



Tunisian Business Speakers' Attitudes towards Code Switching in Business Companies

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Abstract: The present case study examines Tunisian business speakers' (TBSs) attitudes towards their code switching behaviour in two business companies. The varieties of languages investigated are Tunisian Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, French and English. The research seeks to identify the varieties of languages used and the TBSs' evaluation of the status of each variety used in Tunisian business exchanges. It further examines the linguistic performances of TBSs and the social constraints on their interactions. The findings are primarily derived from an instrument designed to measure the TBSs' attitudes and are supplemented by information gathered from observations, questionnaires and interviews. The case study revealed significant results concerning the TBSs' implicit and explicit attitudes towards the varieties of languages used in the businesses investigated. It also presented considerable findings on their code switching behaviour along with their linguistic performances.

Keywords: *TBSs, Attitudes, Code switching (CS), diglossic CS, marked vs. unmarked CS, Bilingual speakers.*

1. Introduction

The present case study investigates TBSs attitudes towards their code switching (CS) behaviour. TBSs are Tunisian employees working in Tunisian/international business companies and interact frequently among themselves and with Tunisian/foreign colleagues/clients. The varieties of languages investigated are Tunisian Arabic (TA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), French and English. This case study aims to derive the TBSs' personal judgements about the varieties of languages used in

Tunisian business conversations and their attitudes towards their CS behaviour. It seeks to identify the reasons behind adopting these varieties of languages and the TBSs' evaluation of the status of each variety used in Tunisian business exchanges. It further examines the linguistic performances of the speakers of these varieties and the linguistic constraints on their interactions. The findings are primarily derived from an attitudinal test to obtain the TBSs' implicit judgements about the varieties of languages chosen in these Tunisian

businesses and are supplemented by information gathered from observations, questionnaires and interviews to extract the TBSs' explicit attitude about their CS performance.

2. Theoretical Background

Language attitudes have been chiefly associated with the speakers' personal assumptions, judgments and ethics and could thus be 'linked to a person's values and beliefs and promotes or discourages the choices made in all realms of activity, whether academic or informal' (McGroarty 1996: 5). Gardner (1973), for instance, explains how children's positive views towards learning a second language principally immerse from their parents' positive judgments and support to learning a second language for instrumental and integration purposes. Therefore positive or negative attitudes towards languages are first established at home.

On the one hand, Huguet (2006) supports the claim that positive or negative language attitudes are initially set up from household but she adds that they are later reinforced at school. As Baker (1992: 43) states 'schools can, in themselves, affect attitudes to a language be it a majority or a minority'. Huguet (2006) further explains that the existence of minority languages as subjects of study at school added to their constructive evaluation as home

languages by parents contributed to the positive judgements about these languages. She declares that 'logically, the fact that the home language determines attitudes in such a way seems to support those who postulate a certain primacy of attitudes over the role of language learning, as to some extent language attitudes could already be determined in the home' (Huguet 2006: 427).

On the other hand, Bangeni & Kapp (2007) view language attitudes as linked to the socio-economic, political and historical contexts of language use. They believe that attitudes towards languages are not inherent in the languages alone, but basically correlated to power and identity. Drawing on Norton (2000), they think that people express their attitudes towards their languages through their choice of language use and through the negotiations of their identities and selves. Bangeni & Kapp (2007) describe the accepted ways of expressing their beliefs based on a post-structuralist theory of discourse defined as 'saying-doing-being-valuing-believing' (Gee 1990: 142). In their study, they explain how the speakers' language choices are mainly motivated by two aims: academic success via the English language and social integrity through their home languages. Consequently, language attitudes are chiefly set up at home, reinforced at school and later shaped according to

the socio-economic and political needs of its users in a specific historical context.

Research investigating attitudes towards CS behaviour is vast in the literature. Cheng & Butler (1989: 294) for instance believe that CS is a 'natural phenomenon' and a common behaviour in a bilingual community which occurs for diverse reasons. It is a conveyor of social meaning and a way to express competence in both languages used. The switch from one language to another is seen as an act to achieve 'an effective communication, get to the point, clarify ideas and to serve a social interactive function' (Cheng & Butler 1989: 294). Moreover, Cheng & Butler (1989: 299) believe that 'when code-switching is used for the purpose of maximizing communication, or effective expression, and to strengthen the content and essence of messages, it should be considered an asset, not a deficiency', or indication of incompetence in communication as Sanchez (1987) claims (cited in Cheng & Butler 1989: 298).

In the same vein as Cheng & Butler (1989), Kamwangamalu (1989) supports the positive views of CS in multilingual post-colonial settings by considering it 'a cross-cultural phenomenon', and a 'conveyor of modernism'. He divides the languages used by bilinguals into two categories: 'transplanted languages' (post-colonial languages) and 'vernaculars' (local languages). The transplanted languages are

linked to power and high social class. The speakers (whose L1 is a vernacular) are frequently exposed to the transplanted languages as a means of access to education, technology and foreign relationships. The vernaculars are the less prestigious languages, but associated with the speakers' identity and culture. CS between the transplanted and the vernacular languages gives the speakers a high social status and esteem. Therefore, CS conveys modernism and education and reflects the speakers' identity and belonging to their ethnic roots.

Lin (1996) contests the language purists negative attitudes to 'Chinglish' (i.e., CS between Chinese and English) which she considers as a spontaneous outcome of frequent exposure to Chinese and English in education, media, visual and written press and also a bilingual mode of communication between educated Cantonese in Hong Kong. Actually, she states that CS is indicative of education, openness to Western society, social distance and power. She also believes that CS unites different socio-educational classes of speakers; that is to say fluent English speakers and less educated people.

Not only linguists' opinions but also bilinguals' attitudes towards their CS behaviour have been studied. This is very significant in understanding the bilinguals' CS behaviour as active participants in this specific kind of linguistic interaction. Bangeni & Kapp (2007: 265) ascertain that CS

is considered by their respondents (South African Black students) as an in-between language that reflexes a 'dual' association to their home languages (African languages) and to the language of the metropole (English). On the one hand, the home languages reflect their identity and affiliation to their ethnic groups to which they demonstrate a strong maintenance. On the other hand, English is symbolic of modernism, education and prestige. Though described as 'coconuts' (Blacks behaving like Whites) by their kinships, the respondents' attitudes towards both languages remain two-fold and linked to their 'shared hybrid group identity' (Bangeni & Kapp 2007: 265).

