Avoidance of Idioms: An Ethnic Group Identity Issue?

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

May 2008

Canada

ABSTRACT

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The intimate link between language and ethnic identity is well documented in the literature. Language choice, accents, phonetic segments, and specific vocabulary items have been shown to be easily manipulated to express ethnic group affiliation. Idiom use is often socially motivated, suggesting the possibility that they could also be manipulated to express identity issue. This paper reports a study investigating, whether Tunisian students resist learning North American English idioms and whether this resistance, if it exists, is an identity negotiation strategy.

Forty intermediate proficiency Tunisian learners of English as a foreign language listened to the matched-guise recordings peers reading three versions of a scenario, differentiated from one another only on the basis of their idiom content. After listening to each voice, the participants rated the speaker in terms of personality traits and perceived in-group and out-group loyalty as measured by an ethnic group affiliation questionnaire. They also completed an idiom recognition test to assess their idiom familiarity. Finally, they indicated their pride and loyalty to the Tunisian ethnic group by filling out self- rated loyalty scales.

The findings highlighted a significant association between idiom use and Ethnic group affiliation, particularly Engagement in Tunisian culture, which affects the participants' perception of idioms. In terms of status and refinement, the participants rated the American text and the neutral text positively. Thus, contrary to what was predicted, they had a positive view towards idiom use. The participants' ability to recognize idioms and gender had an effect on their reactions to idiom use.

To

My husband, Taoufik
My kids, Adam and Jed

For making my world better

ACKNOWLDGEMENTS

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I- STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The motivation for this thesis stemmed from my personal experience as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Tunisia, and from having become acquainted with a fascinating research issue in the field of bilingualism: the intimate relationship between language and identity.

As a secondary EFL teacher in a secondary school in Tunisia, where English is taught starting from the 6th grade of basic education, I was motivated to help my students (12th-13th year in secondary education / speciality: mathematics, science, or letters) gain native-like fluency in English, assuming this to be a viable goal. To do so, I decided to teach my advanced students expressions whose overall meaning does not come merely from its individual parts (e.g., Gairns & Redman, 1986), such as "skating on thin ice" and "spilling the beans". The abovementioned expressions are usually employed by native speakers of English to describe something dangerous or in talking about revealing secrets, respectively, instead of the more literally, more transparent words that describe these actions.

At that time, I thought that a strong knowledge of expressions, which are defined as idioms (Liontas, 2002) would help my students become better speakers and negotiators, so that they would be in a much better position to take advantage of the opportunities for genuine use of English that come their way (e.g., travelling, Internet).

The literature on idioms showed that they are "ubiquitous" (Okrainee, 2003, p. 1) and frequent in any language discourse. According to some scholars, approximately four idiomatic expressions occur each minute in conversation. (Pollio, Barlow, Fine, & Pollio, 1998). Pollio et al. have found the frequency of idioms (i.e., 4.08 idioms per minute) to

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be high in discourse so they suggested that they could become an important focus "of vocabulary acquisition and language learning in general" (Pollio et al., 1998, p. 62). In addition, idioms are found to be the most frequently used forms of figurative language (Brinton, Fujiki, & Mackey, 1985). Okrainee (2003) found that idioms are common in language instruction: kindergarten teachers use idioms approximately five percent of the time, while grade eight teachers use idioms approximately twenty percent of the time (Lazar, Warr-Leeper, Nicholson, & Johnson, 1989). Due to their frequency of occurrence in both conversational and instructional language (Pollio et al., 1977; Hoffman & Honeck, 1980; Lazar et al., 1989), idioms are important throughout the school-age years for oral communication, discourse comprehension, reading comprehension (Secord & Wiig, 1993), academic achievement, and social interaction (Wiig, 1985).

For the reasons mentioned above, I thought it would be important for my students to learn idioms because using idioms in their speech would make it more native-like and authentic. Prodromou (2003) urged teachers to raise their students' awareness of "how native-speakers use English out there in the real world" (p. 44). Wright (1999), in his introduction to a practice book of idioms for students, also explained that proficiency in the English language could only be achieved through learning idioms.

Finally, I believed, as recommended by Irujo (1986), that the best way to teach idioms successfully would be to allow learners to compare idioms in the first (L1) and second languages (L2) to enable them to discover which idioms are identical, which are similar, and which are different. Doing so would allow positive transfer to occur and ensure that interference (i.e., negative transfer) is avoided. For this reason, the English idioms I introduced to my students were either identical in form and meaning to their

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Tunisian equivalents (e.g., wrapped around your little finger, the walls have ears, to kill two birds with one stone), or different from their corresponding Tunisian idioms (e.g., rain cats and dogs, scratch each other's back, skating on thin ice, spilling the beans).

To my surprise, my Tunisian learners encountered difficulties learning and using English idioms and it was not uncommon to see them avoid these altogether. My general observations during four years of teaching indicated that Tunisian students avoided using English idioms, and preferred using non-idiomatic expressions when expressing themselves in English, particularly if they are given an option to use either idiomatic or non-idiomatic expressions. In addition, my Tunisian students did not use their knowledge of L1 idioms (i.e., Tunisian Arabic idioms) to learn and produce English idioms though they were encouraged to make comparisons between their two languages, since the Arabic language, in general, and in particular, the Tunisian dialect, share many identical and similar idioms with English.

In an attempt to understand the reasons of this avoidance and find solutions, I interviewed at that time some of my students and colleagues, and I kept writing down comments I received. In the words of one student "They [idioms] are important, but not as important as using other grammatically correct structures". Another student stated it less specifically, "I think that there are other items that are more essential". One of my colleagues pointed out that "Idioms are not necessary for daily communication! When a talker uses an unknown idiom, an L2 learner can always ask for clarification (except when reading, I suppose). So, it is more important to teach basic vocabulary and grammar first". Another instructor noted "If students avoid learning idioms, I will not oblige them

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to learn". However, the majority of my Tunisian students and colleagues were not able to provide an answer.

Similarly, Liontas (1997) found that students' comprehension difficulties and avoidance of learning idioms have prompted many secondary and post-secondary learners and instructors to argue against the systematic teaching of idioms in beginning and intermediate language classes.

Contrary to the Tunisian students' reaction towards learning idioms, many studies on students' attitudes towards learning idioms have yielded positive results. For instance, Liontas (2002) investigated how ESL learners themselves assess their knowledge of idioms, examined their opinions towards idioms' teaching and learning, and investigated the affective and cognitive variables that might impact their notion of idiomaticity. Sixty adult college-level learners of Spanish, French, and German completed two questionnaires to achieve two main purposes; first, to assess their level of confidence in understanding and interpreting texts in the target language containing idioms; and second, to examine their personal ways of dealing with idioms. The findings revealed that students showed a strong desire to actively learn idioms in a foreign language classroom. Indeed, 75% of them wanted idioms to become an integral part of their language and culture learning (e.g., *idioms should be included in the foreign language curriculum, idioms play an important role in natural language, culture, and communication*). The findings also demonstrated that the students have specific beliefs about the importance of learning idioms, the nature of idiomatic learning, and the strategies that may facilitate such learning. For example, the participants overwhelmingly endorsed the need to learn, repeat, and practice idioms in a variety of communicative contexts. In addition, the

participants showed their need for a context in processing, understanding, and interpreting idioms. Furthermore, they believed that idioms, especially those which are most useful and frequently used in everyday communication, should be presented in a manner that mirrors real-life language use.

The students' perceptions about learning idioms in Liontas' study seem to have been generally positive, in contrast to those of my Tunisian students, who did not show any desire to actively learn idioms in a foreign language classroom context, a factor that prompted me to examine the cause of their negative reaction further.

At that time, I believed that their resistance towards learning idioms was due possibly to three main factors. The first was that it was difficult for them to learn idioms. The difficulty could have been due to either the non-literalness of idioms, or the ineffectiveness of materials designed to teach idioms in an EFL context (Irujo, 1986). Non-literalness of an idiom refers to the fact that its meaning cannot be derived from its constituent parts. For example, the words that compose an idiom such as "skating on thin ice" or "add fuel to the fire" do not directly express their literal meanings. As a result, an EFL learner, unlike a native speaker of the target language (TL), may not be able to easily figure out the intended meaning of an idiom. For one thing, EFL students' exposure to idioms occurs mainly in non-interactive situations (e.g., when they are watching movies, listening to songs).

The second factor that I thought would explain their avoidance of idioms was possibly a widespread belief among Tunisian students that proficiency in English could only be achieved by learning Standard English, and that such English should not contain idioms, which they considered to be everyday language used in the street. The following

quotes are some of the responses captured by the small survey I conducted at that time to understand my students' resistance to using idioms. In the words of one Tunisian student "They [idioms] are important, but they can be heard everywhere, in the street, for example". Another student stressed that, "I think that there are other items, parts of standard grammar, which are more essential to learn". Indeed, Standard English is considered by these Tunisian students as the refined form of written or spoken English, which has a prestigious status and is the most desirable form of language to learn; whereas everyday language represents the informal language which is considered (according to my students) to be grammatically incorrect and imperfect.

The third factor, as mentioned by Liontas (1999) might be the lack of an adequate idiom presentation in foreign language textbooks so that idioms are treated "more cosmetically than pedagogically" (Liontas, 1999, p. 440). Often, the presentation of idioms lacks any coherent methodology for presenting the strategic use of idioms in order to capture and express particular states of mind or observation at moments "when maximum communication is desired with minimal language" (p. 441).

Presently, however, after having read a great deal about the relationship between language and group identity (Pavlenko & Backledge, 2004; Doran, 2004; and Fought, 2006), I began to wonder about another possible reason that could explain their resistance. This was the possibility that learning and use of idioms might be reflective of group loyalty issues. Indeed, language, as a symbol of identity, occupies an important position in the group as well in that of each individual member. Pavlenko and Backledge (2004) pointed out that individuals possess multiple identities (e.g., ethnic group identities, professional identities, political identities, gender identities), and that these

identities are negotiated and manipulated at different times and in different places. In this

negotiation, language (or language register) choice, as well as specific features of

language (e.g., accents, phonetic sounds, and lexical items) are often manipulated.

Bailey's (2000) study of a Dominican American adolescent who skillfully used multiple

language varieties in order to emphasize his blackness in some instances and his Latin

origins in others, shows that language choice is an identity negotiation strategy. (See also

Casesnoves & Sankoff, 2003; Sayahi, 2005 for other examples). Accent manipulation, is

another identity negotiation strategy, illustrated in Bourhis and Giles' (1977) study of

Welsh participants who made their accents in English more Welshlike when their

political aspirations regarding the preservation of Welsh was challenged by a British

interlocutor. Marx (2002) and Findlay, Hoy, and Stockdale (2004) reported similar accent

manipulation by other linguistic groups. Both studies addressed the question of second

language and second culture acquisition, by focusing on identity and specifically, the

appropriation of accent. The manipulation of phonetic segments for the same purpose of

identity marking is illustrated in Labov's (1963) study of residents of the United States'

resort island, Martha's Vineyard. In this study a group of permanent Vineyarders

adopted a more conservative pronunciation of the /a/ sound in their speech to identify

themselves as Vineyarders and differentiated themselves from the tourists who visited

their island each summer. Labov (1966), Laferriere (1979), Knack (1991), Shilling-Estes

(1995), Boberg (2004), and Zilles and King (2005) reported similar phonetic segment

manipulation by other linguistic groups. Finally, manipulation at the level of the lexicon

is illustrated in Doran's (2004) study of multi-ethnic youth living in disadvantaged

neighbourhood outside Paris who pronounced words in a certain way to signal

membership in adolescent groups and differentiate themselves from mainstream groups (See also Kostinas, 1998; Appel & Shoonen, 2005; Reyes, 2005 for other examples).

With these considerations in mind, I thought it possible that the use of idioms might be related to identity matters in the minds of my Tunisian students. These students could have believed that using a "colloquial language" would make them sound less Tunisian or Arab and sound more like Americans, the most prominent English-speaking group that they are aware of who use idioms. Considering the well-known political conflicts between many Arab countries (i.e. Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, & Palestine) and the United States of America, it is possible that my students could have taken the simple fact of learning English idioms, which they did not consider to be useful for communication outside the American context anyway, to signify a trend towards adopting what they considered to be "American ways of behaving". In other terms, my students might have felt that using idioms made them sound more American and less Tunisian, thus, its use could have been seen as creating a distance between them and their peers.

From the Arabic language point of view, the abovementioned hypothesis is not without merit. Ross (2004) writes that language is a very important part of the Arab identity. The term "Arab" is used to describe people who share a common culture, history, and traditions heavily, but not solely, as they are influenced by Islam and are bound together through the use of the Arabic language. Thus, for Arabs, the language, aside from religion, is an important vehicle for building a sense of identity and shared destiny. He also points out that historically the resurrection of the Arabic language marked a starting point for the Arab revival, and a symbol of Arab identity.

Based on the intimate link between language and identity in the Arabic context, it was possible to hypothesize that my students' resistance towards learning idioms was a reflection of their desire to affirm their Tunisian ethnic identity and to distance themselves psychologically from outgroup members (Bourhis & Giles, 1977), particularly Americans, given the political conflicts between some Arab countries and the United States.

To date, however, there have to my knowledge not been any studies on resistance toward learning idioms in this context. For this reason, in the present study, I decided to examine my students' reluctance to use idioms and probe whether in some ways it is related to group identity matters.

The main goal of this current research then was to investigate whether Tunisian students' observed resistance towards learning and adopting English idioms was associated with identity negotiation. Participants (high-school and undergraduate EFL Tunisian students) were asked to listen in a matched guise like procedure (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960) to the voices of 12 male and female speakers reading passages that differed from one another in their idiom content. After hearing each speaker, they were asked to rate the speaker's voice and personality and the speaker version of an ethnic group affiliation questionnaire. Then, they filled out a biographical, and a foreign language background questionnaires and an idiom recognition test. At the final stage of the data collection process, they were asked to complete the self-rating version of an ethnic group affiliation questionnaire. The rationale and procedure of this matched guise procedure is described in detail in chapter IV.

Before I present my study, I will first describe the research context (i.e., the Tunisian linguistic environment). This section will describe how English has been taught and used in Tunisia in order to provide background information about the subjects. Secondly, I will show the importance of teaching idioms and the reasons so far discovered for learners' avoidance of some target features, including idioms. In the second part, I will show how individuals' multiple identities are negotiated through manipulation of language (or variety) choice, as well as specific features of language (e.g., accents, phonetic sounds, and lexical items).

II- RESEARCH CONTEXT: THE TUNISIAN LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT

Given that the motivation for this thesis stems from my personal experience as an EFL teacher in Tunisia, and given that the thesis data was gathered in Tunisia, I find it significant to shed light on the country of Tunisia, the Tunisian linguistic community, and more specifically, the situation of the English language and the educational system there. This description could more or less help the reader provide an answer for whether Tunisian students resist learning English idioms among Tunisian students and whether this resistance, if it exists, is an identity negotiation strategy.

Historically, Tunisia has been open to both East and West. If someone looks back at the history of North Africa, more specifically the history of Tunisia, s/he may notice that the following languages and cultures - Berber, Punic, Latin, Arabic, and French - have succeeded, and often coexisted with one another. The influence of other languages and cultures such as Spanish, Hebrew, Italian, English, and Turkish is due to short invasions, immigrations, and political dominations (Abdessalem, 1992).

Even though Tunisia is an Arab country where Arabic is the official language, the current language situation there is "complex and dynamic" (Battenburg, 1997, p. 286). In fact, the current language may be characterized as both diglossic and bilingual. Diglossia refers to the use of two languages or varieties of the same language in two different situations (Ferguson, 1965). In Tunisia, diglossia concerns the use of Arabic along a written-spoken continuum. In fact, the mother tongue of the vast majority of Tunisians is Tunisian Arabic (TA), which is the language of communication in everyday life and the language used in the media. Written Arabic (WA) is the official language of Tunisia: language of religion, government, the law, the media, and education. Finally, Modern

Standard Arabic (MSA) is the language of modern literature, school manuals, official documents and written media. However, it is important to mention that the variety used depends on the educational background and language mastery level of the writer or speaker, his/her cultural affiliation and attitude towards the language as well as the audience and the topic at one hand (Daoud, 1991). On the other hand, bilingualism in Tunisia has to do with the ongoing interaction between Arabic and French.

The dynamism and complexity of this situation is further enhanced by the promotion of several foreign languages, especially English as the modern language of science and technology, international trade and electronic communication. In this context, Fishman (1983) wrote regarding language choice and loyalty, "English is less loved but more used; French is more loved and less used" (p. 20). In the Maghreb, especially in Tunisia, researchers have discovered the opposite – while French is more used, English is more loved. In addition, Bannour (2000) and Fazaa (1992) found that English is preferred over French as a foreign language.

Battenburg (1997) also believed that Tunisians are increasingly aware of their need for English. For example, Fazaa (1992) and Ben Sultan (1995) argued in favour of adopting English for scientific, economic, cultural, and political purposes. Ben Sultan (1995) summarized these views "I am not exaggerating if I say that mastering English should be considered as one of the most important factors for entrance into the global community" (p. 16). Moreover, as reported by Akkari (2000), opposition members of parliament called for "making English the first foreign language, instead of French, since the French themselves have begun to realise the inadequacy of their language and its loss of international prominence" (p.20).

