

Can Language Show-off Promote Social Status and Solidarity? An Explanatory Study of the Cognitive Attitudes of Kuwaitis towards Arabic-English Code-switching in Kuwaiti Social Domains

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Abstract

The omnipresence of Arabic-English code-switching in Kuwaiti social contexts is unequivocal. Several studies have indicated that the motivation behind deploying such linguistic variety is to promote social status and solidarity. This study investigates whether adopting such linguistic variety in Kuwaiti social domains meets code-switchers' expectations by characterizing and positioning them in the desired social category. Using a verbal-guise test, the study examines the status (class, education, intelligence) and solidarity (showing-off, attractiveness, sociability) dimensions of 92 Kuwaitis' cognitive attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching. A paired t-test has shown that Kuwaitis' attitudes are in favour of Arabic-English code-switching. In complete contrast with other studies, a one-way ANOVA has uncovered that older generations are more in favour of code-switching than younger ones. Additionally, the results suggest that females are less in favour of Arabic-English code-switching than males, and their positive ratings for Kuwaiti Arabic are significantly higher. The findings are subsequently examined and subjected to critical analysis in order to elucidate the extent to which this phenomenon is deemed appealing by specific parts of Kuwaiti society whilst unfavoured by others. The paper concludes with some recommendations for future research endeavours that might contribute to the investigation of language attitudes and variation in Kuwait.

Keywords: English, Arabic, code-switching, attitudes, Kuwait, language variety, social psychology

1. Introduction

In today's globalised world, language plays a pivotal role in shaping communication patterns and social interactions. The coexistence of multiple languages within a single sociolinguistic context has led to the rise of code-switching as a prevalent linguistic phenomenon. One such dynamic sociolinguistic environment is Kuwait, a nation characterized by its rich linguistic landscape where both Arabic and English have a profound impact on various facets of society. In Kuwait, multilingualism has become a norm rather than an exception due to the global spread of the English language through a variety of means. One of the outcomes of multilingualism in Kuwait is the pervasiveness of code-switching between Arabic and English in informal social contexts, such as cafes, chalets, seaside chalets, and family gatherings (Dashti, 2015). Code-switching in Kuwait has gained significant scholarly attention due to its complex interplay with sociocultural dynamics, identity construction, and communication efficiency. Whilst Kuwaitis who employ Arabic-English code-switching believe that it projects high social status and boosts their social glamour (AlRumaihi, 2021), it has been observed that there may be some Kuwaitis who hold certain reservations towards individuals who engage in code-switching (Hayat & AlBader, 2022), despite the recognition of English as a prestigious language in Kuwait. In addition, while most attitudinal research has focused on Kuwaitis' attitudes towards the English language itself (e.g., Dashti, 2015), the utilisation of Arabic-English code-switching in social contexts could be perceived differently. Thus, this research aims to investigate whether deploying code-switching in informal social contexts meets code-switchers' expectations, or whether their attempt to endorse status and solidarity is generating contrasting results. Another aim is to enlighten code-switchers about people's attitudes towards them in terms of social status and solidarity in the social domain. This is because the current linguistic situation in Kuwait seems to be irreconcilable when it comes to Arabic-English code-switching. On the one hand, some people in the Kuwaiti society disapprove of this linguistic phenomenon. Not only that, but a number of individuals, some of whom are Kuwaiti English language teachers, supervisors, and professors, stridently condemn, criticize, and disparage the users of this linguistic variety in the plain sight of social media, calling it 'disgusting', 'obnoxious', 'repellent' and 'repugnant'. On the other hand, some believe that it is a sign of intelligence, open-mindedness, tolerance, and a major step towards becoming part of the globalising world. Therefore, this paper intends to unveil the underlying cognitive attitudes (i.e., beliefs & perception) of deploying this linguistic variety in the Kuwaiti social domain.

2. Significance of the Study

Understanding Kuwaitis' attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching is a critical endeavour, as it offers insights into the evolving

linguistic landscape of the country and its implications for the future. The interplay between language and attitudes is particularly relevant in a multicultural and multilingual context like Kuwait, where individuals navigate multiple identities and affiliations. By examining these attitudes, a deeper understanding of how linguistic choices reflect and shape Kuwaiti cultural norms and social interactions can be achieved.

Furthermore, since speaking varieties carry social meanings that develop either positive or negative attitudinal reactions (Garrett, 2010), this study attempts to investigate Kuwaitis' attitudes towards this linguistic trend to determine how mixing English with Arabic in social interactions can affect the position of those who use this language variety in the social domain. Although several studies have tried to examine the attitudes towards code-switching, only a few studies have investigated Kuwaitis' attitudes towards this linguistic variety in social domains (e.g., AlRumaihi, 2020; Hayat & AlBader, 2022). In addition, studies that have explored Arabic-English code-switching in Kuwait only used direct research methods, whilst in investigating attitudes, using an indirect approach "penetrates deeper than direct methods, often below the level of conscious awareness" (McKenzie, 2010, p. 45). Hence, this study employs a verbal-guise test to investigate Kuwaiti's cognitive attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching in social contexts.

3. Literature Review

3.1 *The History of English in Kuwait*

The English language has been present in the Gulf region since 1775. However, its direct influence began to infiltrate Kuwait in 1899, when Britain politically patronaged Kuwait as a British protectorate (Tyler, 2017). Furthermore, with the discovery of oil in 1938, both British and American companies blanketed Kuwait's oil drilling industry, which marked a watershed in the sphere of linguistic contact (Al-Batani, 2017). Since such administrations were operating in English, the 'old' Kuwaiti generations who worked side-by-side with the Westerners – especially those who worked in the petroleum fields – were obliged to learn English to facilitate communication (Dashti, 2015). As a result, a multitude of lexical items were borrowed from English, which is traceable in the Kuwaiti dialect despite undergoing phonological and morphological inflections (Ibid).

