Catherine Miller, Alexandrine Barontini, Marie-Aimée Germanos, Jairo Guerrero and Christophe Pereira (dir.)

Studies on Arabic Dialectology and Sociolinguistics
Proceedings of the 12th International Conference of AIDA held in Marseille from May 30th to June 2nd 2017

Institut de recherches et d'études sur les mondes arabes et musulmans

The Impact of Topic on Hybrid Forms: The Case of Arabic in Morocco

Mina Afkir

OpenEdition books

http://books.openedition.org

This text was automatically generated on 12 January 2021.

The Impact of Topic on Hybrid Forms: The Case of Arabic in Morocco

Mina Afkir

1. Introduction

1   Diglossia has been approached differently by scholars since the classic description of Ferguson (1959). "The most widely articulated criticism [of Ferguson's model] concerns the rigid intercontextual compartmentalization of SA and QA" (Albirini 2016: 21). Ferguson (1959) described diglossia as a language situation that is characterized by a strong dichotomization of the situations in which the high variety and the low variety are used. Later on, linguists shifted from this sharp dichotomization to models that integrate the notion of continuum.

2   Blanc (1960), for instance, identified five levels of speech between pure H and pure L, ranging from what he calls plain colloquial to standard classical. Badawi (1973), examining diglossia in Egypt, also posited five *mustawayāt* 'levels' to describe the varieties between the two idealized poles of the Arabic continuum. He dealt with diglossia from a sociolinguistic perspective, focusing on the variable of education, but it is important to note that "using education as a criterion can be considered a problem in his description. It is not clear whether the colloquial levels are built on socio-economic variables like education or are just 'stylistic registers', or whether they can be both." (Bassiouney 2009: 275).

3   The notion of levels pushed linguists to introduce new terms to describe the varieties along the continuum. Mitchell (1980, 1986) proposed for the mixed forms the term Educated Spoken Arabic while Youssi (1983, 1995), describing the diglossic situation in Morocco, used the term 'triglossia', stating that it is a language situation that involves "the alternative use" of three varieties rather than two. Hary (1992: 12) rather coined the term 'multiglossia', strongly claiming that:

> it is imperative to remember that this area in the middle is not composed of only one variety, or of three varieties as proposed by Badawi (1973); there can be a countless number of lectal varieties on the continuum between the two ideal types [...] Since we are dealing with the notion of a continuum, there are no boundaries and no commitment to discrete categories, thus allowing more flexibility in analyzing texts.

4 Models based on the notion of continuum, which is considered as one of the basic developments of Ferguson's classic concept of diglossia, presupposes the existence of in-between spaces and hence the existence of mixed Arabic. From a historical perspective, this form of Arabic has an older and a more recent manifestation. Den Heijer (2012) talked about pre-modern and modern, written and oral manifestations of mixed Arabic. The older form of this form of Arabic, referred to as Middle Arabic by specialists, has been subject to analysis within philological studies while contemporary mixed Arabic has been investigated from a sociolinguistic approach starting from the classic model of diglossia proposed by Ferguson (1972 [1959]) till today with the emergence of new approaches.

5 The present study is a contribution to this very interesting socio-linguistic phenomenon which is the oral manifestation of mixed Arabic in modern times. It seeks to explore more specifically the impact of topic on the occurrence of hybrid forms. Hybridity is a term and a concept that refers to mixture. It has been and is used across different disciplines such as biology, postcolonial studies, cultural studies and globalization theory. In linguistics, "it refers to a word parts of which come from two different languages" (Eid 2007: 408). Van Mol (2003: 89) pointed out that "when within one word a mixture occurs of two language levels, we can talk about hybrid forms." Hybrid forms in Arabic are those words that mix features from both Standard Arabic and colloquial Arabic. The rationale that motivates my investigation is to bring some empirical evidence for this oral manifestation of mixed Arabic from the Moroccan context, which is quite under-resourced as it has not received as much attention from native linguists as other Arabic-speaking communities. More extensive research needs to be done on this area, which constitutes an important facet of the Arabic language and which has started to be recognized as a sub-discipline within Arabic linguistics.

