

Form-Function Correlations in Gen Z's Instagram Direct Messages

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□ ABSTRACT □

This article investigates the form-function correlations in the Instagram direct messages of fifteen Gen Z'ers living in Latakia governorate, Syria. Roughly, Gen Z is the world demographic born between 1996 and the early 2000s. Due to globalization and the emergence of social media as a hub of intermingling ideologies, cultures, and languages; multilingual Gen Z'ers seem to be inclined to perform patterned and systematic code mixing and switching in a variety of contexts and domains. Instagram direct messages were chosen for the intimate and 'safe' environment they provide participants, facilitating their patterned use of code mixing and switching. Adopting James Paul Gee's model of Discourse, this quantitative-qualitative study outlines the form-function correlations prevalent in the participants' social language, connecting their discourse to identity construction. This study also adopts the Myers-Scotton model to determine how meaning is negotiated among participants of this Gen Z Discourse. The current study found that participants of this Discourse systematically and strategically employ code switching / mixing in their speech for a variety of purposes, chief among which are topic shifts and lexical gaps, emotional intensity of domain, change in tone, as well as stance expression. Furthermore, code switching / mixing instances occur when participants are sharing gossip and discussing social activities and opinions of others. It should be noted that the forms under analysis in this article are restricted to code switching and code mixing.

Key Words: Gen Z, Discourse, discourse, Form-Function Correlations, Social Language, Identity, Code Switching, Code Mixing, Matrix Language Frame Model, Negotiation Principle.



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الترباط الصيغي الوظيفي في الرسائل المباشرة على تطبيق الإنستغرام لدى جيل زد

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□ ملخص □

تبحث هذه المقالة في الترباط الصيغي الوظيفي في الرسائل المباشرة على تطبيق الإنستغرام لخمسة عشرة فرداً من جيل زد يعيشون في محافظة اللاذقية، سوريا. تقريباً، يشمل الجيل زد الفئة العمرية المولودة بين عام 1996 وأوائل العقد الأول من القرن الواحد والعشرين. ونتيجةً لظاهرة العولمة وظهور وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، بوصفها منصةً تشهد احتكاكاً بين مختلف الإيديولوجيات والثقافات واللغات، يُبدي أفراد الجيل زد استعداداً للقيام بالمزج والتبادل اللغوي ضمن سياقات ومجالات مختلفة وبشكل منهجي. واستناداً إلى نموذج جيمس بول غي للخطاب، تسلط الدراسة الكمية-النوعية الحالية الضوء على الترباط الصيغي الوظيفي المُلاحظ في اللغة الاجتماعية للمشاركين، إذ يرتبط خطابهم ببناء هويتهم. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على نموذج مايرز-سكوتون لتحديد كيف تتم مداولة المعنى بين المشاركين في خطاب الجيل زد. وجدت الدراسة الحالية أن المشاركين في هذا الخطاب يستخدمون بشكل منهجي واستراتيجي التناوب والمزج اللغوي في حديثهم لمجموعة متنوعة من الأغراض، وأهمها تغيير مواضيع الحديث والفجوات المعجمية، والشدة العاطفية للسياق، والتغيير في النبرة، وكذلك التعبير عن الموقف. علاوة على ذلك، يظهر التناوب والمزج اللغوي عندما يشارك الأشخاص النميمة ويناقشون الأنشطة الاجتماعية وآراء الآخرين. ومن الجدير بالذكر أن الصيغ اللغوية التي تتمحور حولها الدراسة تنحصر بالتناوب اللغوي والمزج اللغوي .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجيل زد، الخطاب، الخطاب اللغوي، الترباط الصيغي الوظيفي، اللغة الاجتماعية، الهوية، التناوب اللغوي، المزج اللغوي، إطار اللغة الحاضرة، مبدأ المداولة

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I.