When the oil industry boomed in 1961 and brought in huge revenues, it positioned Kuwait as the commercial centre of the Middle East, partaking in the global capitalistic trading system (Hasanen, Al-Kandari & Al-Sharoufi, 2014; Taqi, 2010). This triggered the Kuwaiti government to recognise the significance of English as a communicative power and thus pushed toward enforcing free English education across all state schools (Akbar, 2007). Accordingly, Kuwait's Ministry of Education immediately introduced English into the educational system as a mandatory subject area in the early 1960s, coinciding with Kuwait's independence and economic developments (Arabah, Alotaibi & Aldaihani, 2016). However, Alenezi (2022) argues that it was not until after the 1990-1991 Gulf War that the English language fundamentally began to spread in Kuwait, causing an incremental shift in the sociolinguistic scene and linguistic behaviours. Dashti (2015) agrees that the prominence of English was further exalted following the Americans' efforts to quell the Iraqi invasion in 1991, wherein Kuwaitis became admirers of the Western culture and formed iconic representations of their linguistic features, leading to the Anglicization of Kuwait's social life. Furthermore, national gratitude towards the West became a gateway for American and British retail chains to flood the country. As a result, this has led to the globalisation of Kuwait's consumer market, correspondingly compelling local Kuwaiti traders and consumers to learn English (Hayat & AlBader, 2022, p. 61). Moreover, Kuwait began to globalise swiftly due to the booming spread of the internet, the advancement of technology, and extensive exposure to Western media, all of which revolutionised English language learning and communication during the 1990s (Ibid). In this light, Akbar (2007) describes that a change in political ideologies within a society leads to a change in their language attitudes, which, according to Al-Rubaie (2010), applies to Kuwaitis as their language attitudes were influenced by sociopolitical conditions.

Although it is taught as a foreign language and used as a lingua franca, Dashti (2015) asserts that Kuwaitis use English as a second language due to its necessity in various social domains, including technology, international media, employment prospects, academic opportunities, and social rewards. However, schools are not the only source for learning English, as Kuwaitis sought other methods to acquire the language because they looked to English as the language of the future (AlRumaihi, 2021). Taqi (2010) lists a few examples of ways Kuwaitis adopt to learn English: (1) university scholarships; mostly to the United States and the United Kingdom for pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate degrees; (2) attending conferences, seminars, and workshops in private institutions and community services; (3) traveling abroad during the summer; mainly to England, for increased opportunities to interact and communicate in English; (4) and most importantly, the media and the internet. Therefore, most Kuwaitis ascribe the omnipresence of English to globalisation, as well as the ubiquity of bilingualism and multilingualism, and the emergence of code-switching as a sociolinguistic phenomenon (AlRumaihi, 2021). In this regard, Alenezi (2022, p. 23) explains that bilingualism and multilingualism are closely related linguistic terms that are often used interchangeably. By definition, bilingualism refers to speakers of two languages only, while multilingualism refers to speakers of two or more languages (Ibid). Commonly, multilingualism is used as an umbrella term since it includes bilingualism and code-switching, i.e., alternating two languages between or within sentences (Ibid). Thus, with Arabic as their L1 and English as their L2, Kuwaitis represent a typical multilingual society that is heavily influenced by globalisation.

3.2 *The Status of English in Kuwait*

The English language has managed to progressively secure a prevailing status in Kuwait's social life, leading to a sociolinguistic shift in Kuwaitis' diglossic varieties (Dashti, 2015). Scholars from Kuwait's sociolinguistic field moved towards exploring the sociolinguistic aspects of this shift and its implications on Kuwaiti bilingual education in terms of language use and change (Ibid). For instance, Alhouthi

and Male (2017) have found that Kuwaiti parents choose to disregard their right to free education and enrol their children in private schools, despite the high tuition fees. This is because some parents have come to the conclusion that their children would benefit more from attending a private school that offers an English-medium education and is staffed by English-speaking staff (Ibid). In this regard, Almuhanha (2018, p. 12) states that Kuwaitis believe that “once people achieve the accomplishment of learning English, they consider it a communicative power and perhaps even prestige in their possession”. Almuhanha’s (2018) statement aligns with findings from Dashti’s (2015) study which reveals the real reason behind Kuwaitis’ choice of private English schools, namely, it is not about speaking English, but rather what speaking English represents. Dashti (2015) describes that Kuwaitis believe English proficiency is a sign of prestige and social glamour. Akbar (2007) explains that this belief is established by the notion that English embodies an image of the Western lifestyle that symbolises modernity and efficiency. She adds that the notion is mostly popular amongst the younger generation of English-speaking Kuwaitis. For instance, when inquired about the use of English in daily speech, a fifteen-year-old interviewee stated that English “is the language of freedom, technology, and prosperous life” (p. 39). Interestingly, the interviewee’s statement confirms that young Kuwaitis are profoundly influenced by the coupling of English with prestige and technology (Hayat & AlBader, 2022). Their colossal exposure to English has led them to be more versed in English than they are in Arabic, consequently leading them to incorporate English words into Arabic sentences or vice versa, (i.e., code-switch). In other words, the availability of English as a code choice in Kuwaitis’ linguistic repertoire establishes Arabic-English code-switching as a language choice strategy that provides symbolic codes of prestige, modernity, elitism, sophistication, prosperity, and economic power (Dashti, 2015). However, controversial resistance to sociolinguistic shift and code-switching as a linguistic behaviour remains a matter of generational clash (Akbar, 2007). According to Akbar (2007), the older Kuwaiti generation considers language a symbol of group identity and social unity, thus, they tend to strongly index the Kuwaiti identity by preserving the Arabic language. Furthermore, they dread the ramifications of Arabic-English code-switching on Arabic proficiency (Ibid).

3.3 Language Attitudes

According to McKenzie (2010), social psychologists have been interested in exploring language attitudes since the 1920s. Garrett (2010, p. 20) defines attitude as “an evaluative orientation to a social object of some sort, whether it is a language, or a new government policy, etc”. However, Carrie (2017) has augmented Garrett’s definition by including the disposition of the attitude object and relating language attitude to the tripartite structure of attitude developed by Agheyisi and Fishman (1970). This is because most research has described attitude as “a summary evaluation” of affective (feelings), cognitive (beliefs), and/or conative (behaviour) responses to an attitude object (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970; Bohner & Wanke, 2002; McKenzie, 2010). An attitude object is “anything a person discriminates or holds in mind” (Bohner & Wanke, 2004, p. 5). The affective component incorporates individuals’ feelings and emotional response to the attitude object, such as finding a linguistic variety to be interesting, pleasant, boring, irritating, etc. The cognitive component entails thoughts and evaluative beliefs that may lead to stereotypical perceptions of an attitude object. For instance, some individuals may develop certain beliefs based on accents, dialects, or other linguistic varieties a speaker may have used. Such evaluative beliefs can be either about the language spoken by a speaker or about the speaker of a particular language, each of which comprises three evaluative dimensions (Dragojevic et al., 2020). The former includes structure (e.g., logical), value (e.g., pleasant), and sound (e.g., soft) (Schoel et al., 2013). The second incorporates status (e.g., upper-class), solidarity (e.g., attractive), and dynamism (e.g., confident) (Zahn & Hopper, 1985). The last component of attitude is the conative responses to a linguistic variety that can disclose behavioural tendencies towards a linguistic variety. Therefore, language attitude is “one’s evaluation of and disposition towards a speech variety and its speakers, consisting of thoughts, feelings, and behavioural tendencies” (Carrie, 2017, p. 430).

