



Cross-pattern translanguaging in the university environment: A new interpretive model for Arabic–English alternation in academic and digital communication

Dr: Djoubar Abdelhafid
University of M'Sila
Email: abdelhafid.djoubar@univ-msila.dz

Received. 02/01/2026 Accepted: 04/02/2026 Published: 15/05/2026

Abstract:

This article examines the phenomenon of cross-pattern translanguaging in the university environment by studying the alternation between Arabic and English in academic and digital communication contexts. It starts from the basic hypothesis that this alternation is no longer merely a partial linguistic phenomenon to be explained solely by structural or educational factors, but has become a complex communicative practice in which linguistic, pragmatic, institutional and digital dimensions intersect. The article seeks to construct a new interpretive model that makes it possible to understand this alternation as a communicative behaviour shaped by the nature of the situation, the type of medium, the identity of the interactants, and the symbolic and cognitive functions that both Arabic and English perform within the university domain. The article also discusses the presence of this alternation in lectures, scientific discussions, academic writing, digital correspondence, and e-learning platforms, highlighting that the shift between the two languages is not always spontaneous but is governed by considerations related to scientific precision, conceptual economy, academic prestige, group belonging, and the demands of rapid digital interaction. The article concludes that understanding multilingualism in the contemporary university requires moving beyond traditional conceptions of code-switching and adopting an interpretive approach that is open to the interaction of language with medium, institution and social practice, thereby allowing a deeper appreciation of the profound changes that university communication is undergoing in the digital environment.

Keywords: translanguaging, code-switching, Arabic and English, university environment, academic communication, digital communication, cross-pattern alternation, interpretive model.

Introduction:

Multilingualism is one of the most prominent linguistic and sociological issues in contemporary university environments, because the university is no longer a monolingual or monomodal communicative space; it has become a field where languages of knowledge, languages of instruction, languages of daily interaction, and languages of digital media intersect. Consequently, the linguistic phenomenon inside the university cannot be understood solely within the limits of abstract linguistic use, but rather in light of the cognitive, communicative and symbolic functions that the university institution assigns to the languages



in circulation. In this framework, multilingualism becomes an indicator of deeper transformations affecting the very structure of university communication, whether in terms of its relationship to knowledge production or in terms of its connection to training, openness and positioning within the academic field (Al-Baybi, 2021, p. 78).

The importance of this issue appears more clearly in the contemporary Arab university, where the parallel presence of Arabic and English in both academic and digital discourse is evident. Arabic remains, in many contexts, the language of explanation, interpretation, simplification and daily interaction, while English acquires an increasing presence as the language of scientific terminology, specialised reference, international academic research, and cross-border knowledge circulation. This overlap appears not only in lectures and scientific discussions, but extends to university presentations, research, email, educational platforms, and digital communication groups between students and teachers, which makes linguistic practice in the modern university a composite practice that goes beyond the traditional separation between academic discourse and digital discourse (Siddiqi, 2020, p. 810).

Therefore, the alternation between Arabic and English within this context should not be viewed as a mere spontaneous shift between two languages, but as an organised communicative behaviour imposed by the nature of the situation, the function of the discourse, the type of medium, and the identity of the interactants. Linguistic choice in the university is not innocent or arbitrary; in many cases it is linked to the desire to achieve terminological precision, conceptual economy, demonstration of scientific competence, facilitation of understanding, or adaptation of discourse to the fast-paced digital space. Hence, code-switching in the contemporary university environment reveals a transformation in the nature of linguistic use itself, where linguistic, pragmatic, institutional and technical considerations all intersect.

This phenomenon becomes even clearer with the expansion of the digital space within the university, as university communication is no longer confined to the lecture hall or the traditional academic text, but has extended to diverse digital spaces that produce new forms of discourse in which the written, the oral, the formal, the interactive, the cognitive and the pragmatic intersect. Some researchers have pointed out that digital academic discourse is no longer a mere technical extension of university discourse, but has become a specific communicative structure with its own audience, media, mechanisms of influence and persuasion, which requires approaching it with analytical tools that accommodate the specificity of the digital environment and its transformations (Siddiqi, 2020, p. 811).

Based on this, the problem of this article lies in the following question: How can the alternation between Arabic and English in the contemporary university environment be interpreted in a way that goes beyond traditional models and takes into account the cross-pattern nature of academic and digital communication? From this question derive several sub-questions, the most prominent of which are: What is the nature of the relationship between multilingualism and the communicative medium in the university? How are the functions of Arabic and English distributed between the academic and digital domains? To what extent are prevailing approaches adequate for explaining this type of alternation? And to what extent can a new interpretive model be built that integrates the linguistic, pragmatic, digital and institutional dimensions?