The abovementioned dynamism and complexity of the language situation in Tunisia is reflected in the educational system there. Indeed, a recent educational reform of basic and secondary school (1987) brought about a new, business-oriented approach (i.e., based on cost-benefit analysis and market demand for knowledge and skills) to deal with Tunisia's educational problems (e.g., high dropout rates, irrelevance of the curriculum to the student's career opportunities, and the inadequacy of learning materials). The primary cycle (years 1 to 6) and the second cycle (years 7 to 9) of basic education include teaching Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (reading, writing, oral expression, and grammar), French (oral expression, and reading) and English (oral expression, and reading). Once admitted in the diploma of completion of basic education (diplôme de fin d'études de l'enseignement de base), students study for two years in a common-core cycle (10th-11th year), then another two (12th-13th year) in one of five specialities (i.e., experimental sciences, technology, mathematics, science, letters, sports, and economics and management). Instruction in secondary education is in MSA in the humanities and the arts, yet in French in hard and experimental sciences, mathematics and economics. In addition, French is taught as a subject (2-4 hours/week). English is also taught (3-4 hours/week) to all students. At this level, new subjects are introduced, some obligatory, others optional (e.g., philosophy, a third foreign language, computer skills). Students who successfully complete the entire four-year programme take the national *baccalauréat* examination, which is a requirement for university admission. Thus, a student who completes compulsory Arabic, French, and English and opts for another language (i.e., German, Italian, or Spanish) during his basic and secondary education could end up a functional quadralingual (Daoud, 2001).

III- LITERATURE REVIEW

Given that idioms will be the target feature in the present project, an understanding of idioms and their role in L2 learning is appropriate.

1. Idioms

1.1. The term 'idiom' and its definitions

According to *the new Webster Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the English Language* (1980), the term *idiom* derives from the Greek lexeme *idios,* meaning "proper or peculiar to one's self". The following general entry is given:

> "A mode of expression peculiar to a language or to a person; a phrase or expression having a special meaning from usage, or a special grammatical character" (p. 420).

A more precise entry is given in the *Longman Dictionary of English Idioms* (1990):

> "An idiom is a fixed group of words with a special different meaning from the meanings of the separate words. So, *to spill the beans* is not at all connected with *beans*: it means "*to tell something that is secret*" (p. 323).

An idiom, in the standard view, is a multiple word unit whose overall meaning does not come merely from its individual parts (e.g., Gairns & Redman, 1986; Carter & McCarthy, 1988). For example, native speakers of English immediately realize that the meaning of *spill the beans* (to tell something that is secret) cannot be derived from the individual meanings of *spill* and *beans*. The dictionary of American idioms defines an idiom as "the assigning of a new meaning to a group of words which already have their

own meaning" (Makkai, 1975, iv) and this new meaning cannot be comprehended by the separate meanings of its constituents.

1.2. Why are idioms important? Why study idioms?

Idioms are regarded as part of figurative language, one of the most important features of natural language (Hoffman, 1984; Irujo, 1986b). In fact, the work of Pollio et al. (1977) showed that "most English speakers utter about 10 million novel metaphors per lifetime and 20 million idioms per lifetime, and this works out to about 3,000 novel metaphors per week and 7,000 idioms per week" (p. 55). Nevertheless, idioms have been proven to be one of the most difficult aspects of language for learners of several types: L1 learners (e.g., Gibbs, 1994), language-disordered learners (e.g., Nippold & Fey, 1983), and bilingual and second language students (e.g., Yandel & Zintz, 1961; Adkins, 1968; Irujo, 1986; Cooper, 1999). Liontas (1999) also found that idioms are important in second language acquisition; they may not occur as many other parts of the language, but they exist cross-linguistically.

Liontas (1999) asked a very important question: "why teach idioms?" He replied "because idioms afford SL learners unique opportunities" (p. 443). He noticed that idioms enable learners to encounter and understand the workings of natural human language, gain deeper cultural knowledge of the creative expression of human thought and language development through time, and to expand their knowledge of the culture whose language they study. Learning idioms also allows learners to go beyond the literal meaning of the idiom, form and describe their own mental images associated with idiomatic phrases and the conceptual metaphors motivating their figurative meanings. Most importantly, learning idioms enable learners "to grapple with imaginative,

colourful, and expressive ways of communicating an idea or thought via the realm of idiomatic expressions" (p. 446).

In the light of ideas suggesting that idioms are important, I thought that a strong knowledge of idioms would help my Tunisian students become better speakers and negotiators, and therefore, be in a much better position to take advantage of the opportunities that come their way. As well, I believed that special attention should be given to idioms as they are frequently encountered in any language discourse. Pollio, Barlow, Fine, and Pollio (1998) analysed approximately 200,000 words from political debates, taped psychotherapy sessions, and compositions written by students and adults. They concluded that people involved used about 4.08 idioms per minute. Therefore, this high frequency of idioms in discourse "make them an important aspect of vocabulary acquisition and language learning in general" (Pollio et al. 1998, p. 62).

In addition, I thought it would be beneficial for my students to learn idioms because it makes learning the English language more authentic. Prodromou (2003) urges teachers to raise their students' awareness of "how native-speakers use English out there in the real world" (p. 44). Thus, the way for an EFL learner to become more fluent in the target language is not only to have a good command of grammar and vocabulary, but also a good command of " the idiom principle" (Prodromou). Moreover, in the last few years, many linguists claimed that idioms require special attention in language programs. For instance, Lewis (1994, 1997, and 2000) published a series of handbooks for teachers on the importance of idiomatic expressions, with suggestions of how to teach them. Wright (1999), in his introduction to a practice book of idioms for students also explains the reasons why students need to become more idiomatic:

"Idioms are important because they are very common, it is impossible to speak, read or listen to English without meeting idiomatic language. This is not something you can leave until you reach an advanced level" (p. 9).

In the same context, Liontas (1997) questioned French, Italian, German, Spanish, English as a second language (ESL), and Russian instructors at the University of Arizona concerning the importance of teaching and learning idioms in the second language (SL) classroom. Results of the survey and the post-survey interviews showed that the majority of participants were found to be aware of the benefits of teaching and learning idioms in an ESL classroom. They pointed out that idioms "are a colourful aspect of the language" (p. 431) and important not only for the understanding of the TL culture, but also in the practical understanding of native speakers of the target language, newspapers, and advertisements, and that fluency cannot be achieved without idioms. Liontas (1999) concluded that "an appreciation of the idioms' content and sensitivity to their use in the natural context were therefore a characteristic of competent language use" (p. 440).

So far, we have reviewed different reasons for why learners should learn idioms and identified the important role of idioms in creating better communication and making language more native-like and authentic. However, there is still one other point that should be discussed, that learning idioms can be done for social reasons. For example, Simpson and Mendis (2003) analysed the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) to look at how many idioms were found and what their functions were. The Michigan corpus of spoken English (MICASE) is a specialised corpus of contemporary speech recorded at the University of Michigan between 1997 and 2001. This corpus contains 197 hours of recorded speech, totalling about 1.7 million words in 152 speech

events. Those speech events ranged from large lectures, dissertation defences, to one-on-one office-hour interactions and small peer-led study group sessions. The master list of idioms was compiled by three raters, and then it was entered into a database, which allowed the researchers to compile various sorted lists of all the idioms and the transcripts they occurred in. Finally, Simpson and Mendis used a discourse-analysis approach to identify and illustrate the primary pragmatic functions of a selection of idioms in the corpus. The most important function that could be linked to the present paper is to emphasize collaboration. Speakers may use repeatedly these linguistic features to create a collaborative communication and establish a sense of solidarity within a group of speakers. A salient example of this from MICASE is the way different journalists used the idiom *put the heat on,* and multiple variations in form of the same idiom (e.g., *under some heat, heat put on them, putting heat on themselves*) to express shared views and ideas.

Similarly to the journalists who may use idioms to create a collaborative communication and establish a sense of solidarity within their group (Simpson & Mendis, 2003), Tunisian learners' resistance to learn idioms could also be viewed as a way of enhancing solidarity and differentiating themselves from other outgroups. In this respect, avoidance of learning idioms would allow them to maintain their own group membership as Tunisians and afford them a positive social identity.

1.3. Idioms and Transfer

Though Irujo (1986) pointed out that idioms are difficult to learn by second language learners, she stated that there are ways to help teachers prepare materials and activities for teaching idioms. The first difficulty is the non-literalness of an idiom as its

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meaning cannot be derived from its constituents. Indeed, contrary to a native speaker of the target language (TL), an EFL learner cannot figure out the meaning intended because their exposure to idioms appears to occur mainly in non-interactive situations (e.g., songs, movies), where there is no opportunity for negotiation of meaning, nor feedback on use. The second difficulty is related to the correct use of idioms. In fact, teachers have to bear in mind that idioms vary in formality from slang (e.g., *you got it*) and colloquialisms (e.g., *he kicked the bucket*) to those used in formal situations (e.g., *run the risk*). Teachers should also take into account that idioms are invariant and should be learnt as wholes, a factor that makes transfer not successful all the time. The final difficulty is that idioms are not taught very well. Indeed, second language teaching materials either ignore idioms or relegate them to "other expressions" in vocabulary lists.

According to Irujo (1986), one way to teach idioms successfully is to allow learners to compare idioms in the first (L1) and second languages (L2) to enable them to discover which idioms are identical, which are similar, and which are different. Doing so allows positive transfer to occur and interference can be avoided. In this context, one may attribute the resistance to learning idioms to the lack of corresponding structure or lexical item in the L1. But as far as we know, all languages have idioms. Whether languages share a common linguistic and cultural ancestry or not, there are often idioms that are identical or similar across languages.

Putting into practice the abovementioned theories, Irujo (1986, 1993) explored the influence of L1 Spanish on advanced ESL learners' comprehension and production of English idioms that 1) had equivalent figurative meanings in both English and Spanish; and 2) were considered by native speakers to be frequently used. She categorized English

idioms into three groups. The first group consisted of English idioms that are identical in form to Spanish idioms, for example, *to play with fire* and *jugar con fuego* (i.e., to play with fire), the second consisted of English idioms that were very similar in form to Spanish idioms, for example, *can't make heads or tails of it* and *no tiene ni pies ni cabeza* (i.e., it doesn't have feet or head), and the third group consisted of English idioms that were totally different in form from functionally similar Spanish idioms. For example, *to kick the bucket* and *estirar la pata* (i.e., to stretch the leg) are different in forms, but they both have the same meaning (i.e., to die). Each of these groups contained fifteen idioms. To test learners' comprehension, Irujo used a definition test that asked subjects to write a definition of the idiom in either English or Spanish. To investigate learners' production, she used a translation task consisting of a Spanish paragraph with an idiom and an English translation task consisting of a Spanish paragraph with the idiom omitted. Twelve Venezuelan-speaking learners of English were required to fill in the blank with an English idiom. The learners in the study had TOFEL scores ranging from 520 to 620, and were at the time of data collection enrolled as undergraduate students at an American university. The results showed that the subjects used their L1 to both comprehend and produce idioms in the L2. They produced a high proportion of correct responses in both comprehension and production with English idioms that had exact equivalents in Spanish. Additionally, they comprehended idioms that were very similar in the two languages as well as those that were identical in both languages. However, "interference" of Spanish was prevalent in their production. Idioms that were different in the two languages were the most difficult for them to comprehend and produce, although interference of the L1 for these idioms was slight. One of the main strength's of Irujo's work is her effort to

study learners' actual use of L2 idioms, instead of just their acceptability or grammaticality judgments. Another strength is her classification of idioms.

Abdullah and Jackson (1998) also investigated idioms in L1 Syrian Arabic learners of English. They categorized idioms in four groups. First, cognate idioms were those with identical equivalents in form and function in both languages. For example, the English idiom *to play with fire* (i.e., to court trouble), was equivalent in form and function to the Syrian idiom *jalaab fin 'nar* (i.e., play with fire). This group is similar to Irujo's identical group. Secondly, false cognate idioms were those with a similar structure but different idiomatic functions. For example, *to bite the dust* (i.e., to die) corresponded to *jaakulu 'l turab* (i.e., to be very poor). This group did not exist in Irujo's study. Thirdly, idioms with pragmatic equivalents were those with a similar function but different forms. This group is similar to Irujo's different group. Finally, idioms with different cognates were those without equivalents in form or in function in the other language. For example, there was no Syrian idiom that had a similar form or function to the English idiom *to kick the bucket*, and there was no English idiom that had a similar form or function to *kul anzi maalaqua min quaraba* (i.e., every goat is hung from its tendon), meaning "everyone is responsible for their own action". Abdullah and Jackson tested 120 advanced Syrian learners of English (70 female and 50 male university students). They used three tests. The first two tests, a multiple-choice questionnaire and an English-into-Syrian Arabic translation test, were designed to examine idiom comprehension. The production test was a Syrian Arabic-into-English translation test. Abdullah and Jackson later interviewed the participants to see how they arrived at an interpretation of the English idioms in the questionnaire. They found that the results of positive transfer and interference were

similar to those reported by Irujo (1986, 1993). That is to say positive transfer occurred in production of the false cognate group (i.e., identical equivalents). The study concluded that L1-L2 similarity may be the factor that contributed to idiom learning, but it did not necessarily facilitate idiom comprehension or production, and the L1-L2 differences did not crucially impede L2 idiom comprehension.

Though the Arabic language, and in particular Tunisian Arabic (similarly to other Arabic dialects) share identical (e.g., wrapped around one's little finger) and similar idioms (e.g., to be in good hands) with English, Tunisian EFL learners may encounter difficulty learning and using English idioms that they often prefer to avoid altogether. Indeed, in my personal experience as an EFL teacher, Tunisian learners did not use their knowledge of idioms in their L1 (Tunisian Arabic) to learn and produce English idioms though they were encouraged to make comparisons between their L1 and the TL (i.e., English).

1.4. The phenomenon of Avoidance

All these abovementioned theories and studies focused on the importance of teaching idioms and on the ways to do that, but neglect to shed light on students' avoidance and resistance of idioms. However, before looking at students' avoidance of idioms, it is important to mention that the phenomenon of avoidance in second language acquisition was brought to light by Schachter (1974), who pointed out the importance of examining not only the L2 forms that were actually produced by the learners of a foreign language, but also the L2 forms they seemed to avoid using consistently. Since then, avoidance has drawn the attention of many researchers.

Though idioms were not the target, a number of studies were conducted to examine the importance of avoidance phenomena and some experimental evidence for avoidance of idiomatic expressions does exist. For instance, Dagut and Laufer (1985) looked at Hebrew students' use of English phrasal verbs, a lexico-syntactic form with no formal equivalent in Hebrew. Three groups of advanced Israeli learners took three tests (i.e., multiple-choice test, a verb translation test, and a verb-memorising test). The test results indicated that Hebrew speakers avoided the use of phrasal verbs, and preferred using one-word verbs, when expressing themselves in English. Researchers contented that structural and typological differences between Hebrew and English might be the cause of the avoidance.

Hulstijin and Marchena (1989) carried out a similar experiment with Dutch learners of English. These researchers hypothesized that avoidance for structural reasons would not be expected as Dutch does have phrasal verbs. The abovementioned three tests in Dagut and Laufer (1985) were administered. Results showed that neither intermediate nor advanced Dutch learners avoided phrasal verbs categorically. However, both groups tended to avoid phrasal verbs that had Dutch equivalents with identical specific meanings. The authors interpreted this finding as evidence for semantic avoidance of forms that are too similar to the native language, and of forms that have more specific semantic features than other more general forms in the second language. So, we could conclude that learners' perception of both their L1 and L2 played an important role in avoidance.

The abovementioned studies paved the way for Irujo (1993) to investigate whether subjects would avoid using idioms if given an option. The author hypothesized

that 1) subjects would use their knowledge of English to produce many idioms; 2) more idioms that were identical in both languages would be produced; and 3) subjects would use more idioms that are frequently heard and semantically appropriate (i.e., easy to understand). The 12 bilingual speakers of Spanish and English used the same materials (i.e., 45 paragraphs each containing an idiom) administered in Irujo (1986b). Findings confirmed the first and the second hypotheses, but not the third one. Correlations were conducted to figure out the relationships between the idioms that were correctly produced most often and type of idiom, frequency of use, and semantic transparency. It was shown that "the best-known" idioms by participants were those that had identical Spanish equivalents, and "the least known" idioms were totally different in English and Spanish. This result demonstrated that there was a significant correlation between the most produced idioms and the type of idioms. In addition, some "well-known" idioms were also very commonly used; but others were not, and some "frequently-used" idioms were not well-known. This result confirmed that there was no relationship at all between idioms produced the most and frequency of use. Similarly, the relationship between best-known idioms and semantic transparency was weak but apparent. Though this last variable may make an idiom slightly easier to learn, it was not as important as similarity to a first language idiom.

