Digitalisation and polycentricity in Moroccan Arabic: Complexity and heterogeneity in linguistic practices

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Abstract: The main aim of this paper is to analyse the notion of polycentricity (Blommaert 2005; 2010) and its application to Moroccan Arabic as a possible polycentric language. I understand polycentricity in the sense that any environment in which human beings gather and communicate is by definition polycentric and may therefore contain more than one identifiable centre of power (Blommaert 2005). A second objective is to explore how the digitalisation of Moroccan society and the increased use of social media and digital platforms are central to the phenomenon of polycentricity in Moroccan Arabic. In order to do so, I will examine a corpus of uses in various social media and digital platforms as a highly revealing manifestation of polycentricity and heteroglossia in Moroccan Arabic. The analysis reveals how practices and voicing are not subject to constraints or a single norm that defines what is 'irregular' or plain, thereby creating a rather complex polycentric system in Moroccan Arabic that affects both the language itself as linguistic system and its patterns of use.

Keywords: Moroccan Arabic, polycentricity, digitalisation, (de)normalisation and heteroglossic linguistic practices

1. Introduction

The advent of digital platforms, including social media, instant messaging, and online communities, has transformed language dynamics in Moroccan society, giving rise to novel modes of expression and communication styles using Moroccan local languages. This new model of communication has particularly favoured the use of Moroccan Arabic (hereinafter MA) and Amazigh in both private and public media. This is partly attributable to the privatisation of broadcast media and telecommunications, and has affected the way Moroccan society conceives mother tongues as both a language and a resource. This paper focuses especially on MA, the use of which has expanded over the last decade on

national TV channels and mediated computer communication, and which is now used intensively on social media such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and other virtual platforms. These dynamics trigger linguistic, social, political and identitarian changes that need to be explored and analysed through research that looks beyond the large-scale of social and linguistic elements and a micro gap related to individual inter- actions, speech patterns and communicative dynamics and by addressing the focus on complexity, diversity, multiplicity and polycentricity in multilingual Morocco. The main aim of this paper is therefore to analyse how the digitalisation of Moroccan society and the increased use of social media and digital platforms are central to the phenomenon of polycentricity in MA. I investigate how the creation of polycentricity in MA could play a role in the (de)normalisation and (de)centralisation (Milroy 2001) of this variety in a new Moroccan language market and regime. My interest lies essentially in the concep- tualisation of polycentricity in sociolinguistic and digital terms applied to MA. My anal- ysis is based on a language corpus taken from various social media and digital platforms that includes influencer profiles as a highly revealing manifestation of polycentricity in MA. My analysis follows the concept of polycentricity (Blommaert et al 2005; Blom- maert 2010) and its application to MA. A further objective is to consider the potential utility of the concepts of scale and discourses in digital media in relation to both, the polycentric character of MA and subsequently its multi-layered repositioning in the so- ciolinguistic regime. In this sense, polymedia analysis (Madianou 2015) provides an in- sightful tool and method for understanding and interpreting today's digital interaction, considering digital media not as isolated platforms but rather as an interconnected mul- timodal (Kress 2010) and polycentric environment. For the purpose of this article, MA represents not just a linguistic variety or local language but also a semiotic resource with several uses: (i) to communicate and build a translocal and transnational linguistic com- munity; (ii) as a commodity in material, virtual and transnational markets; and (iii) as a tool for creative identities and subjectivities performance (Hachimi 2016).

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the theoretical background of the notion of language as a resource connecting scale and sociolinguistic regime. Section 3 focuses on polycentricity and complexity applied to the context of Morocco and MA. Section 4 discusses digital platforms as spaces for interaction and communication in digital environment. Section 5 offers quantitative data related to the use of the internet and social media in Morocco. Section 6 provides an overview of the research methodol- ogy and the data collection process. Section 7 is dedicated to the analysis with a special focus on polycentricity in MA associated with heteroglossic repertoires and its role in the development of complex linguistic practices and norms. The article ends with a series of conclusions in Section 8.

2. Theoretical starting points: Language as a resource and digitalisation

Language is a political and social force and is therefore managed, regulated, regiment- ed and policed (cf. Blommaert 1999; Kroskrity 2000; Heller 2010; Costa 2019). Chang- ing the position of a language or language variety in a specific sociolinguistic regime

involves the repositioning of this variety within a language hierarchy, usage domains, and user profiles, and thus has ideological, sociopolitical and economic implications. In this sense, the idea of repositioning evokes a particular social and political conceptualisation of language in the sense that it is considered a resource and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1982; Heller 2006; Blommaert 2007a). As Pietikäinen (2010: 81) argued, "this view of language moves away from the notion that languages are whole, bounded, complete entities and leans toward a more heteroglossic understanding that speakers draw on linguistic and semiotic resources." Heller (2010: 350) pointed out that "the emergence of the idea of language as resource, and of the new forms of its production and circulation in current market conditions, does challenge dominant ideologies of language in important ways [...] we can draw on Bakhtinian notions of heteroglossia, Foucauldian ideas of discourse, and Bordieuan ideas of markets to reimagine language as communicative resources socially constructed in uneven, unequal distributed social spaces." In addition, and as Blommaert (2010: 155) argued, languages are also placed resources, that is, a given language may be perfectly functional and valuable in certain positions but may become dysfunctional elsewhere. Furthermore, languages are structured in ways that make sense not only in a specific social and ideological context, but also in particular chronotopes. Sociolinguistic dynamics of change also create differences in the values of languages because several functions are reallocated to them as accommodated resources. However, the social value of a language is a social construct that involves a series of historical conditions, and hence historical power relations and hierarchies between languages are strongly bound to social, political and economic factors. Indeed, the study of MA provides an insight into the longitudinal processes of change in the role and function of this variety, as well as its current values in Moroccan society and its sociolinguistic regime (Moustaoui 2023).

The relocation of MA as a new linguistic resource has led to a repositioning of this variety within the Moroccan sociolinguistic order (Moustaoui 2016). This repositioning marks a decisive shift in the power relations established by the state's sociolinguistic, political and economic regime, but also in the historical relations of dominance and subordination between languages, known historically as diglossia, in the Moroccan linguistic market (Ennaji 2011) with Modern Standard Arabic (hereinafter MSA) being the high variety and MA the low variety. Consequently, MA as a language variety and a resource is used not only over a large territory, spaces and sites, but also by diverse and polycentric communities with considerable linguistic variation and several centres.

3. Polycentricity and complexity in MA practices

Blommaert et al. (2005) described the situation of a language with several interacting centres, each with their own codified norms by using the term polycentricity and they considered it as a theoretical metaphor based on the idea that linguistic practices are shaped by various sociolinguistic norms, authorities or centres. A centre is thereby defined not by its physical materiality, but by the way community connectivity is organized. Blommaert et al. (2005) have associated these normative centres with particular places

in the urban space, such as schools, mosques or local shops. Blommaert (2010) also points out that every environment in which human beings meet and communicate with each other is almost by definition polycentric. Consequently, all language practices, in the case of both standard and non-standard languages, are polycentric in nature. Blommaert (2010: 40-41) also points out that "polycentricity is a key feature of interactional regimes in human environments: even though many interaction events look 'stable' and monocentric (e.g. exams, wedding ceremonies), there are as a rule multiple – though never unlimited – batteries of norms to which one can orient […]. This multiplicity has been previously captured under terms such as 'polyphony' or 'multivocality'." However, languages unite through their use, and they separate through the development of linguistic norms and orders of indexicality and linguistic variability that the same speakers can identify. As Blommaert (2007b: 117) argued, "Indexical order, thus, is the metapragmatic organising principle behind what is widely understood as the 'pragmatics' of language."

In a particular kind of polycentric environment, people have a range of overlapping navigating points in which they can choose from the various varieties, accents, registers, and discourses that can be found and inscribed on the physical and virtual linguistic landscape. To investigate this multi-layered and polycentric character of MA, a conceptual move of this article is the consideration of MA as a space of spaces, linked not just to a single geographical place, but rather to a ranking of registers classified in terms of value or adequacy that are constructed situationally in interaction and that emerge in multiple, differentiated contexts. Polycentric environments like MA also involve multiple scales, each ascribing different values and functions to this variety. For the purpose of this article, scale can be helpful in seeing how the process of repositioning MA is accompanied by processes of hierarchical ordering: shifts in scale trigger shifts in value and function (Blommaert 2007b: 126) in which different discourses and their significations are networked together. Yet, in a polycentric environment such as MA, any extension of the use of a language into areas where it was not previously used (education, the media, literature, the institutional domain, the linguistic landscape, etc) leads us to reflect on the relationship of this language with the other varieties present in the linguistic market. This also raises important questions regarding language policy, planning and management: i) How does polycentricity in MA relate to heteroglossic language practices and the construction of local subjectivities and new forms of belonging? ii) How does this phenomenon work in digital social networks? iii) How the speakers mobilise distinct resources from their polycentric language repertoires?

