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The Influence of Cultural Change upon Idiomatic Language in Algeria

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Abstract:

Cultural change is the outcome of introducing innovation, be it a new invention or a novel concept or idea, into society. Understandably, idiomatic language change following culture change may be unescapable since idioms constitute an integral facet of culture. The present paper aims at exploring the possible influence of culture change on idiomatic discourse in the Algerian context. Semi- structured interviews were conducted to elicit data from a sample group of 12 randomly selected high school pupils whose ages range from 17 to 20 years. Data were analysed thematically to serve the ends of the study. The study revealed that the nowadays idiomatic expressions used mainly by adolescents embody the newly acquired cultural characteristics such as the widespread use of digital technology, the faster-now-world and the current tiny-village-world.

Keywords: Cultural change, idiomatic language, adolescents, Algerian, cultural

1.Introduction:

During the last three decades, the Algerian society has witnessed a surge of new inventions such as the internet and the cell phone as well as new ideas and concepts

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resulting from globalization and the subsequent contact between Algerians and other cultures. Algeria is no exception to other societies as far as the gigantic flow of innovation that has hit the world since the invention of the World Wide Web in 1990 is concerned: the photoshop, the portable GPS, the email and text messaging, the mobile broadband which "brought the massive scope of the internet to the portable package of a cell phone"(Business Insider,2019), the flat screen displays, the MP3 players, the DVD, social media and the IPhone have all found their way indisputably to the country and have become widely utilised. The highly sophisticated Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has eased communication and made access to other cultures within reach. The world has become a tiny village and globalization has come as the new world order: ideas such as tolerance, diversity and the planet becoming a tiny global village have become widely prevalent.

Innovation, cross-cultural contact and globalization have resulted in what is called culture change. Culture change is any alteration that a given social group way of life undergoes as a consequence of the intervention of the previously mentioned factors. This alteration can be drastic and may affect everything which makes culture: communication modes, socialization patterns, cuisine, dressing habits and styles, education. Language is also among the components of culture that are potentially liable to change. An aspect of language that might receive change is idiomatic expressions. Idioms change as an outcome of the cultural change noted hitherto, could be inevitable.

The interrelation between culture and idiomatic discourse has been extensively investigated in the literature and it is already established that both entities are inseparably linked; nontheless, the effect of culture change upon idiomatic language has not gained systematic enquiry, to the best of our knowledge. In the Algerian context, particularly, Idioms state after cultural change has never been the subject of an in-depth systematic investigation.

The present paper, thereupon, aims at exploring the possible effect of the current culture change on idiomatic language in Algeria. To meet this end, the paper employs surveying as a method of enquiry and is structured as follows : Section 1 revises some core definitions of culture and idioms and highlights the relationship between both entities while section two defines culture change and looks into its underpinning factors. Section three represents the methodology section, the study findings and the discussion.

2. Idioms and culture

2.1 .Idioms:

According to O'Dell & McCarthy (2017), idioms represent one category of formualic language and stand for complete whole fixed expressions in the language, that is to say, their meanings are understood beyond the literal significance of the idividual words whereby they are constructed (p. 6). In other words, idioms find their connotations in the shared experiences of the people who make up the community wherein they have been made. Understandably, idioms are often considered by some other scholars as "colloquial metaphors---terms which require users to have some

foundational knowledge, information, or experience, to use only within a culture where parties must have common reference"(Yang, 2010, p. 148).

2.2. Culture:

A relevant definition to the present study is the one by T. Schwartz(1992) cited by Avruch (1998): Culture is the sum of the acquired, made or inherited experiences that members of a social group share. These experiences range from images, codes to their meanings (Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p. 2). Culture is a dynamic entity (Varnuum & Grossman, 2017, p. 1) in the sense that it is constatntly liable to change and evolution.

2.3. Idioms embody culture:

The bond between culture and idiomatic expressions has been extensively researched in translation and cross-cultural communication studies. Idioms are understood if a certain knowledge of culture is met; which portrays the inseparable connection between culture and idioms. "Idioms have rich cultural connotations", says Ping (2018, p. 295), and "English idioms cannot be translated into Polish, they can only be replaced by idioms functioning within Polish language. When an English idiom is replaced by a polish one, the English historical and cultural environment is automatically replaced by Polish history and culture", reports Horodecka & Osadnik (1989, p. 167) as a case in point of the tight link between idioms and culture. Intelligibly, researchers in the field of translation emphasize the necessity of a mastery of not only languages but also cultures in the delicate task of translation.

3. Idioms and culture change

3.1 Culture change:

Since cultures are dynamic of nature (Varnum & Grossmann, 2017 , p1), they are bound to change (Naylor, 1996, p. 1). Culture change can be defined as short or long-

run transformation in ideas, norms, and behaviours of a group of people or changes in the contents or themes of their products reflecting the formerly mentioned modifications over time (Varnum & Grossmann, 2017 , p. 2. "No culture is imprevious to change. No culture today is as it has always been. All cultures change and for a variety of reasons"(Naylor, 1996, p. 1). Put differently, cultural change is a systematic, ongoing and unavoidable process whereby a given culture undergoes alterations of one type or more.