Attitudes were investigated in the Tunisian bilingual speech community (see Belazi 1991). Belazi claims that when the switch between Tunisian Arabic (TA) and French is done for discussing scientific issues, it is regarded by Tunisian bilinguals as positive since French is associated with modernism, whereas if the same switch is done to discuss religious matters, they regard it as negative. This is because, in Muslim societies, religion is associated with traditionalism, thus Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or the local varieties (in this case TA) would be much more accepted as a means to discuss religious issues. In the same line, Lawson & Sachdev (2000) investigated attitudes toward CS in Tunisia at universities and in the streets. They found that 'CS is a

variety for in-group communication, connoting both status and solidarity simultaneously' (Lawson & Sachdev 2000: 1356). Proficiency in the French variety is associated with modernism and high level of education, whereas TA is perceived by Tunisian educated people as the conveyor of their identity. Moreover, Lawson & Sachdev (2000) demonstrate that gender differences are accounted for in evaluating the varieties of languages used by Tunisian educated people. For instance, TA/French CS is highly regarded as a linguistic behaviour when it is practised by Tunisian female rather than male speakers. Besides, attitudes and motivations towards the languages used vary according to the educational, social and economic situation of the individuals.

Furthermore, attitudes towards CS diverge according to the type of CS chosen for interaction between the speakers. Myers-Scotton (1993) classifies CS as being either an unmarked or a marked choice: CS as an unmarked choice occurs in intra-sentential 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 according to the unmarked choice (being of the same educational background) and therefore their CS is positively perceived. However, instances of CS between an educated Tunisian and a less educated one would probably be motivated by a desire to show superiority as Myers-Scotton describes it in her marked choice CS (Author 2007; 2009; 2010) and would consequently be negatively perceived by the less educated speaker.

In her study of CS in Filipino businessmen's conversations, Pascasio (1978: 40) argues that CS between languages is constrained by the languages' users, the domains of use and various socio-cultural factors. The languages' users might be 'peers' (from the same social group) or foreigners. The 'peers' are divided into 'above peers' (i.e., managers or important guests), who have a higher social status, and 'below peers' (i.e., secretary or clerk), who have a lower status. The domains of language use also constrain the varieties of languages used. A business context for instance requires the use of more than one language, as opposed to casual social gatherings such as home, church, and

street. The socio-cultural factors that restrain language use are: social status, role, age, and gender of the interlocutors; the speech functions and topic of conversation along with the domain of language use. Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain (2009) also allege that the study of language attitudes ought to take into consideration the situations of language use and the position of the speakers within the context of interaction. However, they maintain that 'language attitudes are not only expressed in the formulations of a speaker, but also emerge through the ways in which others react to the speaker' (Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain 2009: 217). Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative analyses strengthened by speakers' interactional analysis are prerequisite to achieve significant results to language attitude studies. Pascasio's (1978) study is very significant to the present research as it paves the way for better understanding the CS behaviour of TBSs in this case study and consequently their attitudes towards these languages.

Drawing on the literature on attitudes, CS and the multi/bilingual speakers' attitudes towards their CS behaviour, the present case study aims to examine the TBSs' opinions about the language varieties used in their business conversations and their attitudes towards their CS performances. It studies the reasons for using these code-switching varieties and the status of each variety used in Tunisian business

interactions. It further investigates the linguistic proficiencies of its speakers and the linguistic constraints imposed on Tunisian business conversations.

3. Methods of Investigation

3.1 Research field and participants

The research field selected for the present case study was the Tunisian business sector. Two business companies were selected. The first company examined was a small (in terms of number of employees (N=20)) family business, a resident company (100% Tunisian shareholders) based in the capital (Tunis), dealing with local and international trade. It manufactures cold and clean rooms for farmers, hotels and hospitals. It mainly imports the spare parts for these rooms from France and Italy and exports its refined products to the Maghreb Arab and Middle Eastern countries. The second company investigated was a large (80 employees) multinational joint venture, a multi-group and non-resident company (in partnership with foreign business people) dealing with the import and export of different types of goods, sales and installation in Tunisia (e.g., air-conditioners, electronic products, hotel security equipment, lighting amongst many others). One small and one large company (resident/non-resident) were chosen principally to select one sample of the commonly available types of

companies that exist in the Tunisian business sector. Moreover, this choice widened the variety of the participants involved: the small family business involved Tunisian employees only whereas the second company was a multinational business and therefore included international employees too. The distribution of the participants in terms of company type, occupation, age, gender, educational level, and linguistic background in the research methods adopted is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Participants involved (either employees or clients) are classified according to their company type. Thus, the small business participants are first introduced, followed by the large company ones. The sociolinguistic background of the participants are derived from the questionnaires and consolidated with prior observations and interactions with the participants inside the companies which afforded the researcher the opportunity of gaining first-hand knowledge of the participants. The clients who did participate in the questionnaires or interviews were not assessed for age and educational level. Their linguistic background was derived from observations of their linguistic behaviour during the recordings. The participants chosen for the investigation varied between managers, engineers, administrative assistants, employees and clients. The participants represented a small

but diverse sample in terms of social status, education, and age.

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

Ps	Com.	Occupation	Age	G.	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/A
3	Small	Sales manager	30-39	M	Post-grad	MSA 2/French 3/English 3	Q/R/I/
4	Small	Ad. Assistant	30-39	F	Vocational diploma	MSA 1/French 3/English 1	Q/R/I/
5	Small	Secretary	20-29	F	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 3/English 2	Q/A
6	Small	Accountant	30-39	M	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 2/English 1	Q/A/R
7	Small	T. Client	50-59	M	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 3/English 1	Q/A/R
8	Small	T. Client	40-49	M	Post-grad	MSA 2/French 3/ English 1	Q/A/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/A
14	Large	Ex. Assistant	30-39	F	Bachelor	MSA 2/French 3/English 2	Q/A
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/A
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/A
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/A
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

Key: Ps = Participants/ Com. = company/ G. = Gender/ 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 / A = Attitudinal test

3.2 Data collection methods

3.2.1 Attitudinal instrument

I administrated an attitudinal instrument to assess the TBSs' implicit attitudes towards their CS behaviour, to evaluate the status of each variety used and also to examine the linguistic proficiencies

of the speakers of these varieties. The examination of the linguistic proficiencies of the speakers was an indirect method to investigate the TBSs' social constraints on each variety used in business conversations and also to consider whether the TBSs' attitudes towards the languages used were influenced

by the (low/high) proficiency of the speakers.

