



<https://bulletin.vals-asla.ch> · e-ISSN: 2813-7973 · p-ISSN: 1023-2044

Bach Baoueb, L. (2010). Varieties of languages used in Tunisian business companies: a case study. *Bulletin suisse de linguistique appliquée* (Numéro spécial 2), 25-51.
<https://doi.org/10.26034/ne.vals-asla.2010.0916>

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Varieties of languages used in Tunisian business companies: a case study

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Bien que la littérature sur l'alternance de code entre l'arabe et le français dans différentes communautés de discours bilingues soit considérable, peu d'études ont exploité le contexte tunisien et aucun travail précédent n'a jamais été fait sur le secteur d'affaires tunisien comme un groupe spécifique utilisant plus qu'une paire de langues pour communiquer. Cette étude de cas enquête sur la variété de langues choisies dans deux entreprises tunisiennes, en se concentrant principalement sur les modèles d'alternance de code entre l'arabe (standard (MSA) et local (TA)), le français et l'anglais. Cette étude analyse la situation linguistique complexe dans ces entreprises tunisiennes du point de vue des différentes langues choisies pour la communication orale et aussi pour la correspondance écrite tant dans le cadre national qu'international. L'étude est fondée sur une triangulation des données enregistrées de conversations entre des collègues, des clients tunisiens et étrangers ainsi que sur des conclusions suite à des observations, des entretiens et des questionnaires sur l'alternance de code au sein des entreprises choisies pour l'enquête. Les aspects originaux émergeant de cette toute première étude du secteur d'affaires tunisien sont illustrés et les résultats sont subséquemment comparés à la littérature fournie sur l'alternance de code.

Mots clés:

Alternance de langues, mélange de langues, locuteurs du secteur d'affaires tunisiens, choix marqué/non-marqué du mode de discours

1. Introduction

The present case study analyses the varieties of languages chosen by Tunisian business speakers (TBSs) and their code switching (CS) patterns in two business companies investigated. The analysis is based on a triangulation of a questionnaire results collected for the investigation, the outcome of interviews and the recordings of live conversations amongst the participants inside the businesses chosen for study.

CS is considered as an "alternation in the use of two languages" (Cheng & Butler, 1989: 294). It is a bilingual linguistic behaviour, which has been widely studied by many linguists. Previous studies (Sanchez, 1987 cited in Cheng & Butler, 1989: 298) on dialects or languages regarded CS as an "interference between languages or dialects" because of the speakers' supposed lack of competence in the two languages or dialects involved. CS and *borrowing* were also confounded. CS was seen as a sort of large scale borrowing because of the speakers' poor competence in a certain topic area (Cheng & Butler, 1989: 297-299). The studies on languages/dialects in contact were divided into three categories: CS, code-mixing (CM) and code integration (CI). CS is

often associated to the alternation between languages intersententially, whereas CM involves the mixture of two languages intrasententially. CI is related to borrowing and interference. However, what may be noticed from different studies on CS is that there was considerable disagreement about the meaning of the three terms. Some adopted the term CS for both CS and CM and others vice versa (Cheng & Butler, 1989 (CM); Kamwangamalu, 1989 (CM and CS); Myers-Scotton, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1993b, 2002 (CS)).

Gumperz (1982: 59) defines *conversational code-switching* as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems". He claims that the speakers use only one code in a given context in a diglossic situation of code alternation, whereas in conversational code switching the speakers are *unconsciously* using both codes. This diglossic situation can be applied to Tunisia where the standard variety (Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)) is used in formal situations, whereas the local variety (Tunisian Arabic for Tunisia (TA)) is adopted in informal situations. Actually, TA is the native language and the mother tongue of most Tunisians. It is divided into two main categories: the urban variety (used in the capital, northern and coastal areas) and the rural variety (used in northern, western and southern areas). They are mutually intelligible but present a few lexical, inflectional and pronunciation differences. Instances of CS between the standard and the local varieties do occur, mainly in TV and Radio where a new variety called ETA (Educated Tunisian Arabic) is employed.

Heller (1992: 1) identifies CS as "the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode". It is a *language contact phenomenon* that defines social roles and relationships between speakers. The speakers belonging to the same speech community must share the same communicative roles and conventions in order to proceed to code switching. Heller's approach to CS is functionalist as it is based on role and relationship strategies. To study CS, the linguist has to consider the social boundaries of the speech community, the individual speech repertoires and the linguistic relationship between the languages involved (Heller, 1992).

Myers-Scotton (1993: 480) describes CS as "the selection by bilinguals/multilinguals of forms from two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation". CS is socially motivated by individual or community social *forces*. Myers-Scotton relies on the extensive data collected in different CS instances for various languages, where she notices repetition of the "same referential content in more than one language". She classifies the languages involved as the Matrix language (ML) or the *base language*, which she considers dominant in the CS conversation, and the embedded language (EL) or the *guest language*, which is less dominant than the ML. The relationship between the ML and the EL is not equal although both languages are

activated in the bilingual conversation. She claims that the ML involves a "complex interaction of social, psychological and structural factors" (ibid., 485). Myers-Scotton categorizes CS as being either an *unmarked* or a *marked choice*: CS as an unmarked choice occurs in intrasentential CS where bilingual speakers share the same linguistic and educational background, and want to assert themselves in a certain speech community. It usually happens in informal settings, where bilinguals share the same sociolinguistic identity. In CS as a marked choice, the speakers interact in a rather formal setting, where they "dis-identify with the expected RO (Rights/Obligation) set" (Myers-Scotton, 1993: 484). In a marked choice CS, speakers tend to show off their authority, superiority, and difference from the other speakers' social and ethnic identity. This is applicable in certain situations in Tunisia, where two educated bilinguals may code-switch from TA to French or TA to MSA according to the unmarked choice, being of the same educational background, whereas instances of CS between an educated Tunisian and a less educated one would probably be motivated by a desire to show superiority or to discard the addressee, as Myers-Scotton describes it in her marked choice CS.

Code mixing (CM) is defined as the intrusion of words or short sentences from a language A to a language B. This label (CM) has been adopted by some linguists (Cheng & Butler, 1989; Tay, 1989), and disputed by others (Kamwangamalu, 1989; Myers-Scotton, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1993b; Naval, 1989), who consider CM and CS as the same phenomenon and retain one labelling for both forms: either CM or CS. Aguirre (1985: 61) avoids both appellations and introduced the term *Code alternation* to refer to "the grammatical juxtaposition of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems within the same exchange". CM is also considered by Dulay *et al.* (1977: 57) as "adhering to the linguistic structure of each of the component languages". Torres (1989: 420) delineates CM as "the transference of linguistic units from one language into another", and states that "from this mixture a new integrated code may develop". By contrast, CS occurs when "a change in the social situation motivates the alternation of code" (op-cit: 420). CS is thus elicited by the conversational setting, and the participants' presence and activities. CS occurs intersententially, whereas CM is not a complete switch to another language, but a mixture of two languages in the same utterances or *speech acts* (Torres, 1989).