Accordingly, this article aims to analyse the manifestations of Arabic–English alternation in the university environment, to reveal its communicative and symbolic functions within academic and digital discourse, and then to propose a new interpretive model that allows understanding of this linguistic behaviour in light of the transformations experienced by the contemporary university. Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach with an interpretive dimension, drawing on concepts of multilingualism, code-switching, academic discourse analysis, and digital discourse analysis, in order to interpret the phenomenon in relation to context, medium and institution, not merely in its formal limits. The importance of this approach stems from the fact that it allows a rethinking of university multilingualism as a complex discursive practice, not just a marginal linguistic phenomenon, thereby contributing to a more precise understanding of the transformations witnessed by academic communication in the digital age.

1. Conceptual and theoretical framework of cross-pattern translanguaging:

1.1. The concept of multilingualism in contemporary linguistic studies:

In contemporary linguistic studies, multilingualism is no longer understood as merely the presence of two or more languages in a single social environment or in a single speaker, but is now viewed as a dynamic communicative situation in which linguistic resources move according to context, use, identity and discourse functions. In this sense, modern linguistic approaches are not concerned only with counting the languages present within a society or institution, but with analysing how they function within interaction and what social, cultural and symbolic meanings they carry. Hence, the concept of multilingualism has shifted from a simple quantitative denotation to a complex functional one that sees language as a resource for negotiation, positioning and meaning-making within changing contexts (Awarib, 2017, p. 52). One consequence of this shift is that multilingualism is no longer studied as a fixed state or a rigid structural description, but as a dynamic social practice connected to questions of identity, belonging and institution. Language in this perspective cannot be separated from the cultural and social stakes that produce it, and multilingualism is not understood as a lack of harmony, but as a natural situation in modern societies where reference points and communication media intersect. From this standpoint, multilingualism in the university environment acquires a special dimension, because the university is a cognitive and institutional space where languages of instruction, research, daily communication and digital interaction coexist, making the phenomenon more complex than mere diglossia in its traditional sense (Abish, 2023, p. 30).

1.2. The concept of code-switching and its pragmatic and social functions:

Code-switching is one of the most prominent manifestations of multilingualism in actual use, referring to the speaker's shift from one language to another or from one linguistic code to another within the same discourse or within the same communicative context. However, this shift should not be understood as a mere formal phenomenon or an automatic alternation between two linguistic codes, but as a communicative behaviour with function and meaning, exploited by the speaker to achieve specific goals related to understanding, organisation, influence, and positioning within the speech relationship. In this sense, code-switching is linked



to context more than to abstract structure, because it acquires its true value from its function within interaction, not merely from its occurrence in the speech chain (Al-Zaghoul, 2017, p. 35).

The functions of code-switching are multiple, both pragmatically and socially: it can be used to clarify a term, to specify meaning, to move from one discourse level to another, to build closeness between interactants, or to show belonging to a particular cognitive or cultural community. In the university context specifically, this functional dimension intensifies, because the shift between Arabic and English is often linked to distinguishing between the language of explanation and the language of terminology, or between the language of daily exchange and the language of scientific specialisation. Hence, switching becomes part of the economy of academic discourse itself, not merely a superficial manifestation of linguistic duality. Therefore, its study requires an approach that combines linguistic, pragmatic and social dimensions, so that its relationship to the management of meaning, power and identity within university interaction can be understood (Al-Zaghoul, 2017, p. 41).

1.3. The meaning of cross-pattern alternation in linguistic communication:

If code-switching in its common meaning refers to shifting between different languages, the concept of cross-pattern alternation expands the field of analysis to include shifting between different communicative patterns and expressive media within a single communicative act. Communication in the contemporary environment, especially in the digital university domain, is no longer based solely on verbal language, but relies on the interplay of text and image, oral and written, formal and interactive, visual symbol and terminological expression. Hence, the communicative act is no longer realised within a single linguistic channel, but within a complex semiotic structure where multiple patterns cooperate to produce meaning (Boukrami, 2024, p. 89).

The importance of this concept lies in that it allows understanding that the student's or teacher's transition from Arabic to English does not occur separately from another transition between patterns of expression and their media. English may be used in a slide title, a digital file name, an educational platform, or a short conversation, while Arabic is used for explanation, commentary or building interactive relationships. This means that the value of the linguistic element changes according to the pattern in which it appears and the medium that carries it. Hence, cross-pattern translanguaging does not refer only to the multiplicity of languages, but also to the multiplicity of forms of discursive realisation themselves, making contemporary university communication a composite activity in which language moves between overlapping channels and functions (Siddiqi, 2021, p. 309).

