforces the finality of his stance, highlighting the frustration behind his words.

The analysis reveals that CS in Saint Levant's songs primarily serves an exploratory function. As noted by Myers-Scotton (1993), the exploratory-choice maxim allows speakers to navigate ambiguous social norms by experimenting with identities and relationships. This is evident in his work, where CS becomes a crucial tool for negotiating his complex identity. By employing Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, it is clear that he intentionally shifts between languages, reflecting his available linguistic resources. This markedness enhances the socio-cultural resonance of his music, allowing him to articulate a hybrid identity that appeals to diverse audiences. Thus, the intentional use of CS highlights its role as a powerful mechanism for self-expression and cultural negotiation in contemporary urban contexts.

4.3. Audience Perspectives on Saint Levant's Trilingual Musical Expression

In the contemporary music landscape, artists often act as cultural mediators, bridging diverse linguistic and cultural realms through their work. Saint Levant exemplifies this role with his constant use of Arabic, French, and English in his songs, engaging listeners from various backgrounds. His trilingual music not only reflects his multicultural identity but also invites a range of interpretations and emotional connections among his audience. This interplay of language and identity is particularly significant, as language serves as a crucial marker of social belonging. It influences how individuals define their affiliations with specific groups, shaping their experiences and connections. According to Jaspal (2009), language can both unite and divide, functioning as a vehicle for expressing shared identities and cultural uniqueness. To gain a deeper understanding of how these dynamics manifest in the reception of Saint Levant's music, we conducted an analysis of various comments posted by listeners on YouTube. These comments provide valuable insights into how listeners engage with the artist's multilingual expression and connect with the cultural themes embedded in his songs. The subsequent analysis categorizes these comments into key themes, illustrating how the artist's music influences audience perceptions and interactions. Each theme elucidates distinct aspects of identity, belonging, and cultural resonance within his trilingual musical expression:

4.3.1. Collective Identity and Solidarity Across Borders

Several comments underscore how Saint Levant's music serves as a powerful medium for uniting individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly within the Arab world and its diaspora. These expressions of solidarity transcend

national boundaries, emphasizing shared struggles, histories, and emotions. They reinforce a collective identity that goes beyond local contexts, fostering a sense of unity among listeners who may be geographically distant but emotionally connected through their experiences of displacement and resilience:

- ▶ All the love from Sudan to Algeria and Palestine. We understand the pain and loss too!
- ▶ Black Americans support you, we identify with your struggle.
- ▶ I am from Serbia but these days I am Falastini... the whole world should be!
- ▶ We all are feeling exactly the same: our hearts are in Gaza.
- ▶ Thank you for sharing your world with us!
- ▶ Keep representing us boy you make us all proud from this Cali Iraqi with love
- ▶ Viva Levantines!

In these comments, listeners articulate a profound sense of kinship and collective identity, the repeated use of inclusive pronouns such as “*we*” and “*our*” emphasizes a shared narrative of pain, loss, and solidarity. Furthermore, the references to different geographic regions (e.g., Sudan, Serbia, and the United States) suggest that Saint Levant’s music serves as a bridge connecting various identities. His ability to weave different cultural and linguistic threads into his songs creates a communal experience, positioning his music as a cultural force that unites individuals who are geographically distant but linked by common histories and aspirations.

4.3.2. Multicultural and Hybrid Identity

Saint Levant’s ability to mix Arabic, French, and English in his music allows listeners to feel represented, particularly those with hybrid or diasporic identities. His music becomes a mirror for their own fragmented identities, where multiple cultures and languages co-exist. The comments suggest a strong identification with this hybridity, often highlighting how the trilingual approach resonates with their personal experiences:

- ▶ Père algérien, mère russe/bélarusse. C’est vrai, des fois je me sens pas chez moi nulle part. (Algerian father, Russian/Belarusian mother. It’s true; sometimes I don’t feel at home anywhere.)
- ▶ My body in Sweden, my childhood in Germany, my roots in Bosnia, my dreams in Miami, and my soul in Amsterdam. I don’t feel home anywhere either.
- ▶ Born in Germany, Syrian parents, childhood in Saudi, and most adult life in Canada.
- ▶ This is the story of my life: Body in America, heart in Palestine, soul in Ivory Coast, I feel at home nowhere.