Torres also differentiates between CM and borrowing. She considers the literal integration of a word from L2 to L1 as CM: e.g. "**tengo que type la carta*" (I have to type the letter), while a substituted loan is regarded as borrowing: e.g. "*tengo que taipear la carta*" (I have to type the letter) (op-cit: 420). Torres' distinction between CM and borrowing may be contested. Note that the use of the English verb *type* in an entire Spanish sentence may actually not be grammatically acceptable. Myers-Scotton (1993) points out that verbs and

prepositions carry thematic roles and thus are difficult to integrate into the ML; verbs are usually transformed into nouns. Moreover, Myers-Scotton (1989: 334) criticises the distinction between CM and CS and replaces it by *marked* and *unmarked* CS. She states that since "intra- and intersentential switches can occur as part of the same conversational turn, with both serving the same social function, the CM vs. CS distinction is poorly motivated. Both types occur with CS as the unmarked choices" (ibid., 334). Poplack (1987) applies the terms *smooth* and *flagged* CS to CM and CS respectively (Bhatia & Ritchie, 1989).

As an object of study, lexical borrowing has a longer history than CS. It has been noticed in the speech of monolinguals and considered as a result of contact between two languages during a certain period (especially times of colonisation, trade and exchange between neighbouring countries). Nowadays, it is studied as both a monolingual and a bilingual language phenomenon, and as part of CS strategy. Gumperz (1982) differentiates between CS, borrowing and *loan words*, which he considers *single words* or *short, frozen, idiomatic phrases*. Borrowing and loan words are not restricted to bilingual speakers. A monolingual speaker can use different loan words unintentionally once borrowed by his/her native language. Initially, single words borrowed in L1 are to be considered as CM, but once adopted into the native language, they become loan words. Some linguists have considered single word borrowing as CS, even though the switch is at the word level or within a short sentence (Zentella, 1977; Poplack, 1987). CS, according to Gumperz, involves the mixture of two different grammatical systems, whereas loan words are integrated in the grammar and the lexicon of the first language.

The relationship between borrowing and CS is further investigated. Myers-Scotton (1993: 167-168) states that nouns are the most borrowed EL constituents, seeing that they are integrated into the ML syntactic structure without affecting it. She argues that, like CS, borrowing is socially and linguistically motivated, and underlines the constraints that bind borrowing (B forms) as well as CS. She first divides borrowing in two types: *cultural B forms* and *core B forms*. Cultural B forms are new EL cultural concepts integrated into the ML frame. The two languages involved may share cultural traditions. Most of these cultural B forms are nouns, followed by adjectives, as they do not have thematic roles. Verbs and prepositions may be borrowed but would not fit with the ML frame as they do have thematic roles. An example of cultural B form from the Tunisian context is constituted by *telephone portable*/ 'mobile phone', a new concept to the Tunisian culture. Although an equivalent word was created in MSA *hatef žawel*¹, it is rarely used in spoken

¹ See transcription conventions below (Appendix).

conversations of either monolingual or bilingual Tunisians. It is used in newspapers, written announcements or formal TV programmes. Furthermore, the use of MSA in informal spoken interactions can leave speakers as "objects of ridicule" (stated also in Ferguson, 1959: 68). Cultural B forms are considered as *gap fillers*. Myers-Scotton states that "if cultural B forms have the instrumental role of filling lexical gaps in the ML, core B forms have a 'gratuitous' nature" (Myers-Scotton, 1993: 172). Haugen (1953: 373) underlines the role of core B forms stating that "borrowing usually goes beyond the actual needs of language". He maintains that:

Words are often borrowed because they are felt to be prestigious or just novel. This is especially true if the speakers feel inferior to the speakers of other languages... the loanword may cause native words to seem inadequate and gradually be disused. (Haugen, 1992: 199)

An example of Core B form from the present data is:

(1)

P8²: Je vous dis ça pas pour faire le deal...
 I you tell that not to do the deal
 [I'm telling you this not to bargain]

The English word 'deal' has equivalents in French *marché*, *affaire*, and *commerce*. The preference for the use of *deal* here by the bilingual Tunisian speaker, as Myers-Scotton (1993: 169) describes it, "meets no real lexical needs and may be largely or entirely redundant". The occurrence of core B forms is not predictable and may occur on very few occasions in a CS conversation.

Haugen (1950) draws a distinction between *importation* of new words into the base language and *substitution* of the same words imported by the base language. The substitution of imported words can affect their meaning, morphology, or phonology (cited in Belazi, 1991). Belazi (1991) gives examples of both importation and substitution from French to TA. For example: *servis* from French *service*/'set'; is an imported word which educated TA speakers use without modification while non-educated speakers substitute the consonant 'v' by 'b' because the consonant 'v' does not exist in Arabic, thus, the word is pronounced *serbis* with the fricative 'r'. The second example provided by Belazi is *barkun* from French *balcon*/'balcony'; this is a mere substitution as it adopts the morphological structure of TA (the addition of 'un'). Another example of lexical borrowing and substitution is found in the data collected for this research. See example 2 below from the author's data.

² P8: participant number 8; see table of participants, section 3, below for further details.

(2)

P3: *Si, thama fil banka u el antiris aqal mil leasing..*
Yes, there is in the bank and the interest lower than leasing...
 [Yes, there are banks, and the interest is lower than the
 leasing...]

The TA noun *antiris* is a localised pronunciation of the French noun *intérêt* 'interest' which was borrowed and substituted in agreement with the TA morphology. Belazi (1991) also distinguishes between monolingual and bilingual lexical borrowing. In fact, in the speech of monolingual Tunisians we come across a large number of borrowed words, which were integrated first in the language as foreign words due to the extensive use of French in Tunisia before independence. These words such as *normal* 'normal' pronounced with the fricative 'r', *telifun* for 'telephone', and *prise* for 'plug' or *brise* as some less educated may pronounce it, became part of TA. Thus, bilingual lexical borrowing goes beyond the need of cultural B forms. Bilingual educated Tunisians resort to borrowing for words related to the subjects taught in French, mainly science, chemistry, physics and business studies, likewise for TA/French code-switching. The words may exist in MSA but they are borrowed from French in speaking instances, because speakers have learnt them and used them only in French. Bilingual borrowing is therefore considered nonce borrowing. Monolingual speakers may not recognize these words unless they master French. Another factor intensifying lexical borrowing is the rapid evolution of new inventions and technologies distributed worldwide and adopted by the consumers with their initial labels. They may be translated, coined or renamed later on, but their first label will be mostly used during and after the period of translation to the native language. E.g. *télé* for 'television' later coined as *talfaza*, and *téléphone portable* for 'mobile phone' labelled as *hatef žawel*, among other words used daily by both monolingual and bilingual Tunisians. The translation of these new concepts will be made to keep the host language up to date. The new words will be added to the dictionary of the host language or used in formal written documents. However, at the spoken level, the first label of the new concept might be maintained. Gardner-Chloros (1991: 102) states that borrowing and CS are difficult to distinguish because:

...if it is an innovation on the speaker's part, it is code switching. If it is frequently used in that community whether or not in free variation with a native element then it is at least on its way to become a loan. A loan is a code-switch with a full time job.