1.4. The relationship between language, context and medium in the university environment:

The value and function of language are affirmed within the context in which it is used, because meaning is generated not by verbal structure alone, but by its interaction with the situation, the speakers, the goal, and the medium. In the contemporary university environment, context is no longer confined to the physical and temporal presence inside the lecture hall, but also includes



the technical structure of the platform, the nature of the digital interface, the form of interaction, and the possibilities of circulation, delay and archiving. Therefore, the medium cannot be viewed merely as a neutral channel that transmits language, but as an element that participates in shaping discourse itself, in determining its functions, degrees of formality, and patterns of abbreviation (Al-Ziyadi, 2021, p. 689).

In this framework, linguistic practice within the university is determined by a complex interaction between language, context and medium. The language used in a lecture is not necessarily the same as that used in a university email, an educational platform, or an instant messaging group, even if the interactants are the same. This is because each medium imposes its own rhythm, its expressive logic, and its boundaries of formality, which directly affect the choice of language, its construction and its function. Hence, understanding Arabic–English alternation in the university requires examining it within this triadic interaction, because language adapts to context, context is reshaped by the medium, and the medium in turn changes the pragmatic value of the language used (Al-Ziyadi, 2021, p. 691).

1.5. The overlap between academic discourse and digital discourse:

One of the most prominent features of the contemporary university is the decline of strict boundaries between academic discourse and digital discourse. University discourse is no longer confined to the lecture, the article, or the scientific presentation, but has extended to educational platforms, email, digital groups, and social media for publication and interaction. This extension has led to the emergence of a hybrid space where the formal intersects with the semi-formal, the institutional with the personal, and scientific precision with interactive speed. This transformation affects not only the form of discourse but also its language, because when academic discourse enters the digital space it acquires new characteristics related to audience, circulation, persuasion, abbreviation, and reformulation (Siddiqi, 2021, p. 312).

A consequence of this overlap is that Arabic–English alternation is no longer a phenomenon that can be reduced to one of the two domains separately, but has become a practice located within an intermediate space where academic and digital functions coexist. In digital university messages, for example, English may appear in terminology, titles and technical references, while Arabic appears in guidance, explanation and daily interaction, producing a hybrid discourse in which scientific, symbolic and pragmatic values intersect. Hence, understanding contemporary university communication requires moving beyond the traditional separation between academic discourse and digital discourse, and viewing them as a single intertwined field in which languages, patterns and functions are redistributed in a new way (Boukrami, 2024, p. 90).

2. Manifestations of Arabic–English alternation in university academic and digital communication:

2.1. Code-switching in lectures and scientific discussions:

2.1.1. Code-switching as a tool for explaining scientific content:

In university lectures, code-switching between Arabic and English appears as both an educational and cognitive resource. The teacher or student resorts to English when presenting specialised terminology or referring to original concepts used in scientific references, then



returns to Arabic for explanation, simplification, and re-construction of meaning in light of the local context. This use reveals that switching here does not serve a formal or decorative function, but enters into the core of knowledge construction and circulation within the university space, because the foreign language often guarantees terminological precision, while Arabic allows interpretation, approximation, and content comprehension by recipients. Hence, the shift from English to Arabic within a lecture can be understood as a pedagogical mechanism that combines the requirement of scientific precision with the requirement of educational understanding, making code-switching a tool for knowledge management inside the university classroom (Abish, 2023, p. 34).

2.1.2. Code-switching in managing scientific interaction in the classroom:

Code-switching in lectures is not limited to explaining terms or simplifying content, but also appears in managing scientific interaction in the classroom, such as asking questions, organising interventions, commenting on answers, and directing discussion. In many cases, English is used when referring to a specialised concept, a scientific text, or a reference title, while Arabic is used for questioning, requesting clarification, reformulating, and eliciting participation. This means that switching reflects not merely the presence of two languages, but also a gradation between specialised discourse and reception discourse, and between the language of scientific reference and the language of educational interaction. Hence, switching within university discussions represents part of the pragmatic organisation of scientific discourse, because it helps control the relationship between the knowledge presented and how it is received and interacted with (Al-Zaghoul, 2017, p. 44).