The abovementioned studies showed that avoidance is not an unusual phenomenon in the language acquisition literature and that there is a considerable amount of general research on it. Though research has related avoidance to both semantic or structural differences and similarities between L1 and L2 (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijin & Marchena, 1989) and to the type, frequency of use and semantic

transparency of the target feature (Irujo, 1993), none of them has examined the possibility that students' resistance towards learning idioms, as a linguistic feature, may be used to signal ethnic group affiliation in the same way as language and/or its features have been manipulated in the negotiation of identities, hence the relevance of the proposed study.

2. Language and Identity

According to Marx (2002), identity is conceptualized as a stable, fixed entity within a person controlling his or her actions and understanding of the world around him or her (Pavlenko, 1998; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2002; Norton, 2000). In fact, a person's identity remains in most of the cases unexamined, and it only demands attention when it is threatened, when "something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (Marx, 2002, p. 270). Thus, the individual or the group's identity can be negotiated when it is threatened or displaced, as a strategy for ethnolinguistic differentiation as well as psycholinguistic distinctiveness. For instance, Bailey (2000) conducted a one-year ethnographic study (from July1996 to July1997) to describe and analyse the process of negotiation of identities of a Dominican American adolescent named Wilson. This adolescent skillfully used multiple language varieties (e.g. Spanish, Dominican Spanish, African American Vernacular English, American English and Hispanized English) in order to emphasize various aspects of his identity. Indeed, video-records showed that the adolescent switched among varieties of Spanish and English when speaking with girls, peers, teachers, and researcher. In an attempt to understand this "behaviour", Bailey (2000) demonstrated that through speaking varieties of both languages, Wilson tried to differentiate himself from individuals belonging to groups other than Dominicans and Americans. Moreover, through code-switching, he

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struggled against Black American identity imposed on him. Therefore, Wilson, in particular, and Dominican Americans, in general, tend to use multiple language varieties, especially Spanish varieties, to "transform their race status, from Black or White to Spanish" (p. 578). On the whole, Bailey demonstrated that Black Dominican American teenagers manipulated their speech to emphasize their blackness in some instances and their Latin origins in others, thereby expressing the identity that fetches the better social rewards from their interactions.

Traditionally, the key linguistic means of negotiation of identities discussed in bilingualism literature include, as mentioned in Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), code-switching, code-mixing, and language choice (Auer, 1998b; Heller, 1988; Scotton, 1983), and more recently, crossing (Rampton, 1995, 1999 a,b; Eastman & Stein, 1983). Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) categorized these means as language display, or "a language-use strategy whereby members of one group lay claims to attributes associated with another, conveying messages of social, professional , and ethnic identity" (p. 22). The present literature review expands this understanding of negotiation and illuminates a wide variety of linguistic practices which individuals may adhere, use, or even create, to position and re-position themselves, examining not only language (or variety) choice, but also manipulation of accents, manipulation\or choice of phonemic segments, and use and invention of new linguistic varieties.

2.1. Manipulation of the language (or language register)

We shall not review the entire history of studies that correlates language choice to negotiation of ethnic identities, but a review of few recent landmarks. For instance, Morris (1997) showed that although English has a tremendous impact on the island of

Puerto Rico's social patterns, Puerto Ricans have maintained a distinct identity that is powerfully expressed through the political symbol of the Spanish language. In this context, Morris focused on the shifting ways that Spanish has served as a symbol marker, differentiating groups with opposing political views and providing a focus for efforts to maintain a distinct Puerto Rican identity. To achieve his purpose, he interviewed members of political party youth organisations and university of Puerto Rican student officers. These interviews and discussions were aimed at discovering respondents' views about their own identities. Results demonstrated that in addition to being the fundamental tool used by most Puerto Ricans for most communication, Spanish also had a symbolic importance "as a thing that distinguishes Puerto Ricans" (p. 129). So, Spanish serves as a marker for Puerto Rican identity, in direct opposition to the English-speaking United States, and it is used by Puerto Ricans to assert their distinctiveness from the US.

In the same vein, Casesnoves Ferrer and Sankoff (2003) examined the language situation in Valencia that was very largely Castilian-speaking, and where Catalan has always remained the language of prestige, and showed how language choice is correlated with negotiation of ethnic identities. In this linguistic context, the researchers evaluated the importance of sociodemographic and ideological factors (i.e., geographic origin, social class, political orientation, status, solidarity measures of attitudes, and identity) on the choice of eight varieties of Valencian, Castilian, and Catalan made by high school students in the city of Valencia in Spain. The subjective reaction test, which included a matched guise component as well as sociolinguistic and behaviour questionnaires revealed tentative results. In fact, the indices of status and solidarity, the Catalan and Spanish identity indices (e.g., how much do you consider yourself Valencian, Catalan, or

Spanish), and political orientation of the participants were all positively or negatively correlated to a greater or lesser extent. Although all abovementioned factors are somewhat predictive of the participants' language choice, identity seems to be closely related to the motivations of their choice. In fact, the normalized identity measures have considerably more predictive value on language choice than do feelings of solidarity. Perceptions of the status of the linguistic varieties have no predictive value. This finding shows the importance of language choice as an ethnic group identity negotiation strategy.

In a minority group context, Sayahi (2005) examined the situation of Spanish in two northern Moroccan cities, Tangier and Tetouan, and its role in the process of identity construction of Moroccan- born Spaniards. In addition to being very close to Spain, both cities played a key role during the introduction and the maintenance of the Spanish language in the area. Sayahi interviewed Moroccan-native Spaniards who had native competence in Spanish, and who identified themselves exclusively as Spanish citizens. Results revealed that Moroccan-native Spaniards seem to maintain Spanish in an immigrant setting thanks to the dynamic ethnolinguistic vitality (Bourhis, Giles, and Taylor, 1977) that helps them, as a minority group, to continue to exist. In addition, both the positive attitude shown by the majority of the Moroccans towards Spanish, and the rights the Spanish government bestows on them further convinces Moroccan-native Spaniards that Spanish identity is more valuable, and that language, as a central part of that identity, should be preserved.

Now that we have gone over how language choice, or manipulation of it, is closely related to identity, we will look at the manipulation of accent and its role in

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achieving ethnolinguistic differentiation.

2.2. Manipulation of accents

Spoken language, and particularly accents, has been found to exert a major influence on a listener's impression of a speaker's personality (e.g., Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960; Bourhis, Giles & Lambert, 1973; Gatbonton, 1975; Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005). In the following studies, spoken language is used to indicate membership in national and cultural groups, and it is also a clear indicator of the speaker's ethnic, cultural or social class group. The listener's attitude toward members of a particular group could be generalized to the language the group members' use. So, hearing the language may evoke those stereotypes which the listener feel were appropriate to the group represented.

For instance, Anglo-accented speakers were evaluated more favourably on traits of superiority than Hispanic-accented speakers in Giles, Williams, Mackie and Rosseli (1995). This study investigated the reactions of Anglo participants towards accents after listening to counter-attitudinal message concerning the English-only Movement (EoM) and delivered with an either Anglo or Hispanic accent by a bidialectal speaker. Listening to an ingroup speaker strengthened their sense of American identity. The study also showed, among other things, that the Anglo-accented speaker was more persuasive when delivering the anti-EoM message and Hispanic-accented speaker was more convincing when delivering the pro-EoM message.

In the same vein, the Welsh-born participants in Bourhis and Giles (1977), who had an integrative motivation for learning Welsh, made their accents diverge once they felt that their identities were threatened by the English interlocutor's speech. This study

demonstrated that unlike the Welsh-born participants who had an instrumental motivation for learning Welsh, the integrative group emphasized accent differences during "the nationally salient condition", that is when the English interlocutor challenged their motivation in learning Welsh. The Welsh-born participants' accent divergence was a strategy to make their national group membership more salient and to differentiate themselves from the outgroup. So the integrative group's accent divergence is a reaction towards the feeling of being marginalized and disempowered (Pavlenko, 2004), and an attempt to find a place where their "Welsh" identities can be taken into consideration and valued.

Gatbonton, Trofimovich and Magid (2005) examined the relationship between one's sense of belonging to his ethnic group (i.e., Chinese group) and second language (L2) pronunciation accuracy. Results revealed a relationship between learners' L2 accent and perceived affiliation to their home ethnic group. Indeed, the more the learners sounded like the speakers of their target language, the less loyal to their ethnic group they were perceived to be by their peers.

Findlay, Hoy, and Stockdale (2004) focused on English in Scotland and explored issues of identity and identification of a group of English-born people relative to their experience of living in Scotland. The researchers attempted not only to explore the diverse self-identities of this group, but also to investigate accent as one of the problematic social markers used to impose "otherness" on groups whose visual identity is not different from the whole population. The purpose of Findlay et al. was to make a connection between migration and the longer-term life processes, personal goals, experiences, and the feelings of twenty-seven migrants about identity in terms of

nationality and self. Results demonstrated that there are many identity markers that distinguish people from one another in Scotland, but amongst the invisible minority group, accent is one of the most critical features on which people discriminate "self" from "other". So, despite being internally very diverse as a group, the English migrants interviewed in the study felt that they were dominantly identified as "other" by their hosts primarily through the signifier of accent. Thus, speaking with an English accent was felt to lead to stereotyping, regardless of diverse self-perceptions of identity and despite holding distinctive and varied English regional accents. Findlay, Hoy, and Stockdale concluded that the accent marker is part of the English migrants' expression of having multiple identities.

In an account of her three-year experience as a Canadian language learner who moved to a second language environment (i.e., Germany), Marx (2002) believed that displaying foreign accents in both languages may reflect different aspects of individuals and their identities. The account addressed the question of second language acquisition by focusing on one particular aspect that is the appropriation of accent. In fact, Marx investigated the shift in the accent in her native and second language, as a way to explore the development of new linguistic and cultural identity accompanied by changes to a former first language identity. In this context, Marx explained that during her learning experience, and in an attempt to develop a near-German accent, she developed a new identity. Thus, her struggle with accents, particularly the appearance of an accent in her L1, may mirror a tension between her two identities, which resulted in a need to resolve difficulties and resolve both aspects of her self into some form of coexistence.

The studies mentioned above may prompt us to admit that listening to an ingroup speaker reading or speaking ingroup language (or certain features, such as idioms), would strengthen the ingroup sense of their ethnic identity. Although the relationship between learning idioms and ethnic affiliation is not singled out in the abovementioned studies, it is probable that idioms, similarly to other language features (i.e. accents), may invite the most stereotypical reactions.

The following section will examine how phonetic features, like accents, may be closely related to identity.

2.3. Manipulation of phonetic segments

We shall not review the entire history of studies that correlated phonological features with negotiation of ethnic identities, but a few recent landmarks include the following: Labov (1963) focused on the realisations of /aw/ and /ay/ as in /mouse/ and /mice/. He interviewed a number of speakers drawn from different ages and ethnic groups on the island of Martha's Vineyard, and noted that among the younger speakers (31-45 years old), a movement seemed to be taking place away from the pronunciations associated with conservative and characteristically Vineyard speakers. The heaviest users of this type of pronunciation were young men who actively sought to identify themselves as Vineyarders, rejected the values of the mainland, and resented the encroachment of the wealthy summer visitors on the traditional island way of life. Thus, results demonstrated that these speakers did this seemingly subconsciously, in order to establish themselves as an independent social group with superior status to the despised summer visitors.

Moreover, Labov's (1966), in which, among other matters, the raising of low-front and low-back vowels in New York city is correlated to hypercorrection, entailing a

search for a more "American" identity among children of immigrant speakers of Italian and Yiddish; Laferriere's (1979), in which the frequency of use of a lower back variant of /o/ before /r/ correlates with Irish, Italian, and Jewish ethnicity; Knack's (1991), in which the devoicing of /z/ is correlated with both Jewish ethnicity in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Shilling-Estes' (1995), in which the centralization of the onsets of the /ay/ and /aw/ diphthongs are indicative of "islander identity" on Ocracoke Island, a small off-shore community in North-Carolina.

More recently, Boberg's (2004) study shows that the English-speaking community in Montreal, specifically Montrealers of Jewish, Italian, and Irish origins, display strong ethnic differentiation of speech. Statistical analysis of the interviews found significant differences in the vowel production of the 36 participants. In particular, Jewish participants were found to be relatively advanced in the centralization of back up gliding vowels, having extended this pattern from /u:/ to [ou], whereas Italian participants showed relatively little centralization of /u:/, and none of [ou]. Irish Montrealers, on the other hand, were found to exhibit clear and regular raising in the articulation of /ae/ and /au/ before nasal consonants. The existence of these differences in speech was explained partly by the participants' need to preserve unique features that might distinguish them from the speech of the wider community, and mainly to the residential concentration of these ethnic groups in Montreal. Indeed, like all immigrants, who when they first arrive in a new country, the participants tend to cluster together in specific neighbourhoods in order to enjoy the support and the companionship of fellow citizens who share the same language, religion, culture, and identity.

In the same vein, Zilles and King (2005) analysed the language used by two women (Alice, 71 and Lina, 30) who belonged to a German immigrant community in southern Brazil, and described how the two speakers used their linguistic resources, particularly phonetic segments to express varied, and at times conflicting aspects of their identities. More specifically, Zilles and King showed how the two participants seemed to maintain certain ingroup, German-linked features, or "German-ness". In this context, they identified German phonetic segments into Portuguese use: first, the replacement of stressed word, word-final /ãw/ with [on] (e.g., /alemon/ instead of /alemãw/); second, the retention of alveolar /l/ in word-final position; and third, stop devoicing. For instance, /dunkel/ (dark) was realized as /tunkel/ and /quepra'/ (to break) for /quebrar/. Zilles and King believed that the participants' usage of the German phonetic segments showed a stronger affiliation with their immediate German community and greater investment in their German identity.

Having examined how manipulation of phonological features could be closely related to identity, we may investigate how the lexicon may also be used to announce, maintain, or perhaps revive, identity (or multiple identities).

2.4. Manipulation of lexicon

In his book, *language in culture and class*, Edwards (1976) pointed out that the specific language of specific groups serves both to conduct its particular business and to symbolize its separate identity: "it is partly the instrument of effective common action, and partly the means symbol of group loyalty" (p.49). In this context, Maurer (1950), as mentioned in Edwards (1976), emphasized the functions of a "special language" in group life. He studied the speech of some groups (villains, prostitutes, and vagabonds). He

considered their speech as a group reinforcement of group rapport, and a defensive

reaction to the hostility of the outside world. This verbal inventiveness was seen as

reflecting a way of life, as the key to their attitudes, evaluations and modes of thinking. In

a word, it was a sort of union card; once a word is taken over by another group, its in-

group value is lost and a replacement of that word will be found:

> "They love to talk....and their proclivity for coining and using NEW words
>
> extends much beyond the necessary technical vocabulary. They like to express all
>
> life-situations in argot, to give their sense of humour free play, to revolt against
>
> conventional usage" (p. 272).

Maurer (1950) concluded that the choice of lexicon may be a salient index of affiliation,

especially if the speaker's position is marginal or if the situation makes of his choice a

public affirmation of group loyalty.

More recently, researchers similarly found that street language is a type of register

used by young people, who borrow words or expressions from various languages that are

spoken in the multilingual speech community in which they live. Therefore, it can be

considered to be multiethnic youth language. For instance, Doran's (2004) study explored

'Verlan', a language variety spoken primarily among multi-ethnic youth living in

disadvantaged neighbourhoods outside Paris. In recent decades, this 'street language' has

become a recognizable sociolect in the low-income housing project. Doran argued that

Verlan is best understood as an alternative code that allows its users to delineate a peer

universe, in which their complex, multilingual, multicultural, working class identities can

be performed and recognized in a way they are not within the larger society. Relying on

participants' observation (tutoring sessions), multiple interviews, and records of natural

speech, Doran (2004) suggested that as a peer-group language, this linguistic innovation symbolizes solidarity and provides not only a sense of mutual understanding among friends, but also, a sense of unity between the youths' different languages and cultures. In fact, speakers of Verlan often invert the syllables in a word, which results in a kind of a secret language, incomprehensible to outsiders; for instance, *café* becomes *féca* and *bizarre* (strange) becomes *zarbi*. The French youth register is also characterized by the use of borrowings from other languages spoken in the community. She found that, as most of the young people are second generation immigrants from North Africa, Arabic is the main source of these borrowings. In addition, loan words from American English and Romani, are part of the Verlan idiom. Doran (2004) concluded that the use of multilingual Verlan can "be conceived as an act of identity in which the choice of code itself represents a positioning of identity" (p. 178). Furthermore, by using Verlan, the youth differentiated themselves from two identity positions imposed on them, naming first, the figure of *racaille* associated with delinquency and street culture; and second, the figure of *bourge* associated with otherness, "Frenchness" and sense of betrayal to one's ethnic group. What a Moroccan teen said about how her identity is negotiated through Verlan may summarize Doran's study: "you start speaking it... because you are looking for yourself and you aren't finding yourself, and you stop speaking it when you've found yourself, when you've given yourself another identity" (p. 93).

In the same vein, Appel and Shoonen (2005) conducted an empirical study of street language, a multilingual youth register in the Netherlands which contains many words from languages other than Dutch, and many Dutch words with new meanings. Nearly 300 secondary school students completed a questionnaire on their acquaintance

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with and use of street language, and a subsample of students was also interviewed. Results revealed that the use of street language in Netherlands by secondary school students was widespread (80%). Appel and Shoonen found that street language functions as a kind of in-group register, as it is used with friends and relatives, and is hardly with adults. Thus, street language is a marker for young people of their identity as a special group which is very different from that of adults.

