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Mexicans speaking in dârija (Moroccan Arabic): Media, Urbanization and Language Changes
in Morocco

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1. Dubbing Mexican TV Novelas into Moroccan Arabic



In May 2009, the 2nd channel of the Moroccan TV, 2M, launched its first TV novelas translated into dârija, (Moroccan Arabic): *Las dos caras de Ana* (2006). This initiative came after the Spring-Summer 2008, which witnessed the fantastic success of the Turkish series translated into Syrian Arabic, first broadcasted by Satellite TV (MBC2 in April 2008) and then broadcasted by the Moroccan channel 2M (September 2008). During fall 2008, the new Director of TV2M, Salim Cheikh (coming from the Advertising Sector) announced his intention to broadcast foreign series in dârija, something which never occurred before in the Moroccan TV.

TV series are increasingly popular all around the world and attract a considerable audience. They play an important social role but produce also important economical gain. For decades Egyptian series dominated the Arab market, which is not the case any more today. Moroccan TV produces its own series but by translating foreign series it goes a step ahead toward the idea that Morocco can create its own market and does not need to rely on other countries. This fits very well with a certain patriotic discourse praising the “new Morocco”. Whereas the dubbing of foreign series might have been mainly induced by pragmatic economical objectives, it has been mainly interpreted as a politically linguistically-oriented act and de facto, raises many sociolinguistic issues.

The dubbing experience

In a very short span of time, the dubbing of the novela *Ana* was done by the Plug In Cie (the work started in December 2008 and took approximately two months). This Cie, established since 2007 in Casablanca by Hicham Chraïbi and Jérôme Boukobza, is a multimedia Cie presenting itself as the first Moroccan Cie specialized in the translation and dubbing of films

(fictions, documentaries or advertising) from Spanish and English into French or Arabic. Chraïbi and Boukobza established their society in Morocco in a spirit of delocalization, hoping to attract the European markets by offering cheaper prices and also because they found the Moroccan market promising due to the liberalisation of the Media (Guigère, L'Economiste 8th of March 2007).

It was the first time for the Cie to translate a fiction into Moroccan Arabic. But they had already made numerous advertising in both MSA and Moroccan Arabic. This Cie asked two freelance translators to translate the 120 episodes of 52' of this Mexican series into Moroccan Arabic. The Script was written in Arabic characters in order to be read by professional Moroccan actors like Chuaib Khalili or Myriam Salam.

Table 1: Example of script of translation provided by Imam Lajjam, one the translator

Ana	43,03	أنا
No, no, ella salió.		لا، لا، راها خرجات.
Rafael	43,06	رافايل
O sea que estamos solos. (LA BESA EXCITADO Y ELLA SE RESISTE)		وهي حنا بوحدنا (يقبلها وهي تقاوم)
Ana	43,11	أنا
Gustavo, vas... vas muy rápido.		كوستافو، راك...غادي بالزرب.
Rafael	43,16	رافايل
Y ya me multaste por exceso de velocidad.		وراك عطيتني مخالفة ديال تجاوز السرعة.
Ana	43,18	أنا
Exacto. Sí. Una infracción más y... y... y pierdes la licencia.		أيه. نعم. مخالفة أخرى و...و...ونزول ليك ليبرمي.



أمال صفر
إيرين

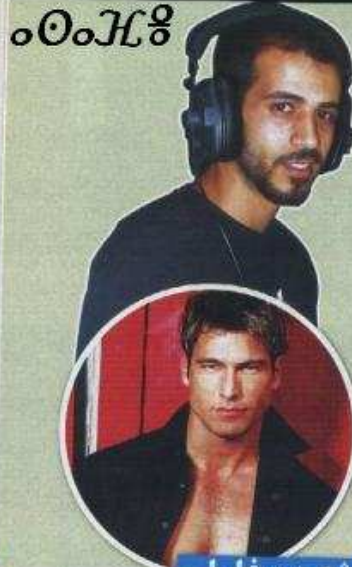
«عملية الدبلجة تقتضي قوة البديهة والحضور النفسي»
«أدخل عالم الدبلجة من خلال شخصية «إيرين» في مسلسل «أنا» وذلك بعد تجربة في مجال التمثيل والمسرح الذي مارزته أمارسه لحد الآن. وبحكم تجزيتي أرى أن هناك اختلافا جوهريا بين التمثيل اعتمادا على سيناريو مسبق يمنح الممثل فرصة إعطاء لمستة الخاصة للدور، وبين عملية الدبلجة التي تقتضي قوة البديهة والحضور النفسي لثقل أداء الشخصية الأصلية في المسلسل بصوت يتناغم مع أحاسيسها وأنفعالاتها، وهذا يتطلب الكثير من التركيز. وباعتبار أن شخصية «إيرين» هي شخصية مركبة فإنها تحتاج إلى جهد كبير لإقناع المشاهد».