2.2. Code-switching in academic writing, research and university presentations:

2.2.1. Code-switching in research writing and academic achievement:

In academic writing, Arabic–English alternation takes a more controlled and selective form than in spoken discourse, appearing in research titles, the use of specialised terminology, reference to theories and models, and the inclusion of concepts whose Arabic translation is not yet settled or that seem more precise in their English form. This does not mean that Arabic academic writing is incapable of producing its own terminology, but rather that switching here is linked to the nature of the knowledge field, the authority of scientific reference, and the horizon of international publication and circulation. Therefore, introducing English into Arabic academic texts may be related to the desire to achieve conceptual precision, to demonstrate belonging to a specific specialisation, or to align local discourse with the standards circulating in research communities. Thus, switching in academic writing does not represent a lack of coherence, but reflects a cognitive situation imposed by the nature of contemporary scientific production (Al-Baybi, 2021, p. 82).

2.2.2. Code-switching in university presentations and scientific slides:

This pattern is also evident in university presentations and scientific slides, where English is used in main headings, graphs, central concepts, and technical names, while Arabic is used in oral explanation, interpretation, commentary, and linking the scientific material to students’



background knowledge. This distribution reveals an overlap between two dimensions: a visual-cognitive dimension that makes English a medium for concise presentation and standard terminology, and an oral-interactive dimension that makes Arabic the language of comprehension, persuasion and simplification. Moreover, the university presentation itself is an intermediate space between writing and oral discourse, making it a fertile field for the appearance of alternation between the two languages as a response to differences in pattern and function. Hence, switching in presentations reflects not only a change of language, but also a change in its position within the communicative structure of the academic presentation (Siddiqi, 2021, p. 314).

2.3. Code-switching in university correspondence and digital educational platforms:

2.3.1. Code-switching in formal and semi-formal university email:

In university correspondence, especially email, Arabic–English alternation appears in subject lines, course names, file titles, and certain procedural or technical terms, and may also appear in signatures or abbreviated reference notes. This phenomenon gains importance because university email occupies a middle ground between institutional formality and professional personal communication; therefore, the linguistic choice within it is not arbitrary, but is subject to considerations related to the situation, prestige, precision, and the sender’s image before the recipient. In the Arab university context, these considerations may lead students or teachers to include English in specific parts of the message, not because English is the dominant language of communication, but because it performs a referential, institutional or symbolic function within this type of discourse. Thus, switching becomes a means of balancing institutional representation with terminological precision in university correspondence (Al-Ziyadi, 2021, p. 692).

2.3.2. Code-switching on educational platforms and asynchronous interaction:

On digital educational platforms, such as learning management systems and virtual classrooms, code-switching is often linked to the nature of the digital interface, the language of the course, the formulation of instructions, and the mechanisms of asynchronous written interaction. In many university environments, unit titles, files or activity names are presented in English, while explanation and written interaction are conducted in Arabic or a mixture of the two languages. This indicates that the digital medium does not only change the form of interaction, but also reformulates its conditions, functions and degrees of formality. It also reveals a functional distribution between the language of the interface or organisation and the language of explanation or human interaction, which makes switching within educational platforms a reflection of the overlap between the institutional and the digital, not a simple linguistic duality. Hence, interpreting this pattern requires attention to the effect of the medium itself in shaping the language used inside the university educational space (Boukrami, 2024, p. 91).



2.4. Code-switching on digital communication platforms between students and teachers:

2.4.1. Code-switching in digital groups and instant conversations:

On digital communication platforms, such as instant messaging groups or channels dedicated to virtual classes, Arabic–English alternation becomes more fluid and less subject to strict formality boundaries. A student may write their question in Arabic and include an English term, or comment with a short English phrase on Arabic content, or use file names, links and course names as they appear in their English original. This is related to the characteristics of this type of discourse, notably speed, abbreviation, immediate circulation, and the use of ready-made and mixed formulas. In this sense, switching in these spaces is not understood only as a linguistic choice, but as a practical response to the economy of digital speed, and at the same time as an expression of the overlap between academic identity and youth/digital identity within the discourse itself (Siddiqi, 2021, p. 316).

2.4.2. Code-switching and reducing the distance between teacher and student:

Code-switching in digital media also contributes to reshaping the relationship between teacher and student, as it can be used to add a degree of flexibility and interactive closeness without completely abandoning the academic character. Using Arabic for compliments or daily enquiries, while including English in the names of themes, documents or professional expressions, creates a hybrid pattern that balances formality and ease, institutional authority and the requirements of rapid communication. Hence, switching in this context performs not only a cognitive function but also a relational function that organises social distance within the digital university domain, and reveals a shift in communication styles between university actors under the influence of new media (Al-Ziyadi, 2021, p. 694).