A similar study designed by Kotsinas (1988) discussed the language variety used by young people from Rinkeby, an immigrant suburb near Stockholm. The variety, which Kotsinas called 'Rinkeby Swedish', is characterised by: first, a more or less simplified variety of Swedish; second, the use of words and expressions from the minority languages spoken in the neighbourhood (e.g., Turkish and Kurdish); and third, the use of English loan words. Kotsinas noted that Rinkeby Swedish, which she considered as a marker of local group identity, is spoken by adolescents from different ethnic groups, as well as by Swedish mother tongue speakers.

Reyes' (2005) explored the ways in which south-east Asian American teenagers creatively appropriated two African American slang terms: *aite* (all right) and *na mean* (i.e., do you know what I mean?). Reyes chose these two terms because they are commonly perceived as emerging from African American culture. The majority of the teens, who participated in the study, were American-born to Cambodian parents (i.e., second generation). The rest of the teens were born in south-east Asian countries or in refugee camps in Thailand or the Philippines, then immigrated to the United States before the age of five (i.e., 1.5 generation). Data collection methods included participant observation, field notes, interviews, and audio and video interactions. Results revealed

various ways in which teenagers both talked about and used slang in the making of youth identity. Indeed, south-east Asians' slang use relied on stereotypes of African American in order to construct their own identities as tough, threatening, and violent. Analyses also demonstrated that Asian teens' use of slang is a way to signal urban youth cultural participation by creating boundaries, not only between teen and adults, but also between each other. Finally, it was found that teens' use of slang is a way to position themselves and others as teachers and students of slang.

The abovementioned studies have related language (or variety) choice, manipulation of accents, manipulation/choice of phonemic segments, and use and invention of new linguistic varieties to identity matters. In this context, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1990) pointed out that language in and of itself is not a key issue in group identity, rather it is language salience that should be studied to determine the relationship between languages in general, and specific language features in particular, and group identity. Furthermore, When looking at the literature of idioms, we find that since the early 1900s, idiomatologists have tried to define (e.g., Makkai, 1972), categorize (e.g., Broukal, 1994; Feare, 1980) and understand idioms (Fraser, 1970; Irujo, 1986), to propose models of their representations, accessing and processing (Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991; Giora, 1997), to teach them using various approaches (Allen, 1995), and to examine the students' opinions and perceptions toward idiom teaching and learning (Liontas, 2002). However, none of these abovementioned studies has linked learning English idioms, as a linguistic feature, to identity matters. More specifically, no one has linked individuals' avoidance of using idioms, or their resistance toward learning this linguistic feature to identity matters. It is true that Taylor, Menard, and Rheault

(1977) found that fear for one's ethnic identity may be a barrier to L2 learning, as Quebec francophone learners, who felt a greater threat to their group, were significantly less proficient in English than those who felt lesser threat. But idioms, as a linguistic feature, were never related to identity, as a strategy for ethnolinguistic differentiation as well as psycholinguistic distinctiveness.

With these considerations in mind, the purpose of this research was to investigate whether an observed resistance towards idiom use among Tunisian students could be an identity negotiation strategy. The following are the specific questions asked in this study:

1. *How does the ethnic group affiliation of the Tunisian participants affect their attitudes towards peers who use English idioms?*

2. *What general consequences to their image do the Tunisian participants believe would arise from their peers' use of English idioms in their speech? Is their perception of these consequences affected by their ethnic group affiliation?*

3. *Will the participants' background variables (i.e., age, household income, & gender), and ability to recognize idioms affect their responses to Question 1 & 2 above?*

IV- METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

1.1. Selection Criteria

As was already mentioned that the purpose of the present thesis was to investigate Tunisian students' attitudes toward learning idioms, two sets of Tunisian participants were recruited. One set rated the voices presented to them, another set provided the stimulus tape used in the matched guise technique. Further details will be provided concerning the second set of participants when dealing with the matched guise technique.

The first set of participants included Forty Tunisian participants, born and raised in Tunisia, they were recruited from two sites: high-school ($n = 20$, final year) and undergraduate EFL students ($n = 20$, 2nd year). The participants had an intermediate proficiency of English as they had an average of seven years (mean = 7. 83) of secondary-level experience with the target language. The researcher contacted the supervisor of the high school and the dean of the university, and asked for their permission to make personal contacts with the Tunisian students. In order to ensure that the group was homogeneous, an effort was made to find an equal number of males and females (17 male and 23 female). All participants were required to read and sign a consent form (Appendix A) in order to ensure participant comprehension of the nature of the task.

1.2. Biographical Profile of Participants

The mean age of the high-school and the undergraduate EFL students was 19.9 years (age range: 18-22). Regarding the participants' overseas experience, only 32.5% (13) reported having lived or visited an English-speaking country, while 67.5% (27) have

never been in an English-speaking country. In terms of their parents' household income, the majority of the participants (42.5%) reported having a household income between 30.000 D and 40.000 D, and the remaining 23 participants reported a household income between 10.000 D and 50.000 D. It is not surprising that they reported these levels of income, since the majority of the students in Tunisia belong to the middle socio-economic class.

1.3. Language background of Participants

As mentioned earlier, the forty Tunisian participants were born and raised in Tunisia, thus the majority (85%) identified Tunisian Arabic as their mother-tongue, while the remaining 15% of the participants identified classic Arabic as their mother-tongue. All participants considered French and English to be their second and third language, respectively. Of the 40 participants, 19 had learned English by the age of 12, 10 by the age of 11, 7 at the age of 13, 3 at the age of 14; while one participant learned English earlier in school at the age of 10. The mean overall age was 12.02 for the whole group.

The mean self-rated overall usage of English with specific people (i.e., close friends, classmates, teachers, and strangers), was 31.63 on a 100-point scale; while the mean self-rated overall exposure to the English language through different types of media (i.e., radio, television, movies, internet, and print) was 5.83 on a nine-point scale for the group. The mean self-rated overall proficiency in English at the time of the study was 6, 4 for all the participants.

2. Instruments

The instruments used in this study were a matched-guise stimulus tape, an idiom

recognition task, and several specifically designed questionnaires: a biographical data questionnaire, a foreign language background questionnaire, an experience with English idiom questionnaire, an ethnic group affiliation (EGA) questionnaire, that had two versions, a self-rating and a speaker-rating version, and two voice and personality traits questionnaires.

2.1. Matched guise stimulus tape

The matched guise technique, an indirect measure of language attitudes pioneered by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum (1960), was designed to explore people's attitudes towards different languages of their speakers. This investigative instrument involves having the same person read the same text in two different languages. In other words, the same speaker is presented in two different guises (i.e., the Tunisian idioms guise and the English idioms guise in this study) and the researcher's purpose is to see whether or not the speaker will be judged differently by the listeners based on his or her voice. This method is commonly used in bilingualism studies with the purpose of revealing patterns of intergroup contact and accommodation (e.g., Bourhis, Giles & Lambert, 1973; Gatbonton, 1975; Gatbonton, Trofimovich & Magid, 2005), or examining attitudes towards different accents (Giles, Williams, Mackie & Rosselli, 1995).

To construct the matched guise component of the study, a passage was adapted from Ting's (2003) lesson on food idiom. Ting compiled what she claimed to be English food idioms and made a lesson using food-idioms in context. Her purpose was to have learners work together to guess whether the expressions carry positive or negative connotations and have them deduce what they mean. The passage was manipulated to make three different texts that were differentiated from one another only in their idiom

content (Appendix B). One contained American English idioms (e.g., the big cheese of

the company); another contained Tunisian equivalents of these idioms (e.g., the big head

of the company); and another still used no idioms at all (e.g., the boss of the company).

Two different stimulus tapes were used. Each tape contained the voices of a male

or a female Tunisian speaker who each read the three texts. The three target texts were

read by two target speakers, and both were 30 year-old bilingual Tunisian men. The

voices of nine middle-aged bilingual male and female Tunisians reading one or two texts

were used as fillers. The target voices and the fillers were arranged in a semi-random

fashion in each tape. Care was taken that the voices of the target speakers were not

played successively, but were set apart by the filler voice. All in all, the audio recordings,

which were used in conjunction with the speaker-rating version of ethnic group affiliation

questionnaire and the voice and personality questionnaires, consisted of 12 passages per

stimulus tape.

By using the matched guise technique, we were not really interested in the

participants' reactions to the three guises, but mostly in their reactions to the idioms. We

hypothesized that if the listeners reacted differently to the target speakers' three texts, it

would be because they were reacting to the idiom content of texts since this was the only

point in which they differed from each other. If so, this technique would show that the

participants' reactions to the text with the American idioms were different from their

reactions to the text with the Tunisian idioms. This technique would also show whether

these differences in their reactions could be correlated with differences in their level of

ethnic group affiliation.

2.2. Questionnaires

2.2.1. Biographical Data Questionnaire

This questionnaire (Appendix C) sought information on a number of biographical facts about the participants. For example, it sought information on the participants' age, gender, and economic status. It also sought information on the participants' educational and career choices in detail in order to provide a more culturally-detailed background. Finally, they were asked to indicate whether they lived or visited an English- speaking country and to specify the country's name, the period and the purpose in order to have an idea about their overseas experience.

2.2.2. Foreign Language Background Questionnaire

This questionnaire (Appendix D) was a detailed survey of the participants' language background and it included questions adapted from Kumar, Trofimovich, and Gatbonton (2008). It first sought information about the participants' first, second and third languages. To have a better understanding of the participants' experience with English, the questionnaire asked them to indicate the age they began to learn it. The participants were also asked about their academic and non-academic exposure to the English language, and to self-rate their usage in the English language. To do this they estimated the amount of language they used in specific situations and with specific people (i.e., close friends, classmates, teachers, and strangers). Language usage was measured in percentage from 0 to 100, with a ten-point interval between stages. In addition, the participants were asked to assess the amount of time they were exposed to the English language through different types of media (i.e., radio, television, movies, internet, and print). English language exposure rating was measured through a nine-point

Likert scale (1 = never and 9 = very often). Finally, participants self-rated their English

proficiency in all the four skills: speaking, understanding, writing, and reading. The

proficiency measure consisted of four-nine point Likert scale (e.g., 1 = I cannot English

at all, 9 = I speak English perfectly) items.

2.2.3. An Idiom Recognition Test

The purpose of the questionnaire (Appendix E) was to assess the participants'

ability to recognize the correct interpretation of idioms. It was adapted from Irujo

(1986b), who aimed to investigate whether second language learners used knowledge of

their first language to identify idioms in the second language. This test was in a matching

activity format that required the participants to link each idiom with its correct

interpretation. English Idioms used in the test were varied: some were identical in form

and meaning to their Tunisian equivalents (e.g., *to open someone's eyes*); others were

similar to their Tunisian equivalents (e.g., *a piece of cake*); and the others did not have

any Tunisian equivalents (e.g., *to spill the beans*). The majority of idioms mentioned in

the first text (Appendix B) were included in the test. Three distracter definitions were

also included in the test (e.g., *to eat a lot*). By knowing the participants' ability to

recognize idioms, we hypothesized that the Tunisian participants' ability with idioms

may have had an effect on their perception of the relationship between use of idioms and

ethnic group affiliation.

2.2.4. Experience with English Idioms Questionnaire

Experience with English idioms questionnaire (Appendix F) aimed to measure the

participants' attitudes toward learning and using idioms. Specifically, this survey was

designed to look at two different issues: The first was the participants' previous exposure

to English idioms, and the second was their attitudes toward learning, knowing and using English idioms. The participants were first asked to indicate the degree of their exposure to English idioms using a nine-point Likert scale (1 = never, 9 = very often). Then, they were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with statements reflecting their self-perceptions of the importance of learning (e.g., *I think that learning English idioms is necessary*), knowing (e.g., *I think that knowing what an English idiom means is interesting*) and using English idioms (e.g., *If I use too many idioms as those presented above or others similar to them in my English speech, I will sound sophisticated*). The survey also sought to assess the participants' level of confidence in comprehending (*I do not feel confident in looking for and finding an idiom successfully when reading English*), interpreting (*I feel not confident in predicting the meaning of an English idiom*), and using idiomatic expressions (*I need English idioms such as those presented above or others similar to them in my English speech in order to express my ideas well*). Participants had to use a nine-point Likert scale. For example, if they circled 1, it suggested that they did not agree with the statement at all, and if they circle 1, it suggested that they agreed completely with the statement.

2.2.5. Ethnic Group Affiliation (EGA) Questionnaire

The ethnic group affiliation questionnaire was designed to measure the participants' self-rating of their own ethnic affiliation to the Tunisian group and their rating of speakers' degree of loyalty towards the Tunisian ethnic group. Participants had to indicate how well the statements described their opinion, using a nine-point scale where 1 means does not agree at all, and 9 means agrees completely.

This questionnaire allowed the participants to indicate their emotional reactions to their ethnic group, and elicited their responses to ethnic group affiliation statements constructed around different themes: pride in being Tunisian, pride in being part of their group, familiarity and pride of its history and achievements inside and abroad, maintaining the Arabic, the Tunisian dialect and the Tunisian symbols (e.g., the anthem and the flag), participating in Tunisian community affairs (i.e., celebrations), defending the honour of the Tunisian, and exposure to the Tunisian media (i.e., songs, novels, and movies). The following are two examples of two statements which address group affiliation: 1) *I am proud of being Tunisian.* 2) *I feel a great pride watching the Tunisian flag in international sport events.*

These statements were adapted from the Gatbonton, Trofimovich and Magid (2005) questionnaire on language (accent) and identity, seeking information on 1) the existence of a relationship between one's sense of belonging to a primary ethnic group and second language pronunciation accuracy, and 2) on the behavioural consequences, if such relationship exists.

There were two versions of this measure: the self-rating version (Appendix G), which the participants used to rate themselves on how loyal they were towards the Tunisian group, and a speaker version (Appendix H), which the participants used to rate the speakers on their ethnic group affiliation towards the Tunisian group. Both versions sought the same information but differed from each other only in the pronouns used. For example, if the first statement in the self-rating was, *I am proud of being Tunisian*, the first statement in the in the speaker's loyalty rating was, *he is proud of being Tunisian.* This second version was part of the first section of the questionnaire in which the

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participants rated the speakers in terms of speech (e.g., English accent, clarity of message), personality, and loyalty. Therefore, there was a possibility that the responses that were given by the participants on the speakers' ethnic group affiliation could have been affected by their perception of the speakers' speech and personality measures (see below).

2.2.6. Voice Traits Questionnaire

The Voice Traits Questionnaire (Appendix I) was designed to measure the participants' evaluation of the speakers' speech on six characteristics: accent, clarity of message, grammatical accuracy in English speech, fluency, ability to express ideas in English, and quality of pronunciation.

2.2.7. Personality Traits Questionnaire

The Personality Traits Questionnaire (Appendix K) consisted of eleven nine-point scales (1= not at all, 9 = completely). Two of which illustrated status traits (i.e., educated and intelligent), three which represented solidarity traits (i.e., honest, trustworthy, and kind), two which corresponded to refinement traits (well-spoken and refined), and the four other measured the degree of the speakers' commitment to either the Tunisian or the American culture (e.g., *I think this person likes American music more than Tunisian music*).

2.3. Data gathering procedure

The researcher asked the participants to come in two groups of twenty to the high school's laboratory for the first group (i.e., high-school students) and to the university's laboratory for the second group (i.e., undergraduate EFL students). First, the participants listened to the matched-guise recordings of twelve male and female voices reading three

versions of a scenario, differentiated from one another only on the basis of their idiom content. After listening to each voice, the participants rated the speaker in terms of English speech on a nine-point scale after listening to the matched guise voices of speakers. They evaluated their speech on the abovementioned six characteristics (see voice traits questionnaire). For instance, participants rated each speaker in terms of fluency after listening to each speaker. If they circled 1, it suggested that they thought the speaker was not at all fluent. A rating of nine suggested that they thought the speaker was extremely fluent (the numbers in between indicated varying degrees of fluency). The participants also rated the speaker in terms of personality. For instance, the participants rated each speaker in terms of honesty after listening to each speaker. If they circled 1, it suggested that they thought the speaker was not at all honest. A rating of nine suggested that they thought the speaker was completely honest. There was a possibility that the responses that were given by the participants on the speakers' personalities could have been affected by their perception of the speakers' speech measure (see above). Speakers were also rated in terms of perceived loyalty to the Tunisian ethnic group as measured in the ethnic group affiliation questionnaire. Then, participants filled out the biographical data questionnaire and the foreign language background questionnaire, and completed the idiom recognition test so that their identification of idioms could be assessed. Finally, the participants were asked to measure their pride and loyalty to the Tunisian ethnic group by filling out self- rated loyalty scales.

The data gathering session lasted about one hour. The questionnaire was administered entirely by the researcher. She also read all of the testing instructions. The instructions informed the participants that they would be hearing the voices of 12 male

and female speakers as they read three different texts in English. They were also informed that they would be handed a copy of the three texts to identify which text was read by each speaker. They were also told to listen to the entire recording and wait until they see the researcher's signal before rating each speaker.