In a polycentric MA context, where the logics and regimes of different regions, trans-local communities, domains and contexts overlap, people have needs and opportunities, or desires to use several genres, registers, and accents in their everyday lives. This is increasingly related to economic, cultural, and sociolinguistic features, generating a language commodity. In the Moroccan context, the strengths that influence the cultural and linguistic needs of MA linguistic communities are linked not only to subjectivities and socio-political identities such as digitalization and the emergence of social media and digital communication. The resulting kind of contemporary polycentric environments present

new challenges to MA in digital social media and the digital polycentricity and linguistic practices they have applied to date.

The other interrelated shift is how the transformation from oral to written form created new contexts and spaces, especially within the media, indicating the modern value of MA as a resource and its fit with the requirements of the modern information society (Michalski 2019). In this sense, these spatial scales move MA from its traditional, geographic and institutional places into new, often hybrid spaces, in which semiotic practices are created, linked to Morocco's new economy (Moustaoui 2019), activism (Suárez Collado & Moustaoui 2023), urban music (Boum, 2012; Moreno Almedia, 2017) and popular music (Hachimi 2022). Within this scale, at least two changes are taking place: (i) from local to global and (ii) from the use of mainly one variety or register to polycentric and hybrid practices, thereby guaranteeing what Heller (2003) calls the 'commodification of languages'. This commodification has created new values for MA in social media.

4. Digital language communities of practice

Digital platforms are spaces of performance, creativity, linguistic innovation and diversity, where communities of practice and speakers experiment with new styles and functions of language and express different forms of belonging and identities, attitudes, and opinions. Digital platforms are also considered spaces of linguistic contact and negotiation in which several users interact and communicate with other linguistic communities and ideologies and they navigate within linguistic norms and pressures that they may contest or renegotiate. In addition, by substituting physical interaction for a digital alternative, several platforms have introduced a novel avenue for building a sense of community and regimes of communication, transcending established political and administrative boundaries (Quercia et al. 2012; Takhteyev et al. 2012) in order to diffuse opinions, information and ideas across space. This has led to the emergence of a new type of geospatial information that defies the conventions of authoritative or volunteered geographic information and introduces a new virtual order of interaction. In this sense, Danesi (2017) examined the nuanced impact of digital communication on interpersonal relationships and language usage, shedding light on how digital interactions influence language patterns and shape communication dynamics. Within these new dynamics, various connected virtual communities are formed around issues related to a specific virtual space such as the polycentric one. This process generates a large polycentric structure, which comprises not only speakers from a specific state within its established legal or political norms and borders but also other communities, people and speakers outside and under the jurisdiction of a particular state (Androutsopoulos & Vold Lexander 2021). In a rapidly changing linguistic, virtual and human landscape, the projection of linguistic practices onto the virtual space thus spans multiple zones, sites, contexts and semiotic cartographies.

So, my aim in this paper is to identify the spatial distribution of global Moroccan communities in social media and the manner in which MA is regimented, used and

capitalised within and from its digital polycentric environment. In this sense, the notion of 'digital polycentricity' (Androutsopoulos & Vold Lexander 2021) will help us to examine how participants use digital media and choose a range of varieties, registers, accents and discursive practices that are related to their multiple forms of belonging and subjectivities.

5. Digital platforms and multilingualism in Morocco

The use of the internet in Morocco is increasing steadily, with 34.47 million users in January 2024, reflecting a penetration rate of 90.7%, according to the *Digital 2024: Morocco report*. Social media are also widely used, with 21.30 million users, 55.7% of the population and a total of 51.36 million cellular mobile connections were active in Morocco in early 2024. A notable demographic trend shows that the majority of social media users are men (58.3%), while women make up 41.7%. The same report notes that the number of social media users in Morocco is equivalent to 55.7 percent of the total population and 61.5 percent of the total internet user base used at least one social media platform (Datareportal 2024).

The growing use of the internet and social media in Morocco, driven by mobile connectivity, provides young users with considerable opportunities and highlights the importance of digital media as a key avenue for engaging Moroccan consumers. In addition, the rise of the internet, along with the country's complex multilingual landscape, has significantly transformed the way information is constructed and consumed, particularly through digital and social media. Young Moroccans – the most digitally literate segment of the population – are at the forefront of this transformation, actively engaging with various digital platforms using local languages (Zaid & Ibahrine 2011).

This has amplified the role of digital media in shaping public opinion and spreading information, making it a critical factor in the broader social and political dynamics of Moroccan society and serving as a means "to counter the hegemonic discourse of traditional media" (El-Issawi 2016: 6). Furthermore, Morocco's local multilingualism adds an additional layer of complexity to the digital landscape. Traditionally, news, information and media were available principally in MSA and French, the languages of power and education in Morocco. However, the proliferation of new media technologies has brought about a process of language democratisation, resulting in an increased use of MA or Darija[1] and Amazigh. This linguistic shift in the digital space not only reflects Morocco's social and cultural plurality but also has significant implications for accessibility and inclusivity. As more digital platform outlets offer content in MA and Amazigh, populations who may not be as fluent in MSA or French now have greater access to news and information. This is particularly important for rural and less literate segments of the population, as well as for the Amazigh-speaking community, which has historically been marginalised in terms of its linguistic representation in the media (Lafkioui 2024). Furthermore, the spread of digital networks and social media allows Moroccan diaspora

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[1] Moroccan Arabic is also called Darija.

communities to stay connected with information from home, wherever they may be. Digital platforms also foster spaces for political discourse and social mobilisation, especially among younger generations who are more adept at using these tools in which the local languages are relocated and capitalised. This trend underscores the growing role of digital technologies in defining the public sphere in contemporary Moroccan society. In the digital area in particular, MA has gained significant traction in the media landscape, reflecting a greater leaning towards embracing the linguistic realities of everyday communication in Morocco. One of the key reasons for MA's growing presence in digital platforms is its ability to connect with a broader audience on a more personal and relatable level. By using MA as a lingua franca, media outlets and content creators can communicate directly with Moroccans, breaking down the barriers created by the more formal and less commonly spoken MSA or the often elite-driven use of French. In addition, a number of intellectuals and media figures have also emerged as proponents of MA in digital platforms. So, the growing presence of MA in the media reflects its practical role as a language of mass communication and social cohesion and as a potential semiotic resource. By gaining traction, MA not only empowers a broader spectrum of Moroccan society but also challenges traditional linguistic hierarchies that have long shaped the country's media and intellectual landscape.

6. The present study

In recent years, I have observed and participated in several social media. In particular, I have observed the accounts of a number of influencers that have a notable presence in the Moroccan public sphere and on digital platforms. Furthermore, I have noted how the social and linguistic context has influenced the way Moroccan influencers build and consolidate their social media presence.

This study employs two methodological tools: polymedia analysis and digital observation. As I argued previously, my analysis touches on two critical concepts in sociolinguistics: complexity and polycentricity. The ongoing diversification of interpersonal media is effectively theorised with the concept of polymedia (Madianou & Miller 2013). To this purpose, I will conduct a polymedia analysis – an insightful tool and method for understanding and interpreting today's digital interactions that considers digital media not as isolated platforms but as an interconnected polycentric environment. Polymedia analysis also refers to the diverse media choices available for communication, from text to video and voice, and how individuals use these to manage social/digital interaction and relationships. As Madianou and Miller (2013: 170) state: "It is an 'integrated structure' within which each individual medium is defined in relational terms in the context of all other media." This methodology will help us analyse how MA linguistic communities use the collective landscape of tools to fit their specific communicative needs, often combining various semiotic artefacts to create meaningful ways of connecting and interacting in the digital space. Polymedia analysis also implies a shift in agency and responsibility for users, highlighting how linguistic choices within this environment can reflect social relationships, cultural norms, and individual ideologies. This methodology is espe-

cially relevant for exploring how Moroccan linguistic communities balance complex social interactions using MA and its various accents and registers by blending various platforms to communicate appropriately across different contexts and spaces, including transnational ones. Lastly, a polymedia analysis also focuses our attention on how MA usage patterns and linguistic choices shape communicative norms and expectations in a particular kind of polycentric environment. As for the digital observation, it should be noted that social media are considered a research site of data collection method for the study combined with a content analysis of the profiles of numerous Moroccan influencers. This approach considers social media as a particular type of hybrid site, replete with videos, texts, visual artefacts and/or connections between speakers, communities and entities. For the purpose of this study, I have examined the profiles of five influencers: two women and three men, whose details are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Influencer profile information

Influencer's Name	Sex and age	Digital platform	Profession
Hicham Chaibi	Male 32	https://www.tiktok.com/@hicham_chaibi93	Creator content in MA
Mayssa Salama Ennaji	Female 54	https://www.facebook.com/elMayssa	President of @NeoMoroccans ThinkTank
Said Abarnous	Male 49	https://www.facebook.com/Abarnouss	Artist
Choumicha Chafay	Female 53	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZGe2b4Dor/	Chef, TV presenter and content creator
Ahmed Asid	Male 63	https://www.tiktok.com/@ahmed.aassid	Amazigh and political activist. Professor of Philosophy

I chose a diversified linguistic corpus composed of a number of videos representing examples of spoken MA in terms of registers and subvarieties. It should also be noted that some of the examples also contain words from other linguistic varieties, namely MSA, Amazigh or French. I have decided to choose a phonetic spelling for the MA script that is more in line with the pronunciation and linguistic realisation of the speakers.[2]

7. Results

7.1. MA as individual talent and accent

The first example is from TikTok. It is a video posted by the Moroccan influencer Hicham Chaibi, who lives in Spain. The video reports an act of racism he and his friends experienced in the centre of Madrid. The video received 44,000 views and 115 comments.