I chose ten participants from both companies to take part as judges in this attitudinal instrument (see Table 1). I selected three speakers to read four texts¹. The selection of the speakers was done after observation of the business employees' interactions inside the companies studied. I chose a postgraduate (female/age 30-39), a graduate (male/age 20-29) and an undergraduate speaker (male/age 40-49) as found in the businesses investigated and who exhibited different proficiencies in the languages spoken. The speakers were unfamiliar to the judges. The content of the four texts was the same, whereas the varieties used were different. The first text was written in French, the second was a TA/French code-switched variety. The third text was written in MSA and the fourth text was a TA/MSA code-switched variety. No text was provided in MSA/French as this code-switched variety had never occurred during the observation of the TBSs' interactions. The structure and content of the texts were adapted from the recordings of genuine conversations in the businesses investigated. No text was provided in TA only because first, this version would not be significant for this study on CS and second, it is relatively impossible to conduct a

business conversation in TA only (an explanation of this rationale would be provided below in the discussion part).

The judges were supplied with an evaluation sheet containing a Likert scale to score the speakers while speaking. The evaluation was made according to a series of traits which is an indirect method to assess the participants' attitudes towards the different varieties used by the speakers. Some additional questions were asked. The questions were designed to complement the participants' (judges here) judgements about the varieties used, the linguistic fluency of the different speakers, to discern the speakers' social classes through the varieties used and also to examine the validity of the varieties used in comparison to the varieties chosen in the businesses investigated. Furthermore, the judges were asked at the end of the test to comment on the testing process, the speakers and subsequently the varieties (See evaluation sheet in Appendix 2, below).

The 10 judges were requested to score 12 speakers speaking four different varieties (the judges were not told that they were only 3 speakers reading 4 texts, but were just told to listen to 12 speakers presenting their companies) making a totality of 120 observations to be evaluated. The evaluation sheet handed to the judges was written in French, being the language mostly used for written communication in Tunisian business companies and

¹ See text in Appendix 1, below (English Version)

also amongst educated bilingual Tunisians in general (see discussion part below). The total listening task took about 15 to 20 minutes. The judges evaluated the speakers on 10 traits: 'intelligent', 'educated', 'modern', 'important', 'modest', 'funny', 'ambitious', 'elegant', 'conservative', and 'serious'. A Likert scale was ranged from 1 to 5 which corresponded respectively to: 1= very low, 2= low, 3= moderate, 4= high, 5= very high. The equivalence of each rank to each trait was clarified to the judges before playing the recordings. On the one hand, traits like 'intelligent', 'educated', 'modern', 'important', 'ambitious' and 'elegant' were positively rated when they were scored 4 to 5. On the other hand, the traits 'modest', 'funny', 'conservative' and 'serious' were less positive when ranked 4 to 5. In fact the differences related to the positive versus negative evaluation of the traits were mainly depicted from the TBSs' own judgements provided in the questionnaires and interviews added to the socio-cultural norms of the Tunisian society related to language attitudes. For example: a TBS who extensively used MSA within in-group members would be judged as too conservative in terms of religious attachment to the language of the Koran. S/he might also be judged as funny or too serious as MSA is rarely used in an unmarked conversational situation. Conversely, a TBS who used French would be more estimated as highly

educated and elegant (see Stevens, 1983). The 120 observations were counted according to each variable ranging from 1 to 14 (10 traits and 4 questions), and were subsequently grouped by language category used in each listening: French, TA/MSA, TA/French and MSA, then by speaker involved: A, B and C. The means and the standard deviations were calculated to evaluate the judges' responses and to compare the TBS' attitudes towards the varieties of languages spoken and the linguistic proficiencies of the speakers.

3.2.2 The questionnaire

To examine the TBSs' explicit attitudes towards their CS behaviour, the varieties of languages used and the social constraints imposed by the Tunisian business sector, a questionnaire was implemented to supplement the data supplied by the attitudinal instrument. The types of questions used for this questionnaire were multiple choice questions, except for the last three questions which were open-ended ones. The first three questions investigated the languages used at home and at work with Tunisian colleagues and with clients from local companies. Question 4 asked about the languages used with clients from foreign countries (Maghreb Arab, Middle East, Francophone and Anglophone countries not listed in the Maghreb Arab or Middle East countries). Question 5 dealt with the languages used for written correspondence with the same

foreign countries as those mentioned in question 4. Questions 6 and 7 examined CS in terms of frequency of use, participants involved and situations of use. Questions 8 to 11 explored the motivations for CS and participants' attitudes towards their CS behaviour. Question 12 accounted for the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of gender, age, occupation and educational level. Such information was necessary for the evaluation of the participants' educational and linguistic background. The last section of the questionnaire was dedicated to the TBSs' comments on their linguistic behaviour and CS. English was chosen as the language of the questionnaire seeing that the participants have not shown any inconvenience about the choice of language. The questionnaire implementation task lasted up to 30 minutes. Twenty participants from both companies contributed to questionnaire responses.

3.2.3 Interviews

The interview used is a qualitative guided interview. It is composed of 13 questions. The first three questions are meant to reveal whether the participants are aware of CS at home with family members. These questions are first intended to examine if CS is originally set up from the household and second the

questions are a prerequisite for the subsequent research, which probes CS inside the business companies. Questions 4 to 6 deal with CS at work, including the languages used, the situations constraining CS, the participants with whom CS is practised and the reasons for CS. Questions 7 to 9 are attitudinal questions investigating the participants' attitudes towards CS. Question 10 examines the use of MSA to code switch inside the company, along with the setting and the reasons behind the use of MSA for CS. Likewise for question 11, the use of English for CS is considered, as well as the setting and the reasons behind resorting to CS in English. The last two questions examine the participants' views on the possibility of dropping CS for a single language to be used with Tunisian colleagues or clients, and Arab speaking clients, as well. The aim is to investigate the participants' attitudes towards the present linguistic situation and their motivations for changing the communication system inside the companies. Six participants are selected for interviewing. This is because it is difficult to interview all of them due to their lack of time and availability. The participants involved, their gender, company type and the length for each interview are displayed in Table 2 below.