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Introduction

Being the norm in the current milieu of memes, reels, and other features of social media apps, multilingualism only feels natural to be sited in everyday use. The makers of this milieu seem to be Gen Z, who are, roughly, the cohort of world citizens born between 1996 and early 2000s (Zelazko, 2023). Gen Z is known to be multilingual. However, in countries not characterized as such, it is intriguing to look into these multilingual citizens' repertoire in order to be able to characterize and cluster them as a homogenous social group with Discourse tenets that distinguish them from people of the same age group and geography. The purpose of this article is to display the form-function correlations in the Instagram direct messages between Gen Z'ers who live in Latakia governorate, Syria. It focuses on the patterned use of forms of code mixing and switching that are meant to fulfill particular discourse functions caused by certain context factors and generated by these Gen Z'ers' continuous identity re/construction processes. This research is a quantitative-qualitative study, where data are collected from the Instagram Direct Messages of fifteen Gen Z'ers after obtaining their individual informed consent. Direct Messages (DMs) are chosen for the intimacy they conjure to create "a comfortable and safe space" for social media users (Bishop, 2022).

This research draws on multiple discourse analysis and sociolinguistic concepts and theories. The research tools are generally discursive, as the general framework is James Paul Gee's Discourse model. Gee postulates the existence of Discourse, which he pithily defines as "language plus other stuff", as it is the mass of features that Discourse actants both follow and generate (Gee, 2010). Discourse, with a small d, is the language that actants of a Discourse use and creatively re/produce to create the lingual aspect for the prominence of the Discourse. As shall be seen, there are particular interconnections between the forms these Gen Z'ers use and the discursive functions they attempt to convey by using these forms.

The data in this quantitative-qualitative study comprise of instances of code mixing and code switching between Arabic, the participants' native language, and English as their foreign language. The following definitions of code mixing and code switching will be adopted for the purpose of this study.

These are adaptations of an extensive list of researches done on these two sociolinguistic phenomena, mainly: (Myers Scotton's Markedness hypothesis, 1989, Bhatia and Ritchie, 1996, Gumperz, 1982, Muysken 2000)

1. Code switching is the intersentential rule-governed mix of a myriad of linguistic units (clauses and sentences) from two distinct codes.
2. Code mixing is the intrasentential rule-governed mixing of a myriad of linguistic units (morphemes, lexical items, phrases) from two distinct codes.

II. Research Objectives:

The objectives of this quantitative-qualitative study are as follows:

1. To discover the form-function correlations found in the participants' use of code mixing and code switching and clearly set out the criteria for choosing one code over another for particular discourse functions,
2. To characterize the social language of the participants' DMs in terms of their continuous identity re/construction.

Literature Review

a) Discourse Analysis Framework

The literature review for this quantitative-qualitative study is multidisciplinary in the sense that at the crux of it is some discourse analysis models as well as some sociolinguistic theories and research on code mixing and switching. As Charlotte Hoffman (1991) suggests, studies on bilinguals need to be as such in order to cover all factors playing a role in the making of the bilingual's repertoire (3).

Similar to other discourse analysts, James Paul Gee (2010) emphasizes the discursive axiom that language and social organizations "bootstrap" one another into being. Gee theorizes that in linguistic production "seven areas of reality" or "building tasks" are going through a process of constant construction, such as assigning significance to objects and people, assigning identity, privileging certain systems of knowledge over others, and building connections and motifs running in longer discourse stretches. In order to unveil how people go about constructing their realities, a discourse analyst possesses six "tools of inquiry", which, with the context of the discourse fragment, are essential for doing analysis (11-20).

The tools of inquiry are the analyst's mechanisms for probing discourse fragments. The first tool is socially-situated identities that people acquire in context, i.e. "the different whos-doing-whats." In other words, it is a process of "recognizing [others] and being recognized" as a member of a particular group.

The second tool of inquiry relevant to this study is the concept of Discourse; Gee differentiates between discourse, as "language in use", and Discourse as a cover term for the way actants "integrate language and methods of emoting, believing, clothing", etc., for being "recognized" as "in" a particular Discourse. Discourses are always "language-plus-other-stuff" (13).