- Thank you for giving a voice and words for this feeling so many of us have. You're a real one.

These comments speak to third-culture individuals, who feel disconnected from a single geographic or cultural space. The CS in Saint Levant's music is seen as a tool that allows listeners to acknowledge and embrace their hybrid identities, where no single language or culture defines them fully.

4.3.3. CS as a Marker of Identity

Saint Levant's strategic CS allows him to communicate across different audiences, blending both personal and collective histories into his music. Many comments directly point out how this mixing of languages creates a multifaceted listening experience, one that simultaneously reflects different parts of the listener's identity:

- Love how you mix our Arabic language with English and French. Beautifully done. Love from Lebanon.
- When you're from North Africa and you can understand all the lyrics (Arabic, English and French).
- Je viens de te découvrir, ma femme est égyptienne, je suis français. Avant qu'elle apprenne le français et moi l'arabe on se parlait en anglais du coup ton concept linguistique nous affecte beaucoup et j'adore tes sons force à toi! (I just discovered you, my wife is Egyptian, and I am French. Before she learned French and I learned Arabic, we used to speak in English, so your linguistic concept affects us a lot, and I love your music. Stay strong!)

Here, CS functions not only as a musical device but as a linguistic representation of identity, reflecting the experience of people who navigate multiple languages and cultures daily. The trilingual approach allows Saint Levant to reach a diverse audience, making them feel seen and represented.

4.3.4. Cultural Representation and Nostalgia

Many comments reveal how Saint Levant's music evokes a sense of nostalgia and longing for home or cultural roots. His ability to blend cultural elements from Algeria and Palestine, for example, strikes a chord with listeners who share these backgrounds. The intersection of music, language, and culture becomes a powerful way to express and reconnect with a collective sense of cultural heritage:

- This song makes me feel like I'm walking the streets of Algiers and Al-Khalil at the same moment.

- ▶ Mon âme à Alger mon cœur à Gaza. (My soul in Algiers my heart in Gaza.)
- ▶ You Know what? This song felt like home. Merci, choukrane!" (Thank you, thank you!)
- ▶ We all are feeling exactly the same: our hearts are in the homeland.

These comments underscore how the cultural mixing in Saint Levant's music elicits strong emotional responses, particularly in those who have experienced displacement or are living in the diaspora. The music provides a cultural home for listeners, even as it reflects the complexities of being rooted in multiple places at once.

4.3.5. Personal Identification with the Artist's Journey

A recurring theme in the comments is how listeners project their own experiences onto Saint Levant's music, especially when dealing with feelings of rootlessness or being caught between cultures. Many listeners feel that his music gives voice to emotions they have struggled to express, such as displacement, exile, and identity fragmentation:

- ▶ Story of my life too... lost between so many countries and identities.
- ▶ I don't feel at home anywhere. This line hits hard for me. Anyone else?
- ▶ As an Arab polyglot travelling across the world, I feel well represented by this artist; it's our thing to know about three languages or more.

These personal testimonies reflect a deep emotional connection to Saint Levant's music, where his linguistic and cultural expressions validate and give voice to the struggles of people living between multiple worlds.