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

Participants	Gender	Company	Timing
1- Administrative assistant	Female	Large	18m.35
2- Administrative assistant	Female	Small	7m.57
3- Engineer	Male	Large	13m.19
4- Sales Manager	Male	Small	12m.30
5- Client	Male	Large	11m.45
6- Client	Male	Small	10m. 25

The aim of the interviews is to obtain qualitative data about the participants' attitudes towards the varieties studied and particularly to derive the participants' own opinions and perceptions of CS constraints. These data are obviously complementary to the quantitative data provided by the questionnaires and the attitudinal test conducted with the same participants. Assessing attitudes through a combination of attitudinal tests, observations, questionnaires and interviews to try to extract objective measurements of informants' perceptions and judgements is a common practice in CS studies in order to obtain reliable judgements (Belazi 1991). Triangulating different methods for data collection is a way to get accurate information either directly (observations, interviews and

questionnaires) or indirectly (attitudinal test). Moreover, involving the participants in the evaluation of their own interactions 'is not just ethically sound but intellectually wise' (Johnstone 2000: 66) and very significant for the present research.

4. Tunisian Business People's Attitudes towards Code Switching

4.1 Description of the attitudinal test results

In order to study the TBSs' perceptions of each variety investigated and to obtain accurate answers about the research questions, a descriptive statistical test is conducted. The mean scores and the standard deviation for each variety by trait are calculated; see Table 3 below.

Table 3. Mean scores for the French, TA/French, MSA and TA/MSA varieties

Variables	Observations	French			TA/French			MSA			TA/MSA		
		Mean scores	Description	Std. dev	Mean scores	Description	Std. dev	Mean scores	Description	Std. dev	Mean scores	Description	Std. dev
1-Intelligent	30	3.60	High	1.00	3.70	High	1.11	3.36	Moderate	1.13	3.20	Moderate	0.88
2-Educated	30	3.70	High	1.05	3.80	High	0.85	3.50	High	1.08	2.93	Moderate	1.01
3-Modern	30	3.83	High	1.14	3.86	High	1.22	3.36	Moderate	1.48	3.16	Moderate	1.05
4-Important	30	3.43	Moderate	1.13	3.33	Moderate	1.33	3.50	High	1.50	2.83	Moderate	0.94
5-Modest	30	2.83	Moderate	1.36	2.96	Moderate	1.27	2.96	Moderate	1.41	2.70	Moderate	1.14
6-Funny	30	2.16	Low	1.01	2.43	Low	1.42	2.03	Low	0.92	1.90	Low	0.80
7-Ambitious	30	3.63	High	0.96	3.66	High	1.12	3.20	Moderate	1.33	3.13	Moderate	1.16
8-Elegant	30	3.50	High	1.33	3.63	High	1.41	3.46	Moderate	1.49	3.36	Moderate	1.15
9-Conservative	30	2.76	Moderate	0.97	2.56	Moderate	1.21	2.90	Moderate	1.12	2.60	Moderate	1.03
10-Serious	30	3.90	High	1.09	3.96	High	0.44	3.83	High	0.90	3.83	High	0.94

Note: every mean score is rounded down if the digits after the decimal point are smaller than or equal to .499, and up if the digits are equal to or bigger than .500. This is to provide a description for the mean scores (McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Allwright, 1998).

On the one hand, the mean scores for the French and TA/French varieties mostly fall in the area labelled ‘high’. The traits ‘important’, ‘modest’ and ‘conservative’ are rated ‘moderate’. Some judges have declared at the end of the test that these three traits could hardly be discerned without having direct contact with the speakers. The trait ‘funny’ also falls in the area ‘low’ for the French and TA/French varieties. The ‘low’ evaluation of this trait is probably due to the nature of the setting and the quality of the data heard. The judges are exposed to speakers in a business context describing their businesses and occupations. The standard deviations from the mean range from 0.97 to 1.36 for the French variety and 0.44

to 1.42 for the TA/French code-switched variety.

On the other hand, the mean scores of the MSA variety mainly fall in the area described as ‘moderate’ for the majority of the traits, except ‘educated’, ‘important’ and ‘serious’ which are ‘highly’ evaluated compared to the trait ‘funny’ that is under-evaluated (low); the standard deviations of the means vary between 0.90 to 1.50. However, the code-switched variety TA/MSA mean scores mostly fall in the area labelled ‘moderate’ except for the trait ‘serious’ which is perceived as ‘high’, and ‘funny’ which is considered in the four varieties as ‘low’. The standard deviations of the means range from 0.80 to 1.15.

If we compare the mean scores of the four varieties studied by traits with regard to the Likert scale (1-5), we notice that TA/MSA is ranked last with eight trait means falling under the category ‘moderate’ followed by MSA with six traits. On the other hand, French and TA/French are predominantly rated ‘high’ (6 traits) displaying comparable mean scores for all the traits. However, the two traits ‘serious’ and ‘funny’ are perceived as ‘high’ and ‘low’, respectively, for the four varieties. Consequently, what could be drawn from the statistical results is that the code switched variety TA/MSA is the lowest evaluated variety in terms of ‘intelligence’, ‘education’, ‘modernism’, ‘importance’, ‘modesty’, ‘ambition’, ‘elegance’

and ‘conservatism’. MSA is ‘higher’ than TA/MSA in terms of ‘education’ and ‘importance’. French and the code-switched variety TA/French are ‘highly’ considered in terms of ‘intelligence’, ‘education’, ‘modernism’, ‘ambition’ and ‘elegance’.

In order to determine the judges’ implicit attitudes towards the linguistic proficiencies of the speakers in the varieties chosen, the mean scores are calculated by speaker for each variety and trait. The results present noticeable contrasts between the speakers, mainly for speaker B who is rated ‘higher’ than A and C for the majority of the traits and varieties; see Table 4.