Mass transformations in political and social standards and stances, the spread of innovation as well as the shift in political systems and establishments make cultures dynamic (Varnum & Grossmann, 2017 , p1). Peoples lives and habits have drastically changed in short spans of time due to the factors that have been hitherto mentioned: inventions such as TV, the automobile and the internet; transformation of the views towards issues including gay marriage in the West, immigration in developed countries and physical punishment of children; and other political changes namely the fall of the Apartheid system, the decline of the Communist block, the shift to democracy in many spots of the world and the appearnce of ISIS in the Middle East (Varnum & Grossmann, 2017 , p1). In brief terms, culture change occurs owing to changes in the physical and sociocultural environments which people attempt to adjust to by adopting new habits and ways of living.

3.1.1 Globalization

Globalization is an overloaded interdisciplinary term. Basicaly, it is the equivalent of the condition of being related to the whole world. Clearly, the term is taken from the word 'globe', meaning the entire world on Earth (Pooch, 2016. p. 15). It originally

started in relation to a global emerging economy by 1990's and then became connected to a wide range of study fields (Pooch, 2016, p. 16). Globalization leads to culture change in the sense that "it is accelerating the integration of the nations in the world system with the development of modern means of transport and economic relations, and the formation of transnational corporations and the global market" (Raikhan et al., 2014, p. 9).

.31.2 Innnovation:

Every novel idea, comportment or object that is distinct from an already availble one is considered innovation (Barnett, 1953). An instance of culture change resulting from the intervention of the new digital inventions is the rendering of the previous material culture into a new immaterial one (Beer). " Cultural objects, which were once recognisable symbols of our engagement with culture and our interests, have become increasingly immaterial"(Beer). Virtuality has replaced reality as non-material substance has become the alternative of the tape and the album. The current culture has become consuming, flexible and mobile.Digital devices affected our habits: people are no longer obliged to watch a TV show when it is broadcast. Our engagement with media such as TV channels has changed because of a growing body of choices in our use of them. Thus, new forms of culture (habits and ways of doing things) have appeared (Beer).

3.1. 3 Contact with other cultures

The coming of a social group into contact with another culturally distinct social group whereby an alteration to their way of living occurs is called culture change (Spindler & Spindler, 1953, p 37)**.** Due to innovation and globalization, cultural contact between

peoples has stepped into a higher level. Communication has been eased as well as mutual learning among different cultures. Expansion of cultural contacts in the modern world has bridged gaps between nations (Raikhan et al., 2014, p. 9), which constitutes in itself a culture change.

3. 2. Culture change effect on idiomatic exporessions

How does culture change influence idiomatic language ? What is the effect of culture change on idiomatic discourse in Algeria? In other words, what is the nature of the transformation that the Algerian idiomatic language has experienced owing to cultural change ? These questions make the subjectmatter of the next section of this exploratory study.

3. 2. 1. Methodology

Traditionally, semi-structured interviews have been utilised in exploratory research to address questions such as what , why and how. Within this respect, the present study employs the noted method to address the previously mentioned research questions and gain insight into the nature of the effect that idiomatic language in Algeria has received as a consequence of the culture change which has occured following the widespread of innovation and globalization. Accordingly, 12 semi-structured interviews have been conducted on June 3rd, 2021 with 12 high school students who belong to an age category ranging from 17 to 20 years to elicit data about their idiomtic discourse.

The choice of the population has been based on the idea that adolescense is the age category wherein the newly shaped cultural features, resulting from the effect of the previously mentioned factors (inventions, cultural contact and globalization), can be

visible. The sample group has been selected randomly among Khadija Secondary School pupils in the eastern province of Batna. Khadija High school receives an overall of 326 pupils who are enrolled over five different branches.

To meet the ends of this research, the semi-structured interviews open-ended questions were prepared in advance to get insight into this little-known area. Responses were phone-recorded by the interviewer who aligned with the ethical standard of avoiding the exercise of any kind of influence on the respondents answers by maintaining a neutral manner. The interviewer and interviewees were able to discuss some idioms in more detail due to the nature of the interview open-ended questions.

The first 3 questions of the interview dealt with the respondents personal information (age, place of birth and native language), and for anonymity puposes, the informants were required to provide their names initials. The remaining questions targeted the focus of the study. To put it clearer, 4 direct open-ended questions covered the interviewees general understanding of terminology related to idiomatic expressions such as idioms, literal and deep meaning while 10 questions enquired about the respondents interpretations of 10 idiomatic expressions they were frequently using among themselves mainly in the school corridors, in the yard and while waiting outside the school building. The last 5 questions tackled informants understanding of 5 old Algerian idioms to discover any potential effect of the new culture on their idiomatic discourse. Interviews took from 15 to 20 mn time each. Once the data were gathered, a deductive approach was emloyed to highlight the themes which were

strongly suggested by the theoretical framework of the study: the widespread use of digital technology, the faster-now-world and the current tiny-village-world.