Social languages, in turn, are the third tool concerned with the "collocational patterns" used to express a socially-situated identity in a particular Discourse. The fourth tool of inquiry to be employed in the analysis below is situated meanings, which are the specific meanings that linguistic structures acquire "in actual contexts of use." These situated meanings are generated by certain schemas, or figured worlds, that actants of Discourses simulate in their minds to deal with the world around them. These figured worlds, which are "unconscious, simplified theories", help Discourse actants give significance to certain areas that are essential to their Discourse.

Figured worlds are shaped by people's experiences. The linguistic patterns studied here are referred to by Gee as "form-function correlations." They tackle the wide scope of the situated meanings grammatical units acquire in actual contexts of use (15).

b) It Takes More Than One Code to Talk Gen Z

There is a lack of consensus in the literature regarding clear-cut definitions of code mixing, code switching (Bullock & Toribio 2009). Some linguists like Poplack (1980) have postulated code mixing as intrasentential code switching, whereas others like Bullock (2009) have suggested a continuum between code mixing, which she calls insertional code switching, and borrowing.

Also, Bullock and Toribio (2009) map out the three main perspectives in the research on code mixing and switching in particular: the sociolinguistic (see Gumperz 1982), the psycholinguistic (see Mechelli et al. 2004), and the structural (see Poplack 1980). For the time being, the research operates on the following definitions of code mixing, code switching, and borrowing as proposed by Bhatia and Richie (1996):

Code mixing is the intrasentential rule-governed mixing of a myriad of linguistic units (morphemes, lexical items, phrases) from two distinct codes. It is constrained by certain grammatical principles and motivated by certain social or psychological prompts (Bhatia & Richie 1996). Below is an illustrative example by a twenty-three-year-old economics student.

As she was speaking with an in-group male acquaintance about his sense of fashion in Pallet Café, she performed the following instance of code mixing:

(1) ?nnu inta: ?l bad boy ?lli rajeh ?al za:mfa bi socks crystal white fo? li sneakers ?l rugged taba?ak.

“Like you’re the bad boy who’s going to university in crystal white socks with your rugged sneakers.”¹

On the other hand, code switching is the intersentential rule-governed mix of a myriad of linguistic units (clauses and sentences) from two distinct codes. Similar to code mixing, it has its own set of constraints and motivations (Bhatia & Richie 1996). The example below is taken from a conversation between two close friends about a language institute they used to go to. The speaker is a fourth year medical student at a private university.

(2) It’s incredibly useful, but I think ?nnu kti:r mahd?oum ha?ou.

“It’s incredibly useful, but I think it’s very unappreciated.”

Mary W.J. Tay (1989) addresses code mixing and switching as communicative strategies from various angles (408-414). In parlance with Mix-Mix, a variety that involves code mixing/switching across different domains in the Philippines, the Gen Z’ers’ social language under study also consists of a unique adjacency of two different codes, colloquial Arabic and English. This social language is not domain specific; i.e. it is used in a variety of contexts for a myriad of different discursive functions. What is interesting about the examined data is that it is not restricted to where it is deemed ‘accepted’ to perform code mixing by the society of those Gen Z’ers, nor is it restricted to filling lexical gaps. This goes in tandem with Tay’s findings. Tay also stresses the effectiveness of code mixing and switching as a marker of solidarity within in-group communication, as well as a tool to show attitude (410-414).

One of the most seminal works of extensive research done on the topic is Gumperz’s (1976) account for what he calls “conversational code switching” and “discourse strategies”. He defines the former as “a juxtaposition within the same speech exchange [...] according to two different grammatical systems or sub systems”.

The structural juxtaposition is the manifestation of the deep structure of “cultural juxtaposition” that the bilingual has cognitively stored. He focalizes the naturalness of such exchanges as they possess “all the earmarks of ordinary conversation in a single language” (59). What is intriguing to linguists is that this concatenation of two different codes is “salient”, whereas for the participant or “creative actor”, as Carol Myers-Scotton (1995) calls them, the main concern behind the automatic selection process is for the communicative effect of the message’s “intentional meaning.”

Gumperz establishes a typology which he claims to cover a variety of different language situations. According to him, discursive functions of “conversational code switching” are: quotations, interjections, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization vs. objectivization (1-76).

¹ These examples are taken from a previous research done by the author.