Kamwangamalu (1989) classifies borrowing as either *vertical* (from L2 to L1) or *both sided* (L1 to L2 and L2 to L1). Vertical borrowing for Kamwangamalu occurs from French as a post-colonial language into the vernacular only. However, Kamwangamalu's Vertical viewpoint has to be reconsidered because even French has witnessed such vernacular intrusion into it through the migrating communities living in France, mainly the North African migrating communities (Nait M'barek & Sankoff, 1988; Bentahila & Davies, 1983 among

others). Words such as *bled*'town', *flus*'money' and *šorba*'soup' among others, are widely used by native French speakers in France in informal oral conversations. Indeed, the size of the North African migrating communities in France is considerable and its linguistic influence on the native population among whom they cohabit is undoubted. However, the notion of borrowing of new concepts or words suggests that the speech community or the speakers who borrow a word for a certain purpose would then drop it once a word is coined for the same concept in the native language. The term *borrowing* or *loan* implies a *return* in some way or another. Note that different languages have borrowed words and kept using them in the base language. They might be integrated and substituted phonologically and morphologically as explained above, but rarely replaced by a native concept, especially at the spoken level (Aitchison, 1981). *Interference* has been also adopted by Haugen (1956: 40) to deal with CS and borrowing. It is "the regular use of material from one language in another so that there is no longer either switching or overlapping except in a historical sense". For Haugen switching is a phenomenon which occurs only when "a bilingual introduces a completely unassimilated word from another language into his speech" (Haugen, 1956: 40). Interference is perceived in the speech of bilingual speakers, whereas borrowing might affect the base language of the whole speech community. Interference in speech (CS) is not collective, but an individual phenomenon (Bach Baoueb, 2007).

This conflicting situation in defining CS is due to the complexity of the phenomenon per se. CS involves the use of two languages or even more. Each language has its own grammatical constraints, discourse functions, cultural and socio-political background. In accordance with the above discussion of CS definitions and conflicting viewpoints, the term CS, in the present study, will be applied for code alternation between the languages investigated (TA/French; TA/MSA/English): this includes CM, intra- and intersentential movements between two languages (CS). The term *lexical borrowing* will be used for instances of the importation and integration of words and phrases in L1 by TBSs, taking into consideration their relevant grammatical, morphological and phonological incorporation discussed in the literature above.

2. Linguistic and sociolinguistic environment

TA is a spoken variety which was not codified but is used at home, between friends or colleagues in both informal and formal spoken situations. It is used in the streets, in informal educational settings, and in business exchanges with Tunisian partners at the oral level (Stevens, 1983; Battenburg, 1997; Ennaji, 1991; Bach Baoueb, 2007). TA reflects the identity and the cultural heritage of Tunisians. The national and official language of Tunisia is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). It is learnt at school and used for formal and

academic purposes. MSA is perceived by Tunisian and Arab speakers as the prestigious language primarily of religion then secondarily of education and politics. MSA is highly considered as linked to the identity of Arabs and Arabic history whereas TA is associated with the Tunisian identity and history (Stevens, 1983; Battenburg, 1997; Walters, 1998; Bach Baoueb, 2007).

French is the native language of the French immigrants who settled in Tunisia after colonisation, mainly of French women who are married to Tunisian men and also of the children of mixed marriages. The French language situation in Tunisia has undergone many reforms. In pre- and post-independence Tunisia (i.e. before and after 1956), French was considered as the second language of Tunisians and part of the Tunisian historical heritage. After few decades and with the starting of Arabisation, French began to lose its considerable weight in the Tunisian educational, political and administrative systems. However, the need for French in most domains (education, technology, science, tourism and business) protects it against the threat of total decay. French is used by educated Tunisians for oral and written communications. It is primarily chosen for oral discussions when TA is not possible to maintain mainly for scientific, medical and technical issues. It is furthermore preferred to MSA for written communication when no impediment constrains its use; (only MSA is now accepted in many Ministries, mainly Justice and Interior Ministries). Although English is not included among the languages of Tunisia, it has attained an important status in the Tunisian society over these last three decades. English is the second language learnt early at school (age 12-13) and is mainly used for instrumental purposes. Oral communication in English outside the educational institutions is mostly encountered in tourism, medical and business organisations (Bach Baoueb, 2007).

3. Research field and methods of investigation

The present case study is conducted in two business companies. The first company investigated is a small family business which deals with local and international trade. Its business collaborators come mostly from European and Maghreb Arab countries. The second company is a large multinational which imports and exports goods. The choice of one small and one large company was principally done to select one sample of the commonly available types of companies that exist in the Tunisian business sector. Moreover, this choice widens the variety of the participants involved: the small family business involves Tunisian employees only whereas the second company is a multinational business and therefore includes international employees, too (see Table 1, below).

Ps	Company	Occupation	Age	Gender	Educational level	Linguistic background	Methods
1	Small	Chairman	60-69	M	Baccalaureate	MSA 2/French 3/ English 1	Q/R
2	Small	Ad. Manager	50-59	F	Baccalaureate	MSA 3/French 3/ English 2	Q/R/
3	Small	Sales manager	30-39	M	Post-grad	MSA 2/French 3/English 3	Q/R//
4	Small	Ad. Assistant	30-39	F	Vocational diploma	MSA 1/French 3/English 1	Q/R//
5	Small	Secretary	20-29	F	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 3/English 2	Q/
6	Small	Accountant	30-39	M	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 2/English 1	Q//R
7	Small	T. Client	50-59	M	Bachelor	MSA/2 French 3/ English 1	Q/R
8	Small	T. Client	40-49	M	Post-grad	MSA 2/French 3/ English 1	Q/R
9	Small	T. Client	40-49	M	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 3/English 2	Q/R/I
10	Small	T. Client	30-39	M	Baccalaureate	MSA 2/French 2/ English 1	Q
11	Small	F. Client	Ø	M	Ø	MSA3/English 2	R
12	Large	Ad. Assistant	30-39	F	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 3/ English 3	Q/R/I
13	Large	Ad. Assistant	20-25	F	Vocational diploma	MSA 2/French 2/English 2	Q
14	Large	Ex. Assistant	30-39	F	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 3/English 2	Q
15	Large	Ad. Manager	30-39	M	Post-grad	MSA 2/French 3/English 3	Q/R
16	Large	Accountant	20-29	F	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 2/English 1	Q
17	Large	Engineer	20-29	M	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 2/English 2	Q/I
18	Large	Engineer	40-49	M	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 2/English 1	Q
19	Large	Engineer	20-29	M	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 3/English 3	Q/R
20	Large	Ad. Employee	30-39	F	Vocational diploma	MSA 2/French 2/English 1	Q
21	Large	Ad. Employee	30-39	F	Baccalaureate	MSA 2/French 2/ English 1	Q/ R
22	Large	T. Client	Ø	M	Ø	MSA 2/French 3/ English 3	I
23	Large	T. Client	Ø	M	Ø	MSA 2/ French 2	R
24	Large	T. Client	Ø	F	Post-grad	MSA 2/ French 3/ English 2	R
25	Large	F. Client	Ø	M	Ø	MSA 2/French 2/ English 3	R
26	Large	F. Client	Ø	M	Ø	MSA 2/French 3/ English 3	R