2.4. Analysis

2.4.1. Scoring procedure

Most of the scales in the questionnaires were nine-point scales. The mean was calculated for each participant's responses on the different scales per voice (12 voices) on the basis on the number circled.

2.4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The purpose of the factor analysis was to reduce the number of variables, and detect a structure in the relationships between variables, that is classifying variables (Thurstone, 1947). In order to see the relationship between attitudes towards and use of idioms, and ethnic group affiliation by Tunisian participants, the participants' responses to the ethnic group affiliation (EGA) scales were subjected to an exploratory (principal components) factor analysis. Thus, responses measuring the same factor (or an independent division) would be highly related. The participants' responses to the English idioms questionnaire, which was aimed to measure the degree of the participants' attitudes toward learning, knowing and using idioms, were also subjected to an exploratory factor analysis.

2.4.3. Statistical Analysis

The Tunisian participants were divided into two groups based on their ethnic group affiliation self-rating and on the different levels of each of the EGA factors that

emerged in the factor analysis (i.e., Pride in being Tunisian and Engagement in Tunisian affairs): participants who were either more proud and engaged or less proud and engaged. In analysing the responses, three-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with repeated measures were performed. The factors were ETHNIC GROUP AFFILIATION (Pride, Engagement), GUISES or TEXTS (Guise/ Text1, Guise/ Text2, Guise/ Text3), and TRAITS (Solidarity, Status, Refinement), and the variables were attitudes toward learning, knowing and using idioms, age, household income, gender, and idiom recognition.

2.4.4. Correlations

It is possible that the participants' ratings of their ability and willingness to use English idioms accounted for the participants' self- ratings of ethnic group loyalty or vice versa. To determine if the relationship mentioned above was present, the participants' ratings of their ability and willingness to use English idioms were correlated with the EGA factors, using 2-tailed Pearson correlational analyses.

V- RESULTS

Research Question 1

How does the ethnic group affiliation (EGA) of the Tunisian participants affect their attitudes towards peers who use English idioms?

The first objective of the study was to determine whether a relationship existed between the participants' ethnic group affiliation and their ratings of fellow Tunisians who used different sets of English idioms in their speech. It must be recalled that in the matched guise stimulus designed for this study, the same target speaker read three different texts that were only distinguished from one another only on the basis of the types of idioms they contained. One text contained a set of clearly American English idioms (e.g., the big cheese), another text contained a set of equivalent Tunisian idioms (e.g., the big head), and another text with few regular idioms (e.g., the boss). It was hypothesized that the participants would react differently to the three guises they heard reading the texts although they belonged to the same speaker. The differences would arise because the speakers used different sets of idioms, since this was the only aspect that was manipulated to make them different. The topic, the length, and the structure of the texts were all controlled. The difference was expected to be manifested on how they rated these guises on the three personality traits (i.e., Status, Solidarity, and Refinement). Finally, it was hypothesized that the participants' reactions to the different guises/texts would be mediated by their ethnic group affiliations measured through their scores on the self-rated version of the ethnic group affiliation questionnaire.

In order to see the relationship between ethnic group affiliation and attitudes towards idiom use by the Tunisian participants, their responses to the ethnic group affiliation

(EGA) scales were first factor analysed. Although the EGA scales that were used in the study were varied and exemplified many aspects of EGA values reflected in the literature, it was not clear which dimensions would be salient in the participants' minds. The factor analysis was conducted to help identify what these factors were. Once these dimensions were determined, if any, these factors were, then, used to compare the participants in terms of their attitudes towards idioms and idiom use.

There were originally 18 EGA scales used in the study but five were excluded because the participants' scores on them were homogenous (All 9 on a nine-point scale). The participants' scores on the remaining 13 EGA scores were subjected to an exploratory principal components factor analysis, using a varimax, with Kaiser normalization rotation option. Although the participant sample was small, the factor analysis revealed a Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin value of .73, which exceeded the required .60 for sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974). The Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant ($p < .000$), suggesting matrix factorability (Bartlett, 1954).

The principal components analysis yielded five dimensions with 13 items containing eigenvalues exceeding 1. A reading of the scree plot, however, revealed a levelling off after the third factor. So, in the final iteration, only three factors were used. Absolute numbers under .50 were excluded. This iteration yielded the best fit-to-data grouping, with 11 items accounting for 63.24% of the data. Table 1 below shows the three factor groupings and the items that loaded on to each.

	Components		
	Factor1	Factor 2	Factor 3
I am proud to let people know that I am Tunisian.	.79		
The Tunisian dialect is important for my personal identity.	.91		
The Tunisian dialect is important for my group identity.	.93		
I will do everything to maintain and promote the Tunisian dialect.	.73		
I am proud of the intellectual and artistic achievements of Tunisians		. 69	
I am happy to participate in the national celebrations of my ethnic group		. 86	
I participate a lot in Tunisian community activities		. 78	
I listen to Tunisian songs		. 90	
I watch Tunisian films		. 70	
It is important to use Tunisian dialect		. 58	
I read Tunisian novels			. 86

Table 1. The results of the factor analysis conducted on the EGA scales.

As evident in Table 1, four items that loaded onto factor 1, six items on factor 2, and one item onto factor 3. The four items loading onto factor 1 seem to have a common basic theme; namely, Pride in Tunisian identity and clarity about the role of Tunisian dialect in showing and maintaining identity (i.e., proud to be known as Tunisian, pride in Tunisian dialect as a symbol of personal and group identity, and maintenance of it). This factor was referred to as *Pride* to reflect its basic focus. The six EGA items that loaded onto factor 2 could be said to be about engagement in Tunisian affairs (i.e., pride in

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Tunisian achievements, participating in national celebrations, participating in community activities, listening to Tunisian songs, and watching Tunisian films). As most of these items together seem to focus on some kind of commitment and involvement in cultural events, the second factor was labelled as *Engagement*. The sole item that loaded on factor 3 was reading novels, and so the factor was labelled *Reading Novels*. Further analysis on the participants' scores on this last factor, revealed a very low mean score of .02 on a nine-point scale, which was difficult to interpret. For this reason, it was excluded from further analyses.

A preliminary analysis of the data indicated that there were no significant differences between the high school participants who heard the guise of one target speaker, and the university level participants who heard the guise of another target speaker. In further analyses reported here, the reactions of both sets of participants to the two sets of target speakers' voices were collapsed. Henceforth, the target speaker refers to both speakers.

To determine the relationship between the participants' ethnic group affiliation and their reactions to idiom use, their responses to the two remaining EGA factors that emerged here and their scores rating the voices of readers of the target texts were subjected to three-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs), with repeated measures design. In these ANOVAs, the within-subjects variables were 3 GUISES (Guise reading the American text, Guise reading the Neutral text, and Guise reading the Tunisian text) and TRAITS (Solidarity, Status, Refinement). The between-subjects variables were two levels of the Pride in Tunisian identity (Lo Pride, Hi Pride) or two levels of Engagement in Tunisian culture (Lo Engagement, Hi Engagement). To determine the two levels of

each factor, the mean of the participants' scores on the items that loaded onto each was calculated and the participants were divided, using the median of the mean scores. Participants who fell above the median (6.13) on the Pride in Tunisian Identity factor were considered to have strong pride (HI PRIDE), and those who fell below were considered to have weaker pride (LO PRIDE). Likewise, participants who fell above the median (3.67) in the Engagement in Tunisian Culture factor were considered to be strongly engaged (HI ENGAGEMENT), and those who fell below this median score were considered to have lower engagement (LO ENGAGEMENT).

1. Pride in Tunisian Identity factor

To find out what the participants' attitudes were towards idiom use as reflected in the three different texts read by the same speaker, a three-way analysis of variance procedure was conducted. The within-subjects variables were three levels of GUISES (the guise used by the target speaker in reading the American text, the Neutral text, and the Tunisian texts), and three levels of personality TRAITS (Status, Loyalty, and refinement). The between-subjects variables were two levels of the PRIDE in Tunisian Identity factor (LO Pride. And Hi Pride).

This ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of GUISE, F (1. 38) =156.47, p =. 000, TRAITS, F (1.38) = 7.44, $p < .05$, and a significant GUISE x TRAITS interaction effect (F (1. 38) = 18.56, p = .000). There were no significant main effects of the Pride in Tunisian Identity variable. Nor was there a significant interaction in which this variable was involved.

Further analyses of the significant main effect of GUISE showed that, overall, the participants could note significant differences among the three guises of the Target

Speaker. His guise reading the Neutral text was rated significantly more positively than his guise reading the American text (7.37 > 7.06, *p* < .05). His guise reading the Tunisian text (3.74) was rated significantly lower than his voice reading the Neutral text (7.37) and the American text (7.06), *p* < .01.

Further analyses of the significant main effect of GUISE x TRAITS revealed that in terms of Status, the Target Speaker's guise reading the American text (7.85) and his guise reading the Neutral text (7.62) were viewed significantly more positively than his guise reading the Tunisian text (3.75), *p* < .001. On the Solidarity traits, the Target Speaker' guise reading the Neutral text (7.05) was rated significantly more positively than his guise reading the American text (6.12), *p* < .01. This guise, in turn, was rated significantly more positively than his guise reading the Tunisian text (3.55) *p* < .01. In terms of Refinement, the Target Speaker' guise reading both the American text (7.15) and the Neutral text (7.47) were viewed significantly more positively than his guise reading the Tunisian text (3.75), *p* < .01.These findings are illustrated in Figure 1 below.
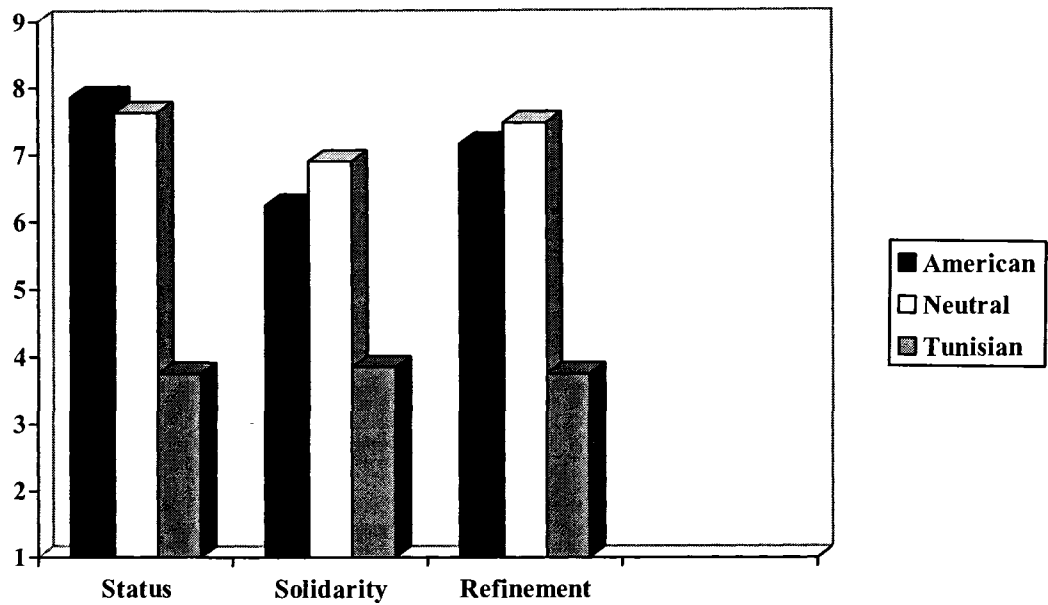
Figure 1. Participants' ratings of the Target speaker guises on personality scales.

2. Engagement in Tunisian Culture factor

The ANOVA conducted on the Engagement in Tunisian Culture factor also yielded a significant main effect of ENGAGEMENT, F (1.38) = 20.761, p < .01, GUISE, F (1.38) = 156.47, p < .001, and TRAITS, F (1.38) = 14.06, p = .001, and a GUISE x TRAITS interaction effect, F (1.38) = 17.29, p = .000. The significant main effect of Engagement showed that participants who showed a stronger commitment to engage in the affairs of the Tunisian group, in general, rated the Target Speakers' guises less positively than did the participants who showed less strong commitment to engage in these affairs.

Further analyses of the significant GUISE x ENGAGEMENT effects revealed that participants who reported stronger commitment to involve themselves in the group's social events rated the Target Speaker guise significantly more positively when they

heard him reading the Neutral text (7.02) than when reading the American text (6.46), $p <$

.001. They rated the Target Speaker's guise least positively when they heard him reading

the Tunisian text (4.02) $p < .000$. Those who showed weaker involvement in the group

rated the Target Speakers guises equally positively when he was reading the American

text (7.87) and the Neutral text (7.85), $p < .001$. They rated his guise reading the Tunisian

text least positively (3.53   ), $p < .000$. These results are illustrated in Figure 2 below.
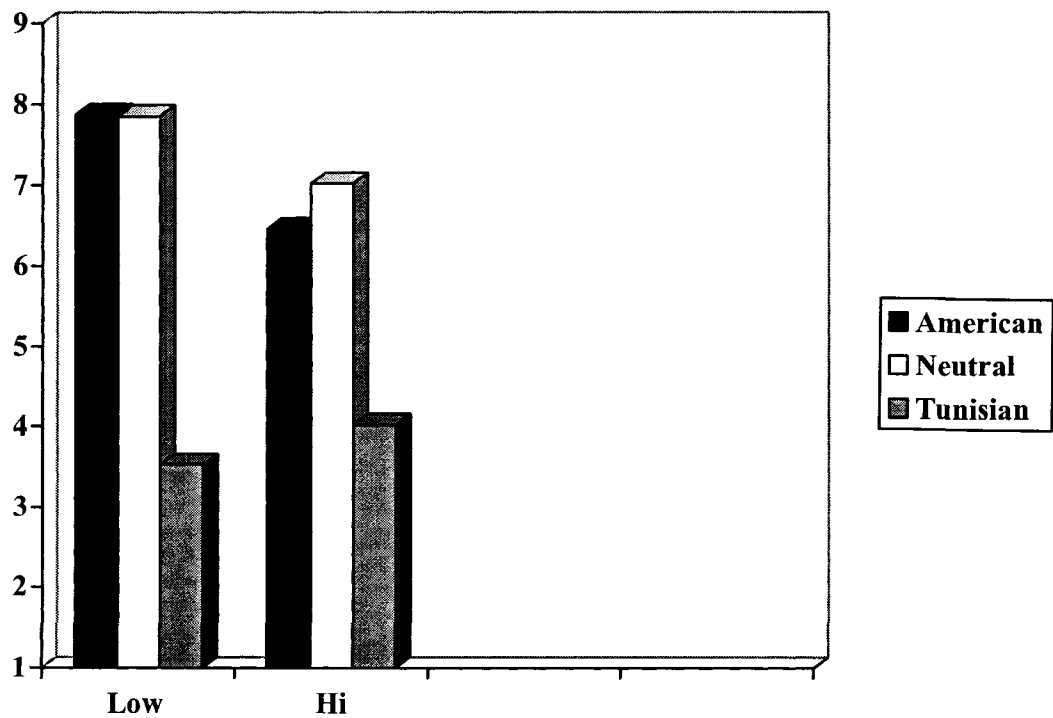
Figure 2. Ratings of highly engaged and low engaged participants.

3. Summary of results

These findings indicate that though it was the same speaker who read all the three

target texts, in general, the participants rated him more positively when he was reading

the Neutral text, than when he was reading the American text. He was rated least

positively when he was reading the Tunisian text. In terms of Status traits, he was accorded equally high status when he was reading both the American text and the Neutral text, but was given very low status when reading the Tunisian text. In terms of Solidarity, he was given high solidarity scores when he was reading the Neutral text, the American text, and the Tunisian text, in this order. Finally, he was seen to be significantly more refined when reading the American and the Neutral text than when he was reading the Tunisian text. These ratings were not significantly affected by the participants' level of pride in their Tunisian identity since there were no significant differences in the ratings of those who showed lower pride and those who showed higher pride in Tunisian identity. However, their ratings were significantly affected by their level of commitment to engage in the affairs of the group.

These results also mean that the Tunisian participants were reacting to the idiom contents of the texts since this was the only way they were different from one another. However, though these results indicated that the participants were able to distinguish between the three texts read by the same speaker and responded differently to them, the results are surprising because it was not expected that the American and the neutral texts would be significantly ranked equally higher on the status, solidarity and refinement scales. This surprising result will be discussed in greater length in the discussion.

Research Question 2

What general consequences to their image do the Tunisian participants believe would arise from their peers' use of English idioms in their speech? Is their perception of these consequences affected by their ethnic group affiliation?

1. The participants' perception of the consequences of idiom use

The second research question of the thesis was concerned with whether a relationship exists between the participants' ethnic group affiliation (EGA) and their perceptions of the consequences of idiom use among their peers. To answer this question, two major steps were again taken. In the first step, the participants' responses to the English idioms questionnaire, designed to measure their perceptions of the consequences of idiom use (i.e., experience with English idioms questionnaire), were subjected to an exploratory (principal components) factor analysis using a varimax, with Kaiser normalization rotation option. Again, the purpose of the factor analysis was to find out the different dimensions of consequences of idiom use that the participants perceived. Although the questionnaire measuring these issues included consequences of idiom use, ranging from making the users sound intelligent to sounding pro-American or pro-Tunisian. It was not clear just exactly what dimensions would underlie the participants' responses. It was thought that the factor analysis would help to reveal these dimensions.