Table 4 Mean scores by speakers for the full test

Variables	Speaker A			Speaker B			Speaker C		
	Mean	Description	Std. dev	Mean	Description	Std. dev	Mean	Description	Std. dev
1- Intelligent	3.25	Moderate	1.08	3.65	High	0.89	3.50	High	1.03
2- Educated	3.37	Moderate	1.07	3.72	High	0.96	3.35	Moderate	1.09
3- Modern	3.35	Moderate	1.18	3.90	High	1.03	3.42	Moderate	1.19
4- Important	2.97	Moderate	1.20	3.47	Moderate	0.98	3.37	Moderate	1.16
5- Modest	2.77	Moderate	1.32	2.65	Moderate	1.00	3.17	Moderate	1.21
6- Funny	1.85	Low	0.94	2.15	Low	0.92	2.40	Low	1.10
7- Ambitious	3.20	Moderate	1.20	3.62	High	1.02	3.40	Moderate	1.05
8- Elegant	3.07	Moderate	1.24	3.95	High	1.03	3.45	Moderate	1.21
9-Conservative	2.70	Moderate	0.99	2.70	Moderate	1.04	2.72	Moderate	1.10
10- Serious	3.87	High	1.09	4.07	High	0.65	3.70	High	0.93

The mean scores show that speaker B is 'highly' judged for most traits (intelligent, educated, modern, ambitious, elegant and serious); compared to speaker C who is 'highly' regarded for two traits only (intelligent and serious). Speaker A's mean scores mostly fall in the area labelled 'moderate' except for the traits 'funny' and 'serious' which are equally judged by varieties and speakers throughout the test as 'low' and 'high', respectively. In order to compare the speakers' proficiencies by varieties studied, the mean scores are calculated for each speaker by variety and traits.

The results show that speaker B is 'highly' judged for the varieties French, and TA/MSA followed by speaker C, then A. Speaker A is 'highly' judged for the code-switched variety TA/French, followed by speaker B, then speaker C. For MSA, speaker C ranks first, followed by speaker B, then A. The linguistic proficiencies of the speakers in the varieties studied are significant in judging the varieties used and the TBSs' linguistic constraints on CS. Indeed, most of the judges have commented on the 'moderate' French linguistic proficiency of speaker A compared to speakers B and C, although they have 'highly' rated his TA/French CS. Moreover, the judges consider that the physical appearance of the speakers in a business context is central to judge the 'importance' of the business person. This evaluation

could not be possible through listening to speakers' voices only.

Moreover, the attitudinal test results reveal that the majority of the judges (68 responses out of 120) would like to meet the speakers (Q1) although they (83/120) do not want to speak like them (Q2). This might be because the MSA and TA/MSA varieties are perceived as marked in a business context. Moreover, the proficiencies of the speakers in the varieties investigated are crucial in evaluating the varieties. The results show that speaker B is favoured above the other two speakers on the French variety (seeing that 7 out of 10 judges would like to speak like him). Actually, speaker B is a highly educated postgraduate compared to A and C who are graduate/undergraduate bilinguals. Moreover, the overall scores show that the speakers are mostly judged (77/120) as coming from the middle class (Q3) except speaker B who is perceived as an 'upper class' speaker for the French variety (6/10) as opposed to speaker C (6/10) for the TA/MSA variety. Furthermore, the judges have evaluated most of the speakers (91/120) as fluent business speakers (Q4).

To sum up the attitudinal test results:

- TA/MSA is the lowest rated variety on most traits.
- MSA is slightly 'higher' than TA/MSA on two traits only (education and importance).

- French and TA/French are ‘highly’ rated in terms of ‘intelligence’, ‘education’, ‘modernism’, ‘ambition’ and ‘elegance’.
- The judges evaluate the French variety ‘highly’ when it is fluently spoken as in the case of speaker B, MSA as spoken by speaker C and the TA/French code-switched variety when it is fluently used as by speaker A.

4.2 The questionnaire and interviews results

The questionnaire results reveal that the majority of the participants (70%) consider CS as a positive communicative process whereas some participants (25%) regard CS facilitator of contact and understanding mainly when the linguistic performances of the speakers in one of the languages are moderate or low. CS is a perfect means to exchange information and achieve a successful interaction:

Extract 1:

P3²: I consider CS positive in the sense that it helps me to communicate and transfer my message...

² P3: Participant number 3; see Table 1 above

as both negative and positive in TBS’s conversations. The interviews conducted with the participants support the questionnaire results. The spectrum of rationales offered for the positive views is that CS enhances communication and reflects the speakers’ ability to use more than one language fluently. CS also facilitates contact between speakers and consequently facilitates the selling of products. Besides, CS is a mediator when speakers lack technical words in one of the languages used. Furthermore, CS helps speakers to carry on the conversation without interruption because of a lack of proficiency in one of the languages used. Therefore, according to the participants, CS is primarily considered as a communicative enhancer, and a

This is a business context and all means of communication are accepted in order to sell products and gain profits. This marketing spirit is noticed in all interviewees’ responses:

Extract 2:

P12: For me CS is positive because it helps me to communicate when I’m stuck. If I limit myself only to TA, French, MSA

or even English inside a multinational, I wouldn't be able to communicate nor sell my products...

Moreover, CS facilitates business interactions as an in-group linguistic behaviour amongst the TBSs due to their educational background and to the fact that TA (a non-codified variety) lacks technical vocabulary:

Extract 4:

P9: Actually CS is positive because there are some technical words we only know in French, we learnt them in French...

Although CS is positively regarded by the majority of the participants (70%), some negative aspects have been pointed out either in the questionnaires or the interviews. The rationales derived from the questionnaire data encompass the fact that addressees might not appreciate or accept CS. They might think that the addresser is not proficient in one of the languages used. Moreover, CS could sometimes lead to misunderstanding if it is extensive. It could affect the purity of the language or might lead to its loss added to the informality of the CS settings. Actually, CS in formal settings is a sign of poor education and a lack of professionalism, mainly when the conversations are

conducted in MSA. Although, the participants believe that extensive CS might lead to misunderstanding, it is preferred to monolingualism in a business setting. It is a key to a lack of proficiency in any of the languages used:

Extract 5:

P4: ... but sometimes it's negative because one would lose his language...

Extract 6:

P17: When I have to use one language, MSA or English, for example with an Arab client from the Gulf, I'm stuck, I find that there are words that I only know in French...That's the main trouble...

CS is judged as negative mainly in formal settings with TBSs of higher social status; CS in formal settings could be linked to the TBSs' lack of proficiency and professionalism:

Extract 7:

P3: ...it has also a negative aspect for example I can't code switch in a business meeting with people from the Trade Chamber. I daren't say a word in Arabic and another in French. I have to be proficient in one language, because it's not professional ...

