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A HISTORY OF MOROCCAN ARABIC STUDIES

Abstract. The first recorded studies on Moroccan Arabic date back to the late 19th century, as a consequence of the interest of the French administrators and Orientalists who were focused on Morocco's political and economic importance to France. These first studies aimed to report grammatical descriptions and transcriptions of spoken varieties. Since its beginning, the 20th century brought a more extensive attentiveness in understanding the local language varieties of the colonised North Africa, which led to more systematic studies that described Moroccan Arabic phonetics and phonology, as well as comparative observations on the Maghrebi varieties. After World War II, European linguists introduced a modern approach in Moroccan dialectology and sociolinguistics, discovering relationships between different Moroccan Arabic varieties and documenting regional ones. The 21st century studies keep pace with the modern reality in the Moroccan society, revealing cultural, sociolinguistic, educational, and socio-political influences in the spoken Moroccan Arabic.

Keywords: Moroccan Arabic, dialectology, language studies, modern studies, Morocco

1. Introduction

The present paper represents a non-exhaustive conspectus on some of the most significant studies concerning Moroccan Arabic throughout history, starting with the first simple linguistic discoveries from the 18th century, then reaching the most recent study trends that display a more complex and detailed perspective in academic publications. We will therefore observe the importance and purpose of studies on Moroccan Arabic in the last centuries. I have also approached the topic of the present study in my doctoral thesis entitled "The language of the sports supporters from Casablanca".

Due to the fact that the Arabic vernacular spoken among Moroccans had been given various names throughout history – most relevant being *Dārija* or

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el-mağribiyya –, in the present paper we will distinguish one name that encompasses all its aspects and phases, namely Moroccan Arabic.

2. Early Studies

In their contributions about the evolution and linguistic aspects of Moroccan Arabic, Heath (2020: 214) and Caubet (2008b: 274) mention that the first documentations pertaining to this variety date back to the 15th century and were written by Jewish deportees from Spain.

Due to the Western colonizers' interest in understanding and using the languages spoken in the conquered territories, Moroccan Arabic started being documented in order to be taught and learnt by the colonizers, especially motivated by the political and economic relevance that Morocco had for the European forces such as France and Spain. These initial studies aimed to report grammatical descriptions and transcriptions of spoken varieties.

A relevant study from this era is entitled *Rudiments of the Arabic-Vulgar of Morocco: With Numerous Exercices and Examples of Its Theory and Practice* and was published in 1872 in Spanish and in 1900 in English by José Lerchundi, a Spanish Franciscan missionary Arabist. At that time, Morocco is referred to as part of The Moorish Empire and its inhabitants are called Moors. Lerchundi is among the first Arabists to emphasize the differences between the spoken and written language:

European grammarians usually divide the Arabic Tongue into the Literary, and the Vulgar. Literary Arabic, called also “learned” “written” or “classical” is employed in writing; the Vulgar is the language *spoken* in the different moslem countries, but it is not written at anyrate by educated persons as it is a corruption, more or less perceptible, from “Literary” Arabic from whose rules it constantly wonders (Lerchundi 1900: VII).

Lerchundi also unveils the colonial perception upon Arabic varieties in the 19th century, as he states:

There are four principal Dialects of Arabic-Vulgar namely those of Arabic, Egypt, Syria and Barbary, and without any doubt soever the last-named is the one which breaks away the most from grammatical rules, particularly that form of it spoken in the Empire of Morocco that is to say the Dialect treated of in this work (Lerchundi 1900: VIII).

These observations suggest that speaking an Arabic vernacular as a non-Arab implies prior knowledge of Standard Arabic grammar.

Nonetheless, Lerchundi admits the challenging aspect and originality of his work:

Not without great difficulties, due to not having in Mission any Monk conversant with the Arabic tongue, to the lack of books for the purpose, (I do not know of any treatise, Spanish or foreign, upon the Arabic Vulgar of Morocco), and finally to the difficulty of finding any moor who would lend himself to teaching constant application to compile some few sheets for my private use (Lerchundi 1900: X).