It is worth mentioning that many morphosyntactic studies and theories were made on the constraints governing the use of code switching/mixing. Studies on code switching and code mixing, especially those adopting structural approaches, have postulated the existence of some constraints that govern the use of the two said phenomena (see Determiner Constraint (Myers-Scotton & Jake, 1993), Functional Head Constraint (Belazi et al., 1994), Free Morpheme Constraint (Poplack, 1980), Conjunction Constraint (Muysken, 2000), Complementizer Constraint (Myers-Scotton, 1993), and many others. These constraints were mostly refuted by real-time data. For example, Okasha (1999), as reported in (Bullock & Toribio, 2009, p. 353), argues that ?nnu CPs distinctly co-occur with English and Arabic CPs, whereas no equivalent English complementizers were found in the data. This is replicated in the data in this article. One of these theories, the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) Model, is employed here.

c) Myers- Scotton's MLF Model

Unlike others who used competence-related data, Carol Myers-Scotton (1993) was the first to address the issue of code switching/mixing using performance data. Her conclusive study was made on code switching / mixing between Swahili and English.

After plenty of modifications and amendments, Myers-Scotton formed the Matrix Language Frame Model, generally referred to as the MLF Model. This model posits that in a code switching / mixing site, there are two languages: the dominant one (the matrix language / ML), and the less dominant one (the embedded language / EL).

The matrix language generates the morphosyntactic frame for the overall structure (33). Myers-Scotton (2005) calls it a 'frame' because it gives a guideline for "pre-surface realizations" of code switching/mixing sites (33).

Myers- Scotton (2005) asserts that morpheme frequency is the criterion by which a language is classified as the ML, and that ML assignment is "dynamic," i.e. by change of corpus, ML might become EL, and vice versa (69-70). The code switching / mixing sites in the data of this research will be analyzed by virtue of the MLF Model to figure out which language is the ML in the social language under the microscope. In particular, complementizer phrases will be analyzed in a similar fashion to many MLF Model studies (see Isurin et al, 2009, 229-231).

Myers Scotton (1995) works on Gumperz's final premise that speakers are not arbitrarily employing language due to their social identities or situational factors. Speakers "exploit" the socio-psychological associations of codes to reach their intentional meaning ends. Speakers are "entrepreneurs" in the sense that they are aware of the codes they have at their disposal; they deliberately use un/marked codes, and they know the consequences of their code choices. Based on her work on African vernaculars in the African micro-level context, Scotton postulates a cognitive innate faculty that is human specific and calls it the "markedness metric".

This faculty is responsible for assessing the choices behind each code, measuring its markedness, and assigning it a reading/interpretation. It is hypothesized in this article that the Gen Z'ers' social language is filled with code choices that are marked for out-groupers; the salience of codes is deliberate and negotiated to create situated meanings and identities for the Discourse. Code choice is determined by speakers' calculated intention to select the "rights-and-obligations set" that accompanies the code being employed. Key to this article is the Negotiation Principle in Scotton's Markedness Theory (77-139). The data will reveal how the Gen Z'ers' DMs are established on negotiating code choice and the side effects of

such a choice to help convey meaning, establish rapport, and create a communal identity that is alien to outsiders:

Negotiation Principle:

Choose the form of your conversation contribution such that it indexes the set of rights and obligations (113).

Hoffman (1991) is cited in many recent studies on bilingualism (see El-Dakhs 2017 for instance) for the reasons code switching and mixing are spread naturally and spontaneously in social interaction. Among these reasons, she lists lack of facility in relevant register and a signal for group identity (3-115). These reasons, and others pertaining to the idiosyncrasy of the medium of social interaction, i.e. Instagram Direct Messages, will be extensively drawn upon in the data analysis section.