Besides, CS is perceived as negative in the presence of out-group members who might feel excluded from the conversation if TBSs use a language they have not mastered.

The interviewees are also asked about their opinions of TBSs who never code switch and use either TA or French to communicate with Tunisian colleagues or clients. The interviewees have refused to make any personal judgements about these TBSs, but they have affirmed that using TA only in business conversations is relatively impossible, unless it is supported by French for scientific and technical words. Furthermore, TBSs consider the unique use of TA for business communication as both positive and negative. They think it is positive because it promotes TA and yet negative given that the TBSs' job requires openness to foreign countries and encourages people to learn more languages, rather than using a non-codified language (in this case TA) and lose business opportunities. However, the use of French only by TBSs to communicate with Tunisian colleagues and clients is also regarded as negative, seeing that it might lead to the loss of TA, and the probable decay and death of MSA. Furthermore, the sole use of French is considered as marked, sophisticated, and a sign of disunity inside in-group members, who share the same socio-cultural and linguistic heritage, unless it is related to TBSs'

socio-educational backgrounds mainly for the case of older generations of TBSs.

Extract 14:

P22: ...those who studied in a French school, or lived in France use French in their discussions all the time. We aren't annoyed because we know it's natural you understand? But there are those who show off... well in this case it's a bit annoying...

In addition, the interviewees judge diglossic CS or TA/MSA/English CS as a deliberate linguistic behaviour. They maintain that CS to languages other than French is not spontaneous, but more of an intentional choice when faced with a client who does not share the same socio-cultural background as TBSs, such as Libyans, Iraqis, or other clients from the Middle East. This is confirmed by all interviewees when they say 'I have to use MSA', 'I try to explain in MSA if I can', 'I can't use MSA for technical words', 'I'm not fluent in MSA, but I have to achieve a successful communication by whatever means', 'I try to show the products if I'm stuck', 'I would feel ridiculous if I used MSA'. The attitudinal test results for the MSA variety support these overt claims. Furthermore, there is evidence supported by the questionnaires that most of the participants (90%) use English to code switch with foreign

clients who do not share their L2 or their local variety. The use of English is mainly confined to technical words or explanations concerning the goods.

Besides, the TBSs are asked about their opinions on changing the linguistic situation and adopting one language for communication between Tunisians and with Arab clients. The arguments offered against this form of oral standardisation are that standardisation would limit the business sector well known for multi-nationalism and language diversity but might be accepted for written correspondence. It is also difficult for Tunisians to achieve complete and successful communication in TA or MSA only but English could be used to avoid misunderstanding. Moreover, using one language with TBSs is quite impossible but sharing a standard language between Arabs is desirable in order to achieve unity among people who share the same religious and cultural background, although it is still widely observed. Furthermore, when asked about their CS behaviour, all participants perceive their TA/French CS as spontaneous and unmarked:

Extract 19:

P3: It's natural...we are accustomed to speak like that... our dialect is already mixed with French...

I mean code switching is unintentional and spontaneous....

Extract 20:

P12: I just want 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... all Tunisians mix TA and French...it's our culture and difficult to drop... besides it's further intensified at work...

However, TA/French CS is socially and linguistically constrained when used either to enhance communication triggered by the contextual setting of a business situation, the participants involved, or because of a lack of technical words in one of the languages chosen. CS is also the result of the frequent contact between their native language (TA) and the language of education and occupation (French).

Extract 23:

P9: Because we studied in French that's all...well a gasket or ring... I don't know these in Arabic...

To sum up the questionnaires' and interviews' results:

- CS is judged as both positive and negative: It is positive because it enhances communication, facilitates

business exchanges and increases profit which is the key concern of TBSs. However, it is negative because it indicates a lack of professionalism and proficiency in the languages used and it is also perceived as a linguistic threat to the native language.

- No form of oral standardisation is accepted by all TBSs because TA lacks technical vocabulary and TBSs lack proficiency in MSA and English, added to the fact that French use only would indicate pretentiousness and could keep those who do not master the language at a distance.
- Diglossic CS and TA/MSA/English CS are marked and constrained by the presence of out-group members.
- TA/French CS is an unmarked and a shared linguistic behaviour amongst TBSs as in-group members; it is the result of the socio-educational background of TBS as well as their linguistic and cultural heritage.

4.3 Discussion

The attitudinal test results reveal interesting points concerning the evaluation of the four varieties (French, TA/French, MSA and

TA/MSA) used in these business companies. Besides the results of the questionnaires and interviews support the TBSs' judgments of the varieties of languages used by the speakers and their CS behaviour indicated in the attitudinal test. Romaine (1989: 347) argues that 'there should be some regularities and shared judgments among community members regarding how code-switching is interpreted, and how speakers are to be categorized on the basis of their switching behaviour'.

First, the 'low' evaluation of the code-switched variety TA/MSA is primarily due to the fact that diglossic CS (Ferguson, 1959) or Educated Tunisian Arabic (ETA) exists only in particular circumstances. In Tunisia, ETA is used in semi-informal or formal oral communication (TV and radio). The adoption of ETA is first aimed at eradicating the extensive use of French in oral conversations, considered unacceptable through mass media. Moreover, the use of French words in alternation with TA on TV, for example, would limit the Arabic audience to TA/French speakers and would prevent foreign Arab speakers (Libya, Middle East, and Gulf countries) from understanding Tunisian broadcasting programmes. ETA is also used in discussions between Arabs from different countries who speak different local varieties but share the same MSA. This is because TA is not mutually intelligible with the

local varieties of Middle East and Gulf people (Belazi 1991). Thus, educated Tunisian speakers would code switch between TA and MSA for all words that are not shared by both varieties or which might be used extensively in French by educated Tunisians. Walters (2003: 92) exposes a further cause for the adoption of ETA by Tunisians. He claims that ‘in cases where Tunisians cannot maintain the *fusha* (MSA), they produce a dialectal form or some fudged form that is between the dialect and the high variety. In other words, they use resources from both varieties and engage in a form of codeswitching I have elsewhere termed diglossic switching.’ The results above confirm what Walters (2003) claims: The lack of proficiency in MSA constrains the TBSs to diglossic CS in order to maintain the conversation and fulfil their business aims. Although, MSA is now attaining an important status in the business sector it is still perceived as a less modern language, compared to French or English, to be used for international business conversations (Bahloul 2001). Furthermore, diglossic CS is under-evaluated because it is a marked CS behaviour in TBSs’ everyday interactions (Myers-Scotton 1988). It is a pragmatically constrained CS, prompted by the setting of the conversations and the speakers involved. As Walters (2003: 92) explains, TBSs mainly resort to diglossic CS because of the presence of out-group members reinforced by

their lack of performance in MSA. As mentioned in the results above, most interviewees have declared their inability to conduct a comprehensive business conversation in TA or MSA.