2.5. Functional and symbolic dimensions of using Arabic and English inside the university:

2.5.1. The functional dimension: between explanation, precision and abbreviation:

The use of Arabic and English inside the university carries clear functional dimensions. Arabic often performs the functions of explanation, simplification, management of local interaction, and linking knowledge to the cultural and educational context of students, while English performs the functions of referring to scientific reference, fixing terminology, conceptual abbreviation, and connecting with specialised literature. Hence, alternation between the two languages should not be viewed as a lack of coherence, but as a functional distribution of linguistic resources according to discursive and cognitive tasks. This distribution does not necessarily imply a strict separation between the two languages, but rather shows how each is exploited according to the situation, purpose and medium. Thus, multilingualism inside the university reflects a realistic communicative logic that adapts language according to the requirements of teaching, research and digital interaction (Abish, 2023, p. 36).

2.5.2. The symbolic dimension: prestige, belonging and academic positioning:

Alongside the functional dimension, Arabic and English carry a clear symbolic value inside the university. In the academic imagination, English is often associated with scientific modernity, specialisation competence, and openness to the global knowledge community,



while Arabic is associated with local identity, cultural legitimacy, and ease of daily exchange. This does not mean that these values are fixed in all contexts, but rather that language choice inside the university may be an act of symbolic positioning as much as it is a communicative act. When a student or researcher includes English in their presentation or discussion, they may seek to suggest competence and belonging to a broader knowledge field, while using Arabic allows them to build closeness, clarify, and affirm cultural and institutional belonging. Hence, code-switching becomes a form of managing academic image within the university space, especially with the growing presence of digital discourse that makes language more visible and more strongly tied to representation, prestige and diffusion (Siddiqi, 2021, p. 318).

3. Towards a new interpretive model for cross-pattern code-switching:

3.1. Limits of traditional approaches to interpreting code-switching:

3.1.1. The dominance of structural interpretation of code-switching:

Many early approaches to studying code-switching started from a structural perspective, focusing primarily on the points of transition between the two languages within or between sentences, and on the morphological and syntactic conditions governing this transition. This direction contributed to revealing important formal regularities, but remained limited in its interpretation of the phenomenon, because it treated switching as a linguistic structure before it was a communicative act and a social behaviour. Hence, this perspective, despite its descriptive importance, is insufficient to explain what happens in the university environment, where the shift between Arabic and English is linked to functions of explanation, interaction management, terminological prestige, and the nature of the cognitive situation, not solely to linguistic structure (Al-Aslaa, 2026, pp. 198-201).

3.1.2. The inadequacy of strict binary approaches to language:

Some traditional models treated Arabic and English as completely separate systems, between which the speaker moves as if choosing from two fixed systems with no overlap. However, this conception does not align with current university practices, where actors do not move within closed linguistic boundaries but exploit multiple linguistic resources according to need, context and communicative purpose. Therefore, limiting analysis to the idea of “switching between two languages” without paying attention to the nature of the resources actually used and their overlap within a single discourse leads to a reductive simplification of the reality of university language use. At this level, multilingualism is not merely the presence of two languages, but a communicative situation where functions, reference points and symbolic stakes intersect (Awarib, 2017, pp. 53-55).

3.1.3. Neglect of the effect of medium and digital space:

Another major limitation of traditional approaches is that they were originally developed to analyse face-to-face interaction or spoken and written discourse in its classical forms, and therefore were not sufficiently prepared to explain linguistic practices occurring within multiple digital media. The shift from Arabic to English inside a university email, a digital presentation, an educational platform, or an instant messaging group does not carry the same



meaning nor is subject to the same conditions. This means that the medium is not merely a technical background, but an element that participates in shaping discourse and determining its functions. Arabic studies of digital discourse have shown that the medium reorganises the relationship between sender and receiver, and affects degrees of formality, abbreviation and circulation, which calls for including it in the core of analysis rather than its margins (Siddiqi, 2021, pp. 312-315).

3.1.4. The limited scope of general social interpretation:

It is true that some social approaches made an important contribution by linking code-switching to social relations and the question of choice within interaction, but these approaches often remained too general when it comes to contemporary university digital spaces. The university is not just a general social space; it is a cognitive and organisational institution with its own laws, hierarchies, and specific representations of the value and functions of languages. Moreover, digital interaction within it adds new layers of complexity that cannot be reduced to general social choice concepts alone. Hence, traditional approaches, whether structural or social, have provided useful interpretive tools, but they are no longer sufficient to understand cross-pattern code-switching in the contemporary university (Ksas, 2017, pp. 170-173).