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[2] The audios are available under this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vC3ffJ3RVDgxo1ON-noTUBHQDcYthgiP7.

Most of the comments are written in Arabizi, an informal writing method that uses Latin characters and numbers to represent Arabic sounds. The title of the video, which is written in MA, reads "what happened to me with racism and the police" and features a police sticker and a Spanish flag (Figure 1 and Example 1).

Figure 1. Title of the video posted on TikTok[3]

Example 1

اسمع اسمع هاد اللقطة وقعت لي أنا ف هاد البلاد هادي. خارج كانتمشى أنا ؤالدري ف واحد البلاصة سميتها البارطِ بييخا، بحال إلا گلتي المدينة القديمة ف كازا، غا هي داك الشي، داك الشي عندهم زايد داك الشي ناضي. ؤهاد البلاصة ف الليل كاتكون عامرة فيها الديسكوطيكات، الناس كايكونو شاربين خارجين كانتمشاو دزنا من واحد الزنقة، تكروازينا مع خمسة ديال الدراري معهم دررية. واحد الشوية هو الدّري صاحبها هو يمشي عند الدّري گال له علاش كاتشوف لي ف صاحبتي؟ حنا عارفين ديك البلاصة شوية فيها الزكا. منين وصلت عندو أنا هو بدا كايغوت هاديك اللعيبة علاش كاتشوف لي ف صاحبتي. أنا بغيت نبرد ؤگلت له لا لا أنا ماشفتش لك ف صاحبتك ؤلا والو. واحد الشوية وأنا نشوفو كايطليق لي واحد الضربة هنايا، جاب الله ما جابهاش لي ف عيني. أنا مع ضربني وأنا نجهل. تا گلت ديك اللعيبة واش تا انا جاي محشي تحت باطو جاي قاطع خمسطاش الكيلومتر مصفطَني رفولي، أنا راه عايش معه عا ديسير أنايا راه متشحال هادي غا مستنف. عاخليتو عازكيتو واحد الشوية وتلاحيت عليه وأنا نعطيه واحد الكروشي صافي ؤهي تنوض تمك، تبلبلات. لدراري معه كلشي هزو القراعي ديال الزجاج واحد عكاز القراعي بداو كاي من حدا وجهي ڭاق ڭاق. كانسمع عا الدري گال لي ديك اللعيبة علّق.

asmaʿ asmaʿ hād l-laqṭa ūqʿat lī āna f hād l-blād hādī. ḫārəž kā-ntməšša āna ʾu d-dər-rī f wāḥəd l-blāṣa smīthā alpārṭe byeḫā, bḥāl ilā gultī l-mdīna l-qadīma f kāzā, ġā hiyya dāk š-šī, ʾəndhum zāyəd dāk š-šī nāḍī. ʾu hād l-blāṣa f l-līl kā-tkūn ʿāmra fīhā d-dīskūṭēkāt, n-nās kā-ykūnū šārbīn ḫāržīn kā-ntməššāw dəznā min wāḥəd z-zənqa, tkrwāzīnā mʿa ḥamsa dyāl d-drārī mʿāhum dərrīya. (…) wāḥəd š-šwīya huwwa d-dərrī ṣāḥəbhā huwwa yimšī ʿənd d-dərrī gāl-lih ʿlāš kā-tšūf lī f ṣāḥəbtī? ḥnā ʿārfīn dīk l-blāṣa šwīya fīhā z-zkā. (…) mnīn wṣalt ʿəndū āna huwwa bdā kā-yġuwwət hādīk l-lʿība ʿlāš kā-tšūf lī f ṣāḥəbtī. āna bġīt nbərrəd ʾu gəlt-lih lā āna mā-šuftš lik f ṣāḥəbtək wullā wālū. wāḥəd š-šwīya ʾu āna nšūfū kā-yṭlīq lī wāḥəd ḍ-ḍarba hnāyā, žāb llah mā žābhāš lī f ʿīnī āna mʿa ḍrabnī ʾu āna nəžhəl. tā gelt dīk l-lʿība wāš tā āna žāy məḥšī taḥt bāṭū žāy qāṭəʿ ḫəmsṭāš əl-kīlūmetr mṣafṭenī refūlī, āna rāh ʿāyəš mʿah ʿā dīsīr anāyā rāh mətṣḥāl hādī gā məstanəf. (…) ʿā ḥəllītū ʿā zəkītū wāḥəd š-šwīya ū-tlāḥīt ʿlīh ʾu āna nəʿṭīh wāḥəd l-krōšē ṣāfī ʾu hiyya tnūḍ təmmak, tbəlblāt. d-drārī mʿa kull šī hazzū l-qrāʿī dyāl z-zžāž wāḥəd ʿukkāz l-qrāʿī bdāw kāy mən ḥdā ūžhī pāq pāq. kā-nəsməʿ ʿā d-dərrī gāl-lī dīk l-lʿība ʿalləq.

[Listen, listen – this incident (scene) happened to me here in this country. I was out walking with my friend in a place called la Parte Vieja, kind of like the Old Medina in Casa-

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blanca, but there it's even wilder and more intense. At night this area is packed, full of nightclubs, drunk people out on the streets. We were walking and passed through an alley, ran into five guys with a girl. After a bit, the girl's boyfriend goes up to my friend and says, "Why are you looking at my girlfriend?" You know that place has a reputation, a bit rough. When I got there, he started shouting that same thing: "Why are you looking at my girlfriend?" I wanted to cool things down, so I told him, "No, I didn't look at your girlfriend or anything." A moment later, I see him throw a punch at me here -thank God it didn't land in my eye. He hit me, and I lost it. I thought to myself: "Man, I came here high, under the boat, I crossed the strait during 15 kilometers, my nerves are fried, I've been living off nothing but dessert for a while, I'm exhausted." So, I let him swing a little, then I lunged at him and gave him a hook. That's when everything blew up. His friends all grabbed glass bottles and one of those bottle sticks, and they started swinging right by my face, bang, bang. I could only hear my buddy saying that line: "Comment on it."]

In this video, Hicham Chaibi speaks the Darija variety from Casablanca, which is also his native variety. Casablanca is Morocco's largest city and economic centre, where modernity and cultural diversity are the norm. The city's accent has become a symbol of these positive qualities and is commonly perceived as representative of open-mindedness and connectedness to the world of modernity. In Moroccan communication culture, the Casablanca accent is associated with cosmopolitan lifestyle and Moroccan youth who are exposed to international influences and contacts and are aware of global trends. The identity of these young, cosmopolitan groups is marked by modernity, yet at the same time retains a connection to the country's roots and customs, giving it an authentic and unique character. The accent also reflects this cultural balance: while retaining the basis of MA, it integrates many words and expressions from other languages, especially French, as seen in the example:

(1)
- الكروشي   *l-krōšē*   Fr. *le crochet* 'the punch'
- الديسكوطيكات   *d-dīskūṭēkāt*   Fr. *les discotèques* 'the discotheques'
- تكروازينا   *tkrwāzīnā*   Fr. *se croiser* 'to cross'
- باطو   *bāṭō*   Fr. *bateau* 'ship'
- رفولي   *refūlī*   Fr. *refouler* 'to expel'

Indeed, the way Casablanca speaks symbolises the evolution of a city that is at the same time a translocal and super urban space. The youthful and pragmatic nature of the accent has proved to be highly influential, spreading all over Morocco through music, film, and the media and it is becoming a reference for the outward-looking lifestyle that Casablanca represents. In addition, communication using this variety and its accent is perceived as direct and pragmatic. Indeed, the Casablanca variety of MA is characterised by its focus on common expressions and clarity, as well as its uninhibited and distinctive style:

(2)
- هاد اللقطة   *hād l-laqṭa*   'this incident'
- داك الشي عندهم زايد   *dāk š-šī ʿandhum zāyed*   'what they have is cool'
- البلاصة شوية فيها الزكا   *blāṣa šwīya fīhā z-zkā*   'a place with a lot of racket'

- عازكيتو واحد الشوية ■   *ʾā zəkītū wāḥəd š-šwīya*   'I made him stop'
- گال لي ديك اللعيبة ■   *gāl-lī dīk l-lʿība*   'he told me the plan'

This facilitates localised and situated communication in the digital space, based on immediacy and closeness to speakers using an accent that conveys a strong sense of belonging to Casablanca and its large language speech community. The Casablanca variety is also perceived as 'cool' due to its connections with other global settings, reflecting progress and new opportunities. In this example, we can see how the use of MA as a linguistic practice is an action that rejects any essentialist conception in the representation of MA, in terms of both its spelling as we can see in figure 1 and voicing. In this sense, language processing based on this example is seen as an individual talent (Heller 2010), in line with Duchêne and Heller's (2012) vision of language as a word of work and as a wordforce (parole d'oeuvre). This cultural model and linguistic ideology also see language as a resource that serves the pragmatic nature of communication imposed by the new local, regional, national or globalised economy. Finally, Hicham's use of a recognizable Casablanca accent that reinforces the image of modernity that appeals to the younger generation, thereby enabling him to attract more followers and secure more views of the posts and videos he shares on his profile.

7.2. MA and the linguistic expertise

The second example is a video posted by the journalist and president of @NeoMoroccans think-tank Mayssa Salama Ennaji on her Facebook page. In recent years, Mayssa has built up a reputation in traditional and social media as a young journalist and think-tanker who opposes the government of Akhnouch. She is especially noted for her oratory skills, both in MSA and MA, attracting considerable attention from outside Morocco and earning her a large social media following.

Example 2

فطبعاً هاد الفيديو درتو، أولاً باش نمسيكم كاملين بالخير ؤباش نگول شكرا إل ساكنة العيون ؤأهلنا ف الجهات الجنوبية اللي تفاعلو مع الفيديو الأخير ديالي اللّي، جبدت فيه غير نقيطة من بحر د الفساد اللي كاين تمّا ؤمسكوت عنه. راه حياتنا كاملة ؤ حنا كانهضرو على هاد المناطق. تانهضرو على أخنوش أربعة ؤعشرين ساعة على أربعة ؤعشرين ساعة، على الغلاء أربعة ؤعشرين ساعة على أربعة ؤعشرين ساعة، حتى خرجات مجلة جون أفريك سمتني رأس حربة معارضة أخنوش. يعني الفراغ ف البلاد فراغ المعارضة وصل إل درجة سماو مدوّنة هي ر رأس حربة المعارضة. يعني ماتگولوش لي ناس ديال الداخل ؤهضري علينا. نوبة الناس ديال الصحرا. علاش؟ لأن هاداك الفاسدين تمّا السياسة ديالهم هي عزل الساكنة. هادوك الناس ديال المناطق الجنوبية معزولين. حنا ما كانهضروش عليهم. ما تانهضروش على العيون ؤطانطان ؤ أسا الزاگ ؤالسمارة ؤغيرو ؤغيرو من الجهات ديال الأقاليم الجنوبية. علاش هادوك الناس تعزلو حتى إل ديك الدرجة؟ خوفا لا نهضرو على معاناتهم إلا يگول لك انفصاليين. لا ما يمكنش. ما يمكنش تكون هادي تهمة جاه تاتعلقوها إل عباد الله. حنا وطنيين ؤكاين فساد. أنا بغيت نجاوب على شي بعضين حيت اللي مضرور ؤ اللي واكل الدّق ؤاللي واكل العصا ؤاللي واصلة له إل العضم.

fā-ṭabʿan hād l-vīdyō ʾawwalan dərtū bāš nmassīkum kāmlīn bi-l-ḫēr ʾu bāš ngūl šukran l-sākīnat l-ʿīyūn ʾu ʾahəlnā f əl-ǧihāt l-ǧanūbīya llī tfāʿlū mʿa l-vīdyō l-ʾaḫīr dyālī llī žbədt fīh ġēr nqīṭa min bḥar d əl-fāsād llī kāyin təmmā u ʾ məskūt ʿanhu. (...) rāh ḥiyāt-

nā kāmla uʾ ḥnā kā-nhǝḍrū ʿla hād l-manāṭǝq. (…) tā-nhǝḍrū ʿala aḫǝnnūš arbʿa ʾu ʾǝšrīn sāʿa ʿala arbʿa ʾu ʾǝšrīn sāʿa, ʾla l-ġalāʾ arbʿa ʾu ʾǝšrīn sāʿa ʾla arbʿa ʾu ʾǝšrīn sāʿa, ḥatta ḫǝržāt maġallat žēn afrīk sǝmmātnī raʾs ḥarbat mūʿārāḍat aḫǝnnūš. yaʿnī l-farāġ f ǝl-blād farāġ ǝl-muʿāraḍa ūṣel l-daražat sǝmmāw mudawwena hīya raʾs ḥarbaṭ al-mūʿārāḍa. yaʿnī mā-tgūlūš lī nās dyāl d-dāḫil wa-ḥḍrī ʾlīnā. nuwbat n-nās dyāl ṣ-ṣaḥrā. ʾlāš? li ʾǝnna hādāk l-fāsdīn tǝmma s-sīyāsa dyālhum hiya ʿazl s-sākīna. (…) hādūk n-nās dyāl l-manāṭǝq l-ǧanūbīya mǝʿzūlīn. ḥnā mā kā-nhǝḍrūš ʾlīhum. mā tā-nhǝḍrūš ʾla l-ʿīyūn ʾu ṭānṭān ʾu ǝssā z-zāg ʾu s-smāra wa-ġērū wa-ġērū mǝ-l-ǧīhāt dyāl l-ʾaqālīm l-ǧanūbīya. ʾlāš hādūk n-nās tʾǝzzlū ḥatta l-dīk d-dārāǧa? ḫawfan lā nhaḍrū ʿala mūʿānāthum ilā īgūl-lǝk infiṣālīyīn. lā mā yimkǝnš, mā yimkǝnš llī ḫruǧ dwā ʾla ḥaqqū infiṣālī. mā yimkǝnš tkūn hādī tuhmat žāh tā-tʿǝllqūhā l-ʿibād llāh. ḥnā wāṭānīyīn ʾu kāyn fāsād. āna bġīt nžāwǝb ʾla šī baʿdīn ḫīt llī mǝḍrūr ʾu llī wākǝl d-daqq ʾu llī wākǝl l-ʿaṣā ʾu llī wāṣla lih l-l-ʿaḍam.

[So of course, I made this video first to greet you all, and to say thank you to the peo-ple of Laayoune and our kinsfolks in the southern regions who reacted to my last video – where I only touched on a single drop from the ocean of corruption that exists there and is being silenced. During all our lives, we've been talking about these regions. We talk about Akhannouch 24/7, about high prices 24/7, to the point where Jeune Afrique mag-azine called me the "spearhead of the opposition to Akhannouch." That means the polit-ical void in the country, the void of opposition, reached the point where they called a blogger the spearhead of the opposition. So don't say to me, "people from the interior, speak about us." Now it's the turn of the Saharan people. Why? Because those corrupt ones over there, their policy is to isolate the population. Those people in the southern regions are isolated. We don't talk about them. We don't talk about Laayoune, Tan-Tan, Assa-Zag, Samara, and so on from the southern provinces. Why have those people been isolated to that extent? Out of fear that if we talk about their suffering, they'll accuse us of being separatists. No, that's impossible. That can't be a ready-made accusation to hang on people. We are patriots, and there is corruption.]

The first aspect to note in this example is the level of MA used, which navigates between two scales, MSA and urban MA, the last associated with the cities of Rabat and Sale in particular as we can see in these examples:

(4)

أولاً	*ʾawwalan*	'first'
ساكنة العيون	*sākīnat l-ʿīyūn*	'the population of Laayoune'
مسكوت عنه	*mǝskūt ʿanhu*	'the silenced'
فراغ المعارضة	*farāġ ǝl-muʿāraḍa*	'the opposition vacuum'

which reflect a normative character of the use of lexicon and manifests a far more na-tional and less regional or local character of the variety used. On the other hand, it should be noted that linguistic expertise is a fundamental element in the treatment of language and patterns of language use.