Embracing the bilingual world citizen is a tendency in the current trends of research in all different linguistic fields, especially in pedagogical studies. After shaming multilingualism as “a deviation”, or a “lack of education, bad manners or improper control of the two grammars” or “linguistic decay” (Gumperz, 1982, Hoffman, 1991), and in an age where pluralistic thinking and tendencies are normalized, Garcia and Otheguy (2019) advocate for a more inclusive approach towards “plurilingualism” in the contemporary classroom. This can provide a segue for the societal appreciation of plurilingualism (1-15).

d) Instagram as the Ultimate App

As Instagram use in general and Instagram Direct Messages in particular are the impetus for this quantitative-qualitative study, it is worth reviewing previous literature, if available, on the intrinsic relation between Gen Z and the app. No prior research was found documenting the correlation between language code use and Instagram DM use, which adds to the originality of this current work.

A 2021 research on Gen Z’s attitudes toward Instagram and Facebook connects the generation’s personality traits with the motives for the use of these two apps. Comparing Facebook to Instagram, the research concludes that Instagram use is more frequent than Facebook for the following motives: disengaging from the environment, having nothing better to do, expressing pride, expressing personal interests, recording experiences, having FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), connecting to community, and Instagram’s global importance.

These driving forces are directly linked to the personality traits Gen Z is famous for, namely neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness (Will, 2021).

There are many online articles on why Gen Z prefer Instagram over Facebook, which, according to these articles, is “dead” for the generation. Gen Z relies on Instagram as its link to the world as they like to perceive it. According to *The Guardian*, they have shifted to it as their news source, setting aside the relevant issues of reliability and fact checking.

Alexa Will (2021) argues that Instagram’s “coveted aesthetic” is what captivates Gen Z, as it distinguishes itself as “a safe space”, which can be used as a political tool to show “allyship”, with hashtag movements, and as a manifestation of “idealized image” of the world. Sharon Anderson (2022) reports that as Gen Z are “digital natives,” it is only logical for them to represent more than 50% of Instagram users, especially that, unlike Facebook, Instagram gives them a free space to discuss topics of “primary interest” to them, such as fashion, design, and beauty. Gen Z opt for Instagram for its visual aesthetic, entertaining content, and digital privacy, which according to Anderson, are characteristics Gen Z do not find in Facebook as a more public, textual, news-related, and “mundane” social platform. This goes in tandem with the findings of this research, as the participants/Instagram users

systematically employ the chat feature of the app and particular form-function correlations for particular discursive functions as an instantiation of their identity and Discourse.

Data Collection and Methodology:

This quantitative-qualitative study is a lay-out of the form-function correlations prevalent in the code mixing and switching operations that Gen Z'ers perform in their Instagram direct messages (DMs) as an authentic sample pool. DMs are chosen for their intimate nature and their tendency to be direct and personal. Instagram seems to attract Gen Z more than Facebook, as a 2022 study that shows the effects of generation gap on social media use and preferences indicates. DMs provide “a safe and comfortable space” for their users (Bishop, 2022).

Data were selected in December 2023 and analyzed for three months afterwards. The data are mainly comprised of fifty conversation threads of different topic domains by fifteen different Gen Z'ers who live in Latakia, Syria. The topics vary from general to personal. Data were collected after obtaining the participants' informed consents. It should be noted that inquiries were directed to participants when the “situated meanings” used were unfamiliar to the researchers.

After the collection of conversations in the form of screenshots was done, they were sifted for the sites of code switching and mixing. These sites include two main codes, colloquial Arabic and English. Upon transcription of data, the instances in which the participant opted for English in their DMs are displayed in English, whereas their Arabic is transcribed using IPA symbols (see Appendix A).

Then, data were clustered in groups on the basis of which discursive functions they serve. In particular, the grouping was meant to underscore the factors that play the dominant role of the code switch and/or mix.