The factor analysis revealed a Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin value of .88, which far exceeded the required .60 for sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974).The Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant ($p < .000$) suggesting that the matrix was factorable (Bartlett, 1954).The principal components analysis yielded three components with 22 items containing eigenvalues exceeding 1. This yielded the best fit-to-data grouping, with items accounting for 79 % of the data. Table 2 below shows the three factors groupings and the items that loaded on to each

Using idioms makes me:	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Feel sophisticated.	. 61		
Feel unnatural.	. 84		
Feel less normal.	. 89		
Feel less confident.	. 71		
Feel less comfortable.	. 67		
Uncaring of my Tunisian heritage.	. 81		
Appear wanting to be an American.	. 81		
Appear preferring American culture to Tunisian culture.	. 63		
Appear preferring American food to Tunisian food.	. 73		
Appear ambitious.		. 87	
Appear refined.		. 77	
Look educated.		. 75	
Look intelligent.		. 80	
Appear to prefer American songs more than Tunisian songs.			. 87
Appear to prefer American movies more than Tunisian movies.			. 80
Appear to prefer American life-style more than Tunisian life-style.			. 71

Table 2. The results of the factor analysis conducted on the participants' perceptions of the consequences of idiom use.

As Table 2 indicates, nine items that loaded onto Factor 1, four items on Factor 2, and three items onto Factor 3. An examination of the nine items that loaded onto Factor 1

reveals the majority (six items) to be concerned with different feelings of discomfort in using English idioms (e.g., it makes me sound unnatural, it makes me sound less Tunisian), including the feeling of appearing immersed in American culture (e.g., people will think I want to be like an American, people will think I prefer American culture to Tunisian culture). Because these items are focused on the feelings awakened by idiom use, which are mostly negative, we labelled this factor as *DISCOMFORT*. The four items that loaded onto Factor 2 refer to the use of idioms as making the speaker sound highly ambitious, refined, educated, and intelligent. Three of these items denote status in matched guise procedures (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaun, 1960), thus, this factor was named *INCREASE STATUS*. Finally, the four items that loaded onto Factor 3 refer to the use of idiom as making a person appear more involved in American culture than Tunisian culture (e.g., people will think I like American songs than Tunisian songs, people will think I like American life-style than Tunisian life-style). Because of this common theme, this factor was labelled *PRO-AMERICAN IMAGE*.

Having identified three different dimensions of the participants' view regarding the use of idioms, the next step was to calculate the participants' mean scores for each of these dimensions and then to use these scores as factors in the statistical analyses aimed at finding out the relationship between the participants' ethnic group affiliation and their perceptions of the consequences of idiom use. To calculate the mean scores for each dimension, once again the participants' scores across all items that loaded onto each factor were summed up and then divided by the number of these items.

2. The relationship between the participants' ethnic group affiliation and their perception of the consequences of idiom use

To answer the question of whether there was a relationship between the participants' ethnic group affiliation (as exemplified in their responses towards the Pride in being Tunisian scales and the degree of Engagement in Tunisian culture scales) and their perception of the Consequences of idiom use (as exemplified in the three dimensions of consequences that emerged from the factor analysis mentioned above), their scores on these two sets of factors were subjected to a Pearson rank correlation test. Because multiple comparisons were made, a Bonferroni adjusted alpha of $p = .008$ was used to test the significance of the results. Table 3 below shows the results of this correlation.

	create feeling of discomfort	increase my status (made me look ambitious, refined, educated, and intelligent)	make me sound less pro-Tunisian and more pro-American
Pride in Tunisian identity			
Engagement in Tunisian culture	. 658 (.000)		.482 (.002)

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between the participants' EGA and their perception of the consequences of idiom use.

These results show a significant positive correlation between the person's willingness to participate in the group's culture as indicated by its music and movies, and the feeling of discomfort in using English idioms, $r = .658$, $p = .000$. The results also show a significant positive association between involvement in Tunisian culture and the belief that English idioms use make the participants sound less Tunisian and more pro-American $r = .482$, $p = .002$. These results mean that the more engaged the participants were in their culture, the more they felt that using English idioms would make them sound unnatural and sophisticated. The more they believed also that English idiom use would make them appear less Tunisian and more American. However, there was no significant difference between the belief about the use of idioms and increased status. Pride in being Tunisian, also, did not correlate significantly with any of the perceived consequences of English idiom use.

3. Summary of results

To summarize, follow-up comparisons indicated again that the participants responded differently to the three speakers when they were reading three different texts. In particular, they rated the American text and the neutral text higher than the Tunisian text. In other words, the Tunisian participants considered a speaker as being more American and less Tunisian when they heard him using English idioms than when using the Tunisian equivalent of these idioms. Again, the results suggest that there was a significant association between ethnic group loyalty and beliefs about the possible consequences to a person's image of using English idioms in their speech. The more engaged in the native culture the participants were, the more they believed that idiom use

made them appear to be more pro-American, and the more uncomfortable they were in using these idioms.

Research Question 3

Will the participants' age, gender, and experience with, and ability to use and recognize idioms affect their responses to the first two questions above?

1. Analysis of Background Variables

It was possible that, in addition to the EGA variables discussed above, some of the demographic variables such as age, household income, and gender would also have an effect on the participants' perception of the relationship between use of idioms and ethnic group affiliation. It was hypothesized that age, gender, and household income would affect the results, since these variables often affect language. But if there was any effect from these, no predication was made about the particular direction the effects would take.

1.1. Age

To determine whether the participants' age had an effect on how the participants perceived the relationship between idioms and speakers' traits, their ratings of the Target Speaker guises on the personality trait scales were submitted to a three-way repeated-measures ANOVA. In this analysis, AGE served as a between-subjects factor, and GUISES (Guise reading the American text, Guise reading the Neutral text, Guise reading the Tunisian text), and TRAITS (Status, Solidarity, Refinement) served as within-subjects factors.

This analysis did not yield a significant main effect of age, nor a significant GUISE x TRAITS x AGE interaction effect, F (1, 38) = 2.28, p = .139. These findings

suggest that participants' age did not affect how they rated the speakers' traits.

1.2. Household Income

In order to determine whether household income had an effect on how the participants perceived the relationship between idioms and speakers' traits, their ratings of the Target Speaker guises on the personality trait scales were submitted to a three-way repeated-measures ANOVA. In this analysis, INCOME served as a between-subjects factor, and GUISES (Guise reading the American text, Guise reading the Neutral text, Guise reading the Tunisian text), and TRAITS (Status, Solidarity, Refinement) served as within-subjects factors.

This analysis did not yield a significant main effect of INCOME, nor a significant GUISE x TRAITS x INCOME interaction effect, F (1, 38) = 01. 054, p = .817. This result suggests that participants' household income did not affect how they rated the speakers' traits.

1.3. Gender

To determine whether the participants' gender had an effect on how they rated the relationship between idioms and speakers' traits, the participants' ratings of the Target Speaker guises on the personality trait scales (n = 40) were submitted to a three-way repeated-measures ANOVA. In this analysis, GENDER (Male, Female) served as a between-subjects factor, and GUISES (Guise reading the American text, Guise reading the Neutral text, Guise reading the Tunisian text), and TRAITS (Status, Solidarity, Refinement) served as within-subject factors. This analysis yielded a significant GENDER x GUISE interaction effect, F (1, 38) = 10.82, p = .002.

Further analyses of the significant main effect of GUISE showed that the male

participants rated the Target Speaker guises significantly more positively than did the

female participants. This result is illustrated in Figure 3 below.
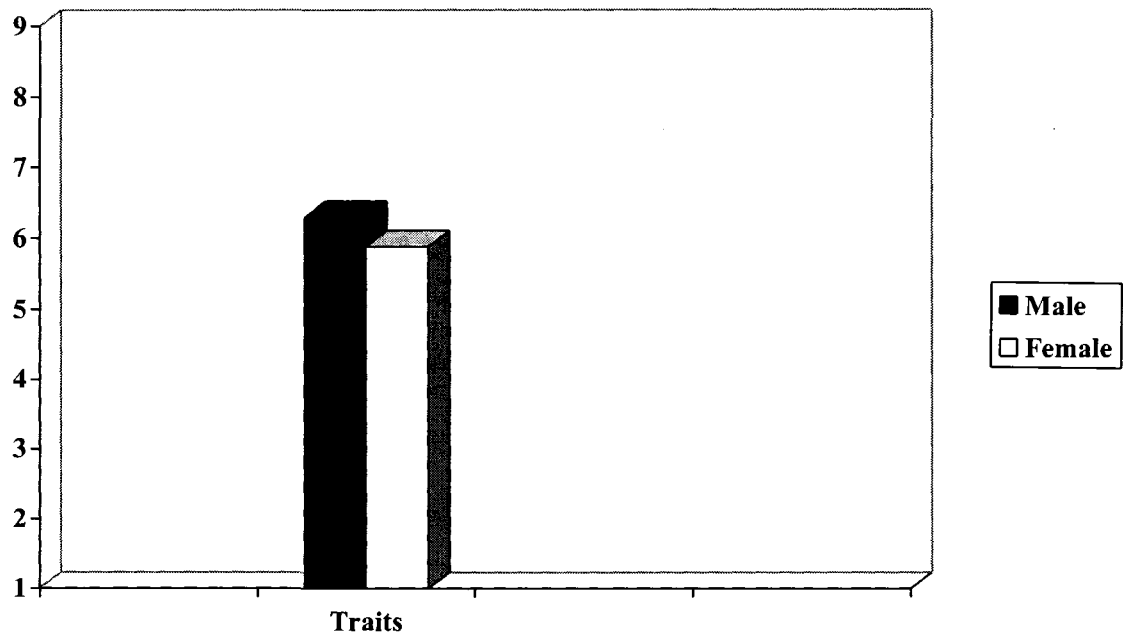
Figure 3. Guises ratings of the male and female participants.

Both female and male participants ($n = 40$) rated the Target Speaker' guise

reading the Neutral text significantly higher on status, solidarity and refinement

dimensions than his guise reading the American text $(7.40 > 7.17, p < .05)$. The speaker's

guise reading the Tunisian text (3.69) was ranked significantly lower on status, solidarity

and refinement dimensions than the voice reading the Neutral text (7.40) and the

American text (7.17). This result again supports our first finding; that is, listening to the

American text did not induce a negative mood or a heightened sense of the participants'

Arabic Tunisian identity, and listening to an ingroup speaker reading Tunisian idioms did

not uplift for their sense of Tunisian identity.

Further analysis of the significant GENDER x GUISE x TRAITS interaction (F

(1, 38) = 10.86, p = .049) revealed that the male participants (n =17) gave higher ratings

to the American and neutral text than did the female participants (n = 23). They also rated

the Tunisian text lower than did the female participants. This result is illustrated in Figure

4 below.
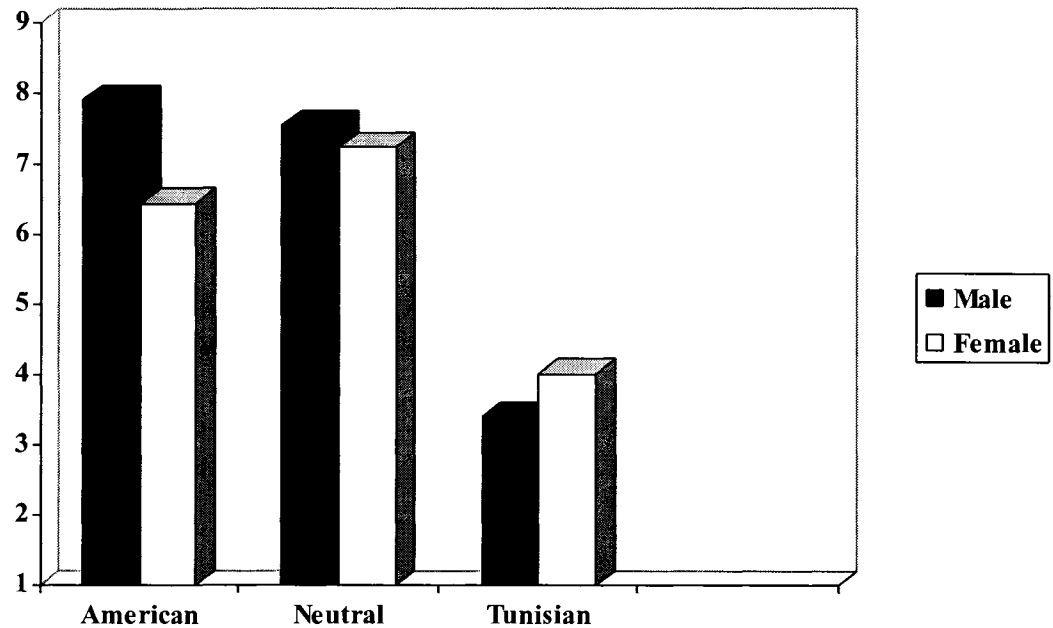
Figure 4. Male and female participants' ratings of the target speakers' guises

The results illustrated in Figure 4 above indicates that the participants' gender had

an effect on how they rated the guise in which the speaker read the texts.

2. Analysis of Idiom recognition

It was possible that in addition to the demographic variables discussed above, the

Tunisian participants' knowledge with idioms may also have had an effect on their perception of the relationship between use of idioms and ethnic group loyalty. After assessing the participants' ability to recognize the correct interpretation of idioms through the idiom recognition test, results revealed that the mean self-rated overall recognition of idioms at the time of the study was .56 for all the participants. The median for idiom recognition test (high Vs low) was .60, so all participants who had a mean of .60 or lower were considered to have low idiom knowledge. The participants who had a mean greater than .60 were considered to have a good knowledge of idioms

In order to determine whether idiom recognition had an effect on how they rated the relationship between idioms and speakers' traits, the participants' ratings of traits were submitted to a three-way repeated-measures. In this analysis IDIOM RECOGNITION served as a between-subjects factor, and GUISES (Guise reading the American text, Guise reading the Neutral text, Guise reading the Tunisian text), and TRAITS (Status, Solidarity, Refinement) served as within-subject factors. This analysis yielded a significant main effect of IDIOM RECOGNITION x GUISES interaction effect, $F (1, 26) = 4. 868, p = .036$.

A further analysis of the significant IDIOM RECOGNITION x GUISES interaction showed that the participants, who had a low idiom recognition score, rated the Target Speaker's guise reading the American text significantly lower than did the participants who had higher idiom recognition score (6.64 vs. $7.28, p < .05$). They also rated the neutral text significantly lower than did the participants with higher idiom recognition score (6.73 vs. $7.72, p < .05$). However, the participants who had a low idiom

recognition score rated reading the Tunisian text higher than did the participants who had

higher idiom recognition scores. This finding is illustrated in Figure 5 below.
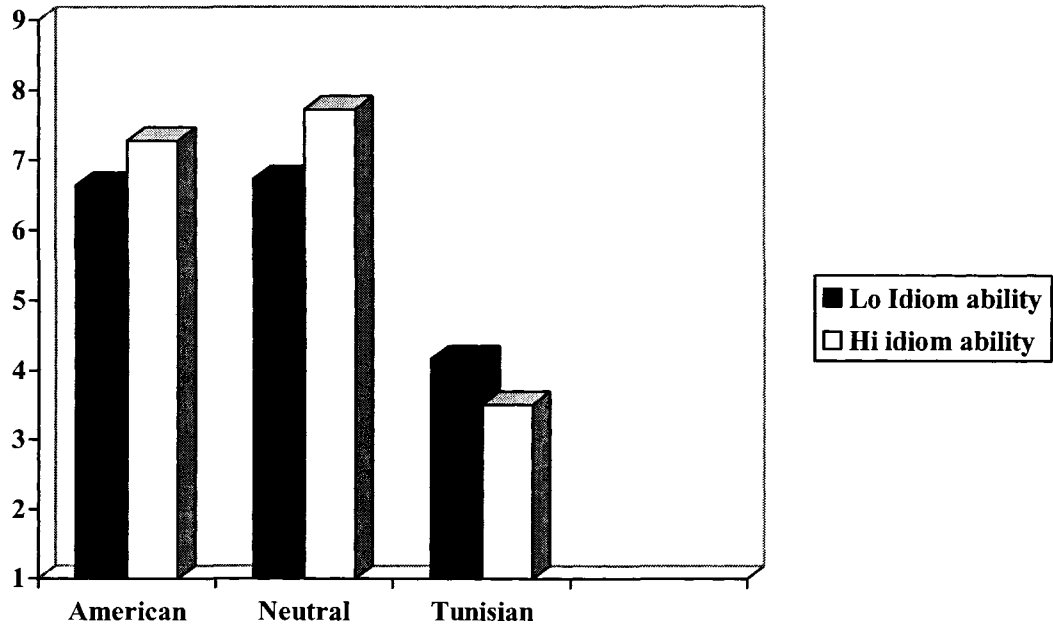
Figure 5. Participants' idiom recognition ability and their attitudes toward the speaker guises.