2. Method

2.1. Data

6 The overall data consists of 24 000 words produced in panel discussions broadcast on one of the two main national television channels in Morocco: 2M. The program that was targeted discusses current political, economic and social issues in Moroccan society. The program is hosted by an interviewer who would initiate a specific topic and then direct the talk. The data consists of two episodes, one about sexual harassment and one about excommunication and extremism. This type of programs was chosen because it constitutes a semi-formal or 'hybrid context' (Eid, 2007) where one may expect speakers to mix different forms of Arabic and to move along the diglossic continuum. Speakers of Arabic would choose "from a range of forms according to parameters set by [...] degree of formality." (Mitchell 1980, 1986, as reported in Owens, 2001: 427).

2.2. Data analysis

2.2.1. Categorization of words in the data

7 The first step in the analysis consisted of categorizing words in the examined data. Words were classified into four categories:

-Standard Arabic (SA) words: Words in this category belong to SA as it is used in contemporary Morocco. They generally contain 't' and 'd' instead of 't̠' and 'd̠'. Case endings are also in the majority of cases absent.

-Moroccan Arabic (MA) words: Words in this category are words that belong to plain colloquial Arabic.

-Shared words: Shared words have a neutral character in that they are common to both SA and MA. Bassiouney (2006) refers to them as neutral. Eid (2007) refers to them as 'ambiguous' or 'unspecified' because they are non-distinct, or not specified as to language variety. The following shared words, for example, were produced in the data.

8 (1)

Neutral words	Gloss
d-dīn	'religion'
l-muškil	'the problem'
l-ḥužža	'the proof'
s-sunna	Sunna
mumkin	'It is possible'

9 -Hybrid words: Hybrid words, also referred to as 'mixed', are described as intermediate forms because they mix features from both SA and MA.

2.2.2. The notion of topic

10 Discourse analysts tried to construct a theoretical notion of topic based on both formal and functional features. In this study, topic is defined from the viewpoint of content; the definition drawn on is a content-based definition. As Brown and Yule (1983: 70) stated, the notion of topic is "an intuitively satisfactory way of describing the unifying principle which makes one stretch of discourse 'about something and the next stretch 'about' something else." In the examined television panel discussions, the topic is suggested by the program interviewer/commentator, and the participants are expected to be 'speaking topically' by making their contribution relevant in terms of the topic framework. There are, however, instances in the data where the participants are simply speaking on the topic and not topically.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Overall use of Arabic forms

11 The quantitative analysis, which is based on 9862 words, has revealed, as Table 1 shows, that the linguistic practice observed in speakers is characterized by the presence of different forms of Arabic, including SA, MA, hybrid, and shared forms. The Speakers switch from one form to another within the same utterance. These findings corroborate the notion of continuum, which is one of the basic developments of Arabic diglossia, and provide additional evidence to what other researchers have found about mixed Arabic in other contexts (Holes 1993, Mejdell 2006, Bassiouney 2006, Eid 2007).

Table 1. The overall use of Arabic forms

Arabic forms	SA	MA	Hybrid	Shared	Other*
Topic 1**	34.87%	43.05%	16.07%	5.23%	0.78%
Topic 2***	61.30%	18.61%	12.84%	6.91%	0.31%
Topic 1&2	48.08%	30.83%	14.45%	6.07%	0.54%

*words in French

**sexual harassment

***excommunication and extremism

12 However, it is noteworthy that the pattern of distribution of these forms is affected by the structure of the discourse. SA forms, for instance, are clustered at the opening of the panel where the choice of codes is neutralized. The opening of the panel is not, in fact, what triggers the use of SA; it is rather the reading style, which still resists mixing (Afkir 2015). Classificatory problems also emerged when assigning some words to the hybrid category. A pertinent question is: at what point, can we consider a hybrid form as becoming integrated in MA and becoming part of it?

3.2. Hybrid forms

13 Hybrid forms in the analyzed media data include different subcategories. Very frequent hybrid forms are those in which SA words are different from their hybrid counterparts by the different realization of one speech sound as in the following example, where the vowel 'a' has been replaced by the central vowel 'ə', which is very typical of the colloquial Arabic spoken in Morocco.

14 (2)

SA	Hybrid forms	Gloss

taḥdīd	*tǝḥdīd*	'limitation'
taḥdīt/t	*tǝḥdīt*	'modernization'
taṭbīˤ	*tǝṭbīˤ*	'normalization'
naẕwa	*nǝẕwa*	'sexual whim'
takfīr	*tǝkfīr*	'excommunication'
taṭaṛṛuf	*taṭaṛṛuf*	'extremism'
taḥaṛṛuš	*taḥaṛṛuš*	'harassment'
ṛamzī	*ṛǝmzī*	'symbolic'

15   Other hybrid forms include vowel shortening as illustrated in example (3), where one or two vowels have been shortened in the mixed form.