3.4 Code-Switching

A great deal of research relies on Gumperz’s (1982, p. 59) definition of code-switching, which is “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems”. However, Gumperz’s definition refers to languages, dialects, styles, registers, and other language varieties, excludes multilingual switching, focuses on grammatical systems and subsystems, and disregards the overarching meaning of the term ‘code’ (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). In this sense, code-switching is the use of two or more codes in a conversational episode (i.e., switching back-and-forth between two linguistic systems) (Auer, 2013; Garcia & Li Wei, 2014). Accordingly, code-switching is either inter-sentential; occurring between sentences, or intra-sentential; within a single sentence (Bullock & Toribio, 2012). Also, the categorisation of code-switching is twofold: (a) metaphorical, mixing codes in a single context; and (b) situational, shifting codes depending on the interlocutor, context, or topic (Blom & Gumperz, 2000). Nilep (2006) describes metaphorical code-switching as more prevalent because it evokes connotations by adding flavour to the topic, hence, promoting social attractiveness. Therefore, this study intends to investigate metaphorical code-switching.

3.5 Attitudes Towards Code-Switching

According to Akbar (2007, p. 86), “attitudes towards code-switching tend to be ambivalent”, mainly because some people believe that those who code-switch are less patriotic, hence socially unattractive (Ennaji, 2005). For instance, Lawson and Sachdev (2000) found that Tunisians have negative attitudes towards code-switching, as all codes of status and solidarity traits were ranked the lowest. However, Lawson and Sachdev (2000) used a matched-guise test (MGT) as a tool, that is, a sociolinguistic experimental technique where research respondents are requested to evaluate speakers’ traits based on their voices in a recorded soundtrack. Although the MGT technique is relatively rigorous in subtly eliciting underlying prejudices toward linguistic varieties (Garrett, 2010), the drawback is that it employs one speaker to produce multiple recorded samples in distinct linguistic varieties. This drawback is most likely to jeopardise the respondents’

trait ratings because it exposes them to less-authentic recorded samples (Labov, 1972). Therefore, Lawson and Sachdev's (2000) findings may have been jeopardised as the respondents were exposed to one speaker who produced the examined variety. Additionally, since Tunisia was colonised by France, the languages used for code-switching in their study were Arabic-French. Akbar (2007) explains that in attitudinal studies, colonisation has negative impacts on attitudes toward language varieties, which also may have influenced the study's outcomes. Furthermore, other studies have revealed that code-switchers received significantly low ratings for class, sociability, and intelligence, together with being frequently evaluated as lacking sufficient competence or control in using both languages (Ebid, 2018). Moreover, AlRumaihi (2021) adds that many perceive code-switching negatively because it is mostly used as a bragging tool. Indeed, several studies have shown that code-switching has a negative solidarity influence as it is perceived as a mechanism to show-off (Al-Qahtani, 2014; Reigh, 2014). In this area, Ebid's (2018) study reveals that a great deal of code-switchers believe code-switching is utilised because there is no equivalent for certain lexis rather than showing-off. However, Dashti (2015, p. 32) debates that "Kuwaitis have completely replaced some Standard Arabic lexical items with the English borrowed equivalents, despite the fact that their equivalents in Standard Arabic do exist". He further expounds that various studies exploring Kuwait's social context have revealed that Kuwaitis have positive attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching in terms of status. In the same vein, AlRumaihi's (2021, p. 42) qualitative study has uncovered that some Kuwaitis believe that code-switching is "a judgment tool by which Kuwaitis form their opinions about one another". AlRumaihi (2021) explicates that such attitudes identify code-switching as a mechanism used to indicate a high socioeconomic status. This is because code-switching in social contexts often stems from stereotypical ideologies to display prestige and privileged education, which has led Kuwaitis with limited proficiency of English to practice code-switching as well. Such attitudes are frequently observed in the Arabian Gulf region, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which tend to associate English language proficiency with high socioeconomic status (Ibid).

Notably, AlRumaihi (2021) argues that gender and age are trivial in shaping Kuwaitis' attitudes towards code-switching in social contexts. However, a great deal of quantitative research has found that gender (Lawson & Sachdev, 2000) and age (Hammink, 2000) play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards code-switching in Kuwait and other contexts. For instance, Abdel-Jawad (1981) and Haeris (2000) have concluded that Arab females view the Arabic language as a reference to high status in the local domain, whereas more recent studies have found that mixing English with Arabic is mostly preferred by females because it promotes social status in the community (Farida, Pandhiani, & Buriro, 2018; Omar & Ilyas, 2018). Additionally, Alshaar (1997) has utilised Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery to find Kuwaitis' attitudes towards English. She has found that females' attitudes towards the English language are significantly higher than males. The discrepancies found in the studies could be ascribed to the social position of females in society (Ibrahim, 1986). Accordingly, the former studies that found Arabic to be an indicator of high status were conducted in less conservative countries (i.e., Jordan & Syria) than those that found significant gender differences in the later studies (Saudi Arabia & Pakistan). As for age, Omar and Ilyas (2018) claim that code-switching is primarily favoured by younger generations. This can be supported by AlRumaihi's (2021) study as the older Kuwaiti generations, despite their positive attitudes towards code-switching, view Arabic as part of their culture, heritage, and identity. Additionally, Dewaele and Wei (2014) have discovered that older age groups (forties and above) are more in favour of code-switching than younger ones. Again, the discrepancy in age and attitudes towards code-switching could be attributed to demographic reasons. This is because AlRumaihi's (2021) study has investigated Kuwaiti participants' attitudes, whereas Dewaele and Wei's (2014) included participants from the USA, the United Kingdom, and some parts of Europe. Therefore, age, gender and contextual elements are critical parameters to be considered in researching code-switching in a given context.

A recent study by Hayat and AlBader (2022, p. 67) asserts that in the Kuwaiti context, it is not acceptable to code-switch with older Kuwaitis because they "view code-switching in a negative way". However, the authors did not provide any evidence for this claim. Additionally, Hayat and AlBader (2022) believe that Arabic-English code-switching is mostly employed by teenage private school students or graduates, which has led linguistic and cultural conservatives to call this phenomenon the "McChicken" variety, referring to the famous McDonald's sandwich. The reason behind this label is the westernization of the Kuwaiti dialects as a reference to American imperialism to display their resentment of the non-conformity with the "typical Kuwaiti" identity (Alshammari, 2019, p. 97). While Hayat and AlBader (2022, p. 59) believe that it is a "fitting" term to describe such common practice, it is substantial to note that the term is used in a "derogatory manner" (Alshammari, 2019, p. 97) for addressing Kuwaiti code-switchers in order to show their "disapproval" of such a linguistic behavior (Hayat & AlBader, 2022, p. 61). For this reason, this study avoided using the term "McChickens" to show respect and appreciation of the linguistic practice as it reflects "openness to other parts of the globe" (Akbar, Taqi & Sadiq, 2020, p. 214).

4. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the cognitive attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching in Kuwaiti informal social contexts in terms of social status and solidarity?
2. Do young, middle-aged, and senior adult Kuwaitis differ in their attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching in informal social contexts in terms of status and solidarity? If yes, in what ways is age a critical variable in shaping such attitude in such contexts? If so, how?
3. Does gender play a significant role in shaping cognitive attitudes in terms of social status and solidarity of Arabic-English code-switching in Kuwaiti informal contexts? If so, how?

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study followed an indirect approach to measure the cognitive attitudes in terms of status and solidarity of Kuwaitis towards code-switching in informal social contexts. This approach was adopted because it “penetrates deeper than direct methods, often below the level of conscious awareness” (McKenzie, 2010, p. 45). The instrument employed was a verbal-guise test (VGT). VGT is a modern adaptation of the MGT that employs different speakers to represent different language varieties. The preference of VGT over MGT in this study is twofold. First, to address the gap in Lawson and Sachdev’s (2000) methodology. Second, the test needed to include both genders to address gender variability because attitudes towards code-switching may vary depending on the gender of the code-switcher (Ebid, 2018). The test was embedded in a two-section questionnaire, where respondents were requested to answer a few demographic questions, such as nationality, age, and gender. After that, they were exposed to the verbal-guise test.

5.2 Verbal-guise Test

VGT is used to elicit latent attitudes towards speech varieties and the speakers of those varieties (Garrett, 2010). The test incorporated 4 speakers through convenience sampling due to the accessibility to suitable speakers from Kuwait who regularly use code-switching in their colloquial speech as well as others who do not. In table 1, the speakers are categorised into two groups:

Table 1. The speakers' profiles

	Gender	Age	Socioeconomic Status	Code-switching
Speaker 1	Male	21	Middle-class	Yes
Speaker 2	Female	20	Middle-class	Yes
Speaker 3	Male	21	Middle-class	No
Speaker 4	Female	20	Middle-class	No

The code-switching speakers were instructed to speak in colloquial Kuwaiti Arabic while mixing English words and phrases into their discourse, whilst the other two speakers were asked to speak in colloquial Kuwaiti Arabic without switching to English. The code-switching samples included metaphorical code-switching of both inter- and intra-sentential patterns. In Table 1, all speakers shared comparable profiles to avoid extraneous variables (Garrett, 2010). The length of each voice sample varied between 1 to 1.5 minutes to minimise respondents’ fatigue (Ibid). Each speaker was asked to imagine themselves in a social context and speak extemporaneously about how they celebrate the Kuwait National Day¹. To avoid content-based variability, the speakers were provided with a list of activities that their speech should include as shown in Figure 1. They were instructed to use a neutral tone with a moderate speech rate and intonation.

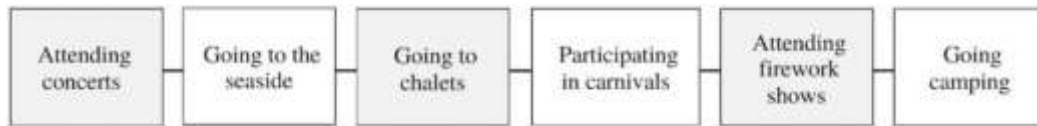


Figure 1. List of activities given to the speakers to include in the recorded monologue

5.3 Pilot Study

The pilot study included three male and three female participants who shared similar profiles with the target sample. They were exposed to the same voice samples and asked to write 10 traits by which they could describe each speaker (Appendix A). The next stage was selecting the most frequent traits amongst the participants. Some traits were changed into more formal wording (i.e., smart=intelligent), and the most common trait that was mentioned by all participants, ‘showing-off’, was changed into pretentious to be consistent with adjective wording of the traits. Because of the high frequency of the ‘showing-off’ trait, it was mentioned between brackets next to the ‘pretentious’ trait in case the meaning of the adjective is not accessible to some respondents. The trait ‘rich’ was changed to ‘high-class’ after asking the participants in the pilot study about which social class they would categorise code-switchers. The study resulted in three adjectives for status (intelligent, high-class, educated) and three for solidarity (showing-off, sociable, attractive).

Table 2. Traits for the main study

Solidarity	Showing-off (Pretentious)	Sociable	Attractive
Status	Intelligent	High-class	Educated

Remarkably, the most frequent traits from the pilot study fulfilled two of the three cognitive dimensions mentioned by Zahn and Hopper (1985), namely status and solidarity (see Table 2). Therefore, it justified excluding ‘dynamism’ from the study since other studies have found that code-switching is predominantly used as status and solidarity markers in Arabic communities (Chakrani, 2011; Ebid, 2018).

¹ Kuwaiti National Day is celebrated on February 25th, which is a few days before the data collection process. This served to motivate the research respondents to participate in the data collection and made the speech event more authentic and congruent with current real-life social talks.

5.4 Main Study

The main study was conducted using an online questionnaire where the voice recordings were embedded above each rating scale and shared on social media to collect as many responses as possible, limiting respondents to one-time participation. As mentioned earlier, the participants were provided with a short biographic data inquiry to confirm their eligibility with the criteria of the study. The eligibility criteria for this study were to fulfil three variables:

1. Kuwaiti participants only, as the study is investigating Kuwaitis’ attitudes.
2. Age range: (young adults: 18-25, middle-aged adults: 26-39, and senior adults: 40-55).
3. Gender: to analyse the results based on gender favourability.

After listening to each recording, the respondents were asked to rate the speakers based on the traits in which the pilot study resulted based on a 7-point semantic differential scale (Appendix B). An option of ‘I am not sure’ was given to the respondents to remark their neutrality because people usually have a positive attitude towards the English language, but they have some reservations when the spread of English is interfering with their indigenous language (McKenzie, 2010).

5.5 Sampling

The purposive sampling was successful to include 101 respondents to complete the test through snowballing. However, some respondents were excluded from the study because some of them were not Kuwaitis (n=8), and one participant indicated a random rating process. The accepted respondents for the study were 92 participants. The age of the respondents varied from 18-55, and they were divided into three age groups as shown in Table 3. The respondents were recruited with the aim to include an equal number of respondents of both genders to circumvent gender variability. Unsurprisingly, there was a slight difference in the number of respondents between males (n=47) and females (n=45).