These findings show that the more the participants were able to recognize the

correct interpretation of idioms, the more positive they were to English idiom use.

However, the less they were able to recognize the correct interpretation of idioms, the

less positive they were to English idiom use and the more positive they were to Tunisian

idiom use. These results confirm the hypothesis that that participants' idiom recognition

affected how they rated idiom use.

3. Summary of results

When age, household income, gender, an idiom recognition were entered as

factors in repeated measures ANOVAs, the analyses only yielded a significant effect of

gender and idiom recognition.

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VI- DISCUSSION

Five findings are worthy of note from this study. The first is the fact that the Tunisian participants differentiated among the three guises, thus, among the three texts. The second is that in terms of status and refinement, the participants rated the American text and the neutral text positively, which means that contrary to what was predicted at the beginning of the study, they had a positive view, on the whole, towards idiom use. Another important finding is that ethnic group affiliation, particularly Engagement in Tunisian culture, affected the participants' perception of idioms. Those who were more engaged downgraded the American text relative to the neutral text. They also associated idiom use with discomfort and with being more American. The last two findings worth noting are that the participants' gender and ability to recognize idioms had an effect on their reactions to idiom use.

1. Differentiation among the three guises

The first noteworthy finding of this study is the fact that the Tunisian participants responded differently to the different guises reading the different texts. For example, they rated the speaker's voice reading the text that contained primarily American idioms (i.e., the American text) and the text that contained more literal, less idiomatic equivalents of these idioms (i.e., the neutral text) significantly more positively than they did his voice reading the text that contained Tunisian equivalents of the American idioms (i.e., the Tunisian text).

This finding shows that the matched guise procedure was effective, although it was a slightly different version from the one classically employed in attitude studies. Instead of having the same speaker read the same text in different languages, the same

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speaker read three texts that differed from each other only in idiom content. That the participants reacted differently to the different guises even if they were produced by the same speaker means that they were sensitive to the idiom content of the texts (since this was the only feature that differentiated the three texts from one another). In other words, because of the structure of the matched guise used here, it seems safe to assume that the participants' reaction towards the guises was also a reaction to the different levels of idiom use in each text.

One could raise a question at this point whether the same result would have emerged had the participants' reaction to idiom use been measured from a direct reading of the three texts rather than merely deducing these reactions via the guises in which they were read. In other words, would the results be the same had the texts been given directly to the participants to read and rate on appropriate measures? The answer to this question may be positive. Nevertheless, since in this study the goal was to find out the participants' reaction to idiom use in speech rather than in a written text, the use of the matched guise, albeit modified, was appropriate.

2. Reactions to the three texts

The second finding of the study worth highlighting is the pattern of results that emerged with regards to the different trait measures (status, solidarity, and refinement) used in this study. This pattern of results shows, first, that the American text and its neutral counterpart (i.e., the neutral text) were overall both rated significantly equally positively on both the status scales (i.e., educated and intelligent), and the refinement scales (i.e., well-spoken and refined). However, the American text was rated significantly less positively than the neutral text on the Solidarity scales (i.e., honest, trustworthy, and

kind). The Tunisian text was rated significantly less positively than both the American and the neutral texts. These findings suggest a positive attitude towards the use of American idioms relative to the neutral text and a negative attitude towards the Tunisian idioms.

That the neutral text would be rated positively on status was predicted from the fact that it contained the variety of English that is considered to be standard, one which is expected to be found in many learning textbooks, which, as already been pointed out above, is what Tunisian students generally take as the model to learn. So, their positive rating of this neutral text simply affirms this fact.

That they rated the American text as positively as the neutral text, however, comes as a surprise. It was earlier hypothesized that the prevalence of American sounding idioms would make the language of the American text sound too casual or "slangy" and would thus make it less appealing to Tunisian learners who, as observed earlier, do not consider casual speech as good Standard English. The fact that the students rated this text as positively as the neutral text suggests that their reactions to American idiom use may not be as negative as anticipated. Therefore, in terms of status and refinement, at least, employing American idioms may not be seen as problematic.

Of greater interest for this study is the fact that the participants rated these texts differently on the Solidarity scales. On these scales, the participants significantly downgraded the American text relative to the neutral text. This finding suggests that although overall there was a positive reaction towards the use of American idioms, their use, in terms of solidarity, may be associated with some negativity; namely, it makes the speaker appear less trustworthy, kind and honest.

On all the scales, the Tunisian text was viewed the least positively. It is not clear exactly why the Tunisian text would be downgraded. It was anticipated that the Tunisian participants might find this text more appealingly than the American text since it contained idioms that are translations of idioms found in the Tunisian dialect. Perhaps the Tunisian participants did not take positively to using the English translations of their native idioms. Whatever their reasons, the participants in this study did not feel as positively about these idioms than they did the American idioms and their neutral equivalents.

It is possible, because the participants rated the neutral text and the American text significantly different from the Tunisian text on all three traits, that they might have perceived only two dichotomies of texts instead of three- the neutral text and the American text, on one side, and the Tunisian text, on the other side, that instead of using idiom content to differentiate the texts, they might have used other elements of the text, for example, the unnaturalness of the Tunisian idioms arising from their being directly translated into English. The first argument could be strengthened by the fact that on both the status and the refinement traits, the American texts and the neutral texts were not significantly differentiated. However, the fact that on the solidarity traits, they rated these two texts significantly differently weakens this argument and suggests that they did differentiate between these two texts. That the Tunisian participants may have downgraded the Tunisian texts relative to the other two texts because seeing their Tunisian idioms translated directly into English was unnatural is worth looking into. The fact that they rated the three texts significantly differently on the solidarity trait scales

even as in the other scales these texts were produced by the same speaker suggests that their sensitivity to the differences among the scales was as predicted in the study.

3. Relationship between Ethnic Group Affiliation and English idioms use

The third and most important finding for the study is one concerned with the role of Ethnic Group Affiliation in the use of English idioms. The ANOVA conducted on the data indicate that those who reported more active participation in their native culture (e.g., they participated more in national celebrations and community activities of the Tunisian community, they listened to Tunisian songs, and watched Tunisian movies) significantly downgraded the Target Speaker's guise reading the American text relative to the neutral text than those who did not show as strong engagement in their culture. This suggests that when the students' ethnic group affiliation was taken into account, those who had higher EGA behaved differently from those with lower EGA in terms of idiom use. For the more culture-engaged participants, using American idioms was viewed more negatively comparing to using their neutral counterparts.

All participants still downgraded the Tunisian idioms relative to American idioms and the neutral equivalents. However, the participants who had higher EGA (i.e., more engaged in their culture) did not downgrade it as much as did those with lower EGA. In fact, they rated them significantly more positively in this case. These findings suggest that idiom use could be associated with identity issues.

As pointed out in the first chapter, previous research on the intimate relationship between language and identity has shown that language switching, accent, specific phonetic segments and the lexicon can be manipulated for identity negotiation purposes, it appears from the result above that idiom use can also be added to the list of linguistic

features that may be intimately linked to identity, at least by certain segments of the Tunisian population. This relationship may have effects on the learning of English idioms but its pedagogical implications will be discussed in greater detail below.

In a further probe of the consequences of idiom use, the same group of participants who reported more involvement in Tunisian culture, significantly associated idiom use with a feeling of discomfort compared to those who were not as engaged. Probed about what they felt the consequences of idiom use could be, these participants associated using English idioms with the feeling of discomfort and unnaturalness. They indicated that using English idioms such as the ones in the American text presents them in a position of being judged to be preferring American songs, movies, and life-styles. So, they are seen to be favouring American culture more than their own. The link between EGA and the participants' perception of idiom use found here suggests that EGA (in particular, Engagement in one's culture) may be a feature of language that can also be manipulable for group identity purposes. Further research has to be done on this issue, of course, to confirm replicability.

It is interesting to note that although Tunisian students, as a group, attributed higher status and refinement to the American text than the Tunisian text, some (i.e., those who were more engaged in their culture) indicated that the use of American idioms made them feel unnatural, less normal, less confident, and less comfortable. This finding suggests that these participants could admire something at the same time that they could feel uncomfortable being associated with its use.

Ladegaard and Sachdev (2006) investigated the attitudes of a group of Danish EFL students towards American English and found a similar result. Even though their

Danish student participants acknowledged the importance of the American cultures, they indicated that they had no desire to adapt an American accent because they felt uncomfortable having one. It seems that the Danish participants in their study and the Tunisian EFL students in this present study are in Necef's (1996) words "not helpless and passive objects of cultural transformation...they are capable of taking a reflexive attitude towards incorporate elements [of the culture] which they find are appropriate to their needs and interests" (p. 56).

Ladegaard and Sachdev's (2006) study suggested that the Danish students there and the Tunisian participants in this study are like many other groups of young people around the world who are fascinated by the Americans as "multifaceted overseas ethnolinguistic community" (p. 105), but they do not seem to like all the symbolic elements representing the American community. Ladegaard and Sachdev identified this phenomenon as the *language-culture discrepancy hypothesis*. Underlying this hypothesis is the notion that it is possible to have positive attitudes towards members of another ethnolinguistic group, and to state a preference for certain elements of that outgroup community, without wanting to adapt all the elements of that culture, including the language, or specific linguistic features, such as idioms. This seems true, at least, for a group of young Tunisian speakers of English.

An important factor that seems to help restrain an all out of adoption of a foreign culture may be the participants' Ethnic Group Affiliation. Of course in this study, only one dimension of EGA was focused upon- Engagement in cultural events. Gatbonton and Trofimovich (2008) found different other dimensions of EGA that could play a similar role; Pride EGA (i.e., pride in the ethnic group), which seems to be equivalent to the

Pride in Tunisian origins found in the present study; Group ID EGA (i.e., desire to be identified as a member of a group); Language EGA (i.e., belief in the role of language in ethnic group affiliation); and Political EGA (i.e., support for the political aspirations of the group). From the present study, it appears that another dimension could be added on to these- strength of engagement in the native culture. Coupland, Holmes, and Coupland (1998) identified three components of ethnic identification: the affective element (e.g., feeling of pride for the group), knowledge, and practice. The engagement in culture dimension that emerged in this study seems to be related to the practice component. It is interesting that Pride in Tunisian origins, one of the two dimensions of EGA that emerged in the factor analysis did not affect the participants' attitudes towards idioms and idiom use. One explanation here could be that there was not much variety in the participants' ratings on the items that loaded onto this factor. On the whole, the participants were similar to one another on this variable.

4. The effects of idiom recognition

The findings regarding idiom recognition suggest that familiarity or lack of it may be the basis of the participants' perception of idiom use. The more familiar the students are with English idioms, the more they can attribute higher status and refinement to its use. This means that learning English idioms and becoming more skillful with them changes one's perception of their use. The other finding means that while the participants are not yet able to use the English idioms, they are likely to turn to the use of the Tunisian equivalent of these idioms. The evidence for this is the finding that those who had lower ability with idioms viewed more positively the Tunisian text compared to those who had higher ability.

Based on this finding it may be pointed out that perhaps it is lack of familiarity with the idioms, not the link between idiom use and EGA that gave rise to the feeling of discomfort in idiom use reported here. The fact that there were strong associations between idiom use and solidarity, as well as between idiom use the feeling of being less Tunisian and more pro-American on the part of some of the participants suggest that EGA had a role in this perception. It is possible of course that more familiarity with idioms would weaken the association between idioms use and feeling less Tunisian. This is, however, an empirical question that needs to be investigated in a future study.

To summarize so far, it appears that the Tunisian participants in this study had, on the whole, a positive view towards idioms and idiom use. In fact, when asked to indicate how necessary it was for the Tunisian students to learn idioms, their responses showed that they considered it very necessary. However, the participants EGA and their ability with idioms could modify this positive perception so that those who had higher EGA and those who had less ability downgraded the use of English idioms more than those who had less EGA and had more ability with idioms.

5. The effects of gender

The last finding of the study was that the participants' gender had an effect on how they rated the guise in which the speaker read the text. The female participants rated the speakers lower on the three traits than did the male participants.

This finding differs from the findings of Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005) who found that female participants were more likely to give higher ratings of loyalty than male participants when speakers were presented in the English guise. They explained this result by suggesting that Chinese women tend to attribute more positive

attributes to men because China is a male dominated society, and women may be acculturized to accord them more value. Within this framework of viewing gender differences, the results of the present study may differ from Gatbonton et al. because women have high status in Tunisia. According to a special international report prepared by *The Washington Times* (2006), women in Tunisia have higher status relative to other women in the African and Arab-Muslim world. This would explain why the female participants in this study were different from the females in Gatbonton et al. In a society where females and males are considered equal, women may assert their positions by rating the male speakers lower on the three traits. However, it is also possible that the female participants in this study were just being less generous and tolerant in their traits' ratings than males at this time.

6. Summary

To sum up, overall, in formulating the research questions in this study, the starting point was an observation that Tunisian students might avoid the use of English idioms for three reasons, namely, the non-literalness of idioms and the ineffectiveness of materials designed to teach idioms in an EFL context (Irujo, 1986); the belief that proficiency in English could only be achieved through learning Standard English; and finally, the lack of an adequate idiom presentation in foreign language textbooks (Liontas,1999). Because of the documented intimate link between ethnic group identity issues and language, it was also hypothesized that their seemingly negative reaction to idioms might be an identity negotiation strategy. This study does not yield any evidence that the present participants avoided idiom use. Whether it was because they had higher proficiency levels than

students observed earlier or whether times have changed from four years back that attitudes towards idiom use has changed could not be ascertained from the study.

On the whole, the present participants seem to see a significant positive association between high status and refinement and idiom use. This perception, however, seems to be affected by two factors- their EGA, particularly Engagement in Tunisian culture, and their ability with idioms. The finding regarding the link between idiom use and ability suggests that the students observed during the researcher's experience as an EFL teacher may have had a reluctance to learn idioms because they were not very familiar with idioms. The finding regarding the association between higher involvement with the native group and idiom use suggests indeed that the link between identity and idiom use could have been at play.

VII- IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Pedagogical

The results of the present study have interesting pedagogical implications. In general, the findings highlight the need to take into account the role of at least one identity issue in student perceptions of idiom use; namely, the strength of their involvement in their native culture. In terms of learning, the findings here suggests that foreign language learners' difficulties in learning and using English idioms may not necessarily always result from the non-literalness of idioms, or the ineffectiveness of materials designed to teach idioms in an EFL context (Irujo, 1986), nor from the lack of an adequate idiom presentation, in foreign language textbooks (Liontas,1999). But they should be aware of possible role of EGA in learning and using idioms.

The other pedagogical implication has to do with the reported feeling of discomfort of certain groups in using English idioms. It is suggested here that this feeling may be due to the fact that the participants felt that idiom use made them sound less natural and uncomfortable. They may have this feeling even if they believe that the use of idioms is necessary. Awareness of this result on the part of the teachers will be helpful in making these teachers present the idioms they are teaching more sensitively.

In this context, dealing with the relationship between perceived accent and perceived ethnic group loyalty, Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005) noted that the materials and the activities designed to help students learn to understand and produce idioms in English should "help to create an atmosphere of inclusion in the classroom of all cultural backgrounds and reduce any threat that learners may feel towards their cultural identity" (p.59). They noted that to reduce the element of cultural threat and

diminish the feeling of being excluded, all cultural backgrounds, for example, should be presented equally through texts, pictures, tables or graphs. These materials and activities may allow students to acquire a positive sense of who they are and teach them how they should act appropriately towards outgroup members, such as the Americans.

Being aware of these options may help EFL teachers to gain an understanding of why teaching English idioms may be such a challenge for themselves and for their EFL students, and therefore may reduce their worries concerning this particular feature of language teaching. Therefore, the awareness of such a condition is crucial to the student's success in learning the foreign language.

2. Limitations

The list of limitations of this study begins with the choice of American idioms. As mentioned in the fourth chapter, a passage used in the matched guise procedure was taken from Ting's (2003) lesson on food idiom. Ting compiled what she claimed to be English food idioms and made a lesson using food-idioms in context. Because it was not an authentic texts and Ting stacked the passage with many food idioms, it is possible that the text had characteristics that were not just due to idiom use that triggered reactions to this text that were different from those to the other texts. In other words, the American text may have sounded unnatural, not just because there were American idioms in it, but because there was one too many of them in it. The fact, however, that the participants had positive reactions to the American text on the status and refinement traits on the one hand; and negative reactions to it on the solidarity traits on the other hand, suggests that the unnaturalness arising from the text being stacked did not matter. If it did, the students'

reaction on the two traits would have been both negative. At any rate, in a further study, care should be taken to reduce the artificiality factor.

In addition, with results of the type reported in the present research, there is always the danger of succumbing to generalizations, thus, several factors need to be taken into account before the hypotheses, assumptions, and predictions of the present study are generalizable.

First, the findings of the present study are limited to the subject pool of the 40 Tunisian students. They are not generalizable to all Tunisian EFL learners or those of the global community.

Second, as mentioned in the methodology section, there was no pre-determined time limit set for the completion of the idiom recognition test. Participants were encouraged to take as much time as necessary before making final decisions concerning the correct interpretations of idioms. Such time factor should be taken into account first before viable generalization could be made.

