



## ARABIC–ENGLISH CODE-MIXING PRACTICES IN BAYOU’S CALL HER RIGHT NOW: ANTHROPOLINGUISTIC STUDY

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the patterns and functions of Arabic–English code-mixing in Bayou’s song “Call Her Right Now” and to examine its social meanings using Michael Silverstein’s framework of indexical order. The research employs a qualitative approach, drawing on a literature review and textual analysis of the lyrics. The primary data consist of a lyric transcript verified against the audio recording, annotated for types of switching (e.g., insertion, alternation), and analyzed descriptively and interpretively based on principles of indexicality. The results show that the verses are mostly in English, which gives them a cosmopolitan style and serves narrative purposes. The chorus and post-chorus, on the other hand, are mostly in Arabic, which gives them emotional power and shows that they are authentic to the area. The inserted English phrase “call her right now” functions as a cohesive bridge and a marker of prestige. This study contributes by linking micro-linguistic findings on code-mixing in Arabic popular music to indexical order theory, thereby clarifying how linguistic elements construct hybrid identities. Further research is recommended using multimodal and ethnographic approaches (e.g., listener interviews, music video analysis, or corpus-based studies) to empirically test social reception and language-ideological dynamics.*

**Keywords:** code-mixing, anthropolinguistics, indexicality, Arabic popular music

### INTRODUCTION

Popular music does not function solely as entertainment; it also operates as a site of social and semiotic practice in which cultural actors negotiate identity, style, and power relations through linguistic choices, lyrical structures, and multimodal elements (Picone, 2024). Contemporary empirical evidence indicates an increase in lyrical code-switching practices in global popular music, often strategically arranged to manage local resonance and cross-linguistic appeal (De Timmerman, 2024). In contemporary Arab societies, Arabic–English code-mixing in songs illustrates how language serves as a source of symbolic and social capital. Studies on language interaction in the Arab region highlight that English lexical and syntactic choices often serve not only to fill lexical voids but also as indicators of style, prestige, and specific identity orientations (Ismail & Arabia, 2015).

In studies examining code-mixing practices in Bahrain, for instance, the use of English elements is associated with factors such as age, educational attainment, and social stereotyping. As a result, younger generations are often negatively labeled, even though these linguistic elements simultaneously signal access to particular social and economic networks. In the broader Arab context, Arabic–English code-mixing in lyrics and musical performance has become widespread across genres (e.g., rap, pop, urban), where English

features function not only as lexical supplementation but also as symbolic capital indexing modernity, transnational access, and cosmopolitan style (Hamed et al., 2025). Case studies of contemporary Arab musicians likewise identify deliberate patterns of code-switching as strategies for identity construction and engagement with multilingual audiences (Bara, 2024).

Recent academic work has increasingly concentrated on quantitative mapping and computational methodologies regarding Arabic–English code-switching, encompassing evaluations of NLP capabilities for processing multilingual texts (Hamed et al., 2025; Picone, 2024). Qualitative case studies have also examined aesthetic and identity-related functions in particular songs; however, they tend to foreground general performative aspects or regional contexts without operationalizing an indexical order framework to analyze the social inferential sequences that emerge from structural patterns in lyrics (Alaiyed, 2022). In other words, despite a literature rich in pattern mapping and computational studies, an empirical gap remains in in-depth anthropological-linguistic analysis that links token-level annotation (e.g., switching type, pragmatic position) to higher-level readings of indexical orders particularly in contemporary Arab popular music.

This study addresses that gap by presenting a detailed analysis of annotated song lyrics that integrates distributional calculations of switching types (insertion, alternation, tag-switching), pragmatic token-level readings, and an explicit interpretation of indexical orders in a single case study: Bayou’s “Call Her Right Now” (Hamed et al., 2025; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The distinctive contributions of this study include (1) operationalizing indexical order at the level of lyrical annotation, thereby connecting micro-level evidence (tokens/phrases) to macro-social inferences; (2) sectoral mapping (verse versus chorus) demonstrating how song structure distributes linguistic functions; and (3) methodological recommendations for future research integrating textual analysis, multimodal approaches, and audience reception studies. Accordingly, this study is important because it helps clarify processes of hybrid identity negotiation in Arab popular music that have not been sufficiently addressed by earlier quantitative or computational work (Nurhikmah, 2024). Based on the framework and research gap outlined above, this study focuses its analysis on lyrical text annotation (textual annotation and interpretive reading) to address questions concerning the patterns, pragmatic functions, and anthropolinguistic implications of code-mixing in the selected song(s) (Tamphu, 2024).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Indexical Order Theory*