Data Analysis and Findings:

Instagram DMs and the actants' social language bootstrap each other into being. The Discourse under the microscope in this article is essentially represented by these Gen Z'ers' choice of Instagram as the virtual communication site, as it serves as the place where they can conglomerate to emote and act as “in” whatever topic or semantic domain they deal with. It is noticed that with the emergence of a specific set of topic domains, the participants' social language becomes characteristically rife with systematic, patterned, and unmarked code mixing and switching. In other sites, an entire conversation thread can occur strictly in either Arabic or English. Below is a table which shows the topics the social language of interest is employed in in addition to the percentage of use of Arabic and English:

(1) The range of topics and their code distribution

Topic	Arabic	English
Relationships – Personalization vs. Objectification (Gumperz, 1982)	25%	75%
Domains of Interest	34%	66%
Emotional States	32%	68%
Gossip and Opinions of Others	21%	79%
Social Activities and Plans	38%	62%

It is worth mentioning that, on average, the mean number of code switching / code mixing instances in each of the conversation threads was 1 in every 3 direct messages. The table

exhibits the range of topics code mixing and switching occur in. Data also suggests that the matrix language in these cases is Arabic, whereas the embedded one is English.

This is justified since the mother tongue of the participants is Arabic. Yet, when the topic allows for code switching / code mixing site generation to occur, English comes into play.

(3) min zihati: ?na ?lmaoud'ou? houei ?nnu ma ?ad baddi koun impulsive

For me, it's just that I don't want to be impulsive anymore.

In this example, the participant started their sentence with the matrix language (Myers-Scotton, 2005) and only favored the embedded language when describing their impulsive tendencies. This displays how the matrix language most frequently operates as an initiator for expressions, with the embedded language playing a complementary role, and frequently, acting as a tool for adding personalization.

Gen Z'ers usually start with the participants' native language, Arabic, as the previous example showed, and continue with their foreign language. Intimacy of topic, change of tone, adjunctification (message qualification), and lexical gaps work as the catalysts for code mixing or switching to occur. The participants 'negotiate' their linguistic identity to be bilingual under these factors, because then their social language would be a direct representation of who they are, how familiar they are with the topic, and how comfortable they are using the code itself, as the instances below suggest how 'entrepreneurial' (Myers-Scotton, 1995) these actants are:

(4) sa?altou fa?alli ?nnu it's where they meet up so her relatives won't annoy her.

I asked him, so he told me that it's where they meet up so her relatives won't annoy her.

In this example, the participant is reporting a conversation they had with a friend. Initiating their sentence with Arabic, the matrix language, and following with English, the embedded language (Myers-Scotton, 2005) is a pattern observably indicative of the nature of Gen Z'ers' social language. Here, to communicate the personal nature of where two romantic partners meet to avoid any annoyance, the participant deliberately negotiates the switch to English, further underscoring Gen Z'ers' tendency to describe matters of personal relevance with their second language.

There are many factors that play a role in having a potential site for the code switch or mix to occur. They can be grouped as follows:

a. Topic Shift / Lexical Gap

(5) ?nnu leif ?am ts^soumi: [? For religious reasons?](#)

Why are you fasting? (Is it) religious reasons?

This example showcases the role ' ?nnu' plays as a trigger for code mixing, as well as its function as a filler. Furthermore, the site of code mixing is significant thanks to its relation to the religious stances and socially-situated identity (Gee, 2010) of Gen Z'ers as a whole, which are marked by a relative distance from religion.

(6) ?nnu leif ?am ys^seir ma?i: [hal depersonalization?](#)

Like, why is this depersonalization happening to me?

In the example above, the participant is describing a feeling of being disconnected from one's self. This example depicts how, when faced with a lack of facility in relevant register in their matrix language (Hoffman, 1991), the participants resort to English, 'depersonalization', to fill in these gaps. The socially-situated identity (Gee, 2010) of Gen Z'ers as a population with high awareness of mental health is displayed through their use of a medical term, depersonalization, a term which would not have become familiar with if not for its widespread use on social media.

b. Emotional Intensity of Domain

(7) bil ʔaʃhor ʔlmad^s[yie kint bi riħlei kti:r turbulent and very painful w kint excited ihki:lak wil DMs safe space la heik ħaki:](#)

In the past few months I was on a turbulent, very painful journey and I was excited to tell you, and DMs are a safe space for such talks. In this example, the site of code mixing represents an increase in the emotional intensity of expression. The participant chose adjectives from the embedded language, English, to reflect the way they felt and to relay it to their counterpart, perhaps due to a notion that this word choice is more faithful to the intensity of emotion, or maybe because they were more certain their counterpart would understand the intensity of emotion they felt more accurately in the participants' embedded language.