Table 1. Distribution of the participants investigated by company, occupation, age, gender, linguistic background and research method

Key: Ps = Participants/ Ad = Administrative/ Ex = Executive / T = Tunisian/ F = Foreign

Ø = no information provided. Linguistic background: 1= Low/ 2 = Moderate / 3= Fluent.

Methods: Q = Questionnaire / I =Interviews / R = Recordings

This is a multi-modal case study based on diverse research methods (Jonkman, 1991; Geswell, 1994). The first method selected is the researcher's own observations of TBSs' interactions inside the companies. Second, questionnaires and interviews are conducted with the participants aiming at deriving some quantitative and qualitative data on the varieties of languages chosen. Third, recordings of live business conversations are carried out. The aim behind the recordings is to consolidate the previous results (observations, questionnaires, and interviews) about the TBSs' linguistic behaviour and to identify the CS behaviour in the conversations of TBSs among themselves and with foreign clients. Most of the recordings are held inside the businesses and vary between informal, semi-formal and formal business interactions/meetings between TBSs and Tunisian/foreign colleagues/clients (see Tables 2 and 3, below).

Interview number	Participants	Gender	Company	Interview timing
1	Administrative assistant	F	Large	18m.35
2	Administrative assistant	F	Small	7m.57
3	Engineer	M	Large	13m.19
4	Sales Manager	M	Small	12m.30
5	Client	M	Large	11m.45
6	Client	M	Small	10m. 25

Table 2. Interviews' length by participants, gender and company type

In order to facilitate the readability of the conversations and achieve understanding of the code switched utterances, two translation glosses are provided under each example of conversation recorded. The first gloss is a word-for-word translation following the word order of the transcribed language(s). This helps the reader identify the lexical and grammatical order of the original language(s) and subsequently recognize their grammatical functioning with respect to CS. The second gloss is an elaborated translation making an allowance for the pragmatics of the English language and aiming to reach a comprehensive reading of the utterances. The elaborated translation prevents possible misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the data content. It sometimes provided with extra words inserted in parentheses to refer to the context of the conversation or shed light on the issue discussed. This helps the reader interpret the meaning of the conversation. In few cases, where the TA syntactic order follows that of the English grammar, only one gloss is provided. Besides, for ethical reasons, names of companies and people are kept anonymous and sums of money are not specified (referred to as X in the extracts). Furthermore, excerpts from the conversations recorded are referred to in the text in terms of participants involved (see Table 3, below).

Company	Participants	Setting	Topic	Timing
Small	Chairman/ administrative manager/ sales manager/ Tunisian client.	Sales manager's office.	They are seeking advice from the client about settling a new business.	9m.30
Small	Chairman/ administrative manager/ Tunisian client	Administrative manager's office	They are discussing a project in Africa in co-operation with the Tunisian client.	14m.10
Small	Administrative manager/ administrative assistant/ accountant/ sales manager.	Administrative assistant's office.	Discussing financial and legal issues.	52m.45
Small	Chairman/ administrative manager/ sales manager/ financial expert.	Chairman's office.	They are discussing financial issues and talking to clients on the phone at the same time.	46m.24
Small	Chairman/ Libyan client/ Turkish client.	The show room.	They are discussing the possibility of selling their product in Tunisia.	31m.20
Large	Administrative assistant/ telecommunication agent.	Administrative assistant's office.	Complaining about a technical problem with phone lines.	6m.03
Large	Administrative manager/ administrative employee.	Administrative manager's office.	They are working together on some clients' files.	7m.44
Large	Administrative manager/ Tunisian client.	Administrative manager's office.	They are discussing administrative and legal issues.	50m.02
Large	Administrative manager/ Lebanese client.	Administrative manager's office.	The administrative manager called the Lebanese client to inform him about some missing documents for some business actions.	8m.30
Large	Engineer/ Lebanese client.	The common room.	The Lebanese client brought a sample of a new product that he would like to sell in Tunisia. He is discussing the technical properties of the product with the engineer.	12m.56

Table 3. Description of conversations by company, participants, settings, topics and length of conversation.

Nevertheless, for the transcription of interviews, the researcher has dropped word-for-word translation as it is not the aim of interviews to reveal any grammatical functioning of TA or French but has respected the conversational order in terms of turn taking, pauses, and stops. Consequently, the interviews are translated with respect to English pragmatics. Actually, the main purpose of the interviews is to extract information on the varieties chosen and CS behaviour (Johnstone, 2000). A reference for each participant is indicated in each extract (see Table 3, above).

The triangulation of these different research methods is intended to strengthen the analysis and support the interpretation and evaluation of the TBSs' CS behaviour. Moreover, triangulating different methods for data collection is a way to get accurate information (Oppenheim, 1992; Johnstone, 2000; Moran-Ellis *et al.*, 2006). Subsequently, evidence from this case study would be a

contribution to the extensive field of CS research. Indeed, different case studies on CS among various speakers belonging to divergent social groups help to build up a consistent knowledge about CS behaviour in general.

4. The varieties of languages used in Tunisian businesses

4.1 *Written languages*

The 20 participants assessed in the questionnaires have been asked about the varieties of languages chosen for written correspondences within Tunisian and foreign companies. According to the results of the questionnaires, internal and external correspondences between TBSs are mainly conducted in French (95%). Few cases of MSA and English (5%) written correspondence occur in the data and they mainly concern the multinational company due to the presence of foreign colleagues from different countries. External correspondence with foreign clients varies according to the clients involved. French is predominantly used with natives (100%) and L2 (95%) speakers of French such as clients from the Maghreb Arab ex-colonies (Algeria and Morocco). English is largely employed with natives (100%) and L2 speakers of English from the Maghreb Arab countries: (Libya 75%) and the Middle East ones (100%). MSA is moderately used with Maghreb Arab countries (25%) compared to Middle East ones (55%); (see Table 4, below).