The concept of indexical order explains how linguistic forms at the micro level (words, phrases, and prosody) initially refer to immediate pragmatic functions at the first order but gradually activate higher-level social inferences at the second order and beyond (Silverstein, 2003). This theory emphasizes that social meaning is not automatically “read” from linguistic form; rather, it is produced through layers of indexicality that link linguistic features to stereotypes, social class, lifestyles, or cultural orientations (Silverstein, 2003).

In lyric analysis, the indexical order framework is used to connect analytical units (tokens/phrases involving language mixing) to social inferences such as modernity, prestige, or local affect. The analysis begins by identifying the pragmatic function of each token (first order) and then mapping the possible social inferences that may emerge (second order) (Jaffe, 2016). Operationally, in this study, each instance of code-mixing is

annotated with its pragmatic function and then positioned within a mapping matrix of token → function (1st order) → social inference (2nd order), so that claims about social meaning can be traced and delimited based on textual evidence and theoretical references.

### ***Theories of Code-Mixing and Code-Switching***

Typological studies of code-mixing distinguish among switching types such as insertion, alternation, and tag-switching, each carrying different structural and pragmatic implications in spoken or musical texts (Muysken, 2000). This typological approach enables researchers to classify language-mixing phenomena at the token, clause, or segment level, thereby supporting systematic analysis, for example, calculating the frequency of insertion versus alternation and facilitating the development of consistent annotation categories (Muysken, 2000). Sociolinguistic approaches to the motivations for code-mixing emphasize social factors: language choice may be instrumental (e.g., lexical need), symbolic (e.g., signaling prestige or style), or aesthetic, particularly rhythmic or hook-related functions in songs (Myers-Scotton, 1993). In this study, code-mixing theory is operationalized through a codebook that defines switching categories (insertion, alternation, tag-switching) and criteria for distinguishing monolingual versus mixed segments. The annotation results are then analyzed to relate switching types to song structure (verse/chorus/outro) and to the pragmatic functions identified.

### ***Anthropological Linguistics Perspective***

Anthropological linguistics views language as a social practice embedded in culture and social structure: language is not merely a system of signs but a medium that shapes identity, power relations, and collective experience (Duranti, 1997). From this perspective, linguistic analysis must account for cultural context, performative practices, and how listeners/communities interpret and attribute meaning to linguistic choices in musical texts (Duranti, 1997). In anthropological linguistic research, a central concern is how language practices (e.g., code-mixing in songs) function as a means of negotiating identity and as a source of symbolic capital, as well as how language ideologies influence reception (Blommaert, 2010). Accordingly, this framework is used here to situate linguistic findings such as sectional patterns, pragmatic functions, and indexical mappings within a broader macro-level analysis that examines social implications, the artist's self-representation strategies, and potential ideological tensions among listeners. This methodological orientation also endorses suggestions for additional research, including reception studies, performative ethnography, and multimodal analysis.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs qualitative data in the form of song-lyric transcripts as the primary dataset. The units of analysis include tokens (words), phrases, lines, and song-structure blocks: intro, verse, chorus, post-chorus, and outro. Secondary data comprising theoretical literature and empirical studies are used to triangulate interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection was designed to be replicable through the following procedures.

Lyric retrieval and storage. Lyrics were downloaded from credible online sources and saved as raw files. This procedure follows documentation practices recommended in document analysis to maintain an audit trail (Dalglish et al., 2021). Verification against the audio recording. Each transcribed line was verified by replaying the official audio recording to confirm spelling, repetitions, and segmentation of song sections; verification

outcomes were recorded in a master file. This verification step aligns with the “prepare your materials/ extract data” procedure in the READ approach to document analysis (Dalglish et al., 2021). Development of an annotation codebook. The researcher developed a codebook containing operational definitions for categories (e.g., insertion, substitution, tag-switching), language labels (Arabic, English), and guidelines for determining pragmatic functions. To ensure consistency with current practices in code-switching annotation, the codebook drew on annotation guidelines and studies on code-switching in recent Arabic NLP/linguistics research (Hamed et al., 2025).