3.2. Justifications for proposing a new interpretive model:

3.2.1. The transformation of the university into a hybrid communicative space:

The need for a new interpretive model arises from the fact that the contemporary university is no longer a single-structure communicative space, but has become a hybrid environment where the face-to-face lecture intersects with the digital platform, academic writing with emails, and scientific presentation with instant conversation. This transformation has changed the functions of the languages used, and has also changed the boundaries of interaction itself, so that it is no longer possible to understand Arabic–English alternation in isolation from this overlap of patterns and media. Hence, the phenomenon is no longer merely a shift between two languages, but has become linked to a composite communicative structure where the academic and the digital, the formal and the interactive, the oral and the written coexist (Siddiqi, 2021, pp. 309-313).

3.2.2. The complexity of the functions performed by code-switching:

Code-switching in the university environment no longer performs a single function reducible to explanation, translation or clarification alone, but has come to perform simultaneous and composite functions; it may be at the same time a tool for explanation, a means of terminological economy, an indicator of specialisation belonging, a mechanism for building scientific prestige, and a response to the characteristics of the digital medium. This functional multiplicity demands a more flexible model, capable of interpreting overlapping motives rather than reducing the phenomenon to a single cause. Linguistic practice inside the modern university is linked to the dynamics of discourse, the nature of the institution, the cognitive stock, and the logic of the digital interface, which requires a multi-dimensional interpretive framework (Al-Aslaa, 2026, pp. 222-226).



3.2.3. The need to go beyond the separation between language and practice:

The necessity for a new model also arises from the need to go beyond the conception that separates language as a system from language as a social-pragmatic practice. Arabic–English alternation in university discourse cannot be understood by relying on language structure alone, nor by relying on social context alone, because what actually happens is an interaction between the linguistic resource, the function of discourse, the nature of the medium, and the conditions of the institution. Therefore, proposing a new interpretive model is not merely a terminological addition, but a methodological response to the transformation of the object of study itself from a partial linguistic phenomenon into a composite communicative practice (Awarib, 2017, pp. 55-56).

3.3. Components of the proposed model: linguistic, pragmatic, digital, and institutional dimensions:

3.3.1. The linguistic dimension:

In the proposed model, the linguistic dimension consists of analysing the linguistic resources used in Arabic–English alternation, such as specialised terminology, fixed expressions, course titles, abbreviations, procedural formulas, and patterns of mixing within or between sentences. However, this dimension is not understood here in its narrow grammatical sense, but as a level that examines the type of elements transferred between the two languages, their cognitive and specialised meanings, and their functions within discourse. Not every insertion of English into Arabic discourse has the same value, because a scientific term differs from a reference title, and a digital abbreviation differs from a procedural expression. Hence, this dimension focuses on the nature of the linguistic resource used and how it is patterned within university discourse (Al-Aslaa, 2026, pp. 203-207).

3.3.2. The pragmatic dimension:

The pragmatic dimension focuses on the purposes that switching achieves within the context: is it used for explanation? For specification? For interaction management? For building closeness or distance? For demonstrating cognitive authority? Here, switching is understood as a pragmatic act shaped by the speaker's intention, the receiver's expectations, and the nature of the situation. Therefore, linguistic choice is not a superficial manifestation of linguistic duality, but enters into the core of the discursive strategy by which the actor organises their communication with others. In the university environment, this dimension gains importance because language is used not only to transmit content, but also to organise explanation, distribute roles, interact, guide, and evaluate (Al-Zaghoul, 2017, pp. 40-42).

3.3.3. The digital dimension:

The digital dimension consists of introducing the characteristics of the digital medium into the interpretation of code-switching, such as the nature of the platform, the form of the interface, the speed of interaction, archiving possibilities, abbreviation, and the integration of text with links, images and symbols. Linguistic practice inside an instant messaging group differs from that inside an email, an educational platform, or a university presentation. Therefore, the model



proposes that understanding the shift between Arabic and English always requires determining the digital medium in which it occurs. The medium here does not surround language from the outside, but reshapes it from within through its technical and interactive characteristics, which makes code-switching part of the logic of the digital space itself (Al-Ziyadi, 2021, pp. 689-694).