	Tunisia			Maghreb Arab Countries			Middle East Countries			French Native Countries		English Native Countries	
	MSA	French	English	MSA	French	English	MSA	French	English	French	English	French	English
Faxes	5%	100%	5%	25%	100%	75%	55%	5%	100%	100%		10%	90%
Invoices		95%		25%	95%	75%	55%	5%	100%	100%		10%	90%
Price offers		95%		25%	95%	75%	55%	5%	100%	100%	5%	10%	90%
E-mails		95%		25%	95%	75%	55%	5%	100%	100%	5%	10%	90%
Messages		95%		25%	95%	75%	55%	5%	100%	100%		10%	90%
Contracts	5%	100%		25%	100%	75%	55%	5%	100%	100%		10%	90%

Table 4. Written language choice in the businesses investigated

Actually, business correspondence requires the extensive use of technical and business words along with financial and banking details. Due to the educational background of most TBSs, all these business notions have been chiefly acquired in French, e.g.

(3)

P12: We only know the terms in French for all administrative (.)
finance (.) and accounting issues...

Thus, French is the main language of written correspondence within TBSs as shown in this extract from the conversations:

(4)

P3: ...de toute façon, *ahna* on va étudier tout en chiffre, *hakka bilqde bilqde*, après tout, si les chiffres dépassent, et en principe *qbal ma nexdhu* le plan béton, on voit combien ça coûte, *tawa noq9odu* et on étudie ça...
 ...anyway, we will study all in numbers, like that very well very well, after all if the numbers go beyond, and basically before that get the concrete plan, we see how much it costs, we will again meet and we study that.
 [...anyway, we will deeply study all this financially, after all if the cost is high, and basically before we receive the concrete plan, we will meet again and discuss that.]

The sales manager of the small business implicitly demonstrates that his firm's projects are reported in French. He declares that they 'will study' the project costs 'in numbers' after consulting 'the concrete plan'. He utters these words in French, because business financial reports, bank statements, invoices and even engineering works are all written and discussed in French (Belazi, 1991).

English on the other hand ranks second as the most applied international language of business and communication (Bahloul, 2001). MSA is less used mainly by TBSs, as they have not been schooled in MSA for such tasks, although they sometimes have to use MSA, mainly with clients from Libya; this point is demonstrated in the following excerpt from the interviews:

(5)

P5: I mean exceptionally Libya (.) the only country which accepts documents in MSA only (.) for the other countries it's in English (.) and it's not a problem I mean when one writes to them (.) but in discussions one can't manage (in MSA)...

The client of the large business clearly shows how MSA is a prerequisite in written correspondence with Libya which constrains its clients and suppliers to use it for any written exchanges. However, for oral interactions, the participant himself claims that TBSs can't manage a whole conversation in MSA with Libyans (Targowski & Bowman, 1988; Walters, 1989, 2003). Another issue stated by the administrative assistant of the large business and noticed in some conversations recorded in both companies is that all correspondence with the Tunisian administrations of either an administrative or a legal nature is carried out in MSA because of the Arabisation process imposed in Tunisia recently (Bach Baoueb, 2007).

4.2 Spoken languages

All the participants (100%) affirm either through the questionnaires or the interviews that TA and French are the languages used for conversations among themselves (Belazi, 1991; Walters, 1998, 2003). However, 20% claim

that they also use English with their Tunisian colleagues. This is presumably true when foreign colleagues or clients are present. Concerning the languages used with foreign clients, the majority of the participants (90%) state that TA and French are used with clients from the Maghreb Arab countries (Algeria and Morocco) compared to MSA (10%) and English (40%) which are likely to be used with clients from Libya who do not use French as a second language (Walters, 1998, 2003). Regarding Arabic-speaking clients from the Middle East, TA (80%), MSA (95%) and English (90%) are fairly equally used compared to French (35%). As regards other foreign clients, French (100%) is widely used with native speakers and English is mainly used with natives (95%) and L2 speakers of English such as German (100%), Spanish (100%) and Italian (95%); (see Table 5, below).

Participants	Spoken languages				
	TA	MSA	French	English	Other
Family members	100%		80%		
Tunisian colleagues	100%		100%	20%	
Tunisian clients	100%		100%	15%	
Arab clients (Maghreb Arab)	90%	10%	90%	40%	
Arab clients (Middle East)	80%	95%	35%	90%	
French clients			100%		
Italian clients			5%	95%	10%
English clients			5%	100%	10%
German clients			5%	100%	15%
Spanish clients			5%	100%	15%

Table 5. Languages chosen by TBSs for oral conversations with different participants

As a general rule, the Tunisian business setting relies on internal and external exchanges of goods and services and thus requires the use of these four languages; notably French and English. Languages are economic assets; they ensure integration into the world market. English is as an international business language whose "value increases by every speaker who acquires it... It is only economic common sense that export-oriented countries in the non English-speaking world prefer English to all other foreign languages" (Coulmas, 1992: 80). English has an important status in the business sector in Tunisia. It is the means of communication and an economic facilitator between two non-native speakers of English who do not share the same second language (Bach Baoueb, 2001, 2007). Furthermore, Lüdi (2006: 20) affirms that:

...language choice is not the outcome of a mechanistic calculation of situational factors, but, on the contrary, a significant tool at the disposal of interlocutors for defining the situation in a way that suites their intentions.

A similar statement is highlighted in the reflection from one of the participants interviewed:

(6)

P17: ...when you use one language only (.) you're limiting yourself (.) limiting your market (.) and limiting the clients thus (.) you're decreasing your gains (.) your opportunities (.) and your knowledge...

TBSs are aware that languages are crucial for business success and prosperity and that any limitations on language use would be a limitation to the business market and consequently to profit (Pascasio, 1978). See how the participants alternate smoothly between TA and French in the following extract from the conversations recorded in the large business:

(7)

P24: *Ena medhabiya nexu* une copie de tout le dossier surtout les courriers *mte9...*
I'd like to have a copy of the entire file mainly the mails of...
 P15: Les courriers *illi 9andna likom entuma dima* des rappels...
The mails that we have for you are always reminders...

Both employees and clients are aware that there should be no restraints on their language choice when it comes to business deals and making profit. Most of the conversations show how the participants alternate unreservedly between codes in order to fulfil their communicative aims (Pascasio, 1978; Targowski & Bowman, 1988; Blommaert, 1998). Extract 7 also confirms that the language used by TBSs for written correspondence is French. Note the use of *file*, *mail*; *reminders* among many others noticed in the data collected for this case study.