16   (3)

SA	Hybrid forms	Gloss
l-muwāṭana	*l-muwaṭana*	'citizenship'
l-mafātin	*l-mafatin*	'erotic parts of the body'
ṣ-ṣalāḥiyyāt	*ṣ-ṣalaḥiyyat*	'prerogatives'

17   Another subcategory of hybrid words is that in which words that have lexico-semantic features of SA are completely dialectalized by integrating within them, to a greater extent, phonological and morphological features from the low variety. Example (4) is an illustration of this type of mixing.

18   (4)

SA	Hybrid forms	Gloss
ta-tažaḍḍaṛ	*ta-ttžǝḍḍǝṛ*	'It gets rooted'
u-maṛṛiṛ	*ta-n-mǝṛṛǝṛ*	'I transmit'

19   There are also instances of hybrid words in which the bound morpheme is in SA and the free morpheme is in MA. In (5), *fa* 'so', the bound morpheme, is in SA, and *kifaš*, 'how', the free morpheme, is in MA. In this type of hybridization, each form retains its identity.

20 (5) - *aṣbaḥ-a yəʕni waḥəd t-təṭbīʕ fa+kifaš yə-mkən n-fəssr-u had lə-zdiwāžiyya.*
- The phenomenon has become I mean normalized. So, how can we explain this double standard?

3.3 Topic and hybrid forms of Arabic

21 The two topics triggered different amounts of SA and MA forms, but they triggered close amounts of hybrid forms, 16.07% for the topic about sexual harassment and 12.84% for the topic about excommunication and extremism. Predictability has always been invoked as an important aspect when describing speakers' shift from one variety to another along the diglossic continuum. Despite apparent chaos due to the immediate choices speakers make as the talk unfolds, there are, in fact, certain factors that affect their shift toward the standard or the colloquial end of the continuum. First, since hybrid forms can be interpreted as close to both the High variety and the low variety, their occurrence is, therefore, expected in media programs that are more informative than entertaining and that deal with current and serious debatable issues. Holes (2004: 344) stated that:

> in any passage of Arabic speech, whether monologue or conversation, one cannot track, still less make sense of, the moment-by-moment, unpredictable changes in language form unless one is also aware of co-occurrent changes in the ideational content of the discourse [...].

22 In addition to the ideational content of the analyzed media talk, the semi-formality of the setting and the speakers' skills in SA can also be invoked as leading to the occurrence of intermediate Arabic forms.

23 A finding, however, that stands out as interesting is that the switching to hybrid forms is undoubtedly motivated by the seriousness of the topic, but the way a given topic fits in the communicative habits of a speech community may increase the predictability of such forms. For Holes (1995: 280), "there are few variables where one of the variants which constitute it always occurs in one level and never in the adjacent one." In the sexual harassment topic, words that express ideational content related to verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature do, in the overwhelming majority of cases, occur as hybrid forms. For instance, the verb *taḥaṛṛaš* 'to harass sexually', as Table 2 shows, was used by speakers 24 times and in 79.16% of them, there was a shift to the hybrid form. No one of the participants expressed this word by its variant in colloquial Arabic.

Table 2. The variants of the verb *taḥaṛṛaš* 'to harass sexually' in the data

Verb	Total number	SA	MA	Hybrid forms
To harass	24	5 (20.83%)	0 (0%)	19 (79.16%)

24 To talk about sexuality in MA is perceived by Moroccans as vulgar and taboo (Bourquia 1996, Miller and Cheikh 2012) and hence a shift to another language is very likely. This is why when it is not French or SA, it is the intermediate forms where the SA lexical content is blended with the phonological and morphological structure of colloquial Arabic and hence colloquialness is avoided. What one of the female participants said

when she took the floor reflects to what the extent it is taboo to deal with this topic in public discourse.

25 (6) - *ḥna m-tyəqqn-in bi-anna l-mužtamaˁ l-məġrib-i w-l-ʔuṣra l-məġribiyya l-yūm hiyya ə: mu-taḥəffiḍ-a anna-ha t-tfəṛṛəž yəˁni l-ʔabāʔ w-l-ʔabnāʔ f-had-l-ḥəlqa anna ḥna ka-nə-stəʔdn-u-hum u-b-kull ḥtiṛām anna-hum i-səmˁ-u l-ha.*
- We are sure that Moroccan society and the Moroccan family today are uh reserved to watch, I mean parents and children, this episode. We request their permission, and with all respect, to listen to it.