To a certain degree, this indicates that there could be a process of linguistic levelling, manifested in Mayssa's use of typical MSA expressions such as:

(5)

- تهمة جاه   *tuhmat ǧāh*   'false accusation'
- رأس حربة المعارضة   *raʾs ḥarbat al-mūʿārāḍa*   'opposition leader'
- خوفا   *ḫawfan*   'fearing'

This tendency to linguistic levelling is used to bring MA closer to MSA. Indeed, as a content creator in Arabic, Mayssa adopts these traits and linguistic features close to MSA which reflect authenticity and an ideological stance indicates her alignment with the language of intellectuals in Morocco (Irvine & Gal 2000) and a cultural resonance of her voice as a Moroccan intellectual woman (Hachimi 2017). This kind of practice not only generates a sense of differentiation but also strengthens the creation of a register with norms and a sense of identity and belonging among her followers, who identify with the shared linguistic practices, choices and a single cultural model; in other words, the implicit ways in which the knowledge of society's language is created, organised, and managed at various stages. The other aspect in this example is the notion of stance or positionality from which Mayssa produces her discourse. Despite being physically located in the southern city of Layoune, Mayssa is attempting to connect and interact with a large audience located all over the country because as she said her posted video has feedback from various people situated in different regions. This positionality creates a spatiotemporal and translocal scale that connects her with many other communities throughout Morocco. As she points out in the video, she has received comments asking why she does not condemn the corruption that exists in other regions of Morocco. This information demonstrates the ability of digital communication to overcome physical barriers and attract followers from various territories, not only because of the quality or relevance of the content, but also because of the way people communicate and connect with their audience and the sense of proximity it generates.

7.3. Heteroglossia in action and MA

The third example is a video posted by the journalist and humourist Said Abarnous on his Facebook page. He defines himself as a digital creator, journalist and artist. Said Abarnous is originally from the city of Al Hoceima in the Rif region. He has a university degree in linguistics and communication, and his PhD thesis was dedicated to the history of theatre in the Riffian variety of Amazigh. In his posts and videos, this uses several languages, first and foremost, MA, MSA, and Riffian and occasionally French. However, as I was analyzing the content of his accounts on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, I noted that most of his posts and videos were in MA. Said is also famous for his videos and posts on Algerian politics, the country's president and relations with Morocco. The transcript below (Example 3) is from the video featuring the Algerian national football team and its poor performance during the latest edition of the African Cup of Nations (2024).

Example 3

السلام عليكم. المنتخب الجزائري بالأمس يسجل نتيجة التعادل واحد الواحد. تماما بحال المنتخب المصري. دارو ديك
الدخلة ديال حنا واعرين ؤ ف التالي وقع التعادل. بزاف تاع الخوت من الجزائر، جزائريين ما عجبتهومش النتيجة،
ؤمازال ما لقاوش شي تفسيرات. أنا دبا ف إطار أنني نعاونكم أخوتي خوتي لزرجليان جبت لكم شوية متاع الأسباب.
أولا بالماضي ف إطار التضامن مع المصريين ؤ المنتخب نتاع مصر گالّك ما يمكنش أنا نربح ؤهم يتعادلو. المصريين
تعادلو ؤ فلتو من الزندقة إذا حتى يانا غادي نفلت من الأنگالا ؤ غادي نجيبها تعادل ؤمريضنا ما عندو باس. تمتا من
يذهب أبعاد ؤ كايگولك بأن القضية عندها علاقة مع الأرضية ديال الملعب. كيفاش؟ كاتعرفو بأنه تقارير صحفية، قادة
من قناة الشروق ؤصحفيين آخرين گالو بأن الكاف نبهت بالماضي باش ما يبقاش يمشي يزور الملعب دبا وساعة، لأن
هادي عشر أيام ولا تلت أيام ولا خمس أيام ، بالماضي كان كايمشي مع الصباح كايضرب دورة كايطلّ على الملعب ؤ
مع الضهر ؤ مع العصر، يعني كان كايمشي دبا وساعة.

s-salāmu ʿalaykum. al-muntāḫab əl-ğazāʾīrī bi-l-ʾams yusəžžil nātīžat t-taʿādul wāḥəd l-wāḥəd. tāmāman bḥāl l-muntāḫab əl-miṣrī. dārū dīk d-dəḫla dyāl ḥnā wāʿrīn ʾu fə-t-tālī wqəʿ t-taʿādul. bəzzāf tāʿ əl-ḫūt mə-l-ğazāʾir ğazāʾīrīyīn mā ʿəžbāthumš n-nātīža, ʾu māzāl mā lqāwš šī tafsīrāt. āna dāba f ʾīṭār ənnī nʿāwənkum a-ḫūtī ḫawtī lezaržəlyẽ žəbt līkum šwīya mtāʿ l-ʾasbāb. ʾawwalan bəlmāḍī f ʾīṭār t-tāḍāmun mʿa l-maṣrīyīn ʾu l-muntāḫab ntāʿ maṣr gāllək mā yimkənš āna nərbəḥ uʾ humma yitʿādlū. l-maṣrīyīn taʿādlū uʾ fəltū mən əz-zandāqā iḏān ḥətta iyyānā ġādī nəflət mən əl-ʾangālā ʾu ġādī nžībhā taʿādul ʾu mərīḍnā mā ʾəndū bās. (...) ṭəmmatā man yaḏhabu ʾabʿād ʾu kā-ygūllik biʾanna l-qāḍīya ʾəndhā ʿalāqa mʿa l-ʾarḍīya dyāl l-məlʿab. kīfāš? kā-tʾərfū biʾanna taqārīr ṣaḥafīya, qāda mən qanāt š-šurūq ʾu ṣaḥafīyīn āḫrīn gālū biʾanna l-kāf nəbbhāt bəlmāḍī bāš mā yibqāš yimšī yizūr l-məlʿab dābā w-sāʿa, liʾənna hādī ʾəšr iyyām wullā təlt iyyām wullā ḫəms iyyām, bəlmāḍī kān kā-yimšī mʿa ṣ-ṣbāḥ kā-yḍrəb dūra kā-ytəll ʿla l-məlʿab ʾu mʿa ḍ-ḍhur ʾu mʿa l-ʿaṣar, yəʿnī kān kā-yimšī dābā w-sāʿa.

[Peace be upon you. Yesterday, the Algerian national team recorded a 1–1 draw, exactly like the Egyptian national team. They made that big entrance of "we're strong," and in the end, it was a draw. Many brothers from Algeria, Algerians, weren't happy with the result and still haven't found clear explanations. Now, in the spirit of helping you, my Algerian brothers, I've brought you a few reasons. First, Belmadi, out of solidarity with the Egyptians and their national team, said to himself: "I can't win while they draw. The Egyptians drew and escaped trouble, so I'll also escape the trap and bring home a draw – and no harm done." Then there are those who go further and say the matter has to do with the pitch conditions. How so? You know that according to press reports – even from El Chourouk channel and other journalists – CAF warned Belmadi not to keep visiting the stadium constantly. Because for ten days, or maybe three or five days, Belmadi had been going there morning, noon, and afternoon, making the rounds and checking out the field.]

The most striking feature of this example is how the use of MA makes conversations immediate and authentic, demonstrating how the language is adapted to Morocco's football culture.

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[4] All French words are transcribed the way they sound in Moroccan Arabic and are in bold.

In this sense, MA includes a repertoire of expressions and specific jargon that allows speakers to communicate experiences and emotions immediately with different degrees of humour such as:

(6)
- مريضنا ما عندو باس | *mərīḍnā mā ʿəndū bās* | 'the sick person gets better'
- فلتو من الزندقة إذا حتى يانا غادي نفلت من الأنڭالا | *fəltū mən əz-zandāqā iḏān ḥətta iyyānā ġādī nəflət mən əl-ʾangālā* | 'they were saved and I too was saved from the stumble'
- نجيبها تعادل | *nžībhā taʿādul* | 'I draw a tie'
- دارو ديك الدخلة ديال حنا واعرين | *dārū dīk d-dəḫla dyāl ḥnā wāʿrīn* | 'they started at the beginning by "we're strong"'

This football jargon, common in sports media, uses slang, expressions, and informal grammatical structures. Said's choice of register reflects a level of social inclusion: by using MA with its idiomatic nuances and jargon, he constructs a collective identity that not only celebrates the sport but also underpins a sense of belonging. This creates a space for exchange in which speakers and followers can express both their knowledge and their sense of humour, all in a register and discourse that is familiar and accessible to most Moroccans. Secondly, the video is a parody of the Algerian national team's elimination from the African Cup of Nations, and attempts to satirise the Algerian coach's explanations and excuses. This type of content has great potential to resonate with followers and communities, as it connects with common emotions and expectations surrounding football in Morocco. Said employs comical exaggeration, referring to absurd factors or unusual excuses to justify the result. This type of humour frequently resorts to the use of gestures, expressions and an exaggerated tone, and plays with Darija slang and idioms to add greater authenticity and proximity. Significantly, in this parody, MA acts as a potential resource that guarantees a kind of collective catharsis, allowing followers to share and laugh at the disappointment, while exploring the exaggerated reasons. This is also an example of heteroglossia in action: MA becomes a tool for expressing multiple voices within a playful and open context such as a football parody. Heteroglossia emerges in the ability of the language to incorporate and interweave various norms, registers, accents, jargons and cultural nuances within a single act of communication, reflecting its polycentric and diverse character. In this specific context, the heteroglossic and polycentric character of MA not only adds to the humorous content but also allows for a communication that escapes the control of normativity as a purist and monoglossic ideology.