Auguste Mouli  ras, a French missionary and anthropologist born in Algeria, acknowledges the ignorance regarding the Arabic from Morocco from the previous centuries. In his study published in 1895, entitled *Le Maroc inconnu:   tude g  ographique et sociologique. Exploration du Rif*, he observes various regions and local tribes, underlining the linguistic complexity by stating that “knowing Arabic is like knowing at least twenty languages” (Mouli  ras 1895: 3).

3. 20th Century Studies

Numerous studies from the 20th century continue the exploration of Moroccan Arabic focusing on semantics, morphology, and phonology. These trends lead to a more expansive documentation about local variations, commonly in contrast with the Standard Arabic norms and, following Ferguson’s (1959) definition of diglossia, the question of different varieties and languages pertaining to Moroccans’ speech has become an intriguing topic for international scholars.

In his study about the linguistic history of Morocco, the Moroccan linguist and anthropologist Simon L  vy (1996) concludes that the multilingual social reality of Morocco is the antithesis of the *une nation, une langue* motto (L  vy 1996: 127).

3.1. An Inconsistent Arabic Script

A remarkable characteristic identified in the studies from previous centuries is the inconsistency of the Arabic script, which is not limited to certain periods. Although the authors claim that the Arabic language (along with its local varieties) is the subject of their researches from Morocco, some of them use the Maghribi script in their textbooks, transcriptions, and glossaries.

The table below highlights the consonant varieties found in the aforementioned studies, distinguishing the Modern Standard Arabic version of Arabic script from the Maghribi:

Table 1

Arabic Script Varieties Identified in Moroccan Arabic Studies from the 19th and 20th Centuries

Modern Standard Arabic	Maghribi script	Phoneme (Latin script)
ف	ب	f
ك	ف	k
ق	ق	q
ج	ڨ	g

The Maghribi script is used especially by French scholars, as it had been observed in the following studies: *Notices sur les caractères étrangers, anciens et modernes* by the French Assyriologist Charles Fossey (1927), *Textes arabes en parler des Chleuhs du Sous (Maroc): Transcription, traductions, glossaire* by the French Arabist and Berberologist Edmond Destaing (1937), *Der arabische Dialekt der Houwāra des Wād Sūs in Marokko* by the Swiss Orientalist Albert Socin and German Linguist Hans Stumme (1894).

Nonetheless, the Maghribi script is used by a Moroccan Professor in an Arabic-French dictionary published in 1923, which might suggest a preference of the French audience for the Maghribi script. The dictionary contains terms mostly specific to Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria (Tedjini 1923: VI). A notable example refers to the term *beaucoup* which is listed in Moroccan Arabic as *bzzāf* or *b-zzāf*: “بالزّاب ou بزّاب” (Tedjini 1923: 18).

Although the following studies pertain to the same era as the ones listed above, their Arabic texts had been written in the Modern Standard script: *Hespéris: Archives Berbères et Bulletin de l'Institut des Hautes-Études Marocaines* (1924), and *Mélanges René Basset* (1925) by the Moroccan High Studies Institute members from Paris.

A different approach regarding Moroccan Arabic learning is notable in the conversation guide published by two German Arabists in 1912, where they had only used the Latin script for transcribing texts in the Moroccan Arabic from Casablanca, without using Arabic scripts at any extent (Vassel and Kampffmeyer 1912).

4. Moroccan Arabic's Status

The representative researcher Catherine Miller follows the four main criteria used by linguists to determine whether a language or variety is either peripheral or minority. Firstly, the geographical criterion has a different applicability in Moroccan Arabic's case, as it pertains to the “less central and more peripheral” class of the peripheral Arabic dialects. The second criterion is demographic, implying that the language of the majority could acquire the official status and be imposed to the minorities. Along with the conclusion that this criterion

cannot be universal (Miller 2011: 57), we can note that it does not apply to the linguistic situation in Morocco due to the lack of institutional recognition of the Moroccan Arabic as an official language.