Second, the attitudinal test results show that MSA is rated slightly ‘higher’ than TA/MSA on two traits only (education and importance). Actually, MSA and its older form Classical Arabic (CA) are associated with religion, education, and politics. MSA is mainly used for reading and writing purposes. TA is the native language of Tunisians, which is used at home and in informal and semi-formal speaking situations only. TA is not codified, nor is it recognized as the national language of its speakers. It is less prestigious than MSA but reflects Tunisians’ identity, history and culture. Moreover, TA has integrated many borrowed words from other languages, such as Spanish, Italian, Turkish and French, which makes it unacceptable in written documents and not mutually intelligible with other local varieties of Arabic. In addition, TBSs’ attitudes toward MSA and TA are still widely divergent. MSA is associated with ‘purity’, ‘correctness’ and complexity. This explains its ‘high’ judgement for the two traits ‘education’ and ‘importance’ in comparison to the code-switched variety TA/MSA. Like all world languages, MSA has witnessed a change, development, shift and decay of old forms in

favour of new ones. In order to follow the flow of modernisation and the new technologies, MSA has resorted to borrowing and coinage of new words. In fact, all Arab countries' leaders disregard their local varieties in favour of MSA, which is recognized as the official language of Arab countries. This attitude towards the varieties dates back to the Arabic crusades (8th C), which aimed to spread the Islamic religion and the Arabic language, and suppress the local languages of its colonies. Consequently, MSA is still regarded as 'higher' than the local varieties as its 'proper' use is confined to educated people. In contrast, the local varieties are considered degenerate and not 'proper' for use apart from speaking purposes. Freeman (1996 np) claims that 'Many Arabs will state that Classical Arabic is 'the real language' and that the dialects are 'corrupted' or 'impure' forms'.

In an attitudinal study conducted in Egypt comparing CA, Egyptian Arabic (EA) and English, El-Dash & Tucker (1975) have discovered that English rates slightly higher than CA and EA. CA is rated higher for religion and 'likeability' whereas EA is considered higher in the evaluation task being a home language. Evaluating the high variety (CA or MSA) over the low one in Arabic countries is a common feature noticed in attitudinal studies. The high variety is identified with religion, literary heritage and the historical background of Arabs; the

low variety reflects the identity and cultural heritage of its speakers (Tunisians in this case) (Stevens 1983; Battenburg 1997; Freeman 1996; Lawson & Sachdev 2000; Walters 1998, 2003; Author 2007; 2009; 2010).

Third, the attitudinal test results indicate that French is positively regarded by the judges for most traits. Evidence of a high level of 'education', 'modernism', 'importance' and 'elegance' has always been associated with French in French post-colonial countries, likewise English in English ex-protectorates (Stevens 1983; Cheng & Butler 1989; Kamwangamalu 1989; Lin 1996; Battenburg 1997; Lawson & Sachdev 2000; Bangeni & Kapp 2007; Rubdy 2007). Stevens (1983:108) declares that 'to be educated in Tunisia is to be a French speaker. Hence, knowledge of French carries with it prestige; (and) ignorance of French produces lack of status... (moreover) the prestige of French in Tunisia often makes possible the use of that language as an expression of power, (and) an assertion of authority.' 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 most Ministries).

In his attitudinal test, Belazi (1991) has found that French rates higher in terms of 'education', 'modernism' and 'importance', whereas TA rates higher in terms of 'religion', 'conservatism' and 'nationalism'. Here the traits 'religious' and 'nationalist' have not been considered because the author believes that they are not significant for the present study as it is a business context. Although some interviewees, as mentioned above, disapprove of the exclusive use of French in business communications and perceive it as a threat to TA, the attitudinal test results for the French variety show that it is 'highly' perceived as a business variety and its fluent speakers (speaker B) are above all 'highly' regarded. This issue is raised by Southworth (1980:139 cited in Myers-Scotton 1993) when studying English and Malayalam CS; he states that 'we might ask [...] why people who are fluent in English bother to use Malayalam at all. The answer seems to be that to carry on a conversation entirely in English would create an extremely formal atmosphere. Making excessive use of English is, in fact, a way of keeping a person at a distance.' Evidently, TBSs disregard the exclusive use of French in business conversations between in-group speakers for the same reasons as mentioned by Southworth. First, the sole use of French would exclude the TBSs who do not speak the language fluently. Second, The

TBSs who speak French only at work would be judged as 'snobbish' and showing off. Third, the TBSs' sense of belonging and attachment to their native language (TA) as a conveyor of their identity and culture would refrain them from dropping TA and losing it in favour of a post-colonial language (French), even though the majority of the interviewees have assured from the beginning of the interviews that French use is firstly established and encouraged from the household (McGroarty 1996; Huguet 2006).

Fourth, the results prove that TA/French CS is 'highly' perceived by the judges because it is as an unmarked CS behaviour (Myers-Scotton 1988; 1993; Ennaji 1991; Lawson & Sachdev 2000), practised among Tunisian educated bilinguals (Belazi 1991; Walters 2003) and between TBSs in informal and semi-formal speech situations. Actually, CS is the 'most significant discourse marker in bilingual conversations' (Auer 1994:125). The speakers show preference for one language or the other because they want to use the languages in which they have a better competence and for socio-political or educational reasons (Heller 1992). In the present case study, the participants declare that TA/French CS is constrained by the setting (that is the business setting), the topic (business/technical), the mode (formal/informal) and the participants (Tunisians/foreigners) involved in the conversations.