26 In the data, MA is never employed to talk about sexual desire or erotic parts of the body. When the speakers do not use SA, they resort to hybrid forms. *nəzwa* 'sexual whim', *ṛəġba* 'desire', *mafatin* 'erotic parts of the body' are all encoded mixing the lexical content of SA with features from MA.

27 With respect to the second topic, which is about excommunication and extremism, the participants resorted to hybrid forms because many of the terms triggered by this topic do not have equivalents in MA. Words like *takfīr* 'excommunication', *tažrīm* 'criminalization', *zandaqa* 'infidelity', *kufṛ* 'disbelief' are either in SA or in mixed Arabic. Moreover, while hybrid words constitute 12.84% of the overall amount of words, the percentage of SA is very high; it is 61.30% compared to only 18.61% for colloquial Arabic. The following extract illustrates the dominance of Standard Arabic.

28 (7) *hunāka ḍawābiṭ uxṛā wa-hiyya tawaffuṛ š-šuṛūṭ wa-ṛtifāˁ l-mawāniˁ wa-hādihi l-qaḍiyya xāṣṣ-a bi-l-qaḍāʔ wa-laysat bi-aˁyān n-nās walaw kāna ˁāliman walaw kāna ˁāliman lā yažūz an yaqūl fulān hāda l-fulān kāfir*
There are other controls which are the provision of conditions and the absence of prohibitions and this matter is the duty of judicial authorities and not people. And even if the person is a scholar and even if the person is a scholar, he does not have permission to say that so and so is a disbeliever.

4. Conclusion

29 The goal of this study has been to investigate the impact of topic on Moroccan speakers' use of hybrid forms. The findings have shown that the examined media talk covers a linguistic space where different forms of Arabic occur, including SA, MA, shared and hybrid forms; that is, the participants constantly shift between the idealized poles of the diglossic continuum. The two topics triggered close amounts of mixed forms, but the motivation behind mixing features from the high and low varieties differs from one topic to another. In the topic about sexual harassment, the degree of colloquialness decreases and that of hybridity and standardness increases because this is how language is used in public discourse to talk about sexuality, which is still taboo in Moroccan society. Content related to verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature is never expressed in colloquial Arabic. In the topic about excommunication and extremism, hybrid forms are needed because many terms in religious discourse do not have their equivalents in MA. Moreover, SA forms are very dominant; 61.30% of the analyzed talk was produced in the high variety, shifting the discourse more towards the standardness pole of the continuum.

30 One implication of these findings is that the notion of use is as important as grammatical constraints in any study of mixed Arabic. In addition to structural rules

that govern the process of hybridization, there are also pragmatic rules at play. In fact, despite apparent chaos, there are certain variables such as topic that predict the use of mixed forms in a specific context, making hybridity to a great extent predictable rather than random. More importantly, hybridity was found to be constrained by the way a given topic fits in the communicative habits of a speech community and should hence be approached within the framework of the socio-cultural context of the latter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Afkir, Mina. 2015. "Arabic in the Moroccan Media Space: What Implications for Diglossia?", Paper presented at the Forum for Arabic Linguistics, Essex University, Colchester, United Kingdom.

Albirini, Abdulkafi. 2016. *Modern Arabic sociolinguistics: Diglossia, variation, codeswitching, attitudes and identity.* New York: Routledge.

Badawi, Elsaid M. 1973. *Mustawayaat al-ˤarabiyya al-muˤaaṣira fi miṣr.* Cairo: Dar al-Maˤaarif.

Bassiouney, Reem. 2006. *Functions of code-switching in Egypt: Evidence from monologues.* Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Bassiouney, Reem. 2009. "The variety of housewives and cockroaches: Examining code-choice in advertisements", Al-Wer, Enam, & de Jong, Rudolf (eds.), *Arabic dialectology.* Leiden, Boston: Brill. 273-284.

Blanc, Haim. 1960. "Stylistic variations in spoken Arabic: A sample of interdialectal educated conversation", Ferguson, Charles (ed.), *Contributions to Arabic linguistics.* Cambridge: Center for Middle Eastern Studies. 81-156.