إعداد: محمد الفتت



نادية قيمين
مهندسة صوت

بعملية المزج وهي عملية تقنية دقيقة ترافقها مهمة فنية ونوع من الرقابة المسبقة على الحوار، كي لا تكون أخطاء أو عيوب على مستوى اللغة. وبالتالي يستطيع جميع المشاهدين استماع مضمون العمل والتفاعل معه بشكل إيجابي».

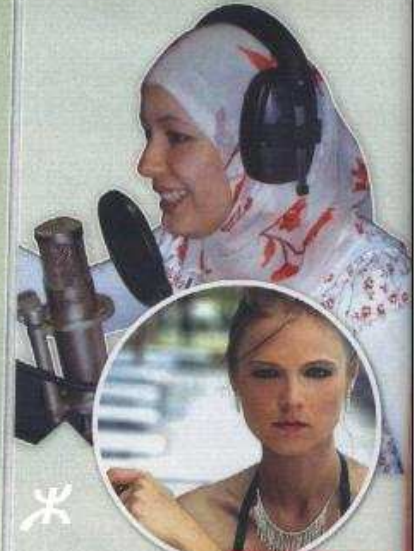


شعيب هليلي
رفاييل بوستمانتي

«استطعت تجاوز الخوف والقلق على الرغم من صعوبة هذه التجربة»

«بعد اجتيازي لعملية الكاستينغ باقتراح من صديق لي يعمل مهندسا للصوت بشركة «باوغ إن» تم اختياري لأداء صوت رفايل بطل سلسلة «أنا». وقد استطعت الاندماج بسهولة في عالم الدبلجة، وذلك بفضل الثقة في النفس التي اكتسبتها من خلال الموسيقى ومواجهة الجمهور. كما استطعت تجاوز الخوف والقلق على الرغم من صعوبة هذه التجربة، لكن بعد بث أولى حلقات المسلسل وتحقيقها لردود فعل إيجابية من قبل المشاهد المغربي، أصبح العمل بالنسبة لي سهلا، بحيث أخذت نوعا من المراس على هذه المهنة الجديدة».

oLoXZY



مريم سلام
أنا

«أحاول الانسجام تماما مع شخصية أنا، لأعبر بعمق وبإحساس وصدق»

بالموازاة مع مهنتي كمهندسة صوت أقوم بما يسمى في قاموس مهن التلفزة بـ «Voix off» وذلك بالاشتغال في العديد من الوصلات الإشهارية، والآن أحرص تجربة مختلفة في مساري المهني من خلال دوري في المسلسل المكسيكي المبدع بالدارجة المغربية، وذلك بشخصية «أنا» وهي شخصية محورية في هذا المسلسل. فبعد عرض أولى حلقات هذا المسلسل بدأت أفس ردود الفعل الإيجابية للمشاهد، وذلك انطلاقا من ارتسامات وتشجيع أصدقائي وأسرتي، وكذا عبر نتائج نسب المشاهدة العالية التي حققها المسلسل من خلال عرضه على القناة الثانية. أجد أنني أحاول الانسجام تماما مع شخصية أنا. لأعبر بعمق وبإحساس وصدق بفضل عشقي الكبير للتمثيل وذلك منذ صفوف الدراسة، كما استطعت أن أصقل هذه المهبة وتطويرها من خلال هذه التجربة الفريدة والرائدة في المغرب».