The participant also displays an unconscious, total trust in their medium of communication, Instagram DMs, as a 'safe and comfortable space' (Bishop, 2022) to discuss their deepest thoughts and feelings.

(8) ma ba^s[ref ʔnnu bħis ʔnnu](#) all people of color are going through a struggle la [ʔnnu](#) ma:noun white w kti:r mohim [ʔnnu ʔnʃayier ʃan ħafi: on our feeds](#)

I don't know, I feel like all people of color are going through a struggle because they're not white, and it's really important to share about this topic on our feeds.

The socially-situated identity (Gee, 2010) of the Gen Z'er as a digital native (Anderson, 2022) is clearly evident in this example.

The participant displays their allyship (Will, 2021) with other minority groups who face injustices throughout the world while openly calling for the publicization of this allyship outside of their private DMs.

(9) [ʔaXoueɪ ʔtrakit ʔl ʃiyil baʃid ma ʔtXanʔit maʃ ʔlmoudir w afaktilou ʔaXoueɪ I crashed out ʃal aXi:r](#)

[I quit my job man after I had a fight with the manager, and I yelled at him man. I just crashed out.](#)

The participant showcases Gen Z'ers' reliance on Arabic to relay events, while opting for English to convey emotion, hence, 'crashed out'. Furthermore, 'crashed out' itself is a slang term closely related to Hip Hop culture, which enhances the socially-situated identity (Gee, 2010) of Gen Z'ers derived from the widespread appeal Hip Hop enjoys among members of this Discourse.

c. Change in Tone

(10) call me crazy idc bas ma bitfahham halmafaʃir killa

Call me crazy, I don't care, but I don't understand all these emotions.

The abovementioned example is a participant's reaction to a state of mass panic after an incident in their city. To cement their ambivalence towards their counterpart's reaction to their stances, they switched to their embedded language.

d. Stance Expressions

(11) ʔnnu ya zalamei we get it

Man, it's like, we get it.

In this example, the participant begins their sentence with Arabic, using 'ʔnnu' which serves the function of its English counterpart 'like' on the one hand, and as a trigger for code change on the other.

The participant expresses their stance using the common English expression, 'we get it', which further establishes their efforts to signal their group identity (Hoffman, 1991) and the unmarkedness of such an exchange (Myers Scotton, 2002).

Through these examples, ‘ʔnnu’ and its multivariate use is established as a key element of Gen Z’ers’ discourse. The examples above show that it may operate as a filler, and a complementizer to either Arabic CPs or English ones (see Okasha’s 1999 findings).

(12) "ʔl mohim i don't think i am up for it"

Anyway, I don't think I am up for it

In the previous example, the participant code switches to their embedded language (Myers-Scotton, 2005) to refuse a suggestion from their counterpart, perhaps to convey a change in tone, signifying a sort of sternness to decline the suggestion.

e. Adjunctification

(13) ʔift ʔl blouzei which you didn't like bil maḥal [hadak](#)

I saw the top which you didn't like in that place.

In this example, the participant opts for English to add adjunctification, a form of message qualification (Gumperz, 1976), to an Arabic noun. Opting for English to add a specific quality to their utterances further strengthens the in-group-ness (Tay, 1989) of the participants' communication.

One of the situated meanings found prevalent in these Gen Z’ers’ discourse is that of the Arabic word, ‘mostatib’, with its original meaning, ‘firmly established’, being extended and ‘exploited’ and ‘negotiated’ (Myers Scotton, 1995) to convey other meanings in different contexts, as the examples below show:

(14) ʔifit Ahmad² ʔlyoum? (Did you see Ahmad² today?)

yep, kan kti:r mostatib. (yep, he was rather down)

ʔllah y saʔdo ʔa hal ab, he's a total jerk. (May God help him, his father is a total jerk)

(15) ʔl youm we went to wadi qandil wif eld^ʕao, elwad^ʕ? mostatib ...ya reit kint maʔna (today we went to Wadi Qandil at the crack of dawn, it was cool. I wish you were with us.)