Nevertheless, the third and fourth criteria listed by Miller (2011: 58) could be applied in the evaluation of Moroccan Arabic. The third one is socio-economic and is used to distinguish language levels and styles according to the social class hierarchies.

The uses of disadvantaged, even illiterate, social classes will be considered less prestigious, less valued than the uses of educated or bourgeois classes who would hold the norm. In multilingual countries, the distinction between social classes can be based on the use of different languages, while in more monolingual countries, it will mainly be what sociolinguists call sociolects.

The fourth criterion is a political one, implying that the most powerful and/or central groups define the standard norms of a language (Miller 2011: 58). The Moroccan researcher Ahmed Ech-Charfi also concludes that “linguistic change in peripheral communities is caused not only by local attitudes, but also by attitudes of the dominant community” (Ech-Charfi n.d.: 26).

Such an influential status has been attributed to the vernacular of Casablanca, according to several researchers’ observations (Hachimi 2018: 61-2). Jordi Aguadé further argues that the city of Casablanca has evolved after the colonization, which concomitantly led to the evolution of the Moroccan Arabic (Aguadé 2003: 301).

Although the main subject of the present paper is Moroccan Arabic, we cannot overlook the influence of Amazigh in Morocco’s linguistic landscape. In his publication entitled *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology*, Yasir Suleiman (2003) mentions the ideological antagonism between Amazigh and Arabic in Morocco:

The Berber-speaking populations in Algeria and Morocco supported Arabic against French during the nationalist struggle for independence in the first half of the twentieth century. But the situation changed after independence. Berber-speakers started to assert their own identity through an increased emphasis on their language (Suleiman 2003: 11).

Amazigh had been recognized as an official language in the current Constitution of Morocco adopted in 2011, which led to an increasing demand of institutional recognition of Darija. Politicians, intellectuals, and the civil society had been already encouraging this recognition before 2011, due to Darija’s usage all around the Moroccan media, from informal discussions to political debates, interviews with officials, broadcasts from the Parliament, etc. (Chatar-Moumni 2015: 75-6). Unofficially, however, Darija is already the predominant Arabic variety in Moroccans’ everyday speech.

In her study about the plurilingualism issues and challenges, the Moroccan researcher Asma Nifaoui (2020) simply lists the most relevant languages in Morocco

according to their status: “the group of official languages (standard Arabic and Amazigh), the group of mother tongues (Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh) and that of foreign languages, mainly French, English, and Spanish” (Nifaoui 2020: 6). The researcher Adil Moustauoui also notes that the empowerment of the Moroccan Arabic is based on “the appearance of a discourse that reasserts Moroccan Arabic as the national language, and through the expansion of its sphere of use” (Moustauoui 2018: 535).

Even if Moroccans are constantly exposed to multiple languages and varieties, the mother tongue for many Moroccans remains the one which is used in familial environments and in which they claim to have a greater level of proficiency, according to survey responses from 2006 and 2012 (Benítez-Fernández, de Ruiter and Tamer 2012: 101-2). The individuality of the mother tongue, thus being different from standard Arabic, Amazigh, or other languages, is also observed by Caubet’s research in 1999, which involved the questionnaire responses of Baccalaureate graduates (Caubet 1999: 235). This tendency is thought to persist as a consequence of the “failure of arabicization” subsequent to the independence regained in 1956 (Benítez-Fernández, de Ruiter and Tamer 2012: 83).

After analysing and comparing dialectology studies which illustrated collected data using maps, Catherine Taine-Cheikh (2012) concludes that, in the process of understanding and defining the language contact and status between Amazigh and Arabic in Morocco, historical events and continuity are more relevant than geographical delimitations (Taine-Cheikh 2012: 42).

Miller (2011) attempts to define the norms and identify deviations in contemporary Moroccans’ speech, mentioning that the status and evolution of Moroccan Arabic are mostly influenced by its usage in urban areas and in youth’s speech, where it is generally exposed to language contact and code-switching, especially involving French and other foreign terms that are popular in virtual environments such as social media (Miller 2011: 65).