3.3.4. The institutional dimension:

The institutional dimension consists of the fact that the university is a space organised by implicit or explicit language policies, academic hierarchies, and cognitive representations of the value and functions of languages. English inside the university is not just a foreign language; it is often given the status of scientific reference, the language of terminology, publication, and accreditation in some disciplines, while Arabic is associated with functions of local teaching, explanation, and administrative and daily communication. Hence, Arabic–English alternation cannot be interpreted without taking into account the position of each language within the university’s linguistic market, and the symbolism, prestige and cognitive authority attached to that position. In this sense, the proposed model integrates the institution into the interpretation of the phenomenon, because linguistic choice does not occur in a vacuum, but within a structure that determines what is considered legitimate, prestigious, or more effective in each university context (Ksas, 2017, pp. 174-177).

3.4. Mechanisms of the model’s operation in interpreting the shift between Arabic and English:

3.4.1. The multi-level analysis mechanism:

The model proposes that each instance of Arabic–English alternation be analysed through four interrelated questions: what is the linguistic resource being switched? What pragmatic function does it perform? What effect does the digital or pattern medium have on its appearance? And what institutional conditions give it its value? Thus, the phenomenon becomes readable on overlapping levels instead of being reduced to a single factor. When a teacher uses an English term within an Arabic explanation in a lecture, the analysis does not stop at the presence of a foreign term, but examines its type, its function, its relationship to the lecture pattern, and its value within the academic field. When a student uses English in a file title or in a quick message on an educational platform, the phenomenon is also interpreted in light of the logic of the digital interface, the speed of interaction, and representations of formality and abbreviation (Siddiqi, 2021, pp. 315-317).

3.4.2. The mechanism of linking pattern and function:

One of the fundamental mechanisms of this model is that it links the communicative pattern to the function of the language used. Arabic and English are not distributed arbitrarily; each tends to be associated with a specific communicative pattern within the university space. English tends to have a stronger presence in titles, terms, files and interfaces, while Arabic tends to be used for explanation, immediate interaction, guidance, and building local understanding. However, this distribution is not fixed; it changes according to the medium, the actor, and the specialisation. Hence, the model operates by revealing the relationship between the position of



the language and its function, rather than merely describing the shift from one language to another (Obeid, 2023, pp. 217-220).

3.4.3. The mechanism of interpreting switching as positioning:

The model also assumes that the shift between Arabic and English is not merely an expressive choice, but is often an act of academic and symbolic positioning. When a speaker uses English, they may be placing themselves within a specific specialisation or referential horizon, and may be seeking to demonstrate scientific competence or belonging to a particular knowledge community, while using Arabic allows them to affirm closeness, interpretation or local effectiveness. In this sense, switching becomes an indicator of how university actors negotiate their academic and digital identities simultaneously, and linguistic choice becomes part of managing image and position within the university space (Siddiqi, 2021, pp. 318-320).

3.4.4. The mechanism of interpreting switching as a response to the hybrid context:

Finally, the model operates by viewing code-switching as a response to a hybrid context that combines the academic and the digital, the formal and the everyday, the local and the cross-border. In such a context, the shift between Arabic and English ceases to be an exceptional case and becomes part of the logic of communication itself. The university speaker or writer constantly adapts their linguistic resources according to the type of interaction, the degree of institutionality, the nature of the platform, and the speed of execution. This is what makes the proposed model capable of interpreting the phenomenon in its dynamism, not as a fixed structure, but as a cross-pattern practice determined by the interaction of multiple levels (Boukrami, 2024, pp. 89-92).

3.5. The value of the model in understanding academic and digital communication in the university environment:

3.5.1. Going beyond interpretive reductionism:

The value of this model lies first in that it goes beyond reductionist interpretations that confine code-switching to a single level, whether grammatical, social or psychological. It allows understanding of the phenomenon as the result of an interaction between linguistic resources, pragmatic functions, digital characteristics, and institutional conditions. This multiplicity of analytical levels makes it more capable of accommodating the complexity of contemporary university communication, where language cannot be separated from its media nor from the academic structure that frames it (Al-Aslaa, 2026, pp. 230-233).

3.5.2. Its suitability to the nature of the contemporary university:

The value of the model also lies in its suitability to the transformations of the modern university, which has come to rely on multi-form communication: face-to-face, written, digital, synchronous and asynchronous. Instead of imposing a priori boundaries between academic discourse and digital discourse, the model assumes their overlap and makes this overlap part of the interpretation. Hence, it is a model more capable of explaining the actual university reality, where students and teachers move between the lecture hall, the university presentation,



email, the platform, and the digital group, accompanied by continuous linguistic movement (Siddiqi, 2021, pp. 321-323).