7.4. MA between neutrality and switching & mixing

The fourth example is a video posted by the famous Moroccan chef Choumicha on her TikTok page. The video is the preparation of a pasta recipe with salmon and vegetables. The video was viewed by more than 17,000 people, shared by more than 6,000 and had 290 comments, mostly written in MA with Arabic script and a Latin transcription, as well as a number of comments in French. In her TikTok profile, Choumicha defines herself as a TV presenter of cultural programmes.

Example 4

مؤخرا دقت واحد المقارونيا طايبة بالسلمون أو متحضرة بالسلمون. أنا كنت طلبتها غير **بالصمون** ولكن منين جابوها لي تفاجأت باللي فيها بعض المكونات ؤلا بعض الخضر اللي زادو داك **الصمون** واحد النكهة رائعة: بورو خزو ؤ البسباس. شفتو معيَ درنا داك البورو مع شوية ديال الزبدة حتى تشحر ؤ تعسل، من بعد حكينا خزو، كانحكوه ف الجهة ديال الحكاكة الغليضة، كانحكو البسباس. بالنسبة **لباط** كانخدو طنجرة ديال الما كانديرلو الما حتى كايغلى ؤ نديرو معه الملحة ؤ من بعد كانزيدو الكرافاطً أولا لفارفيل. نخليوهم كايطيبو تقريبا تلاتة أرباع الوقت المحدد على العلبة أو على البواطة، ؤ كانحيدوهم. داك الشي اللي بقى لهم راه حنا غادي نكملوه ف لصوص. بالنسبة لصوص شفتو معيَ درنا البورو حتى طاح مع ديك الزبدة، درنا معه البسباس ؤمن بعد ضفنا عليه خيزو ، غادي نزيدو دبا شوية ديال الما ديال السليق، شوفو عندكم زوج ديال الإختيارات إما إلا عندكم المرق ديال الدجاج كاديرو المرق ديال الدجاج، إلا ماكانش المرق ديال الدجاج متوفر كاديرو الما ديال السليق ديال الماقارونية. أنا غادي نستعمل المرق حيت أنا من عشاق المرق سواء كان ديال الدجاج أو ديال اللحم ؤ لا ديال السمك. نخليو هاك دا غير يغلي غادي نرجّع له الكمية ديال الماقارونية اللي أنا باغي نحضر، غادي نضيف الكمية اللي خاصني ديال **البابيو** أولا **الكرافاطً** غادي نحركوها ؤ نضيفو لها كمية ديال **الصمون**، نحركو مزيان نخليو داك النكهة ديال **لفومي** أو ديال الدخان اللي كاين ف الحوت تطلق ف المرق أولا ف لصوص. من بعد كانضيفو لكريم فرش القشدة الطرية مهمة جداً بالنسبة لهاد الوصفة هادي. ؤ ف الأخير كانديرو شوية ديال الفروماج ، كانحركو باش يلاه كاتشرب الماقرونية داك المكونات كلها ؤ كاتبدا كاتبان لنا **لصوص** أنها كاتختر . صافي دبا غادي نزلها ف طابق ديال التقديم، غادي نرش عليها شوية ديال الجبن مبشور أولا **الفروماج** محكوك !

*muʾaḫḫaran dəqt wāḥad l-maqārōnīyā ṭāyyiba bə-ṣ-ṣalamōn aw məthaḍḍra bə-ṣ-ṣalamōn. āna kunt ṭləbthā ġēr bə-**ṣ-ṣomõ** wālākin mnīn žābūhā lī tfāǰəʾt bəllī fīhā baʿḍ l-mūkaw-wīnāt wullā baʿḍ l-ḫuḍar llī zādū dāk **ṣ-ṣomõ** wāḥad n-nəkha rāʾiʿa: bōrō ḫizzū ʾu l-bəs-bās. šəftū mʿāya dərnā dāk l-bōrō mʿa šwīya dyāl z-zəbda ḥətta tšḥər ʾu t əssəl, mən bəʿd ḥəkkīnā ḫizzū, kā-nḥəkkūh f ž-žīha dyāl l-ḥəkkāka l-ġlīḍa, kā-nḥəkkū l-bəsbās. Bə-n-nisba l-**lēpāṭ** kā-naḫdū ṭanžara dyāl l-mā kā-ndīr lū l-mā ḥətta kā-yiġla ʾu ndīrū mʿah l-məlḥa ʾu mən bəʿd kā-nzīdū l-krāvāṭa awlā le-fārfēl. nḥəllīhum kā-yṭībū təqrīban tlāta arbāʿ əl-wuqt əl-muḥaddad ʿla l-ʿulba aw ʿla l-bwāṭa, ʾu kā-nḥiyydūhum. dāk š-šī llī bqā lhum rāh ḥnā ġādī nkammlūh f lāṣōṣ. Bə-n-nisba lāṣōṣ šəftū mʿāya dərnā l-bōrō ḥətta ṭāḥ mʿa dīk z-zbīda, dərnā mʿāha l-bəsbās ʾu mən bəʿd ḍəfnā ʾlīh ḫizzū, ġādī nzīdū dāba šwīya dyāl l-mā dyāl s-slīq, šūfū ʿəndkum žūž dyāl l-iḫtīyārāt immā ilā ʿəndkum l-maraq dyāl d-džāž kā-ddīrū l-maraq dyāl d-džāž, ilā mā kānš l-maraq dyāl d-džāž mətwəffər kā-ddīrū l-mā dyāl s-slīq dyāl l-māqārōnīya. āna ġādī nəstəʿməl l-maraq ḥīt āna mən ʿuššāq l-maraq sawāʾan kān dyāl d-džāž awlā dyāl l-lḥəm awlā dyāl s-samak. nḥəlliw hākdā ġēr yiġlī ġādī nrəžžəʿ lih l-kəmmīya dyāl l-māqārōnīya llī āna bāga nḥəddər, ġādī nḍīf kəmmīya llī ḫāṣṣānī dyāl **l-pāpīyõ** ʾawlā l-krāvāṭa, nḥərrkūhā ʾu nḍīfū lihā kəmmiya dyāl ṣ-ṣomõ, nḥərrkū məzyān nḥəlliw dāk n-nəkha dyāl **lfymɛ** awlā dyāl d-duḫḫān llī kāyn fə l-ḥūt ṭṭləq fə l-maraq awlā f lāṣōṣ. mən bəʿd kā-nḍīfū **lākrēm frēš** l-qišda ṭ-ṭarīya mūhīmma židdan bə-n-nisba l-hād l-wuṣfa hādī. ʾu fə l-ʾāḫīr kā-ndīrū šwīya dyāl l-frōmāž, kā-nḥərrkū bāš yəllāh kā-tšrəb l-māqārōnīya dāk l-mūkawwīnāt kullhā ʾu kā-təbdā kā-tbān linā **lāṣōṣ** ənnāhā kā-təḫtər. ṣāfi dābā ġādī nnəzzəlhā f ṭabaq dyāl t-təqdīm, ġādī nrəšš ʿlīhā šwīya dyāl l-žubn məbšūr awullā **l-frōmāž** maḥkūk.*

[Recently, I tried some pasta cooked with salmon, or more precisely prepared with salmon. I had ordered it just with salmon, but when they brought it to me, I was surprised to find some added ingredients, some vegetables that gave the salmon a wonderful flavor: leek, carrot, and fennel. So, as you saw with me, we sautéed the leek with a bit of

butter until it softened and caramelized. Then we grated the carrot – using the coarse side of the grater – and also grated the fennel. For the pasta: we take a pot of water, bring it to a boil, add salt, and then add farfalle or penne. We let them cook about three-quarters of the time indicated on the package, then remove them. The rest of the cooking will be completed in the sauce. For the sauce, we started with the leek sautéed in butter, added the fennel, then the carrot. After that, we pour in some of the pasta cooking water. You have two options here: either use chicken stock if you have it, or if not, just use the pasta cooking water. I'm going to use stock, because I'm a big fan of it – whether chicken, beef, or fish. We let it simmer a little, then add back the amount of pasta we want to prepare. We stir it in, then add the salmon pieces. We mix well so that the smoky, fish flavor blends into the stock or sauce. After that, we add fresh cream – very important for this recipe. Finally, we add some grated cheese, stir so that the pasta absorbs all the flavors, and the sauce begins to thicken. That's it – now we transfer it to a serving dish, sprinkle some more grated cheese on top.]