The status of Moroccan Arabic as an identity factor will be further discussed in section 6, dedicated to this issue.

4.1. Diglossia and triglossia

The Moroccan researcher Abderrahim Youssi reconsiders the definition of diglossia provided by Charles Ferguson (1959):

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (Ferguson 1959: 336).

Youssi (2013) therefore indicates that the linguistic landscape of Morocco is more complex and exceeds the limitations of Ferguson's concept, introducing the notion of triglossia, defined by the coexistence of the three linguistic levels: the high level – or formal, represented by the Classical or Modern Standard Arabic, which is inaccessible to most speakers –, the low level – referring to the Moroccan Arabic that is used in daily communication, especially in informal environments –, and the median variety – in addition to the linguistic landscapes observed by Ferguson (1959), the contemporary Moroccan speakers use a blend of linguistic elements from both Classical or Standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic in media, intellectual discussions, and other interactions with speakers of various statuses. He further concludes that “this centuries-old situation of diglossia in bilingualism, then of triglossia in multilingualism in the modern era, has been able to create illusions regarding the real functions of language in both oral and written communication in general, and the transmission of knowledge and skills in particular” (Youssi 2013: 33-4).

Aguadé (2012) emphasizes the linguistic authority which politicians must have and he condemns the lack of grammatical accuracy and prestige that he had noticed in the speech of Moroccan politicians, mentioning his forthright point of view in this regard:

In my opinion, the problem here does not lie in the use of the classical language, but rather in that of the “wooden language” (whether in Arabic, dialect, French or Berber!) of the Maghreb political class, a class with which most of the population unfortunately cannot identify. Let us not forget that Egypt – an Arab country where the use of dialect in official speeches, magazines, books, plays, television series and films has been common for decades – has a political regime much less democratic and much more repressive than that of Morocco. And it is more than doubtful that the Iraqis recognized themselves in the dialectal language that the dictator Saddam Hussein and his entourage often used in their speeches... (Aguadé 2012: 370).

5. Code-switching and Loanwords

Poplack (1988) distinguishes loanwords from code-switching according to the frequency of the linguistic elements in question in everyday speech. Therefore, she suggests that a word or structure which is often embedded in a matrix language might become a loanword, as long as it is subjected to phonological and morphological integration in the matrix language (Poplack 1988: 28-9). Although such observations are relevant for standard languages, we can apply Poplack's strategy on Moroccan Arabic corpora, despite the lack of its official standardization.

One of the most common practices of code-switching occurring in Moroccans' speech implies the embedding of French words into the Moroccan Arabic matrix. This phenomenon had been observed by various European and Moroccan researchers such as Hassan Takrou (2012), who observes the phonological

and morphosyntactic adaptation and order in such speech productions. His study proves that the mother tongue – Moroccan Arabic – predominantly represents the matrix language and leads the linguistic transformations of the French embedded terms, regardless the proficiency level that the speakers may have in French (Takroun 2012: 74).

An additional noteworthy study assesses code-switching tendencies and patterns in Amazigh radio discourse. Based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the Moroccan authors conclude that the discourses produced by Amazigh bilinguals are bidirectional, implying that “both languages play the role of matrix language and embedded language in varying degrees” (Driouch and Elghazi 2023: 1323).

Spanish language is another essential feature in the expansion of the Moroccan Arabic vocabulary. In this regard, a study published in 1987 by the Spanish researchers Laila Benyahia and Jordi Aguadé exposes instances of Spanish words which had been embedded in Moroccan Arabic and had been adapted to the latter’s rules and structures to such an extent that they have become loanwords (Benyahia and Aguadé 1987).

6. Linguistic identity and beyond

The emblematic French researcher Dominique Caubet (2017d) debates broadly the impact of the Moroccan Arabic usage for defining modern Moroccan identity. She starts her study with the following statement:

Darija (Moroccan Arabic) has undergone drastic changes in practices in the Moroccan emerging civil society from the beginning of the century. Its status was influenced by the place it had taken in the Moroccan landscape. Voices claimed that Darija was a key element for the definition of a new Moroccan identity, Moroccaness (Caubet 2017d: 99).