3.5.3. Its contribution to understanding Arabic and English within the university field:

This model also allows a more precise reading of the relationship between Arabic and English inside the university. It does not treat Arabic as merely a local language, nor English as merely a foreign language, but examines how their functions are distributed within a specific academic and digital economy. Thus, it helps understand why English is used in certain places, why Arabic regains its effectiveness in other places, and how a new form of cross-pattern translanguaging emerges within the university institution from this interaction (Ksas, 2017, pp. 177-179).

3.5.4. Its scientific and methodological horizon:

Finally, the value of the proposed model is not limited to interpreting the case of Arabic and English in the university, but extends to the possibility of employing it in the study of similar linguistic practices in other educational institutions or in various professional and knowledge environments. It provides a flexible methodological framework for analysing multilingualism when it intersects with digitisation, specialisation, institution, and daily interaction. Hence, it opens a new research horizon that reconnects sociolinguistics with digital discourse analysis and university studies, and gives the researcher a more synthetic tool for understanding language in its contemporary conditions (Awarib, 2017, pp. 56-57).

Conclusion:

This article has shown that multilingualism in the contemporary university environment is no longer a phenomenon that can be explained in light of traditional conceptions that confine it to the mere coexistence of two languages or a formal shift from one linguistic code to another, but has become a composite communicative practice determined by the interaction of language with context, medium, institution and discursive function. The analysis has demonstrated that Arabic–English alternation in university academic and digital communication does not occur arbitrarily, nor is it understood only as a natural result of bilingualism or linguistic duality, but rather as an organised behaviour governed by overlapping cognitive, pragmatic, symbolic and technical considerations. In many contexts, Arabic performs the functions of explanation, simplification, interaction management, and building shared understanding, while English appears as the language of scientific terminology, specialised reference, conceptual abbreviation, and positioning within the global knowledge field. The article has also shown that this alternation varies according to the university spaces in which it occurs, from lectures and scientific discussions to academic writing and university presentations, through formal correspondence, educational platforms, and digital communication tools – confirming that linguistic practice in the modern university has indeed become cross-pattern, moving between the oral, the written, and the digital, between the formal and the interactive, and between the local and the cross-border.



One of the most important findings of the article is that traditional approaches to code-switching, despite their importance in revealing some of its structural and social dimensions, are no longer sufficient to explain the linguistic practices that characterise the current university environment. This is because these practices do not occur within a purely linguistic context, but within a hybrid space where language interacts with digital media, with the institutional logic of the university, and with the transformations that have affected academic discourse itself. Hence the need arose to propose a new interpretive model for cross-pattern code-switching, based on four integrated dimensions: the linguistic dimension, the pragmatic dimension, the digital dimension, and the institutional dimension. This model has allowed a broader and more precise understanding of the phenomenon, because it does not explain the shift between Arabic and English from a single angle, but links it to the nature of the linguistic resource used, its discursive function, the characteristics of the medium in which it appears, and the symbolic and institutional status of each language within the university space.

The scientific value of this proposed model lies in that it offers an interpretive framework that suits the nature of the contemporary university as a multi-layered communicative space, in which it is impossible to separate academic discourse from digital discourse, nor language as structure from language as practice. It is a model that contributes to renewing the view of multilingualism by integrating digital and institutional transformations into linguistic analysis, and gives the researcher a more flexible tool capable of accommodating the complexity of current university linguistic phenomena. Moreover, its importance is not limited to studying the relationship between Arabic and English alone, but extends to the possibility of employing it in the study of other linguistic situations that experience a similar overlap between multiple languages, diverse media, and changing knowledge institutions.

Furthermore, this article opens multiple research avenues that can contribute to deepening the study of multilingualism in contemporary university contexts. There is a need for applied field studies that document actual patterns of code-switching in university lectures, digital correspondence, and e-learning platforms, through the analysis of real corpora representing different university disciplines. There is also a need to study the differences between scientific and humanities disciplines in the distribution and functions of Arabic and English, and to examine the impact of digital transformation on reshaping the symbolic values associated with each language within the university institution. Added to this is the importance of expanding research towards studying students' and teachers' representations of code-switching, and how they perceive its relationship to scientific competence, academic prestige, cultural belonging, and digital interaction. The results of such research could also be invested in developing university language policies that are more aware of actual linguistic practice and more capable of achieving a balance between global scientific openness and the preservation of local communicative effectiveness.

Thus, the article concludes that cross-pattern translanguaging in the university environment is not a marginal or incidental phenomenon, but is one of the indicators of the profound transformations that academic communication is undergoing in the digital age, and that understanding it requires new interpretive models that accommodate the complexity of the



relationship between language, knowledge, medium and institution in the contemporary university.

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