What is striking in this video is the level of neutrality of the MA used by Choumicha in lexical, morphosyntactic and even phonetic terms in the sense that the register used seems to be unrelated with any region or city. This feature also confers a degree of homogeneity on MA that distances it from any ethnolinguistic or regional territoriality or features. This video also clearly displays Choumicha's ability to switch registers by creating a norm based on repeating expressions and words from different varieties: MA, MSA and French:

(7)

- متحضرة بالسلمون   *məthaḍḍra bə-ṣ-ṣalamōn*   'prepared with salmon'
- أنا كنت طلبتها غير **بالصمون**   *āna kunt ṭləbthā ġēr bə-ṣ-ṣomõ*   'I ordered it with salmon'
- من بعد كانضيفو **لكريم فرش**   *mən bəʿd kā-nḍīfū **lākrēm frēš***   'then we add the fresh cream'
  القشدة الطرية   *l-qišda ṭ-ṭarīya*   'I draw a tie'
- الجبن مبشور **أولا الفروماج**   *l-ǧubn məbšūr awullā **l-frōmāž***   'grated cheese'
  محكوك   *maḥkūk*   'grated cheese'

In this example, we can see how the words 'salmon', 'cheese' and 'cream' are used in both Arabic and French. This practice is attractive and distances itself from any purist view of the language, eliminating boundaries and creating a unique style. It is a language choice that can indicate a high social status in digital spaces. Nevertheless, this style generates comments and even interpellations from the audience. Below are such examples in MA:

(8)

الحمد لله وليت كنسمع القشدة الطرية وأنا فرحانة ماشي كيف بكري كنت غير كنسمعها كتشدني السخانة

al-ḥamdu li-llāh wullīt ka-nsməʿ l-qišda ṭ-ṭarīya ʾu āna farḥāna māšī kīf bəkri ġēr ka-nsməʿha kā-tšəddnī s-saḥāna

'Thank God now that I listen to l-qišda ṭ-ṭarīya (crème fraiche) I get happy; before I listened to it and I would get hot flushes'.

la crem frech 😂 = *chomicha*.
'fresh cream 😂 = chomicha'.

The latter expression refers, in a humorous way, to Choumicha's use of French when speaking of fresh cream.

Switching between or mixing varieties and registers as in these examples reflects a particular tone:

(9)

بعض الخضر اللي زادو داك **الصمون** واحد النكهة رائعة: بورو خزو ؤ البسباس.

baʿḍ l-ḫuḍar llī zādū dāk ṣ-ṣomõ wāḥəd n-nəkha rāʾiʿa: bōrō ḫizzū ʾu l-bəsbās
'some vegetables that gave the salmon a very good flavour: leek, carrot and fennel'

It attempts to highlight a personal style that manifests a distinct and hybrid Moroccan modern identity manifested through a cultural fusion in everyday life and in social relations, yet which is also relatable to diverse audiences and followers who are comfortable with translanguaging, crossing and mixing languages. This is clear from the reactions to the video in the comments. This form of expression enables Choumicha to engage with a global digital culture and is also a way of asserting her distinct voice and discourse as a Moroccan woman, within broader Arab-speaking digital spheres. In addition, switching between languages allows Choumicha to communicate in a more precise, open and expressive manner. Certain concepts or emotions may be easier to convey in MA, while others might be clearer or more widely understood if they are in MSA or French, e.g. *les pattes* 'the pasta', *fumé* 'kipper'. This flexibility enables users to communicate efficiently, opting for the language that best conveys their intent and thereby accommodating a particular style in a digital polycentric communication environment. Finally, this model of managing Moroccan languages has a strong implication for content creation, marketing, and policy-making in the sense that content creators must strategically mix languages and also follow a multilingual content strategy which can expand potential new markets and spaces.

7.5. MA and *luġat al-muṯaqqafīn* 'the language of intellectuals'

The final example is a video posted by Ahmed Assid on his TikTok account. Assid is an Amazigh activist, intellectual and High school teacher of philosophy. He is famous for his discourse as an advocate of a secular society and as well as an individual rights activist. In recent years, Ahmed Assid became even more prominent in the public media sphere for criticising the re-Islamisation of Moroccan society and the degradation of ethical principles. The video is titled: Why is it that a talent from Morocco is restricted in his own country and is a shining success in other countries?
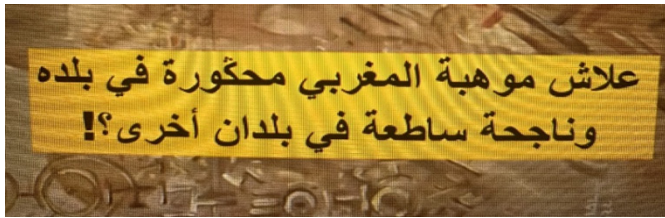
Figure 2: Title of the video posted on TikTok[5]

Example 5

يتما ستما، السيدات والسادة المشاهدات وَالمشاهدين الأعزاء. كانحيّيكم وَ كانرحب بكم ف هاد الڤِيديو اللي الموضوع ديالو واحد السؤال دائما كايطرحوه عليّ المغاربة وَ بالخصوص الشباب. علاش المغربي لمّا كايكون الداخل، الموهبة ديالو ماكاتبانش؟ لما كايكون الداخل ديال بلادو ف المغرب وَ كايكون محگور كايكون مهمش. ولكن لمّا كايخرج من البلد لأي بلد آخر خارج الوطن كاتبان الموهبة ديالو وَ كاينجح وَ إلا غير دلك. أشنو هو السبب؟ السبب هو مانسميه تحرير الطّاقات. وَ لهدا ما كانوش كايعتبرو أن هناك تلميد كسول وَ تلميد مجتهد. هاد التنائيات ما عندهومشاي. إذا لمّا الطفل مند الطفولة المبكرة كايتعلم يحرر الطاقات ديالو كايكبر بهاد التربية المتحررة اللي ماكايقمع فيها حتى حاجة الداخل ديالو بالعكس كل ما عندو كايعطيه كايعطيه إل بلادو إل الأسرة ديالو وَ المجتمع ديالو. حنا للأسف هدا هو العطب اللي عندنا بالضبط، لمّا كاتكون ميول ف الطفل كانقمعوها فيه، كانرضوها فيه الداخل. أو أننا ما كانعطيوهش الإطار أو المحيط اللي يقدر يعبر فيه على هاديك الطاقات بل كايخليها عندو الداخل. هادا بالإضافة إلى نسبة الهدر المدرسي الكبيرة اللي كاتجعل أنه واحد العدد د الناس منين كايتلاحو خارج المدرسة على أنه ما صالحين ال والو وَ ماعندهم تكوين ما عندهم عمل كايضيعو. كايضيعو لأنه كايعتاقدو بأنه ما عندهم أي طاقة وَ أي شيء لفعل والو لأن المجتمع ابتداء من وَ الأسرة المدرسة علمهوم بأنهم لا شيء أنهم والو وَ بينما هم لا كل فرض ف المجتمع إلا وَ عندو شي حاجة اللي يمكن يعطيها. خاصنا غير نقلّبو عليها وَ نعرفوها منذ الطفولة، ما كانديروش هاد المجهود.