Annotation procedure. Manual annotation was conducted on the lyrics by the primary annotator, who labeled language, type of switch, pragmatic function, and contextual justification. A random 20% sample was re-annotated by a second annotator to assess reliability. This sampling and double-annotation practice is commonly used in CSW corpora and research on switching functions (Belani & Flanigan, 2023).

The analysis proceeded along two tracks: (A) descriptive and (B) interpretive. (A) Descriptive analysis. *Frequency and distribution*: The number of tokens/lines per language and the frequency of each switching category were calculated using pivot tables in Word. Summary outputs were exported as contingency tables (Creswell & Poth, 2018). *Classification tables*: Classification tables were then used to evaluate commonly occurring switch locations (Dalglish et al., 2021). (B) Interpretive analysis. *Pragmatic-function labeling (first-order)*: For each switching event, the pragmatic function was recorded in the “Pragmatic Function” column and supported by contextual evidence in a paired “Justification” column. This functional coding practice was adopted from recent CSW function studies (Belani & Flanigan, 2023). *Mapping to indexical orders*: An indexical mapping sheet was compiled containing Token – Section – Switch Type – First-Order Function – Inferred Social Meaning – Contextual Evidence. Second-order social inferences were recorded only when supported by at least two forms of evidence: (a) textual context and (b) theoretical literature. This approach follows recommendations to integrate corpus annotation with theoretically informed readings in contemporary Arabic CSW research (Hamed et al., 2025). Triangulation and limits of claims. All inferential claims were checked through triangulation with relevant literature and the audio-verification documentation; claims not supported by external corroboration were framed as cautious interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## DISCUSSION

This study examines several aspects of Arabic–English code-mixing in Bayou’s song “Call Her Right Now.” The discussion addresses the following components: the contingent structuring of the lyrics or patterns of language distribution, the classification of code-mixing occurrences, an analysis of the resulting indexical order, the pragmatic functions at the level of utterance, and the anthropolinguistic implications of these practices.

Table 1  
Lyric Contingentization

Part	Lyrics
Intro	<i>if that’s your baby why she calling right now 3x bayou come in right now</i>

Verse 1	<i>too many songs about my exes maybe i'm better off just texting her right now is it too late i learned my lessons don't wanna be selfish but i need you right now</i>
Chorus	وليه يا حبيبي تسألني صدقت والنجوم تشهد لي كنت بعيش انا متمني يكبر هو انا كاتمها ودمعي على خدي مدينة كبيرة مش قدي بس حاسس اني لوحدي بكل امانة
Post-Chorus	وبعدين هروح فين بعد اما شفت قسوة فعنيه اختياري ده مش هين هين هين وبعدين هروح فين بعد اما شفت قسوة فعنيه اختياري ده مش هين هين هين
Verse 2	<i>i was outside and i had you crying demons that you dealt with in silence i could only love you in private dirt on me but you stuck beside me and i don't take this lightly</i>
Outro	<i>Call her right now</i>

### ***Contingential Structuring of the Lyrics in “Call Her Right Now”***

Based on the contingentization of the song lyrics above, the song is organized into the following structure: an intro (English), a verse (English), a chorus (Arabic), a post-chorus (Arabic), a verse (English), and a chorus and post-chorus (Arabic), ending with the English phrase “call her right now.” Overall, the lyric lines are distributed across approximately ~18 lines in English and ~36 lines in Arabic (an estimated ratio of about 33% English to 67% Arabic). This count is descriptive (with the line as the unit of analysis) and is meant to show how people switch languages. This pattern indicates alternation at the level of song sections (verse versus chorus): the verses predominantly use English, whereas the chorus/post-chorus sections use Arabic. Consequently, the song's arrangement produces interlingual alternation at a sectional/inter-discoursal level