Another limitation of the study is that the participants' responses were elicited only by questionnaires. Interviews and observation of attitudes of the Tunisian participants towards speakers of the American, neutral, and Tunisian guises could increase the validity of the participants' responses.

Another limitation is that the participants' level of proficiency was not assessed. Indeed, individual differences in proficiency may have had an effect o Interviews and observation of attitudes of the Tunisian participants towards n the participants' ratings of the speakers' traits and ethnic group affiliation.

Furthermore, the participant sample studied was homogeneous in terms of gender (i.e., 17 males and 23 females), education level (i.e., 20 undergraduate EFL students and 20 high school students), and socio-economic class participants (i.e., 42, 5% participants reported having a household income between 30.000 D and 40.000 D and the remaining 23 participants reported a household income between 10.000 D and 50.000 D). This uniformity may have been helpful in better understanding the background of this particular sample of the Tunisian community. However, it did not allow for a deep examination of the different experiences of other different individuals.

A final limitation of a more general nature in language attitude research is the fact that correlation does not mean causation. The present study found that there is a correlation between the participants' attitudes towards and willingness to use idioms and their ethnic group affiliation. Therefore, we would not be able to assume that these patterns are caused by their attitudes. The problem, as mentioned in Ladegaard (2000), is that even a statistically significant correlation between attitude and behaviour "will not provide us with any proof as to what has caused subjects to act in a particular way" (p. 228). So we should be cautious to point to a causal link between the participants' attitudes towards and willingness to use idioms and their ethnic group affiliation.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, this research has shed light on the relationship that exists between ethnic group affiliation and learning/use of idioms, and therefore, may represent a contribution to scholarship.

3. Directions for future research

The direction of future research is based on the limitations of the study just

described above. Thus, the recommendations offered below aim to strengthen the construction of this research design for future investigations.

Future research may explore in greater detail the link between ethnic group affiliation and the participants' perception of idiom use. Since findings in the present study revealed that EGA (in particular, Engagement in one's culture) may be a feature of language that can also be manipulated for group identity purposes, further research has to be done on this issue to confirm replicability.

A larger pool of participants might have strengthened the findings discussed here even further. Thus, future studies might well consider a larger participant pool from several EFL institutions. Therefore, the results could be said to be more representative of the general student body studying English as a foreign language, adding greater validity to the relationship between the participants' use of English idioms and ethnic group affiliation. Equally important will be to compare the ratings of the Tunisian participants with other Tunisians growing up or residing in a north American country, such as Canada, to investigate if their overseas experience would affect their ratings of the speakers' traits and ethnic group affiliation.

In terms of relationship that was found to exist between the participants' gender and their ratings of the speakers' traits, it would be interesting to see how participants from other societies in which females and males are considered equal, would rate female speakers on traits and loyalty. It would also be of interest if those participants could be compared with participants from male dominated or patriarchal societies, where men occupy a majority of high ranking positions, such as China.

An additional variable that could be looked at in future replications of this study is the participants' level of proficiency in their foreign language. It would be interesting to correlate the participants' level of proficiency with their perception of the speakers' ethnic group affiliation. Perhaps those participants who are less proficient would rate the Target Speaker guise reading the America and the neutral text more positively than the Target Speaker guise reading the Tunisian text.

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Appendix A

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Souha Ayed for her master's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Gatbonton in the department of Education/Applied Linguistics at Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE
I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to gather information about Language and Identity.

B. PROCEDURES
I have been informed that (1) the tasks I will be asked to complete an idiom recognition test, filling out questionnaires, as well as listening and reacting to different scenarios recorded on tape; and (2) the total testing time will take approximately an hour.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION
I understand that:
   ◊ I am free to decline participation in the experiment without any negative consequence. I have chosen to participate freely.
   ◊ I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.
   ◊ my participation in this study is confidential (i.e., the researcher will know but will not disclose my identity.
   ◊ my participation in this study may be published or presented at a scientific conference; data will be reported in a way that protects each participant's identity.
   ◊ if I request a copy of the final research report , one will be sent to me.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (Please print):
………………………………………………………

SIGNATURE:
………………………………………………………

RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE:
………………………………………………………

DATE:
………………………………………………………

THE THREE TEXTS

The American text:

Bob works hard **to bring home the bacon,** and **put bread and butter on his family's table**. Every morning, he drags himself to his desk at the bank and faces his tedious 10-hour-a-day job. His boss, Mark, is **a bad egg** but has somehow taken a liking to Bob so he always speaks well of Bob in front of Mr. Davies, the owner and **big cheese** of the company. Mark tells Mr. Davies that Bob's **the cream of the crop** and is one **smart cookie** who **uses his noodles**. Mark likes **to chew the fat** with Bob during coffee break and discusses **half-baked** company plans with him because he trusts Bob and knows that Bob won't **spill the beans** behind his back. On these occasions, Bob tries to avoid any **hot potatoes** and, even if Mark isn't his **cup of tea**, Bob makes an effort to **butter him up** by leading Mark into discussions about electronic gadgets which Mark is **nuts** about. Bob really thinks that Mark is **out to lunch** and **nutty as a fruitcake**, but if he **polishes the apple**, his job could become **a piece of cake** and maybe one day he will find his **gravy train**.

The Neutral text:

Bob works hard to make a living, and put food on his family's table. Every morning, he drags himself to his desk at the bank and faces his tedious 10-hour-a-day job. His boss, Mark, is a bad acquaintance but has somehow taken a liking to Bob so he always speaks well of Bob in front of Mr. Davies, the owner and boss of the company. Mark tells Mr. Davies that Bob's the best and is an intelligent person who thinks a lot. Mark likes to chat with Bob during coffee break and discusses unofficial company plans with him because he trusts Bob and knows that Bob won't reveal the secrets behind his back. On these occasions, Bob tries to avoid any problematic issues and, even if Mark isn't his favourite person, Bob makes an effort to show him his admiration by leading Mark into discussions about electronic gadgets which Mark is crazy about. Bob really thinks that Mark is not realistic and a little crazy, but if he continues to be servile, his job

could become very easy and maybe one day he will find his way to earn big income with little effort.

The Tunisian text:

Bob works hard to earn his bread, and put food on his family's table. Every morning, he drags himself to his desk at the bank and faces his tedious 10-hour-a-day job. His boss, Mark, is a rotten egg but has somehow taken a liking to Bob so he always speaks well of Bob in front of Mr. Davies, the owner and big head of the company. Mark tells Mr. Davies that Bob's the flower and is a genie that uses his grey matter. Mark likes to shorten the time with Bob during coffee break and discusses half-baked company plans with him because he trusts Bob and knows that Bob won't reveal the secrets behind his back. On these occasions, Bob tries to avoid any trouble and sing to it and, even if Mark isn't his favourite person, Bob makes an effort to show him his admiration by leading Mark into discussions about electronic gadgets which Mark is crazy about. Bob really thinks that Mark is sleeping in a honey pot and out of his mind, but if he continues to carry the basket, his job could become a sweet and maybe one day he will find his way to earn big income with little effort.

Appendix C

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE

a- Age:

b- Gender: Male   ( )   Female ( )

c- Citizenship: Tunisian   ( )   Other   ( ) – Please specify:..........

e- Education:

- What field are you studying? (e.g., Engineering) ....

- If studying, what degree will you obtain upon completion of studies?

      High school diploma (Baccalaureate)   ( )

      Masters   ( )

      Other   ( ) – Please specify...

f- Occupation:

- Are you currently working?   Yes ( )   No   ( )

- If currently working, what is your occupation?....................................

- Whether or not you are currently working, what is the ideal career that you would like

      to have? ....

g- Income:
- Please mark the space next to the number which represents your parents'/guardians

average yearly income, if applicable in Tunisian Dinars.

      Less than 10.000 D   ( )

      Between 10.000 D- 20.000 D   ( )

      Between 30.000 D- 40.000 D   ( )

      Between 40.000 D- 50.000 D   ( )

      More than 50.000 D   ( )

h- Overseas Experience:

- Have you ever lived in or visited an English-speaking country? Yes ( ) - No ( )

- If yes, where?...

- If yes, how long?...

- If yes, for what purpose?

       Studies ( )

       Job   ( )

       Other   ( ) – Please specify:.................

Appendix D

FOREIGN LANGUAGE BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

a- General:

- Which language do you consider to be your mother tongue?

    Classic Arabic   ( )

    Tunisian Arabic   ( )

    Other   ( ) – Please specify:..................

- Which language do you consider to be your second language?...............................

- Which language do you consider to be your third language?....................................

b- English:

- At what age did you start learning English? ....

- Estimate how much you use English with each of these people:

    1. With your close friends.

    0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

    2. With your classmates.

    0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

    3. With your teachers in your school.

    0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

    4. With strangers (e.g., people you meet on the street, in buses whom you don't

        know and don't need to know).

    0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

- How often are you exposed to the English language in the following types of media?

	1= Never	*9= Very Often*

1. Radio   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. Television   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. Movies   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Internet   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. Print (e.g., books, journals, newspapers)   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

- How would you rate your ability to speak English?

I cannot speak   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   I speak English
English at all   perfectly

- How would you rate your ability to understand spoken English?

I understand   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   I understand
spoken English extremely poorly   spoken English
    perfectly

- How would you rate your ability to write in English?

I write in English   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   I write in
extremely poorly   English
    perfectly

- How would you rate your ability to read English?

I read English   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   I read English
Extremely poorly   perfectly

Appendix E

IDIOM RECOGNITION TEST

- Read carefully and match each idiom (*column 1*) with the appropriate

interpretation\ meaning (*column 2*).

column 1	*column 2*

column 2

( ) - to give money to someone to keep him
    silent
( ) - to spoil an important event (e.g.,
    birthday)

column 1

1- to open someone's eyes
2- to be out to lunch
3- cream of the crop
4- to be all ears
5- a piece of cake
6- to be nuts about something
7- to put bread and butter
    on the table
8- a hot potato
9- to stop someone's mouth
10- to play with fire
11- a bad egg
12- a smart cookie
13- to pull someone's leg
14- the big cheese
15- to spill the beans
16- someone's cup of tea
17- to rain on someone's parade
18- to use one's noodles
19- to put one's cards on the table
20- to give a hand

( ) - to like something a lot
( ) - someone who is intelligent
( ) - to do something dangerous
( ) - someone who is bad to be with
( ) - someone's favourite
( ) - not to pay attention
( ) - the best in the group
( ) - to think
( ) - the boss
( ) - to tell someone's secrets
( ) - something easy to do
( ) - to make someone see something he or
    she has not seen before
( ) - to help or assist
( ) - to be faithful
( ) - to be completely open and honest
    about one's intentions
( ) - to be listen very well/ attentively
( ) - to earn money for the family
( ) - something sensitive or difficult to
    handle
( ) - to fool someone playfully\to tease
( ) - to eat a lot
( ) - to be a good friend

Appendix F

EXPERIENCE WITH ENGLISH IDIOMS QUESTIONNAIRE

a- Experience with Idioms

- When you were in secondary school, do you remember your English teachers teaching

you, or talking to you about idioms?   Yes   ( ) -   No   ( )

- How often did your teacher teach you or talk about idioms?

   Never   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   Very Often

b- Attitudes towards Idioms

- Indicate how well you agree or disagree with each of these statements by circling ONE of the numbers 1 to 9. If you do not agree with the statement, circle 1. If you agree with each statement completely, circle 9. Circle any other number in between to indicate different degrees of agreement or disagreement.

                                                          1= Not at all   9= Completely

1. I need English idioms such as those presented above and others like them in my English speech:

a) in order to be understood by Tunisians with   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    whom I speak English sometimes.

b) in order to be understood by native speakers of   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    English with whom I speak sometimes.

c) in order to express my ideas well.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. I think that learning English idioms is necessary.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. I think that knowing what an English idiom means   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
   is necessary.

4. Using too many idioms such as those presented above or others like them in my English speech:

a)   will make me sound highly ambitious.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

b)   will make me sound sophisticated.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

c) will make me sound refined.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

d) will make me sound unnatural.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

e) will make me sound educated.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

f) will make me sound less like a normal
   Tunisian speaker of English.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

g) will make me sound intelligent.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. If I use too many idioms such as those presented above and others like them in my
English speech:

a) people will think I don't care
   about my Tunisian heritage anymore.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

b) people will think I want to be like
   an American.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

c) people will think I like American
   culture more than Tunisian culture.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

d) people will think I like American
   food more than Tunisian food.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

e) people will think I like American
   songs more than Tunisian songs.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

f) people will think I like American
   movies more than Tunisian movies.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

g) people will think I like the American life-style
   more that the Tunisian life-style.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. I feel uncomfortable around people who use English   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Idioms.

7. I do not feel confident in looking for and finding an idiom
successfully when reading English.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

8. I do not feel confident predicting the meaning of an
English idiom.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Appendix G

EGA QUESTIONNAIRE (SELF-RATING VERSION)

- *Indicate how well you agree or disagree with each of these statements by circling ONE of the numbers 1 to 9. If you do not agree with the statement, circle 1. If you agree with each statement completely, circle 9. Circle any other number between to indicate different degrees of agreement or disagreement.*

	1= Not at all					*9= Completely*			
1. I am proud of being Tunisian.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. I am proud to let people know that I am Tunisian.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. Speaking the Tunisian dialect is very important for my personal identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. Speaking the Tunisian dialect is so important for Tunisian group identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. I will do everything I can do to maintain and promote the Tunisian dialect.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. I am proud of the intellectual and artistic achievements of Tunisians.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. I am ready to defend the honour of my ethnic group when it is at stake.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. I am always happy to celebrate the national celebrations of my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9. I feel a great pride listening to the Tunisian anthem in international sport events.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10. I participate a lot in Tunisian community activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11. I like listening to Tunisian songs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12. I like reading Tunisian novels.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13. I like watching Tunisian films.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

14. I think it is important to use Tunisian dialect   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    whenever possible.

15. I feel a great pride watching the Tunisian   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    flag in international sport events.

16. I think Arabic should be the only language used   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    in college or university

17. I feel a great pride when Tunisians succeed abroad   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    (studies or job).

EGA QUESTIONNAIRE (SPEAKER VERSION)

VOICE # ....

- Indicate how well you agree or disagree with each of these statements by circling ONE of the numbers 1 to 9. If you do not agree with the statement, circle 1. If you agree with each statement completely, circle 9. Circle any other number between to indicate different degrees of agreement or disagreement.

	1= Not at all						*9= Completely*	

1. He is proud of being Tunisian.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. He is proud to let people know that He is Tunisian.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. Speaking the Tunisian dialect is very important for his personal identity.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Speaking the Tunisian dialect is so important for Tunisian group identity.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. He will do everything he can do to maintain and promote the Tunisian dialect.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. He is proud of the intellectual and artistic achievements of Tunisians.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7. He is ready to defend the honour of his ethnic group when it is at stake.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

8. He is always happy to celebrate the national celebrations of his ethnic group.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. He feels a great pride listening to the Tunisian anthem in international sport events.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10. He participates a lot in Tunisian community. Activities.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

11. He likes listening to Tunisian songs.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

12. He likes reading Tunisian novels.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

13. He likes watching Tunisian films.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

14. He thinks it is important to use Tunisian dialect   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    whenever possible.

15. He feels a great pride watching the Tunisian   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    flag in international sport events.

16. He thinks Arabic should be the only language used   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    in college or university.

17. He feels a great pride when Tunisians succeed abroad 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
    (studies or job).

Appendix I

VOICE TRAITS QUESTIONNAIRE

VOICE # ………

*- After you have listened to the voice, please indicate how well you agree or disagree
with each of these statements by circling ONE of the numbers 1 to 9. If you do not agree
with the statement, circle 1. If you agree with each statement completely, circle 9. Circle
any other number between to indicate different degrees of agreement or disagreement.*

a- This person's English speech

Is heavily accented   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   Non-accented

b- This person's English speech

Is not easy to understand   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   Very easy to understand

c- This person's English grammar

Is not at all accurate   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   Extremely accurate

d- This person's voice

Is not at all fluent   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   Extremely fluent

e- This person

Has a great difficulty in expressing him/herself   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   No difficulty in expressing him /herself

f- This person

Has poor pronunciation in English   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   Excellent pronunciation in English

Appendix K

PERSONALITY TRAITS QUESTIONNAIRE

VOICE # ....

- After you have listened to the voice, please indicate how well you agree or disagree with each of these statements by circling ONE of the numbers 1 to 9. If you do not agree with the statement, circle 1. If you agree with each statement completely, circle 9. Circle any other number between to indicate different degrees of agreement or disagreement.

	1= Not at all					*9= Completely*			
1- I think this person is extremely honest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2- I think this person is well spoken.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3- I think this person is refined.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4- I think this person is educated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5- I think this person prefers American food (e.g., hamburgers) to Tunisian food.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6- I think this person is extremely kind.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7- I think this person is extremely trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8- I think he would rather live in the United States than in Tunisia.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9- I think this person is intelligent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10- I think this person likes American music more than Tunisian music.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11- I think this person admires American culture more than Tunisian culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9