Artistic productions are often meant to expose honest traits pertaining to their authors, even from a sociolinguistic perspective. This aspect is exemplified by Moroccan rappers who have started expressing themselves “in their natural language, Darija, sometimes mixed with French or English” since the late 1990s. The progressive development of Darija led to an extraordinary act in 2006, when artists, intellectuals, and journalists were claiming for the first time that they were “proud of their mother tongue, Darija” (Caubet 2008: 113-7). After observing manners in which modern Moroccans write their own Arabic dialects, Aguadé (2006) emphasizes the distinctiveness of Moroccan Arabic, suggesting that it could be considered an independent language with its own linguistic system (Aguadé 2006).

Another significant statement extracted from Caubet’s significant works is the following:

The general impression is that this use of Darija as a language name is fairly recent, but we haven't been able to trace it exactly. In the old days, people used to refer to *l-earbiya dyal-na* ("our Arabic") or just *l-earbiya*, when opposed to Berber or French; or *l-lehja* ("speech", "parlance"), when opposed to *l-foṣḥa* (Classical Arabic). This reference to Darija has developed tremendously since the beginning of the century, together with a form of public recognition. Nowadays, it is used massively in Arabic – and in French as *la darija* (Caubet 2017d, 100).

Furthermore, Moroccan Arabic has become more often referred to as Darija in linguistic studies, especially after the first decade of the 21st century.

A remarkable observation regarding formal aspects and the "correct" use of Moroccan Arabic pertains to Dominique Caubet (2018), highlighting the speakers' fluency in a language without norms:

More than fifteen years of experience in writing Darija, in Latin or Arabic script, have led to a situation where most connected Moroccans have now acquired fluidity in reading and writing Darija, through collective national effort. Beyond the first amazement at the easiness of communication, the fluency came without too much effort and with it, the ability to create. There was also a feeling of freedom since there is no language planning, but the accessibility of the language also made it risky (Caubet 2018: 13).

Additionally, Caubet argues that writing Darija in Arabic could be a political decision or even a statement, "because this is how your message will be conveyed to a maximum of people who are not really at ease reading Standard Arabic or French. Another reason, more political, is the idea of access to the people, in a post-'Arab spring' climate" (Caubet 2017: 120).

7. 21st Century Studies

A notable tendency from the first decade of the 21st century is the delimitation between local varieties of Moroccan Arabic, proven through phonetic and phonologic documentations from diverse areas. According to Caubet's contribution to *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, defining the koine reveals idiosyncratic implications, as it is presented to be spoken in the urban areas, but different from

the pre-Hilālīan dialects such as the ones spoken in Fes, Old Rabat, Salé, or Tetouan. (...) Morocco has a very particular situation in that the dialect of the political capital, Rabat, is too peculiar (old pre-Hilālīan dialect of Andalusī families) to be adopted as a koine; the intellectual capital, Fes, offers the same situation, and although the dialects of these old cities are prestigious in a way, they are not adopted nationwide (Caubet 2008b: 273).

In their comparative study about varieties from three Moroccan cities, the researchers Falchetta and Guerrero additionally state that the inter-urban vernacular does

not pertain to a certain origin, although it is spoken all around major cities (Falchetta and Guerrero 2023: 124). The Spanish researcher Christophe Pereira (2012) further observes the division of the North African dialects into sedentary pre-Hilàlian and Bedouin dialects (Pereira 2012: 955).

Studies about Moroccan Arabic from the latest decades do not focus exclusively on modern subjects. Some scholars use complex perspectives and theories that have been developed until nowadays in order to scrutinize early studies. Such an approach belongs to the Spanish researcher Jairo Guerrero, who analyses a corpus published in 1800 under the title *Grammatica linguae Mauro-arabicae*. This grammar is authored by Franz von Dombay and it is the first systematic documentation of Moroccan Arabic, describing phonology, morphology, and syntax, thus being a foundational text in Arabic dialectology and it reveals cultural and linguistic interactions between Europeans and Moroccans (Guerrero 2015).