### ***General Patterns of Code Mixing in Song Structure***

Table 2  
Classification of Mixing Codes

ID	Part	Text	Switching type
T1	Intro	<i>if that's your baby why she calling right now (repetisi)</i>	Monolingual English no CS here
T2	Verse 1	<i>too many songs about my exes / texting her right now...</i>	Monolingual English no CS here
T3	Chorus	صدقت والنجوم / وليه يا حبيبي تسألني بكل... بس حاسس اني لوحدي تشهد لي امانة	Inter-section alternation (verse English → chorus Arabic)
T4	Post chorus	شفت قسوة.... وبعدين هروح فين بعدما فعنيه + then call her right now	Insertion / Code- mixing (English token inserted after Arabic)

			block)
T5	Verse 2	<i>i was outside and i had you crying...</i>	Monolingual English no cs here
T6	Outro / Ending	<i>call her right now (line)</i>	English insertion / refrain

The notation “no CS” for IDs T1, T2, and T5 indicates monolingual segments. The dominant CS category observed is sectional/inter-sentential alternation (verse vs. chorus). The insertion of an English token at the end of the Arabic/post-chorus block represents direct code-mixing within the lyrics. This classification will later serve as the baseline for constructing an annotation table for an indexical order reading (Silverstein) and for analyzing pragmatic functions. The analysis of language distribution shows that “Call Her Right Now” employs a sectoral alternation pattern, namely, a division of languages by song section. All verses are sung in English, whereas the chorus and post-chorus are sung in Arabic. This pattern corresponds to inter-sentential switching occurring at boundaries between discourse segments (Muysken, 2000). The consistency of this partition suggests that the language shift is not spontaneous but strategic and structurally functional, a finding aligned with functional modeling of code-switching in popular music (Davies & Bentahila, 2008).

In the outro, the song presents its only insertion instance: the phrase “call her right now,” inserted immediately after the Arabic block. Positioned at the closing section, this insertion functions as a hook within global pop aesthetics, simultaneously linking two linguistic registers that were previously separated. According to [Thejinglewriter.com.](https://www.thejinglewriter.com/), (2024) the use of English at a climactic point can operate as a “branding phrase” that increases memorability among cross-linguistic audiences. Accordingly, the song’s structure constructs two distinct semiotic spaces: English zone (verse): personal narrative, modernity, intimacy register; Arabic zone (chorus/post-chorus): affect, collective emotion, proximity to local cultural identity. Such a separation of linguistic zones constitutes a form of bimodal identity design that has been widely discussed in studies of diaspora music (Sarkar & Allen, 2007).

### ***Indexical Order Reading (Silverstein)***

By applying the concept of indexical order (Silverstein, 2003), we can trace how the first-order indexicals above generate broader social-macro entailments: First-order: The use of English in the verses indexes a global/pop style, exposure to Western musical culture, and alignment with international aesthetics (evidenced by English words/phrases in the narrative sections). Second-order (n+1): This pattern invites the inference that the artist/lyrical persona is part of a translocal youth culture positioning the self within modern lifestyle circuits associated with particular forms of social prestige (e.g., access to education, consumption of global culture). Repeated English use in the verses reproduces indexicals that, at a wider social level, mark aspirations toward modernity and symbolic mobility (Silverstein, 2003). Competing overlay (n+2 / commoditizing overlay): The Arabic chorus as an arena of local affect signals an identity-balancing strategy, asserting local attachment while maintaining a global style. At this level, identity commodification emerges: language becomes marketable symbolic capital (e.g., a “globally styled but locally rooted” persona). This form of indexical order can be politicized and interpreted as prestige by some audiences or as a loss of linguistic “purity”



by others (Alnajjar & Abdalla, 2024). Socio-cultural implications: depending on the listener's social context, the pattern may be interpreted in divergent ways. Pro-modernity readers/youth audiences may read English use as a legitimating style and signaling membership. Conservative readers/language purists may interpret the code-mixing as evidence of erosion in local language values (a phenomenon also documented regionally as stigma, e.g., the “chicken nuggets” label, etc (Alnajjar & Abdalla, 2024). In brief, the alternation structure (English verse, Arabic chorus) plus the inserted English hook produces a dual indexical effect: (a) associating the speaker/artist with global cultural networks (first–second order), and (b) simultaneously reconstructing local intimacy through the Arabic chorus (an n+1 overlay that negotiates hybrid identity). Silverstein's framework clarifies how micro-linguistic features can generate larger-scale social inferences.