Bourquia, Rahma. 1996. *Femmes et fécondité.* Casablanca : Afrique-Orient.

Brown, Gillian & Yule, George. 1983. *Discourse analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Den Heijer, Johannes. 2012. "Introduction: Middle and Mixed Arabic, a new trend in Arabic studies", Zack, Liesbeth & Schippers, Arie (eds.), *Middle Arabic and Mixed Arabic: Diachrony and synchrony.* Leiden: Brill. 1-25.

Eid, Mushira. 2007. "Arabic on the media: Hybridity and styles", Ditters, Everhard, & Motzki, Harald (eds.), *Approaches to Arabic linguistics presented to Kees Versteegh on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday.* Leiden, Boston: Brill. 403-434.

Ferguson, Charles. 1972 [1959]. "Diglossia", Giglioli, Pier Paolo (ed.), *Language and social context.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Hary, Benjamin H. 1992. *Multiglossia in Judeo-Arabic.* Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Holes, Clives. 1995. "The Uses of Variation: A Study of the Political Speeches of Gamal Abd al-Nasir", *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics V*.13-45.

Holes, Clives. 2004. *Modern Standard Arabic: Structure, functions and varieties.* London: Longman.

Mejdell, Gunvor. 2006. *Mixed styles in spoken Arabic in Egypt: Somewhere between order and chaos.* Leiden, Boston: Brill.

Miller, Catherine, & Cheikh, Myriam 2010. « Les mots d'amour : dire le sentiment et la sexualité au Maroc. De quelques matériaux », *Estudios de Dialectología Norteafricana y Andalusí* (*EDNA*)*13*. 173-199.

Mitchell, T. F. 1980. "Dimensions of Style in a Grammar of Educated Spoken Arabic", *Archivum Linguisticum 11*. 89-106.

Mitchell, T. F. 1986. "What is Educated Spoken Arabic?", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language 61*. 7-32.

Owens, Jonathan. 2001. "Arabic Sociolinguistics", *Arabica XLVIII*. 419-469.

Van Mol, Marc. 2003. *Variation in Modern Standard Arabic in Radio News Broadcasts: A Synchronic Descriptive Investigation into the Use of Complementary Particles.* Leuven, Paris: Peeters.

Youssi, Abderrahim. 1983. « La Triglossie dans la Typologie Linguistique », *La Linguistique 19 (2)*. 71-83.

Youssi, Abderrahim. 1995. "The Moroccan Triglossia: Facts and Implications", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language 11*. 29-43.

ABSTRACTS

One of the basic and well-established developments of Arabic diglossia is the notion of continuum, which was proposed by linguists who were critical of Ferguson's classic model to reflect the existence of more than two varieties between the poles of pure H and pure L. Studies done on spoken Arabic in Morocco (Youssi 1983, 1995, Afkir 2015) or in other Arabic speech communities (Blanc 1960, Badawi 1973, Bassiouney 2006, Mejdell 2006) have all shown that Arabic language variation is to be viewed as a hierarchy of 'levels' or 'varieties' between the poles of pure H and pure L. The Arabic forms which mix features from both Standard Arabic (SA) and Moroccan Arabic (MA) are referred to as 'hybrid', 'mixed', and 'intermediate' forms. The present study seeks to explore to what extent the variable of topic has an impact on Moroccan speakers' shifts to these hybrid forms. The data consists of 24 000 words produced in television panel discussions. This type of programs was chosen because it constitutes a semi-formal or 'hybrid context' (Eid 2007) where one may expect speakers to move along the diglossic continuum and produce mixed Arabic. The choice of one of the different varieties of Arabic is certainly motivated by shifting value systems attached to them and by their social meaning to the Moroccan speech community. The frequency-based quantitative analysis in this study has revealed that in addition to all these variables that are at play when codes interact, topic stands out as a variable that also predicts a specific form of Arabic. More importantly, hybridity is constrained by the way a given topic fits in the communicative habits of a speech community and should hence be approached within the framework of the socio-cultural context of the latter.

INDEX

Keywords: mixed Arabic, hybrid Arabic forms, multiglossia in Morocco

AUTHOR

MINA AFKIR

Hassan II University, Casablanca
mina_afkir@yahoo.com
Post address:
Rue Cadi Ayad, Imm 42, Appt 9
Diour Jamaa, Rabat, Maroc

AUTHOR