(16) kti:r [haseit](#) ʔnnu fi thrill bi ʔnnu ʔlwaḥed yrooḥ ʔa their room w bs zone out and chill

I really thought that there is a thrill in someone going to their room and just zone out and chill.

Here, the participant employed code mixing at different points within their utterance. Firstly, the use of ‘ʔnnu’ is prominent, serving as a complementizer, the Arabic equivalent of ‘that’ CP, in its first appearance. In its second, however, it serves as filler. Secondly, to express their opinion and how they feel about what the participant is describing, ‘thrill’, they switch to English to accurately convey their feelings to their counterpart. The latter cements the signaling of group identity of Gen Z, the entrepreneurs (Myers-Scotton, 1995) of this Discourse, via their intentional choices between their matrix and embedded languages. Opting to use English to refer to ‘one’s room’ is a signal that this Gen Z member employs English to deeply personalize their private space. This aligns with Myers-Scotton’s language attitude notion (2006) as those participants’ positive and personal attitude towards English is reflected in employing it for personal and intimate issues. Lastly, to express social activity, the participant opts for their second language, ‘zone out and chill’. This choice goes hand in hand with the ‘un-markedness’ (Myers-Scotton, 1989) of in-group communication and the markedness of out-group communication, as such a complex code switching / code mixing site is very common in the data.

(17) (In response to Kim Kardashian wearing Monroe’s dress): I don't know, krihit the fact ʔnnu she wore Marilyn’s dress, ʔnnu the exact same one, ʔnnu she sweated in it ... ḥaseit

² Pseudonym for one of the participants.

k'ʔnnu she was overwriting history bi kel waqaħa ... Xosʕosʕan the dress ʔlli captured a big chunk of that era... ʔnti habeiti ʔllook? I just find it repulsive.

I don't know, the fact that she wore Marilyn's dress, like the exact same one, like she sweated in it... I felt as if she was overwriting history in the rudest way... especially that this is a dress which captured a big chunk of that era... did you like the look? I just find it repulsive.

In this example, 'ʔnnu' is frequently employed. Moreover, the use of 'repulsive' in this context is a strong example of message qualification (Gumperz, 1976), a major function of code mixing. The participant plays the role of the 'creative actor' (Myers-Scotton, 1995), maneuvering between two codes to express the intentional meaning they aim to convey.

Also, the context cue (Gumperz, 1982, 1992), of this conversation, Kim Kardashian wearing Marilyn Monroe's dress, is a key driver of code switching/mixing, as the topic is intimately, and somewhat inherently, connected to the domain of the English language.

The socially-situated identity (Gee, 2010) of Gen Z'ers' as individuals with a great interest in pop culture is also displayed here and venerated by their code mixing/switching.

Conclusion

This quantitative-qualitative study aims to provide a clear-cut view of the functions code switching and code mixing processes of Gen Z'ers in Instagram DMs play in the general making of the Gen Z'ers' Discourse, and in particular a distinct group of multilingual Gen Z'ers in Latakia, Syria. The quantitative-qualitative study concludes to the following findings:

1. The participants' DMs' social language is characterized by a high level of code mixing and switching. Arabic is found to be the matrix language, while English is the embedded one. There is a set of factors that initiate the code switching and mixing.
2. The participants' DMs enjoy a complex and systematic linguistic nature, particularly in their CPs. Complementization is initiated by Arabic 'ʔnnu', as it initiates potential mixing and switching sites. It has another function in a variety of contexts; it functions as a filler.
3. The social language of the participants is not only a product of their hybrid identities and identity issues, but is a principal manufacturer of them.

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Appendix A:

Phonetic Symbol	Letter Equivalent	Example
s ^ʕ	ص	s ^ʕ oora
d ^ʕ	ض	d ^ʕ arb
t ^ʕ	ط	t ^ʕ awi:l
ð ^ʕ	ظ	ð ^ʕ orooʃ
q	ق	qa:l
ħ	ح	ħarf
X	خ	Xajr
ɣ	غ	ɣasool
ʕ	ع	ʕajn
ʔ	ء	ʔaʔin