5. Code-switching patterns in Tunisian businesses

5.1 TA/French code switching

Regarding the frequency of code switching and the varieties of languages code switched at work, the majority of the participants affirm that they *often* code switch with their Tunisian colleagues at work (95%) and with Tunisian clients (85%), whereas they *sometimes* code switch with foreign colleagues or clients (80%). This is true when the interlocutor is monolingual; as code switching happens only between speakers who share at least two languages (see Table 6, below).

Participants	Frequency of code switching			
	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Tunisian colleagues	95%	5%		
Tunisian clients	85%	15%		
Foreign clients or colleagues	15%	80%	5%	

Table 6. Frequency of code switching at work by participants

The languages used by the participants to code switch at work with their colleagues and with Tunisian and foreign clients are further investigated. Actually, TA/French CS occurs mainly between Tunisian colleagues (95%) and clients (100%) or with clients from the Maghreb Arab countries who speak French as a second language such as Algeria and Morocco (95%); (see Table 7 below).

Participants	Languages				
	TA	MSA	French	English	Other
Tunisian colleagues	95%		20%	10%	
Tunisian clients	100%		100%	5%	
Foreign colleagues/clients from Maghreb Arab countries	95%	55%	100%	70%	
Foreign colleagues/clients from Middle East countries	95%	95%	40%	95%	
Foreign colleagues/clients from France			100%	10%	
Foreign colleagues/clients from Italy				100%	20%
Foreign colleagues/clients from UK or USA				100%	
Foreign colleagues/clients from Spain			5%	100%	15%
Foreign colleagues/clients from Germany			5%	100%	15%

Table 7. Varieties of languages code switched at work

The frequency of switching varies according to the situations and the participants involved (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). During the interviews, the participants claim that the languages used for CS differ also from one company to another. In fact, the participants of the family business use TA/French to code switch with colleagues and Tunisian clients, whereas the participants belonging to the multi-national company use TA/French and French/English to code with Tunisian colleagues, above all with colleagues from different countries such as Lebanon and Romania. Here is an example from the large business extracted from the recorded conversations:

(8)

P15: *Ey titulaire, illi huwa X, tżi thot huni* the undersigned X, *kollhom mba9ed huwa* de toutes les façons, *beš, 9ala* un seul modèle *na9mlu koll šey u hot* X residing at X...
Yes owner, that is X, you will put here the undersigned X, *all of them then it* anyway, *will, on one model we will do everything and put* X residing at X...
 [Yes the owner, that means X, you will write here the undersigned, *same* for all (the files), anyway we will map on one model, and *here* write X is residing at X...]

The participants also claim that they use English without CS with English native speakers and French with French native speakers. Regarding the languages used with clients, they all affirm that TA/French are used with Tunisian clients, and TA/English or MSA/English are used with Arab clients who do not share the same local variety as the participants. English and French are used respectively with native speakers of these languages (see Table 7, above). The occurrence of CS according to the frequency of use was furthermore studied in the businesses investigated (see Table 8, below).

Participants	Topics and frequency of code switching											
	Informal discussions				Formal discussions				Technical topics			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Tunisian colleagues	90%	10%			80%	15%	5%		85%	10%	5%	
Tunisian clients	80%	20%			70%	25%	5%		80%	15%	5%	
Maghreb Arab colleagues/clients	55%	45%			25%	70%	5%		35%	60%	5%	
Middle East colleagues/clients	60%	40%			30%	65%	5%		40%	55%	5%	
French colleagues/clients			5%	95%			5%	95%			5%	95%
Italian colleagues/clients		5%	60%	35%		5%	60%	35%		5%	60%	35%
UK/USA colleagues/clients			45%	55%			45%	55%			45%	55%
Spanish colleagues/clients		5%	70%	25%		5%	70%	25%		5%	70%	25%
German colleagues/clients		5%	70%	25%		5%	70%	25%		5%	70%	25%

Table 8. Topics and frequency of code switching with Tunisian/foreign colleagues and clients

Key: 1=usually / 2= sometimes / 3= rarely / 4= Never

Actually, the participants declare in the questionnaires that informal (90%), formal (80%) and even technical (85%) discussions with Tunisian colleagues and are *usually* conducted in a mixture of TA and French. The percentages of CS with Tunisian clients and colleagues are nearly distributed (informal 75%, formal 70% and technical discussions (80%)). However, there might be some restrictions on CS with Arab clients from the Maghreb Arab as the majority of the participants declare that they *sometimes* code switch either in formal (70%) or technical (60%) discussions, though they *usually* code switch in

informal meetings (55%) with these clients. The participants might consider CS as informal in formal meetings with foreign clients as they rarely (95%) do. They would rather try to maintain one language for the whole conversation which might be L2 as the shared language of both participants. They might further regard CS with out-group members as marked and inhibited in comparison to TA/French CS within in-group members (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Lawson & Sachdev, 2000). This issue is discussed in this excerpt from the interviews:

(9)

P17: Generally the easiest one to communicate with is either a Tunisian (.) or someone with whom we have to use one language without code switching (.) either English or French (.) with these it's easy (.) because from the beginning to the end of the conversation we are using one language only (.) but with a Tunisian we switch (.) he himself code switches...

The participant plainly judges that communication is more flexible with in-group members because they share the same CS behaviour (Targowski & Bowman, 1988; Heller, 1992; Lawson & Sachdev, 2000; Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Clyne, 2003) whereas using the native language of the interlocutors is simpler than CS with out-group members. The main reason stated in the questionnaires for CS with in-group members is *habit* as Lüdi (2006: 20) claims:

Stable language choice may also result from personal habits or from automatisms (i.e. when a particular perceptive scheme entails an unconscious language choice).

Actually, all the participants (100%) declare that they code switch with their colleagues because they are used to CS at work. Besides, the majority (85%) confirm that they are also accustomed to code switch with their Tunisian clients. Few participants (20%) regard CS with foreign colleagues or clients as a habitual conversational practice. These results are also stated in the interviews conducted with some of the participants.

(10)

P12: I just wanted to mention that we Tunisians are used to code switching because (.) we grew up exposed to it I mean it's not something that we encounter at work only (.) I mean you can't hear a sentence that is not TA and French mixed (.) it is in the society's culture and is difficult to drop (.) and it is further intensified at work...