Table 3. Verbal-guise test respondents categorised based on age

Young Adults (18 – 25)	Middle-aged Adults (26 – 39)	Senior Adults (40 – 55)
(n=37)	(n=35)	(n=20)

5.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was processed using SPSS 25.0 statistical analysis software. After encoding the test results into a numerical format, the mean and standard deviation were calculated for each speaker based on each trait. Next, both code-switchers’ mean scores were combined and compared to the overall mean score of the non-code-switchers based on each trait. To find the significance between the two groups based on status and solidarity dimensions, the traits for each group were combined based on the aforementioned dimensions. A paired t-test was used to find the significant difference between code-switchers and non-code-switchers ratings. To find the correlation between code-switching and solidarity, another set of three paired t-tests of the mean scores for each dimension trait between code-switchers and non-code-switchers was conducted. Next, a one-way ANOVA test was processed to compare the ratings between the two groups based on age. Finally, another one-way ANOVA test was used to compare the mean scores based on gender ratings. Because a semantic-differential scale was used, the negative traits that had the highest score in the questionnaire were reversed.

6. Findings

6.1 Kuwaitis’ Cognitive Attitudes

A paired samples t-test of the overall respondents’ score, irrespective of age and gender, (N=92) for both dimensions indicated that there was a significant difference in mean scores in status ratings (p= .000) between attitudes towards code-switchers (M=5.326, SD=1.23) and non-code-switchers (M=4.1993, SD=1.18; t(91)= 4.372, p<.01). The ratings indicated no significant difference in solidarity (p= .236).

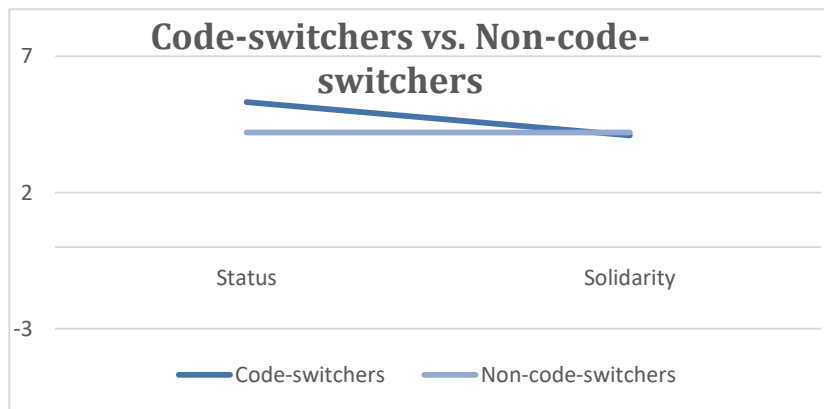


Figure 2. Comparison of status and solidarity ratings between code-switchers and non-code-switchers

Although solidarity for non-code-switchers is slightly higher than code-switchers, Figure 2 shows the significant difference in status ratings in favour of code-switchers. Contrary to Tunasians’ attitudes that were investigated by Lawson and Sachdev (2000), code-switching can promote social status in Kuwaiti social contexts, which is congruent with other studies (i.e., Al-Rubaie, 2010; Dashti, 2015). Therefore, attitudes towards a linguistic variety are ambivalent due to the context and the languages used in code-switching.

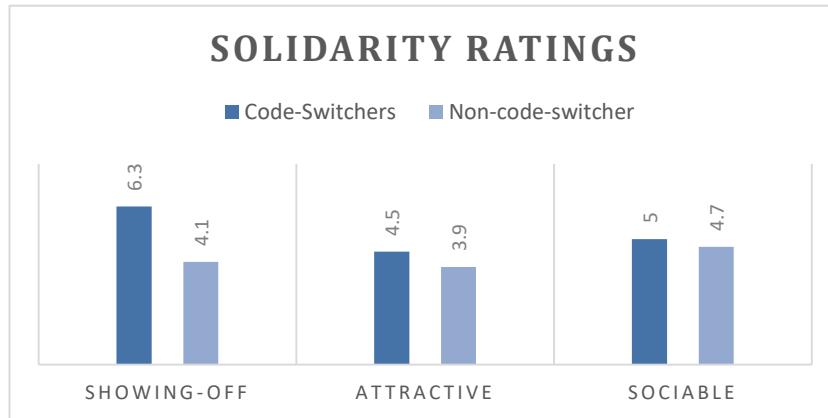


Figure 3. Comparison of solidarity trait ratings between code-switchers and non-code-switchers

To determine the cause as to why solidarity saw no significance, and to refute Nilep’s (2006) claim of the positive correlation between code-switching and solidarity, another set of three paired t-tests of the mean scores for each dimension traits between code-switchers and non-code-switchers was conducted. In Figure 3, solidarity is significantly affected by the ratings of showing-off ¹(p= .000) and attractiveness (p= .008).

As can be seen in Table 4, solidarity ratings of code-switchers are relatively higher than non-code-switchers. Based on these ratings, it is evident that although most of the respondents believe that code-switchers are showing-off, it is significantly more attractive to them than non-code-switchers (p= .008). The solidarity ratings support Al-Qahtani (2014) and Reigh’s (2014) findings that code-switching is perceived as a show-off mechanism but disagree with them in terms of attractiveness. Hence, code-switching could add flavor to the conversational episode which makes the code-switchers more attractive as other researchers have theorised (Chakrani, 2011; Ebid, 2018; Nilep, 2006).

Table 4. Solidarity Ratings of Code-switchers and Non-code-switchers

	Code-Switchers			Non-code-Switchers		
	Showing-off	Attractiveness	Sociability	Showing-off	Attractiveness	Sociability
M	6.3	4.5	5	4.184	3.875	4.701
SD	1.588	1.787	1.43	1.715	1.531	1.398

In complete contrast with Lawson & Sachdev’s (2000) finding in status ratings, the t-test revealed significant mean differences in all status traits in favour of code-switchers rather than non-code-switchers, respectively. Findings in Figure 4 and Table 5 confirm Taqi’s (2010) and Dashti’s (2015) conclusions that Arabic-English code-switching in social contexts gives higher status to the speaker due to the high prestige of the English language amongst Kuwaitis. This could explicate the high ratings of attractiveness because high-class, educated, and intelligent people can be attractive regardless of whether they are showing-off or not. Thus, despite finding no significant difference between code-switchers and non-code-switchers in terms of solidarity because it is a show-off mechanism (Al-Qahtani, 2014; Reigh, 2014), it can give code-switchers higher status, which leads them to be perceived as significantly more attractive and relatively more sociable than non-code-switchers.