### *Analysis of Pragmatic Functions*

Following Silverstein's (2003) theory, \*first-order indexicality\* refers to the direct meaning or pragmatic function of a linguistic form. In this song, these functions are manifested and have been systematically identified and compiled in the following annotation table:

Table 3  
Annotations

ID	Part	Lyrics	Language	Switching Type	Function/Meaning of Indexical
1	Verse	<i>if that's your baby why she calling right now (x3)</i>	Inggris	Monolingual	Global hook; international pop image.
2	Verse	<i>too many songs about my exes / maybe I'm better off just texting her right now</i>	Inggris	Monolingual	Personal narratives; urban & digital identities.
3	Verse	<i>is it too late / I learned my lessons / don't wanna be selfish but I need you right now</i>	Inggris	Monolingual	Modern intimacy; cosmopolitan persona
4	Chorus	وليه يا حبيبي تسألني / صدقت والنجوم تشهد لي / كنت بعيش أنا متمني بكبر هوانا / كاتمها	Arab	Alternation (Ing → Arab)	Local affection; Arabic expressivity; emotional authenticity.
5	Chorus	ودمعي على خدي / مدينة كبيرة مش قدي بس حاسس اني لوحدي بكل امانة	Arab	Monolingual	High emotions; cultural proximity; Arab social image.

6	Post-chorus	وبعدين هروح فين / بعد أما شفت فسوة فغنيه / اختياري ده مش هين	Arab	Monolingual	Dramatization of emotions; affective intensity.
7	Verse 2	<i>i was outside and i had you crying / demons that you dealt with in silence</i>	Inggris	Alternation (Arab → Ing)	Global narrative; depth of emotional conflict.
8	Verse 2	<i>i could only love you in private / dirt on me but you stuck beside me / i don't take this lightly</i>	Inggris	Monolingual	Global pop style; vulnerable persona-modern.
9	Outro	<i>call her right now</i>	Inggris	Insertion	Global hooks; a marker of prestige; unification of two linguistic zones.

Based on the annotation table above, the pragmatic functions that emerge in the song can be identified as follows.

### ***English Verses as A Global, Urban, and Contemporary Register***

English tokens in the verses (e.g., “texting her right now,” “I learned my lessons”) signal a narrative style aligned with the aesthetic of global R&B/hip-hop. In studies of urban music, the use of English is often associated with a “modern cosmopolitan stance” (Pennycook, 2007). Similar patterns are also documented in research on code-switching in Maghribi and Levantine music (Boumans, 2015). *First-order indexical*: affiliation with global popular culture and contemporary interpersonal narration.

### ***Arabic Chorus as The Emotional Core***

Arabic lyrics such as “تسألني يا حبيبي وليه” and “خدي على ودمعي كاتمها” mark a deeper emotional domain, drawing on distinctive Arabic metaphors and poetic structures. Research on contemporary Arabic music suggests that Arabic is frequently employed in choruses to build emotional intimacy, given that Arab listeners tend to process emotion more intensely in their first language (El-Haj & Alsharif, 2019). *First-order indexical*: intimate figurative language, emotional authenticity, and local resonance.

### ***The Insertion “Call Her Right Now” as A Marker of Global Stylistics***

This phrase closes the song and functions as a musical imperative. English insertions are often used in Arab pop as a technique of commodified modernity that is, the mobilization of global elements to enhance aesthetic value or symbolic status. *First-order indexical*: emphasis, a stylistic hook, and a performative command. *Indexical order*: second-order and higher-order indexicals (Silverstein, 2003) The first-order meanings identified above subsequently develop into higher-level social inferences.