5. Conclusion

Saint Levant's music serves as a critical lens for examining contemporary intercultural dynamics, particularly through the strategic implementation of CS between Arabic, French, and English. This study reveals that his use of both inter-sentential and intra-sentential CS is not merely a stylistic choice but a marked linguistic strategy that reflects the complexities of his cultural identity. By applying Myers-Scotton's markedness model (1993), we can discern the motivations behind these CS practices, highlighting how they signify both social and cultural positioning within a multilingual landscape. The marked nature of Saint Levant's CS acts as a vehicle for navigating and negotiating multiple cultural spaces, allowing him to engage with listeners who share similarly layered identities. This deliberate use

of marked forms facilitates a richer, more nuanced dialogue about belonging and cultural resonance, as it challenges traditional linguistic boundaries and invites audiences to explore their own hybrid identities. By employing inter-sentential shifts to denote thematic transitions and emotional depth, and intra-sentential CS to blend linguistic resources seamlessly, he constructs a musical narrative that mirrors the lived experiences of his audience.

Moreover, the analysis of listener's feedbacks underscores the collective identity fostered through his music, revealing how CS acts as a bridge connecting diverse backgrounds. Many listeners articulate a profound sense of solidarity rooted in shared experiences of displacement and cultural fragmentation, reflecting the power of music to forge communal ties across geographic and cultural divides. The emotional investment expressed in these comments highlights how Saint Levant's linguistic choices resonate deeply with those who navigate similar complexities of identity.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that Saint Levant's language practices, framed within Myers-Scotton's markedness model, are pivotal for understanding how language functions as a site of identity construction. His marked CS not only reflects his own hybrid identity but also challenges conventional notions of language and culture, inviting listeners to engage with their multifaceted selves. Ultimately, this study contributes to a broader understanding of music as a transformative medium capable of fostering intercultural dialogue and solidarity, underscoring the intricate interplay between language, identity, and cultural expression in contemporary society.

Looking ahead, further research could expand on the implications of CS in other contemporary artists' works, facilitating a comparative analysis across different cultural contexts. By examining how similar linguistic strategies manifest in diverse musical genres and geographic regions, scholars can gain deeper insights into the role of language as a mechanism for identity negotiation and cultural expression. Additionally, exploring the impact of social media and digital platforms on the reception and dissemination of multilingual music could provide valuable perspectives on audience engagement and community building in the digital age.

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Code-Switching w trójjęzycznej muzyce Saint Levanta: język, tożsamość i ekspresja kulturowa

Streszczenie. Niniejsze badanie analizuje praktyki przełączania kodów w muzyce Saint Levanta, koncentrując się na tym, w jaki sposób te wybory językowe odzwierciedlają jego złożoną tożsamość kulturową oraz angażują wielojęzyczną publiczność. Celem badań jest zrozumienie motywacji stojących za tymi praktykami przy wykorzystaniu jako ramy teoretycznej modelu nacechowania Myers-Scotton. Przeprowadzono jakościową analizę wybranych utworów z dyskografii Saint Levanta, aby zidentyfikować zarówno wzorce przełączania kodów między zdaniami, jak i wewnątrz zdania. Analizę wsparły wywiady i dane kontekstowe, co pozwoliło uzyskać wgląd w tło kulturowe artysty oraz dynamikę socjolingwistyczną. Wyniki pokazują, że przełączanie kodów językowych przez Saint Levanta obejmuje zarówno przełączenia między zdaniami, jak i wewnątrz zdania i jest elementem świadomej strategii budowania tożsamości i zaangażowania publiczności. Z badania wynika, że te wyróżniające się wybory językowe odzwierciedlają szerszą dynamikę międzykulturową i ujawniają złożoność nawigacji w różnych przestrzeniach kulturowych. Muzyka Saint Levanta ilustruje, jak artyści wyrażają złożone tożsamości poprzez wielojęzyczność. Badanie przyczynia się do głębszego zrozumienia roli języka w budowaniu wspólnych tożsamości międzykulturowych i podkreśla znaczenie przełączania kodów językowych jako formy artystycznego oporu wobec monolitycznych narracji tożsamościowych.

Słowa kluczowe: przełączanie kodów, wielojęzyczność, tożsamość kulturowa, Saint Levant, dynamika międzykulturowa