Table 5. Status Ratings of Code-switchers and Non-code-switchers (N=92)

	Code-Switchers			Non-code-Switchers		
	Class	Education	Intelligence	Class	Education	Intelligence
M	5.135	4.989	4.972	4.266	3.989	4.342
SD	1.533	1.670	1.445	1.397	1.524	1.446
	t (91) = 4.418, p<.01			t (91) = 3.009, p<.01)		

¹ In the first t-test, the mean scores of *showing-off* were reversed because it is a negative trait. The second t-test included the actual mean scores of *showing-off* to clarify its relationship amongst other traits.

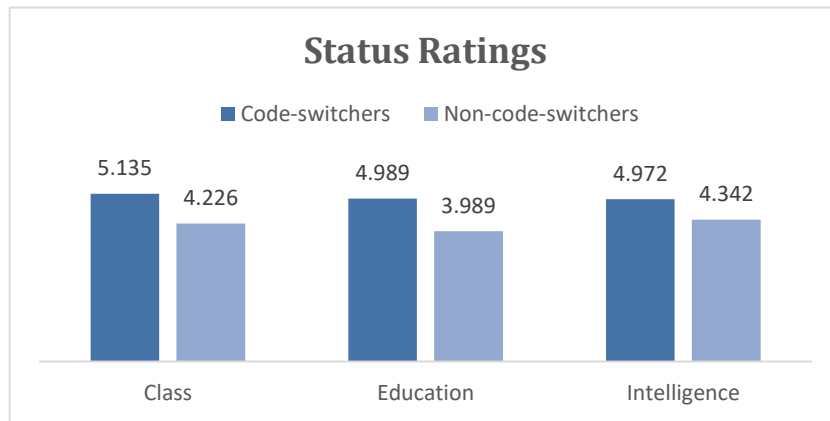


Figure 4. Comparison of status trait ratings between code-switchers and non-code-switchers

6.2 Age

A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in status ratings between groups ($F(2,89) = 11.062, p < .01$). A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that senior adults rate code-switchers significantly higher in status than both young ($p = .000$) and middle-aged adults ($p = .001$), but there was no significant difference between young and middle-aged adults ($p = .542$). The oldest group rated code-switching significantly the highest for status. The three groups did not differ significantly in the solidarity ratings ($p = .700$). Figure 5 demonstrates that senior adults' ratings were significantly higher in status ratings than the other two groups. Since significance could only be identified in status ratings for senior adults, and this research only investigates the cognitive responses of code-switching, we may question rather than assert that Omar and Ilyas' (2018) findings are in discord with this research in terms of young adults' favourability of code-switching. This is because status ratings follow a pattern in which code-switching is more prestigious to older generations than the younger ones; being young adults the lowest, middle-aged adults are more than young adults and senior adults are more than both groups. To add further, it raises questions about Hayat and AlBader's (2020) uncorroborated speculation that older Kuwaitis view code-switching in a negative way and lean more towards Kuwaiti language purism and preservation. On the contrary, senior adults are significantly more in favour of code-switching than middle-aged ($p = .001$) and young adults ($p = .000$). In addition, senior adults seem not to reject to give English a high status in Kuwait (cf. Hayat & AlBader, 2020).

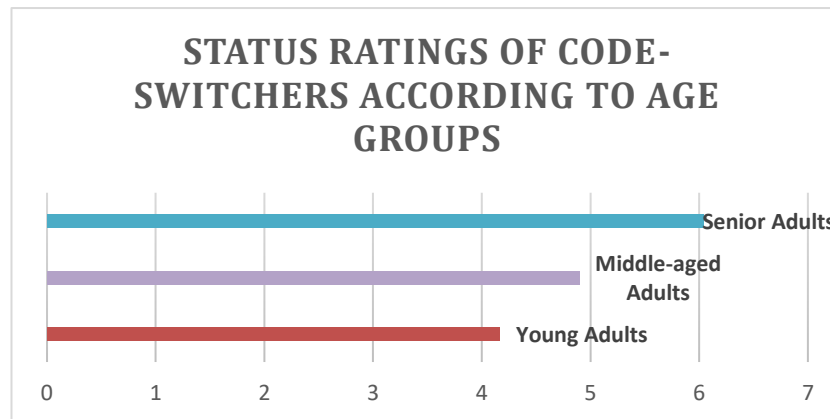


Figure 5. Comparison of code-switchers' ratings based on age groups

There was another statistically significant difference in status ratings of non-code-switchers ($F(2,89) = 11.062, p < .01$). A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that young adults rated non-code-switching significantly higher in status than middle-aged adults ($p = .000$). This has only made questioning Omar and Ilyas (2018) more cogent. The two significant findings of code-switching and non-code-switching respective to age groups made the status ratings pattern more logical. From Figure 5 and Figure 6, we can assume that age is critical in shaping attitudes towards code-switching (Hammink, 2000). This contradicts with AlRumaihi's findings because age can be a significant variable in measuring Kuwaitis' attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching in social contexts. Such conflicts could have been established because of the methodical approach used to investigate this phenomenon. Hence, a mixed-methods approach is needed to draw a strong conclusion about how age can be a significant variable in measuring Kuwaitis' attitudes towards code-switching.

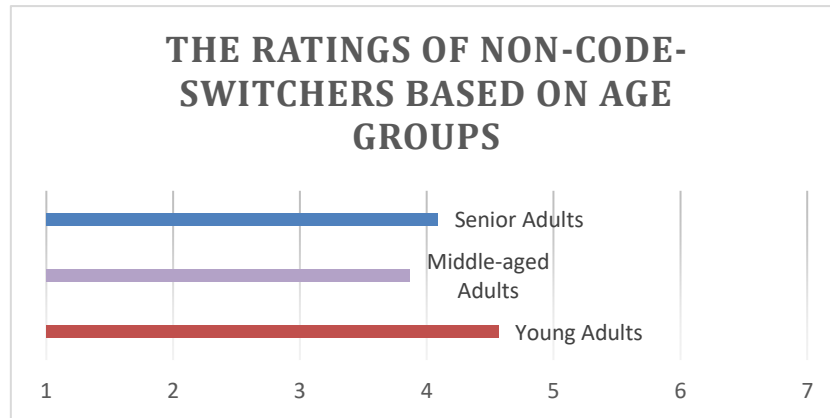


Figure 6. Comparison of non-code-switchers' ratings based on age groups

6.3 Gender

A one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in status ratings between males and females ($F(1,90) = 5.513, p < .05$). Males ($M = 5.365, SD = 1.443$) rated code-switchers significantly higher in status than females ($M = 4.685, SD = .841$) ($p = .007$). Nonetheless, there was no significant finding in solidarity between the groups ($p = .345$). Figure 7 demonstrates that males rated code-switching significantly higher for status and relatively higher for solidarity than females.