Analyses elaborated on various spoken varieties performed by contemporary scholars – who are knowledgeable about much older research results – agree that the Arabic from Morocco has been highly influenced, throughout the past century, by “rural-to-urban migration and the urban areas’ growth in demographic, socio-economic and political weight” (Falchetta and Guerrero 2023: 123-4). Other studies observe closely certain pronunciation tendencies and patterns motivated by various sociolinguistic factors. Such an example is represented by Guererro’s research performed in 2019 and published in 2023, where he investigates the utterance of interdental fricatives in the north-eastern city of Berkane, which differs from one generation to another (Guerrero 2023).

Many studies in the 21st century focus on varieties, trends, or specific characteristics observed in certain communities, either offline or online, or in the media. Nowadays scholars debate the status of the Moroccan Arabic and its occurrence in the speech of multilingual communities. In addition to the multilingual Moroccan speakers, it is worth mentioning the Moroccan youth exposed to multilingual content available on the internet – especially on social media – which motivates them to embed foreign linguistic elements into their speech, despite their limited proficiency in the languages in question.

Linguistic practices on Moroccan radio stations inspired scholars such as Miller (2012) to observe their evolution throughout the first decade from the 21st century. In her research about the multilingual radiophonic landscape, Miller suggests that media might reflect sociolinguistic changes which are constantly taking place in Morocco (Miller 2012: 14-15). In another study about linguistic practices in the Moroccan media in the second half of the 20th century, Miller (2012b) notes that during the 1950-1960 decade the Moroccan media aimed to contribute to the education of people by promoting speech productions in Classical Arabic, but during the 1990s the use of vernaculars in the media revealed a mixed-style tendency (Miller 2012b: 157-8).

An additional observation extracted from her study about the use of Darija in the first decade of the 21st century refers to Mexican soap operas that had been dubbed into Darija instead of Classical or Standard Arabic, which marked an important step to the popularity and recognition of Darija (Miller 2010). Other conclusions following observations upon the printed Moroccan press from 2009 and 2010 show the prevalence of Standard Arabic in formal and objective sections, while Darija had been used in rather informal and entertaining contexts (Miller 2012c).

The question of the impact upon language evolution based on media corpus analysis is also approached by Nizha Chatar-Moumni in her study published in 2015. The author speculates that the usage of mixed styles and codes could contribute to the standardization of Moroccan Arabic (Chatar-Moumni 2015: 75).

The expansion and valorisation of Moroccan Arabic has become conspicuous also in the online environment, from entertainment to social media interactions and content creation. The sociolinguist Atiqa Hachimi considers that the outstanding and increasing popularity of Moroccan Arabic pop songs on YouTube demonstrates an expanding interest in written and oral Darija, which also “raises new and important sociolinguistic questions” (Hachimi 2017: 244). Regarding the usage of Moroccan Arabic in online interaction, Hachimi further argues that its increasing popularity in online written contexts does not necessarily entail the users’ fidelity towards the exclusive usage of Moroccan Arabic (Hachimi 2017: 245).

The worldwide phenomenon of “keyboard-to-screen communication or electronically mediated communication”, which emerged as a consequence of technology development and availability, led to formal adaptations of written Moroccan Arabic, “a language with no institutional status and no language planning”; thus, following Caubet’s definition, “the portmanteau word *3aransiya* < *3arabiya* + *faransiya* (“Arabic” + “French”) was the name given in the 80s to Darija-French code-switching; recently it was recovered by the young generations to name Darija written in Latin script, which was called *e-darija* around 2006” (Caubet 2018: 3). Caubet further highlights script adaptations that are recurrent in written productions:

Table 2

**Description of Arabic Characters Adapted to the Latin Script,
Based on the Visual Similarities between Digits and Arabic Characters**

Arabic character	<i>3aransiya</i>	Phoneme
ع	3	ʕ
ز	7	ħ
ق	9	q

Due to the development of artificial intelligence in the latest decades, Moroccan Arabic – like most of the contemporary languages and varieties – has been subjected to computational linguistic processes, such as natural language processing, which

led to extensive discussions motivated especially by its lack of standardization. A relevant study for this topic had been published by two researchers from the Institute for Language and Information of the University of Düsseldorf who mention that the spontaneous code-switching structures also represent an important challenge in defining code-switching patterns (Samih and Maier 2016). Studies on artificial intelligence represent an ongoing trend, motivated especially by the development of computational linguistics and machine learning.