Furthermore, a large number of participants (75%) regard CS as an easy way to express thought between Tunisian colleagues and clients, and even with foreign ones (85%). They resort to CS mainly because TA lacks technical words related to the business context. In point of fact, most of the participants (75%) declare in the questionnaires that they code switch with their Tunisian colleagues or clients when discussing technical and scientific issues because such terms are not available in TA (Bentahila, 1983). None of the participants

claim to code switch due to lack of mastery of one of the languages with colleagues and very few do with Tunisian clients (5%). CS might be deliberate when the participants want to show a higher status and a high proficiency in more than one language. Actually, 50% of the participants declare that they code switch to show superiority with Tunisian clients and even foreign ones, whereas very few (15%) resort to this practice with their own colleagues at work (Bentahila, 1983; Valdés-Fallis, 1978) (see Table 9, below).

Reasons for code switching	Participants		
	Tunisian colleagues	Tunisian clients	Foreign colleagues/clients
Habit	100%	85%	20%
Show status	15%	50%	50%
Easy to express thought	75%	75%	85%
Lack of mastery		5%	80%
Absence of technical words	65%	75%	85%

Table 9. Reasons for code switching with Tunisian/foreign colleagues and clients

These facts are further supported by some of the participants and clients interviewed. Note how the speaker code switches for technical words in this extract from the recorded conversations:

(11)

P2: *Hedheya nhotehlek* juste le texte sur ordinateur u *na9tihulek* sur disquette...
This one I put it for you just the text on computer and give it to you on a floppy disk...
[I'll type this text and save it for you on a floppy disk...]

The lack of technical vocabulary in TA leads towards a heavy reliance on French to discuss technical matters. Furthermore, the participants claim to be more fluent in French, especially when discussing administrative issues. They also assert that even Tunisian clients use French, either during phone calls or face-to-face interactions:

(12)

P9: *Ey, ena beš nodxel b'deux domaines, l'énergie solaire u l'agriculture, l'irrigation, huma les pays Africains, ils manquent el wahed...*
Yes, I'll enter with two domains, energy solar and agriculture, irrigation, they African countries, they lack the thing...
[Yes, I'll access (the market) with two domains, solar energy, and agriculture, I mean irrigation, those African countries lack these assets...]

Many French technical words are depicted from the conversations such as: *isolation*/'insulation'; *ventilateur*/'ventilator'; *groupe*/'engine'; *panneaux*/'panels'; *froid*/'freezer'; and *installation*/'installation' among many other expressions. These words are always uttered in French within French or even TA

utterances. All the evidence suggests that this is due to prior education in French for technical and scientific subjects and also to the Tunisian business context which necessitates the use of foreign languages (Bentahila, 1983; Bahloul, 2001).

5.2 TA/MSA/English code switching

TA/MSA/English CS is primarily (95%) practised with clients from the Middle East and some Maghreb Arab countries (55%) such as Libya. CS between the three languages may be done for several reasons: First, TA might not be mutually intelligible with their local varieties, thus its alternation with MSA would avoid misunderstanding (Bentahila, 1983). Second, clients from these countries mainly use English as a second language whereas TBSs use French, thus the use of English would serve as a lingua franca for all technical and scientific discussions which cannot be carried in MSA, mainly by TBSs as they have been schooled in French for such tasks (Blommaert, 1998). Based on the results of the questionnaires, some of the participants (60%) claim that they *always* code switch with clients from the Middle East during informal meetings whereas 40% *sometimes* resort to CS. However, in formal and purely technical discussions only 30% to 40% of the participants *always* code switch compared to 65% to 55% who *sometimes* code switch between TA/MSA/English (see Tables 7 and 8, above). In fact, the participants affirm in the interviews that CS in very formal situations is not appreciated because it is not professional and shows a lack of proficiency in one of the languages used mainly when the interlocutor is of a superior social status (Belazi, 1991; Lawson & Sachdev, 2000).

The main reasons stated in the questionnaires for CS with foreign colleagues or clients are either lack of mastery of one of the languages (80%), absence of technical words (85%) or because they find CS as an easy way to express thought (85%) (Valdés-Fallis, 1978); (see Table 9, above). Here is evidence from one of the participants working for the small business:

(13)

P3: Because I'm not proficient in MSA (.) and the technical words I use (.) I don't know their equivalents in MSA (.) therefore when I encounter some technical difficulties (.) I use English...

CS becomes a facilitator for the continuation of the conversation: whenever the speakers are *stuck* in one language, a second or a third language is used to carry on the conversation as long as the two or three languages are shared by the same speakers (Pascasio, 1978). They sometimes also switch to the local variety of the interlocutor to get the message. Here is an example from the conversations recorded in the large business where the participants resort to such linguistic behaviour:

(14)

P15: 'Ostез' X tlaqit e-mail men 9andek 'fi xusus' trade marks in the
name of X...
 'Mr' X **I received** e-mail from you 'concerning' trade marks in the
name of X...
 [Mr X, I received your email concerning the trade marks in the
name of X...]

Most of the participants interviewed in the large business acknowledged their CS linguistic behaviour and consider languages as means of communication so if the aim is achieved all means (languages used) are appropriate. Moreover, the whole work atmosphere is predisposed to CS mainly when the discussions are about administrative tasks such as price offers or invoices provided in written English.

6. Comparison between the communication atmospheres in the two companies

The triangulation of the different methods used for investigating the choice of the language varieties and CS in the Tunisian businesses studied reveal that there are similarities and differences between the two companies in terms of language choice and CS behaviour. Actually in both companies, the participants declare that TA and French are used for oral communications between Tunisian colleagues and clients, whereas with foreign clients the varieties chosen are affected by the participants involved. However, the difference between the two companies lies chiefly in the atmosphere inside the businesses and with colleagues. Regarding the small family business, they are all in-group members and have the same socio-educational and cultural background (Targowski & Bowman, 1988; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Heller, 1992; Lawson & Sachdev, 2000; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Their code choice is pre-established and used accordingly. Hence TA/French CS is freely used mainly in informal to semi-formal situations. Another important factor that should be kept in mind is that the small business is a family one i.e. most of the participants are relatives and thus the atmosphere is more relaxed than in the big business; note how the participants both work and jest allowing for a relaxed mood:

(15)

- P6: *Nhotlu climatiseur zeda?*
(Shall) I put an air conditioner, too?
- P4: Réserve?
 Reserve?
- P3: *Le, el haq réserve, inti ta9ti réserve ?*
No, really reserve, you give reserve?
[That's incredible; do you ever give any spare (item)?]
- P6: *Ena marka réserve?*
I person reserve?
[Am I someone who ever give a spare thing?]
- P3: *Inti complètement réserve...*
You completely reserve....
[You're really a mean person...]

Many instances of such relaxed and jesting conversations were observed and recorded within the small business. However, when a client is present the atmosphere becomes more formal and TA/French CS is less practised though it is triggered by technical topics (Lawson & Sachdev, 2000). Here is an example from the conversations recorded in the small business:

(16)

- P8: *Il faut faire, Il faut voir avec un juriste si vous pouvez avoir un amendement a9la ce statut, et le projet hedheya tkabbru fih vous avez waqteha le droit, la possibilité d'exploiter et de louer...*
You should, you should see a lawyer if you can have an amendment over this charter, and this project, this one you expand it, you have then the right, the possibility to exploit and rent...
[You should see a lawyer (and check) if you can have an amendment over this charter in order to expand this project, later you could exploit or rent it...]