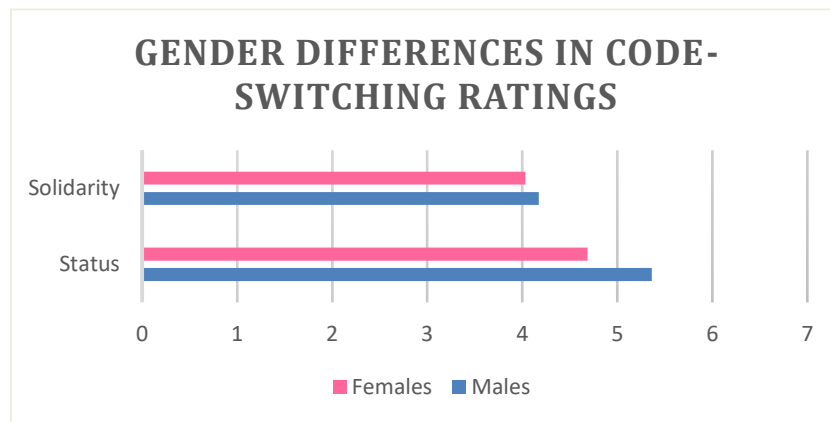


Figure 7. Comparison between male and female ratings to code-switchers

The ANOVA test also revealed a significant difference in status rating in favour of non-code-switchers ($F(1,90) = 4.892, p < .05$). Females ($M = 4.60, SD = 1.10$) rated one female non-code-switcher significantly higher in status than males ($M = 4.02, SD = 1.381$) ($p = .03$). This comes in contradiction with AlRumaihi's (2021) findings since gender plays a significant role in shaping Kuwaitis' attitudes towards code-switching in Kuwaiti social contexts, despite recruiting participants from an identical context. This can be attributed to using a considerably deeper tool to investigate the cognitive attitudes of the participants (McKenzie, 2010).

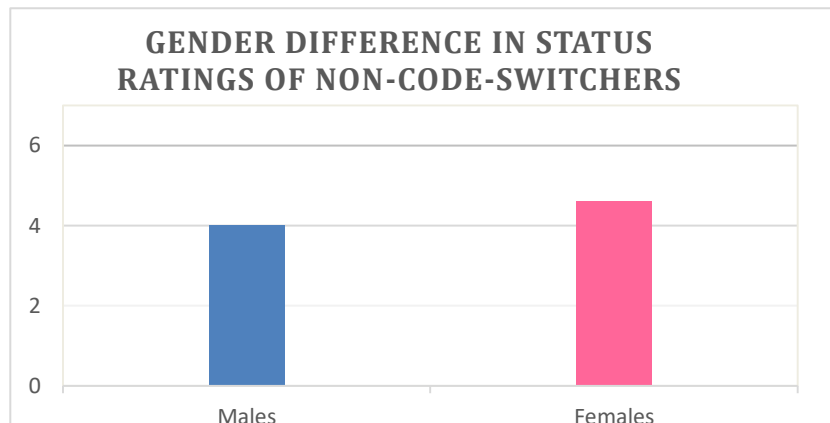


Figure 8. Comparison between male and female ratings to non-code-switchers

In consensus with Abdel-Jawad (1981) and Haeri (2000), figure 8 shows that females prefer non-code-switchers' speech to indicate a high social status in social domains. The opposite pattern found by Omar and Ilyas (2018) could be ascribed to the social position of females as proposed by Ibrahim (1986), since their study was conducted in a more conservative context (i.e., Saudi Arabia). However, the findings are also opposite to other findings in less conservative contexts (i.e., Dewaele & Wei, 2014; Farida et al., 2018). This disparity is normal due to the ambivalence of attitudes towards code-switching (Akbar, 2007). This could be ascribed to other contextual factors and/or differences, such as ethnic background, level of education, amongst others (AlRumaihi, 2021).

Discussion

The literature underscores the significant sociolinguistic shifts that have occurred in Kuwait, largely driven by historical events, economic developments, and globalisation. The influx of English into various domains, including education, commerce, and media, has positioned English as a language of prestige and modernity (Almuhanha, 2018; Dashti, 2015). This shift is crucial for understanding attitudes towards code-switching, as the symbolic connotations of English proficiency influence how Kuwaitis perceive and evaluate linguistic behaviours. The research results indicate a substantial difference in mean scores in status ratings between attitudes towards code-switchers and non-code-switchers ($M=5.326$ vs. $M=4.1993$). This difference aligns with findings from AlRumaihi's study (2021), suggesting that Arabic-English code-switching is indisputably associated with higher social status and prestige in the Kuwaiti society. The linguistic repertoire of Kuwaitis encompasses both Arabic and English languages, resulting in the adoption of code-switching as a deliberate and tactical decision to improve their communication abilities within a multilingual setting. (Al-Rubaie, 2010; Dashti, 2015). Moreover, other studies highlight the idea that code-switching is not merely a linguistic phenomenon, but a social tool that reflects identity, belonging, and socio-economic positioning (Akbar, 2007; AlRumaihi, 2021). The favourable attitudes towards code-switching in terms of status ratings could be seen as a reflection of the positive attributes associated with English proficiency and globalised communication. The context of Kuwaiti society, with its emphasis on modernity and international connectivity, may lead to more favourable evaluations of code-switching, contrary to attitudes observed in different contexts (Lawson & Sachdev, 2000).

The study initially observes that code-switchers enjoy a significant advantage in terms of status ratings. This finding is intriguing because it refutes the widely held belief that society might view code-switching negatively. This contradicts findings from Lawson and Sachdev's (2000) study on Tunisian attitudes, which emphasized lower status ratings for code-switchers. However, this incongruity is attributable to various factors, such as sociopolitical history and colonial influence (Akbar, 2007), confirming the role of context in shaping language attitudes. The status ratings, particularly the preference for code-switchers, align with the prestige attributed to English in Kuwait's linguistic landscape (AlRumaihi, 2021; Dashti, 2015). This reflects the globalisation-driven associations of English with modernity, education, and socio-economic power. These findings also parallel Taqi (2010) and Dashti's (2015) conclusions that Arabic-English code-switching grants speakers higher status due to the high prestige of the English language. However, the nuanced relationship between code-switching, status, and attractiveness is emphasized, suggesting that higher status does not necessarily equate to greater social appeal. This can be noted from the ratings of the solidarity dimensions, where code-switchers can be perceived as people who show off their linguistic repertoire. One of the factors contributing to the significantly higher ratings in this dimension is that in the Kuwaiti society, English can be seen as an indication of wealth, prestige, and communicative power (Almuhanha, 2018). In addition, the display of English proficiency in social domains establishes perceptions of modernity, elitism, sophistication, prosperity, and economic power (Dashti, 2015). Therefore, the reason for the high ratings of 'showing-off' is not limited to linguistic show-off. Rather, it could extend to being perceived as showing-off in several other dimensions. For example, drawing on Almuhanha's (2018) findings, code-switchers may sometimes be seen as individuals who have the opportunity to attend private schools, explore different cultures through travel and media, and possess a strong understanding of technology. In other words, language show-off can be used to show-off personal and social attributes. However, while some code-switchers might be perceived as showing off, their use of code-switching could still enhance their attractiveness, resonating with the concept of code-switching as a sociolinguistic strategy for prestige and social appeal (Chakrani, 2011; Dashti, 2015;

Ebid, 2018).