However, CS with in-group members seems to be practised between TBSs even outside the business setting. Most of the participants have declared that they have started CS very early at home and have always code switched between TA and French regardless of the setting of conversations. They further claim that CS is a habitual behaviour between educated Tunisian bilinguals brought about at home and reinforced by the educational background, the 'functional gap' between TA and MSA, the 'psychological association of French with modernism and Arabic with Traditionalism, along with the intensive trade between Tunisia and the West' (Belazi 1991: 91-92). CS is also extensive in the speech of fluent French and Arabic bilinguals (Bentahila 1983: 233). It is a linguistic behaviour practised by bilinguals to show their communicative competence in switching between two varieties in different speech situations (use of different vocabulary for diverse topics, CS a rhetorical device and CS as language gap fillers among other CS strategies). The mixed variety is spontaneously spoken by bilinguals in different domains and situations of use.

Unpredictably, the participants who regard TA/French CS as positive are the same ones who think that it has some negative points as well, presumably because they switch themselves. However, their negative

attitudes towards CS seem to be arising out of their fear of being misjudged by their addressees as linguistically incompetent (Cheng & Butler 1989; Kamwangamalu 1989; Lin 1996; Lawson & Sachdev 2000; Rubdy 2007; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain 2009; Author 2009; 2010). The participants consider CS as a perfect means to boost communication and rapport between speakers although it might reflect some aspects of informality and a lack of professionalism. What is more striking about the interviewees' perception of their TA/ French CS is that they have not recognized their own switching during the interviews, when asked by the interviewer to comment on the languages used during the interview process. The reason is that some interviewees perceive their CS a 'monolect' instead of two mixed varieties (Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998: 76). In the monolectal view of CS, the mixture of the two languages behaves like a unique and smooth language. CS 'is not necessarily a 'marked' or 'special' way of speaking, with particular functions and effects which make it different or more effective than monolingual speech (Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998: 76). Monolectal CS is the rule, a language per se which is 'used in a relaxed way, and for purposes - if any - that have more to do with speech elaboration, a desire to speak nicely or artistically, to create humorous effects, and so on' (Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998: 76).

This supports the 'high' evaluation of the TA/French code switched variety in the attitudinal test results provided above.

Although English is judged as the most significant variety for international business communication with foreign colleagues and clients who do not speak French as a second language, it is still perceived as a marked variety constrained by the setting, topic and the participants involved in business interactions. Bahloul (2001: np) stresses the importance of English for business progress he declares:

...technological exchanges particularly with the USA, (which) highlight the need for English... English has made significant gains in the domains of radio/TV broadcasting and the written press, domains that were traditionally and exclusively operated by French and Arabic... adverts of products drawn upon English are an attempt to secure a significant share of the market at home and abroad... despite the recent territorial gains of the English language in Tunisia, it still lags behind Standard Arabic and French. These two

languages remain far more important than English, at least for the time being.

Battenburg (1997: 281) affirms that from the 1980's there was an urgent appeal from the government to promote the status of English in Tunisia as opposed to that of French aiming to pursue the international flow of modernisation and technological progress via the English language. English has certainly strengthened its position and status in Tunisia since then, but its coexistence with French in Tunisians' everyday interactions is still widely observed.

Interestingly, the investigation on attitudes shows that TBSs implicitly consider the linguistic proficiencies of the speakers in the varieties used and show a preference for the varieties that are fluently spoken by TBSs. They appreciate the French, TA/French and MSA varieties when they are fluently and smoothly spoken as done respectively by speakers A, B and C in the attitudinal test (Lawson & Sachdev 2000:1356). Perceptibly, attitudes are influenced by the linguistic proficiency of its speakers even if the compared languages themselves are not equally perceived (as in this case study). Lasagabaster (2005: 310) affirms that 'if the most influential variables in each of the languages are compared, the first thing that draws our attention is the fact that language competence appears as a very

influential variable in all cases.' Presumably, a poor competence would derive negative attitudes about the investigated language (s) even if the broad-spectrum of attitudes are widely considered as optimistic.

5. Conclusion

The attitudinal test findings are supportive of the results obtained from the interviews and questionnaires in terms of attitudes towards the language varieties used in these business companies and the TBSs' CS behaviour. The results show a preference for French and TA/French varieties used spontaneously and fluently during business conversations, compared to MSA and TA/MSA as marked varieties constrained by the setting and the participants involved in the conversations. Their use is confined to specific social constraints and they are hardly ever used in the everyday conversation of Tunisian bilinguals. Although in the attitudinal test the TBSs have judged the linguistic proficiencies of the speakers in the varieties used and have showed a

preference for the French variety when it is fluently spoken by a post-graduate speaker (B) compared to the performances of the other two speakers (A and C), in the interviews, some of them have refrained from giving any judgments on the performances of TBSs in the language varieties used in business communications. This might be due to TBSs' precedence of business considerations over any linguistic or social considerations. The research also reveals significant results concerning the implicit and explicit attitudes of TBSs towards the varieties of languages used in the businesses investigated along with their CS behaviour. Although TA is associated with the identity and linguistic heritage of TBSs, it nevertheless lacks the key linguistic means to achieve a successful business communication, hence the use of the code switched variety TA/French which has thrived to become a monolect used by TBSs in any informal to semi-formal business conversations.

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Appendix 1

English version of the Text supplied in Four varieties (French, TA/French, MSA, MSA/TA)

We are a trading company. We deal with different clients all over the world. Our company is well-known internationally. It is a branch of a famous French mother company known worldwide. We construct cold room for hotels, restaurants and all institutions requiring a cold conservation of their products.

We also construct cold rooms for farmers to conserve their fruits and vegetables and we furthermore supply hospitals and clinics with clean rooms for operation blocs and sterile spaces. I'm the sales manager of this company. I deal with clients and well as suppliers. My task consists in advertising our products in Tunisia and abroad. I travel a lot through the country to promote our company and attract new clients. I also attend international cold fairs which take place annually in a different country around the world. I like my job a lot because I find it passionate, enriching and well paid.

Appendix 2

Evaluation Sheet

How do you find this speaker?

	1	2	3	4	5
Intelligent					
Educated					
Modern					
Important					
Modest					
Funny					
Ambitious					
Elegant					
Conservative					
Serious					

Questions:

- 1- Would you like to meet this person? Yes ___ No ___
- 2- Do you wish to speak like this person? Yes ___ No ___
- 3- To which social class does he/she belong to? High ___ Middle ___
Low___
- 4- Is he/she acceptable as a business person? Yes ___ No ___