For the large business, the presence of foreign colleagues constrains the use of certain varieties. For instance when one of the foreign managers or engineers (French, English, American, and Romanian) is present, the conversation becomes rather monolingual (Lawson and Sachdev, 2000); it is carried either in French or in English (45% *rarely* code switch whereas 55% *never* do; see Tables 7 and 8 above). The atmosphere becomes very formal except for few informal greetings or short personal queries (5%). This issue is raised by the administrative assistant when interviewed; see below:

(17)

- P12: Generally (.) we must speak English, but sometimes it happens that we exchange words in French or in Arabic (.) I mean to express things that may be we don't want the boss to know about them...

However, when the TBSs are interacting among themselves, the conversational environment becomes more informal and relaxed, and TA/French CS is more practiced (80%). Moreover, the presence of colleagues

or clients from the Middle East gives the opportunity (65%) to TBSs to explore more varieties (TA/Lebanese Arabic (LA)/MSA / English). Here is an example of a conversation between a participant and a Lebanese client:

(18)

P15: *Huwa 9ala kolli hal koll ma famma new action, awel 'ma fi' new action fel court '9ala tul' naba9thu xater ahyanan... It evidently when there is new action, as soon as 'there is' new action in court 'directly' we send, because sometimes... [Evidently when there is a new action, as soon as there is a new action in court we will directly inform you because sometimes...]*

Moreover, when the participants discover that the interlocutors also share their second language (that is French), the conversation becomes even more mixed allowing for a *melting pot* of five languages altogether.

(19)

P26: *'El' vertical 'fi 9eddet' largeurs 'm9ayyan, u fi el' horizontal 'u momken ykun heza illi ehna enollu el' corinth 'u heza fi naw9yin', corinth AC errafi9, 'u' corinth AD'el' 9ridh... 'The' vertical 'has many' widths 'special, and there is the' horizontal 'and it can be this that we call the' corinth 'and this has two models', corinth AC the thin, 'and' corinth AD 'the' thick... [The vertical model is displayed in different widths and the horizontal model, also called corinth, displays one thin AC and one thick AD models...]*

On the one hand the general atmosphere in the small business is rather relaxed and CS practices are more or less homogeneous among these participants who are in-group members (see e.g. 15 above and 20 below), added to the fact that many of their clients have established a friendlier relationship with this group and their interactions within the company have become rather comfortable.

(20)

P12: *[...we Tunisians are used to code switching because (.) we grew up exposed to it I mean it's not something that we encounter at work only (.) we grew up hearing all the Tunisian society (.) all of it mixing TA and French...]*

The large business on the other hand, displays more formal and restricted interactions. The relationship between the TBSs and their foreign colleagues shows more conformity than the first group, and CS is mainly practiced between Arabic speakers, either TBSs or foreign Arab colleagues and clients (Blommaert, 1998; Scollon & Scollon, 2001; see e.g. 17 above).

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the varieties of languages chosen in the businesses investigated is mandatory for understanding the CS behaviour of TBSs. The

data collected by means of observations, questionnaires, interviews and recordings of live conversations presented the general framework of the setting and context investigated. To sum up the findings presented above:

- For written communication: French is mostly used with Tunisian and foreign companies whose L1 or L2 is French. English is applied with natives or L2 speakers of English, and MSA is chiefly employed with Libya.
- For oral communication: TA and French are spoken with Tunisian colleagues/clients. French and English are used with native colleagues/clients or L2 speakers of French and English. MSA is mostly utilised with Arab speakers such as Libyans or Middle Eastern clients.
- TA/French is an in-group code switched variety practised between Tunisian colleagues/clients, whereas TA/MSA/English CS is used with out-group members from the Maghreb Arab, Middle East or Gulf countries.
- The communication atmosphere in the small business is more relaxed and less formal than the large business due to the presence of foreign colleagues (out-group members) which constrains their linguistic behaviour.

The present case study has delivered important findings in terms of varieties of languages used by TBSs' and their linguistic behaviour. This investigation, which aims, in part, at generating future case studies in the Tunisian context, can be considered as a small but valuable contribution to the sociolinguistic investigation of Tunisian business life in particular and of the Tunisian linguistic and sociolinguistic context in general.

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Appendix

Transcription symbols

The following transcription conventions adapted from Nortier (1990: 9-11) are used for the transcription of Tunisian Arabic (TA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Libyan Arabic (LBA) and Lebanese Arabic (LA) utterances in the data of the present research:

- dh* [ð]** Pronounced as *the* in English not to be confounded with *t* followed by *h* pronounced as *think* in English.
- ʒ* [ʒ]** Like the French uvular *r* in *France*.
- h* [ħ]** No equivalents in French or English; it is a voiceless pharyngalisated fricative.
- q* [q]** No equivalents in French or English; it is an uvular voiceless stop similar to *k*, but deeper.
- š* [ʃ]** Exists in English as in *share*, but included so as not to be confused with *s* followed by *h* pronounced separately as in *shar* (awoke), or *š* followed by *h* as in *šhar* (month).
- x* [x]** Pronounced as *ch* in Scottish *loch* (lake), or *j* in Spanish *mujer* (lady).
- ǰ* [dʒ]** As *j* is pronounced in French *jour* (day).
- ʕ* [ʕ]** No equivalents in English or French, it is pronounced like *a* in *rather* but a voiced pharyngalisated fricative.

In order to help the readers recognize the languages used, TA utterances are italicised, MSA are italicised and highlighted in bold and LBA/LA utterances are italicised and quoted. The choice behind using this simplified notation instead of the IPA is in fact based on many factors. First, this notation exists in the literature on CS; it was used by Nortier (1990) for MA (Moroccan Arabic)/Dutch CS adopted from Otten's (1983 cited in Nortier, 1990) notation used in his MA Dictionary. Second, I found this notation easier to read either for native or non-native speakers of Arabic than the IPA. I tested it on Tunisian and English speakers and they both pronounced the utterances appropriately. Moreover, I myself found it easier to read Nortier's (1990) transcripts than Belazi's (1991) based on the IPA although the latter's were in my native language, i.e. TA. Third, the use of the Latin alphabet and this simplified notation is meant to facilitate readability for non-native speakers of TA, LBA, LA and MSA, because what is of crucial significance here is an accurate translation of the code switched utterances. French and English on the other hand were transcribed with respect to their writing conventions as they do not pose any equivalent problematic issues.