The examination of age in this study further complicates the picture. While AlRumaihi (2021) asserts that these variables are insignificant, this study uncovers age-related discrepancies in attitudes towards code-switching. For instance, older generations rated code-switchers significantly higher in status than younger ones. These findings stand in contrast to research by Dewaele and Wei (2014), demonstrating the intricate interplay of age and context in shaping attitudes. This can be attributed to their prior exposure to the English language when they worked side-by-side with American and British oil drilling companies in 1938. According to Dashti (2015), people who worked in the petroleum fields were obliged to learn English to facilitate communication. As a result, a multitude of lexical items were borrowed from English that is traceable in the Kuwaiti dialect. This signifies senior adults' appeal to the English language and tolerance to mix it with Arabic. Drawing on Carrie's (2017) definition of language attitude, older generations' evaluative orientation and disposition towards English entail a positive disposition. The claim by Hayat and AlBader (2022) that older Kuwaitis view code-switching negatively is earnestly challenged by the results of this study. From the verbal-guise test, it can be established that older generations do not "view English in a negative way" (p. 67). Additionally, solidarity ratings have found no significance between senior adults and younger groups. In other words, solidarity ratings did not receive significantly lower ratings than young and middle-aged groups. Thus, this does not imply any concern about the implications of employing such a linguistic code in social domains (cf. Akbar, 2007).

Gender has a profound influence on shaping the cognitive attitudes of Kuwaitis toward code-switching. This study directly contradicts the work of Alshaar (1997), which found that males performed better than women. This may be due to the fact that the views of men have changed since Alshaar's study was done in the late 1990s. Another plausible explanation could be that Alshaar employed Gardner's (1985) ATMB test in her study. According to Gardner (2004), the ATMB test is specifically designed to measure second language attitudes and motivation for second language learners in academic contexts (Gardner, 2004), rather than second language use in social domains.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated the cognitive attitudes towards Arabic-English code-switching in Kuwaiti informal social contexts in terms of social status and solidarity. Code-switching is highly favourable to promoting social status. However, solidarity could be an area of debate because of different gender and age perceptions of this phenomenon. Additionally, being a show-off person does not inevitably mean being unattractive. The results have shown that although code-switching is perceived as a mechanism for showing-off, it could be more favourable to males and senior adults. The results have shown a notable pattern in which attitudes towards code-switching are shaped. Whilst it is more favourable to Kuwaiti males, females perceive code-switching as a show-off mechanism that negatively affects the social status of the code-switcher. Additionally, the older the generation, the more favourable code-switching is to them. Thus, adopting Arabic-English code-switching as a language variety in Kuwaiti social contexts can result in being positioned in different categories of social status and solidarity according to the age and gender of the target audience. Finally, the results suggest that the majority of the Kuwaiti society is not 'repelled' nor 'disgusted' by this Arabic-English code-switching in the social domain. Hence, the negative attitudes towards this linguistic tool expressed by some individuals remain marginal, whilst the mainstream finds it more attractive than non-code-switching.

8. Limitation & Further Research

Although the study used both genders to code-switch and not-code-switch and combined their ratings to avoid gender-biased results, the significant findings in favour of code-switching cannot be held equally true for both genders. Therefore, a deeper analysis of code-switching attitudes based on the gender of the speaker should be conducted to address this gap. Furthermore, research suggests that attitudes towards code-switching may vary in respect to the listener's proficiency in both languages used during the switching process (Sayahi, 2011). Therefore, the speakers' English variety as well as proficiency must be taken into account. Finally, all speakers in the sample recordings were young adults. Subsequently, the results of this study may not be pertinent to all age groups, which may have impacted the attitudes expressed by different age groups. Thus, it would be worthwhile to investigate Kuwaitis' attitudes towards this linguistic variety using speakers from different age groups.

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Appendix A: Pilot Study Result

Female 1	Female 2	Female 3	Male 1	Male 2	Male 3
Educated	Showing off	Educated	Showing off	Showing off	Showing off
Smart	Weird	High class	Confused	Intelligent	Rich
High-class	Rich	Attractive	Dishonest	Arrogant	Dishonest
Noticeable	Noisy	Showing off	Educated	Educated	Educated
Showing off	Fool	Intelligent	Lazy	Smart	Lazy
Cheerful	Attractive	Confused	Sociable	Hard working	Sociable
Ambitious	Arrogant	Nervous	Noisy	High class	Smart
Rich	Big-headed	Sociable	Controlling	Intellectual	Attractive
Confident	Boastful	Comedian	Intelligent	Academic	Controlling
Sociable	Educated	Bilingual	Attractive	Duplicity	Cool

Appendix B: Sample of The Verbal-guise Test used as a Data Collection Tool

Before you start...

Your volunteer participation is highly appreciated to investigate a prevalent sociolinguistic phenomenon in Kuwait. By completing this questionnaire, you accept your answers to be collected, analysed, used and managed by the researcher solely.

Demographic Information

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age

- 18 - 25
- 26 - 39
- 40 - 55

Nationality

- Kuwaiti
- Other

Listen & Rate

Please listen and rate each speaker based on the listed traits. Your rating must be according to your own judgment.

Example: If the question is about how beautiful the speaker is, please rate to what extent you think the speaker is or is not beautiful using the scale from 1-7. If you are unsure, please check the relevant box below the trait.

Please note that negative and positive traits vary in left/right position for research quality purposes

Speaker 1



After listening to speaker 1, do you think she is

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Low-class High-class

Unsure

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Educated Not educated

Unsure

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not intelligent Intelligent

Unsure

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not pretentious (Not showing-off) Pretentious (Showing-off)

Unsure

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Attractive Not attractive

Unsure

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not sociable Sociable

Unsure

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