«عملية المزج ترافقها مهمة فنية ونوع من الرقابة المسبقة على الحوار»

«بدأنا العمل على مشروع الدبلجة بالدارجة المغربية منذ شهر دجنبر، بعد أن كنا في السابق نقتصر على دبلجة بعض الأعمال الدرامية باللغة الفرنسية، وتلخص مهنتي كمهندسة صوت في تجميع كل التسجيلات التي تتم داخل الاستديوهات والقيام

The 4th of May 2009, the diffusion of the first episode started at Prime time 6.50PM and three weeks later attracted 38% of the Moroccan audience (Chabâa, *Le Soir* 22/05/2009). In Winter 2009-2010 it was followed by a second Mexican TV novela *Ayna Abi*, which in December 2009-January 2010 runs 1st on top ten TV emissions in Morocco with an audience of 5,6 million, i.e. 59% of Moroccan audience (Marocmétri January 2010), helping the channel to maintain a good general audience rate (27.3%). The two Mexican telenovelas are very similar, sharing the same key Mexican actors, and so does the dubbing keeping the same Moroccan voices (like Chuaib Khalîli), which start to become familiar voices for Moroccan spectators. The heroes keep their Mexican names in the Moroccan version (whereas the Turkish heroes got Arab names in the Arabic version). Nevertheless, it seems that many spectators are not aware of the dubbing and believe that the heroes are Moroccans (according to what some people told me about their own mother). Technically speaking, the dubbing is well done and the Moroccan voices follow well the movement of the lips of the Mexican actors. The public success of this first dubbing experience has convinced 2M to pursue dubbing of foreign series for the years 2009-2010.¹

The Public debate

As soon as the novela *Ana* was broadcasted on 2M, it raised numerous critics and comments reported in the press and in the web. The crucial point of discussion concerned the language (use of *dârija*) rather than the content of the series. At the very same time, the 1st national channel, *al-Awla*, was broadcasting another Mexican series translated into MSA, which, to my knowledge, did not raise any comments.

Since many years, Moroccan spectators are used to watch Moroccan series in Moroccan Arabic, Egyptian series in Egyptian Arabic, Turkish Series in MSA or Syrian Arabic as well as numerous Foreign series in either MSA or French. It seems normal that Turks speak Syrian but apparently many Moroccans had difficulties to conceive that non-Moroccans could speak Moroccan Arabic.

As usual, one could distinguish two main wings leading the debate:

- a) A “conservative” wing/discourse criticizing westernization, consumerism, low moral value of these TV novelas and considering that the use of *dârija* was the tool of the French-speaking groups in order to marginalize the place of *al-‘arabiya* (MSA). This

¹ In March-April 2010, two news series were dubbed by TV2M, *el-diablo* broadcasted at 1PM and *al-‘add al-‘aksi* broadcasted every Saturday evening.

wing clusters people close to the Arab nationalist wing (Istiqlâli) or to the Islamist trend. It was clearly expressed, for example, in the column of the Arabic-speaking Journal *at-Tajdîd*, close to the PJD, an Islamist party, which criticized regularly the French domination upon 2M.²

In a paper dated 12th April 2009 by I. Hammoudi, *at-Tajdîd* indicated that officially TV2M follows the Moroccan legislation by increasing its number of Arabic program (60% in 2004, 65% in 2007, 70% in 2008) but that in fact it resorts mainly to *dârija* and not to MSA and that French remains the prestigious language on TV2M. In June (Ghasal, *at-tajdid*, 26-28 June 2009) *at-Tajdîd* publishes a two pages article on the issue of translating foreign series into Moroccan Arabic. According to the newspaper, the main problem was the low moral values of these series and the fact that the TV drops all its cultural and societal programs to resorts to cheap series in order to attract advertisers [Fiction represents 20% of the TV programs series, advertisement occupies 9% and represents an important source of funding]. The Series were contributing to the low level of culture in Morocco. The journal was not totally against the idea of dubbing but insisted that translating into *dârija* was acceptable for social programs like *Yawmiyât al-Fellâh*, could be eventually done for high level cultural program if using a fine *dârija* but raises problems for foreign love fictions because those fictions are not compatible with the moral values of the Moroccan society. The level of *dârija* used in the translation of the Mexican telenovelas was considered a very low and vulgar level, *dârijat-az-zanqa* (or *ddarija dyal zzanqa*) “Street *dârija*”, a comment that was made by many people, not related to the Islamist or Arab nationalist trend.