7.1. Notes on Multilingualism

The question of multilingualism and exposure to various languages and styles is extensively discussed in contemporary research publications. Moroccans' responsiveness to external linguistic elements and their assimilation into Moroccan Arabic speeches is mostly common among young generations and motivated mainly by emigration and consistent online exposure to foreign content. This tendency goes beyond Arabic diglossia, triglossia, Amazigh, and French, embedding elements from other languages such as English, Italian, and Spanish.

In their group study among the Moroccan ultras, the eminent researchers Catherine Miller, Dominique Caubet, and Karima Ziamari indicate that their style is rather "glocalized" – "both very localized and globalized" –, referring mostly to their behaviour and approach to the ultras phenomenon and fandom (Miller, Caubet and Ziamari 2023: 52). Notwithstanding, I believe that their aforementioned concept is valid also with regards to the languages used by the Moroccan ultras in their diversified demonstrations (Brandea 2021: 507-8).

7.2. A Sociolinguistic Perspective on Free Speech

During the latest decades, Moroccans have been broadly inspired by international events and trends they had learned about mostly by virtue of the media. The flourishing freedom of speech has not been limited to certain topics, as it has also influenced the linguistic productions, especially after the Arab Spring.

The use and impact of Moroccan Arabic in artistic productions – mostly pertaining to underground subcultures – has been closely observed by Dominique Caubet throughout the past decades. In the beginning of her paper about the significance of Darija in new social and cultural movements, published in 2009, Caubet mentions the emergence of new music styles such as rap, rock, fusion, concomitantly with the departure from the North-African Raï music; thus, Darija had begun to be used by various young artists and protesters, contributing to its recognition in the civil society (Caubet 2009).

Analyses on Moroccan rap songs frequently unveil multilingual aspects and code-switching patterns or segments (Harrouchi 2015) but also disclose rappers' authenticity based on their expression manners that may include elements which are specific to their place of origin (Schwartz 2019).

Another ascending contemporary trend involves the linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis of chants and other expression manners of the sports supporters, frequently focusing on the ultras. In their article entitled "From emotion to politics: A sociolinguistic analysis of the Moroccan Ultras' chants", Miller, Caubet, and Ziamari debate the linguistic behaviour of the Moroccan ultras, focusing on code-switching, mixing, and affrication, then comparing them with more general youth language practices. In this particular case, Darija gains more recognition due to the popularity of the ultras' chants, which are often meant to express "the voice of the people" (Miller, Caubet and Ziamari 2023).

8. Conclusions

A significant aspect in the evolution of Moroccan Arabic studies is the development of the Moroccan identity based on the language representation. Studies published before the second half of the 20th century reveal the uncertainty of the national identity through inconsistent documentation of the local Arabic varieties. As the language had been initially documented in either Maghribi or Arabic script, nowadays the Arabic script prevails, while native Moroccan Arabic speakers also use the standard Arabic script in their written expression, together with a modern adaptation of the Latin script.

Moroccan Arabic studies have evolved throughout time to comply with the knowledge demand of their audience and to also reflect the changes and trends in the linguistic landscape of Morocco. These studies started from a basic, even rudimentary point, where simple observations upon the "Moors' language" had been listed, continuing to complex debates and analyses applied on specific varieties and communities.

Contemporary studies on Moroccan Arabic are not limited to the language on its own, but they often take into account its contact with other languages, revealing attentiveness to the preservation and definition of Moroccan identity whilst embracing external influences.

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