a-yitmā stmā s-sayyidāt u-s-sāda l-mūšāhidāt ʾu l-mūšāhidīn l-ʾaʿizzāʾ. kā-nḥəyyīkum ʾu kā-nrəḥḥəb bikum f hād l-vīdyō llī l-mawḍūʿ dyālū wāḥəd s-suʾāl dāʾiman kā-yiṭərḥūh ʿlīya l-maġārba ʾu bə-l-ḥuṣūṣ š-šabāb. ʾalāš l-məġrībī ləmmā kā-ykūn l-dāḥil, l-mawhiba dyālū mā kā-tbānš? ləmmā kā-ykūn l-dāḥil dyāl blādū f l-məġrib ʾu kā-ykūn məḥgūr kā-ykūn muhammaš. (…) wālākin ləmmā kā-yiḥruž min al-bālād l-ʾayy bālād āḥar ḥāriž al-wāṭān kā-tbān l-mawhiba dyālū ʾu kā-yinžaḥ ʾu ilā ġēr dālik. šnū huwwa s-sābāb? s-sābāb huwwa mā nusammīh taḥrīr aṭ-ṭāqāt. l-buldān n-nāhīḍa ʾu l-buldān l-mūtāqād-dīma kā-tḥrəš bəzzāf ʿla ənnāh tḥarrar aṭ-ṭāqa dyāl l-farḍ mundu ṭ-ṭūfūla. (…) wa li-hādā mā kānūš kā-yiʿtabrū anna hunāka tilmīd kasūl ʾu tilmīd mužtāhid. hād t-tunāʾīyāt mā ʾəndhumšāy. idan ləmmā ṭ-ṭifl mundu ṭ-ṭūfūla l-mūbakkīra kā-yitʾəlləm yiḥarrar ṭ-ṭāqāt dyālū kā-yikbər b-hād ət-tərbīya l-mutaḥarrira llī mā kā-yiqmaʿ fīhā ḥətta ḥāža l-dāḥəl dyālū bə-l-ʿaks, kull mā ʿəndū kā-yəʿṭīh, kā-yəʿṭīh-l-blādū l-l-ʾusra dyālū ʾu l-mūžtāmaʿ dyālū. ḥnā lə-l-ʾasaf hadā huwwa l-ʿāṭāb llī ʾəndnā bə-ḍ-ḍabṭ, ləmmā kā-tkūn muyūl f ṭ-ṭifl kā-nqəmʿūhā fīh, kā-nrəḍḍūhā fīh lə-d-dāḥəl. ʾaw ənnanā mā kā-nəʿṭīwəhš l-ʾīṭār ʾaw l-mūḥīṭ llī yiqdər yiʿabbar fīh ʿla hādīk ṭ-ṭāqāt bal kā-yḥəllīhā ʿəndū l-dāḥel. hādā bi-l-iḍāfā ilā nisbat əl-hadr əl-madrāsī l-kəbīra llī kā-təžʿəl ənnu wāḥəd l-ʾādād də n-nās mnīn kā-yitlāḥū ḥārəž l-madrāsa ʿla ənnahu mā ṣālḥīn l-wālū ʾu mā ʿəndhum təkwīn ʾu mā ʿəndhum ʿamal kā-yḍīʿū. kā-yḍīʿū li-ʾənnahu kā-yiʿtāqdū ʾənna mā ʿəndhum ayyi

ṭāqa ʾaw ayyi šəyʾ li-fiʿl wālū li-ʾənna l-mūžtāmaʿ ibtidāʾan mə-l-ʾusra ʾu-l-madrāsa ʾəllmūhum bi-ʾənnahum lā šayʾ ʾənnahum wālū baynamā humma lā, kull farḍ f əl-mūžtāmaʿ ʾillā wa-ʿəndū šī ḥāža llī yimkən yiʿṭīhā. ḫəṣṣnā ġēr nqəllbū ʿlīhā ʾu nʿərfūhā mundu ṭ-ṭūfūla, mā kā-ndīrūš hād l-məžhūd.

[Ladies and gentlemen, dear viewers, greetings and welcome to this video. The topic today is a question that Moroccans – especially young people – often ask me: Why is it that when a Moroccan is inside the country, their talent doesn't show? When they're in Morocco, they're ignored, marginalized. But when they leave the country, go abroad, suddenly their talent emerges, they succeed, and it's a different story. What's the reason? The reason is what I call the releasing of talent. That's why, in those places, they don't consider there to be a "lazy student" versus a "hard-working student." These dualities don't exist. When a child, from early childhood, learns to free their potential, they grow up with this liberated upbringing where nothing inside them is repressed. On the contrary, everything they have to give, they give – to their country, their family, and their society. Unfortunately, this is exactly the flaw we have: when a child shows an inclination, we suppress it. We bury it inside them. Or we don't give them the framework, the environment where they can express those energies – instead, they keep them bottled up. On top of this, the high rate of school dropouts means many people get thrown out of the education system with no skills, no training, no job – and they end up lost. They're lost because they've come to believe they have no potential, nothing to offer, since society – starting with the family and school – taught them they are nothing, they're worthless. But in reality, every individual in society has something they can contribute. What's needed is simply to look for it and recognize it from childhood. And we don't make that effort.]

Assid begins the video in Amazigh in order to say hello ستما يتما *a-yitma stma* 'friends' before switching to MSA to welcome:

(10)

السادات والسادة المشاهدات والمشاهدين الأعزاء

s-sayyidāt u-s-sāda l-mušāhidāt ʾu l-mušāhidīn l-ʾaʿizzāʾ

'ladies and gentlemen and dear viewers'

Starting the post in Amazigh is not just a communicative act but also a political one in the sense that the speaker revealed his Amazigh linguistic and socio-cultural identity. This practice situates Assid as a bi/multi-lingual speaker addressing a broad ethnolinguistic and cultural communities that includes Amazigh, MSA and MA. Secondly, Assid's example shows us that the register he used in MA is that of an expert linguist, as he chooses a variety that represents what is called the language of intellectuals. This notion of 'the language of the intellectuals' implies in itself the presence of one or more standard linguistic references. In the case of MA, this is MSA and the prestigious Moroccan linguistic varieties.

(11)

السبب هو مانسميه تحرير الطّاقات

s-sābāb huwwa mā nusammīh taḥrīr aṭ-ṭāqāt

'the motive is what we call releasing the talent'

إذا لمّا الطفل منذ الطفولة المبكرة

idan ləmmā ṭ-ṭifl mundu ṭ-ṭūfūla l-mubakkira

'then when the child from an early age'

This tendency in linguistic choices tends to shape vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and even cultural norms within this frame, thereby exerting an element of attraction, providing central standards or prestigious linguistic varieties. At the same, this practice often holds a higher social or cultural status. Assid also adopts terms, expressions, or a neutral accent that will raise his social prestige, which draws audiences from other language backgrounds and other linguistic communities:

(12)
- تلميد كسول وَتلميد مجتهد   *tilmīd kasūl ʾu tilmīd mužtahid*   'bad student or diligent student'
- التربية المتحررة   *ət-tərbīya l-mutaḥarrira*   'liberating education'
- نسبة الهدر المدرسي   *nisbat əl-hadr əl-madrāsī*   'the school dropout rate'
- الإطار أو المحيط   *l-ʾīṭār ʾaw l-mūḥīṭ*   'the setting or environment'
- لا شيء   *lā šayʾ*   'nothing'

Similarly, the fact that MSA is still the reference language, will lead to a clear reduction in the linguistic differentiations between MA varieties and accents. This linguistic choice is related to a distinct economic and cultural social class, which affects the main selection criteria for a variety that represents a large Arabic-speaking area inside and outside Morocco.

8. Conclusion

In this paper I have re-conceptualised the notion of polycentricity from the physical setting to complex digital media environments for the purpose of identifying 'centres', that is, different patterns of language use and orientations for participants' digital language and practices. The examples analysed demonstrate a social and linguistic complexity in the way the Moroccan digital linguistic community manages the various spoken forms, varieties and accents of MA in digital media. The use of MA in a digital and polycentric environment such as social media, where English and other dominant languages often dominate, adds a layer of originality and authenticity that can be perceived as attractive and genuine. This reshapes the assumption that each individual navigates purposefully from a multitude of communicative options in their everyday media use. Rather than simply being a matter of technological convenience, choices of different semiotic artefacts, including text and voice reflect relational, cultural, ideological and situational preferences and the way these choices shape several communicative norms and expectations.

These choices act as signs that index particular social relationships, identities, or emotions. For instance, a post message might signal a casual or routine interaction, while a video voice could imply a need for immediacy or intimacy. In all examples, one of the norms employed is the conscious choice of the language variety, accent or register and its representation in terms of both individual and collective identity. Through varying combinations of communicative and linguistic practices, we have observed how the influencers manage resources to create an integrated style where MA as lingua franca plays an essential role in connecting with their audience and building a Moroccan digital and cultural identity.

If we look further at these examples, we can observe the diversity and polycentric character of the MA language system, which in turn ensures that multiple voices are heard and repositioned in the public and virtual space, thus generating language management and policies that are more inclusive and open, from the bottom-up scale.

Another important aspect for consideration is whether and how MA in digital communication is considered a distinct, independent and autonomous linguistic construction in which people have active agency. This means that the choices available to individuals for their own initiatives, visibilising their varieties or accents and mobilising them in the digital space, correspond to linguistic repertoires they know and use in their everyday interactions.

Furthermore, our polymedia analysis reveals that Morocco's norm of mixed language use on digital platforms is both a reflection of the nation's linguistic diversity and a creative expression of its dynamic identity. Through the flexible use of MA, MSA, French or Amazigh, Moroccans have crafted a distinct online language ecosystem that balances cultural pride, social status, and accessibility. This digital and heteroglossic multilingualism demonstrates the adaptability and resilience of Moroccan identity in the global digital era, affirming that language is not just a means of communication but a key element of cultural connection, personal expression, and social interaction.

Finally, the absence of a standard variety and an orthographic homogenised norm, or any national, state-imposed standard leaves MA a situation of free and open linguistic communication, which is uncontrolled, unmanaged and unplanned by institutions. This means that oral and written practices in MA are not subject to constraints or norms that define what is 'irregular' or simply 'wrong' from a linguistic and normative point of view, thereby creating polycentric, de (centralised) and de (normalised) environments for this variety.

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