b) Against this conservative wing, one finds the “progressive” wing acting for the promotion of the *dârija*, considered to be an essential part of the Moroccan identity. This movement considers that *dârija* is a language that Moroccan people should be proud of instead of being ashamed of, and supports any initiative coming from the Media (Newspaper, radio, net) or from the artistic scene (cinema, music, theatre)

² 2M was created in March 1989 as a semi-private radio (at the hand of the Royal holding ONA). It became state-owned since 1996 (70% State, 28% ONA). It started with French consultancy (TF1) and was reported to be 70% French-speaking up to 1998 (Ennaji 2005). It has always been far more French-speaking than Al-Awla, the 1st National TV, which remains more conservative both in terms of contents and language choices. Although state owned, 2M relies mainly on advertising with, in 2007 state subventions approximating 180 millions Moroccan dirhams whereas advertising bringing 520 millions Dirhams. Since 2008, 2M does no receive any state subsidy and relies only on advertising whereas TV1 receives more that 900 millions dirham (Ziraoui, *TelQuel* 6 February 2010).

acting for this promotion (Caubet 2005, 2007). The Moroccan French-speaking Journal *TelQuel* has been the key-symbol of this movement since its famous cover in June 2002 entitled “Darija, national language”³ (Bénitez-Fernandez 2009, Caubet 2005). The Promotion of *dârija* goes hand with hand with the emergence of a civil movement asking for the acknowledgement of the historical and contemporary cultural diversity/plurality of Morocco (including its Berber component). The liberalization of the media, particularly the creation of ten private radios in 2006, and the emergence of an urban artistic scene has considerably reinforced the public visibility of this wing (Caubet/Benlyazid 2007).⁴ It may be noted that this wing is not limited to the French-speaking elite but includes now many young people, who followed the Arabic curriculum during their schooling.

However, it appeared that the “progressive wing” was rather divided concerning this first TV novela in *dârija*, and critics around the dubbing cut across political and ideological stand. A recurrent argument was that the translation sounds hilarious or ridiculous for Moroccan ears; it was impossible to imagine Moroccans engaged in such type of love interactions; the vocabulary was inadequate; it sounded like advertising; stylistic choices were not pertinent with the characters, too vulgar, based on the street language of Casablanca only, without reflecting the geographic and social diversity of Moroccan Arabic. It is clear that a number of supporters of the *dârija* would have preferred a higher cultural product than this second-class TV novela.

Examples of comments from spectators quoted in the newspapers include: “Words used in daily life are not necessary acceptable on TV” “How could an old person from a certain standing speak the street language?” “People from Casablanca will be OK but people from other cities, who have a different *dârija*, specific to their region feel apart, worst than that they hear words for the first time, which are not understandable”.⁵

The discussion on the web site *Casafree*⁶ highlights the divergence of opinions among Moroccan French-speaking web users, many of them finding the translations ridiculous, whereas a few see it as a positive step:

³ *Telquel* n. 34, 15 June 2002: Cover and dossier : “*Dârija*, langue nationale »

⁴ Cf. the documentary *Casanayda*, 2007 by Dominique Caubet/Farida Benlyazid (Casablanca, Sygma distribution) describes the civil network around the musical scene and the role that promotion of *dârija* plays within this movement.

⁵ Quoted from Chaaba, *Le Soir* 22/5/2009

⁶ http://www.casafree.com/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=33379
Anna, un feuilleton doublé en *darija* sur 2M

Posté par ali32 le : 07/05/2009 14:07

j'ai vu une épisode hier mout dial dahk hta libgha yatafqas qu'il regarde. la seul chose positif des acteurs qui vont trouver au moin ou travailler. 😊

Posté par Yuki le : 07/05/2009 18:04

On dirait douk les traductions "Tarjama Humour" qu'on trouve sur les sites marocains ou même Youtube et Cie!
Il manque que l'accent marrakchi 😊 Pff, franchement c'est du n'imp!