### ***English as an Index of Prestige and Global Orientation***

The use of English in the verses indexes membership in global youth culture, a phenomenon widely discussed in contemporary sociolinguistics (Eckert, 2008). At a higher order, English functions not only as a narrative resource but also as a marker of social mobility and modernity (Blommaert, 2010), access to global cultural capital (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), and a self-image as a cosmopolitan subject (Pennycook, 2007). In Arab contexts, this aligns with Alnajjar and Abdalla's (2024) finding that English often operates as symbolic capital for urban youth.

### ***Arabic as An Index of Affect, Locality, and Authenticity***

Several studies indicate that Arab listeners display strong emotional preferences for Arabic lyrics in sections that are introspective or melancholic (Hassan, 2011). Within an indexical-order framework, Arabic thus indexes local emotional values, relational intimacy, and cultural continuity. *Higher-order indexical*: the affirmation of local identity within a global structure.

### ***Their Combination as An Index of Hybrid Identity***

When the song alternates between English verses, an Arabic chorus, and a return to English in the outro, its structure produces a loop of hybrid identity: the performer emerges as a figure who blends Arab locality with Anglophone globality. This phenomenon is discussed in scholarship on global hip-hop linguistics (Alim, 2009), where multilingual practice is treated not merely as aesthetic ornamentation but as identity work. In terms of indexical order, this combination can signal: (*second-order*) "Arab but globally aligned," and (*third-order*) a brandable hybrid identity compatible with international markets.

### ***Anthropolinguistic Implications***

#### ***Language As a Social Practice That Constructs Identity***

Duranti (1997) emphasizes that linguistic anthropology examines how language constructs social relations. In this song, the alternating structure suggests that the artist negotiates a social position between two domains: an emotional-local world (Arabic) and a narrative-global world (English). Code-mixing is therefore not simply a language choice but a practice of social identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

#### ***Audience language ideology***

Within Arab communities, attitudes toward English-mixing are often ambivalent: it may be celebrated as modern while also being criticized as a "loss of authenticity" (Suleiman, 2003). Accordingly, a song of this type can be read as a discursive practice that both celebrates hybridity and catalyzes ideological debate about language.

#### ***Music as a performative arena for hybrid identity***

In line with Stokes (1994), music is never neutral; it is a cultural space where identities are displayed, capitalized, and negotiated. The song's linguistic arrangement in Bayou illustrates a performative strategy for producing a marketable hybrid persona. Based on the results and discussion presented above, this study argues that code-mixing in the song "Call Her Right Now" not only shapes a sectoral and functional distribution of languages but also generates diverse pragmatic functions and social meanings through mechanisms of indexical order. These results have theoretical ramifications for linguistic anthropology and the sociolinguistics of popular music, in addition to practical consequences for the examination of language-oriented production and branding

strategies within the music industry. In addition, this study opens opportunities for further investigation through multimodal approaches and audience-reception research to strengthen the validity of the interpretations advanced here. The Conclusion section will comprehensively formulate all findings and recommendations in response to the research questions.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the practice of code-mixing in the song “Call Her Right Now” reflects processes of social meaning-making as understood in anthropological linguistics, namely the ways in which language functions as a marker of identity, cultural affiliation, and social orientation. The sectoral distribution of English in the verses and Arabic in the refrain reveals a symbolic structure that is not merely aesthetic but also operates as a strategy of self-representation and social relationality: English indexes global orientation, mobility, and modernity, while Arabic indexes emotional intimacy, authenticity, and communal solidarity. The analysis shows that patterns of code-mixing, their accompanying pragmatic functions, and the meanings emerging through indexical ordering together construct a hybrid configuration of the musician’s identity, while simultaneously illustrating how language operates as a cultural practice within the context of popular music.

The limitation of this study is that it relies solely on song lyrics, which means it does not capture linguistic practices in performative contexts or audience reception; this is significant because these dimensions are important in anthropological linguistics, which emphasizes the relationship between language, action, and social experience. Future research should therefore integrate linguistic ethnography, multimodal analysis of musical performance, and reception studies to better understand how listeners interpret code-mixing and how social meanings are negotiated within communities. Expanding the corpus to include works by other musicians would also help determine whether the identified indexical patterns and social functions are individual phenomena or part of a broader cultural trend.

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