3. 2. 2. Summary of interviews results

The respondents mother tongue, place of birth and the ability/inability to interpret old and new idioms are all reported in the table below:

Table 1. Interviewees demographic info and idioms interpretation ability:

Number of interviewees	**Place of birth**	**Mother tongue**	**Interpretation of new idioms**	**Interpretation of old idioms**
9	Batna	The local Algerian Arabic	Easily done	Easily done
1	khenchla	Chaoui	Easily done	Inability of interpretation
1	Batna	Kabyle	Easily done	Inability of interpretation
1	France	French	Easily done	Inability of interpretation

Not all respondents were able to interpret the old idiomatic expression: خلي البير بغطاه which was provided as an example to illustrate the terminology *idiom* to the interviewees. Likewise, not all the them were able to supply explanations to the rest of the old idioms: لالا ريحانة, عمي مليح وزادلو الهوا و الريح, ما خص القرد غير الورد. Particularly,

participants whose native language was not Algerian Arabic found difficulty in understanding the noted idioms.

As far as the new idioms : يقلي عليا ,قيس معايا ,عميتها ,عمي الرادار ,زيقي/زيق ,انترنت فرشة ,موبيل حطبة ,موبيل قرلو,كونيكسيو فليشة ,خباشة خباش/لاكونيكسيو بالقطرة are concerned, the respondents were entirely aware of their interpretation. Interestingly, the interviewees except one were not aware of the literal meaning of the word فرشة .The one exceptional respondent answered that فرشة is a cloth that is used to wipe feet on which is the equivalent of low and degrading. Similarly, the literal meaning of يقلي عليا and its relation to the deep meaning of it was not completely understood by the respondents**.** One interviewee said that frying produces a high pitch sound which is similar to the high pitch sound of a liar who tries to convince people of their lies.

Table 2. Respondents interpretation of old idioms:

Old idioms	**Respondents interpretation**
بغطاه خلي البير	do not dig further, do not stir matters further
ما خص القرد غير الورد	Somebody who looks for complementary stuff while they lack necessary matters, one is in need of more important stuff
عمي مليح وزادلو الهواء و الريح	Aggravating an already messed situation,

لالا ريحانة	A woman who is exceedingly proud of herself, a prestigious woman, an important rich woman, an arrogant woman

Table 3. New Idioms interpretation:

Idioms	Respondents interpretations
انترنت فرشة	Weak internet connection
يقلي عليا	He is lying to me
قيس معايا	Come with me, share the matter with me
كونيكسيو فليشة	Strong internet, high speed internet, faster high-speed net connection, faster net connection
عمي الرادار	an extremely curious person, sb who knows every little thing /captures everything
عميتها	I did bad, I did it bad, I spoiled it, I damaged it
لاكونيكسيو بالقطرة	Weak internet, very low-speed net connection**.**
موبيل قرلو/موبيل حطبة	Old fashioned cell phone, old small mobile phone
زيقي /زيقي	Get lost, go away
خباشة / خباشة	Excellent pupil , hardworking pupil, good pupil who gets good marks

3.2. 3. Discussion of the findings

The focus of the present study is the effect of the current culture change on idiomatic expressions used by the Algerian adolescents. In this respect, the interviewees displayed a command of the newly coined idioms. Some of them; however, showed a

total ignorance of the suggested old Algerian idioms. In more detail, the respondents whose mother tongue is Chaoui, Kabyle and French were not able to interpret the old idioms. Clearly, their ignorance of the noted Algerian Arabic idioms is due to their upbringing in a different culture. Their ability to understand the new idioms can be justified by their belonging to the same local culture which is Batna province and Khadija Secondary School. The interviewees ignorance of the meaning of the old idioms may signal a potential disappearance of those idioms.

The new idioms that are prevalent among the respondents turn around three themes: the widespread of new inventions (the internet, the radar and the cell phone), the world becoming a tiny globalized village which is refelcted in the use of idioms such as خباش/خباشة that is borrowed from relatively far settings (Algiers), and the speed that characterizes modern life or what is labelled as the faster-now-world is embodied in the new idioms constructions themselves which tend to be shorter than old idioms constructions (one word and two word idioms).

4 Conclusion

The present exploratory study findings confirm that cultural change caused by innovation, globalization and acculturation has influenced adolescents idiomatic language in many ways. The newly forged idiomatic expressions represent the modern life fast rythm as they are themselves made of short structures (one-two words idioms). Further, some of them are about the new inventions that characterize nowadays culture. Finally, they reflect globalization effects in the sense that idioms belonging to other geographical zones are widely used in other zones.

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