Posté par sizuxxy le : 01/06/2009 12:23

awiiiiili malhoum 3la halthoum, o mazal zaydinha b le prénom ANNA 😊... le comble c k'ils ont employé des termes d zn9a

😊 plus minable, y a pas. ds un pays qui represente ma fierté on dirait une pub de butagaz 😊

Posté par Fahd le : 09/05/2009 19:53

Salam, - Je comprends pas pourquoi au Maroc on est toujours hyper défaitistes. Personnellement je trouve que c'est une très bonne initiative de la part de 2M et pour une première c'est quand-même assez réussi, ça m'a même donné envie de regarder ce feuilleton sachant que généralement les trucs mexicains à l'eau de rose ce n'est pas vraiment ma tasse. –

Posté par farida le : 01/06/2009 13:37

ben, je reste un grande encourageante de "intaj watani", mais je prefere ecouter la darija en premier temps dans des domaines plus serieux, les "news" ca devient de plus en plus paaas mal, on s'y habitue, ensuite, pourquoi pas les documentaires? par exemple "ta79i9" " modawala"... et bcp d'autre ca renderais la credibilité a notre darija bien aimée

Posté par le : 01/09/2009 15:48

c'est pas les meme doubleurs que pour les pub non ? des fois...j'entendrais presque signal ! colgate ! tide !

Translation:

« I saw an episode last night, laughed to death. If you want to get nervous just have to watch. The only positive thing is that actors will find a place to work”

« We were lacking series in darija. They should have change the name, instead of Ana they put Aicha, it will look nice (laughing)

« It looks that the translation of Tarjama Humor, that ones finds on Moroccan web sites or even Youtube & Cie ! It just lacks the Marakchi accent. Pff Really meaningless!!!”

« aaaah what's going on ? and even they add the name ANNA. The worst is that they used street words. More shabby, there is not. In a country which represents my proudness. It looks like an Ad for butagaz”

“I don't understand why in Morocco we are always hyper defeat-oriented. Personally I think it's an excellent initiative from 2M, and for a first experience it's quite successful, it even makes me feeling to look at this series whereas this kind of Mexican staff it's not really my cup of tea”

“I remain a supporter of national production but I prefer to hear darija first in more serious domains, news are becoming more and more not bad, we get used and then why not documentaries like Investigating and so on, it will bring back credibility to our beloved darija”

“Aren’t they the same dubbers than those on Ad no? sometime I would even hear Signal! Colgate! Tide!”

Ten months later, TV2M continues to receive thousands of letters criticising this dubbing policy⁷ but at the national level the phenomenon of foreign series in *dârija* seems to be well accepted as testified by the wide audience and the success of *Ayna Abi*.

Creating a new language?

Due to the fact that the translation was done in a very short span of time, it’s not surprising that it raises many critics. One of the translators, Imam Lajjam (Lajjam 2009) mentioned that they had to work very quickly, were not present when the actors were playing the translation and so could not test if their translation looked appropriate or not, a fact that made him rather frustrated. According to him, the Cie appeared to be more concerned by the mercantile aspect (rewarding financial market) than by the ideological aspect (promotion of *dârija*). The Cie did not want to spend too much money, arguing that most of the spectators were little educated and more concerned by the images than by the words! As pointed out by some critics, dubbing of cheap foreign series is far less costly than producing original series and is an intelligent way to answer the public demand for Moroccan series and to raise the share of audience.

But the owners of the Cie, Chraïbi and Boukobza, interviewed two times by the *TelQuel* (Saadi, *TelQuel* 6th of June 2009 & Ziraoui, *TelQuel* April 3rd 2010) insisted on the means involved for the dubbing, mentioning that more than 40 people were working on this project including two translators, one verifactor, two adaptators and more than 15 professional actors. They considered that they tried to find “an adequate level of language, not too close from Classical Arabic, not too familiar” and that « they had to create a new language, a new *darija*, not too much close to that of Casa, Fes or the North, nor too vulgar”. The actors read the translation but sometimes changed some expressions if they feel it necessary cf. Chouaib Khalili, the voice of Rafael Bustamente “I sometimes change a word by an expression that I would use more spontaneously in the life with the people. I’m pleased because my friends say that Rafael Bustamente speaks like Chouaib Khalili” (Saadi, *TelQuel* 6th of June 2009).

But the debate via the media indicates that the notion of “an adequate level of language” does not reach a public consensus, as can be witnessed not only for this dubbing experience, but for many other artistic creations (films, and songs in particular) which were released recently.

⁷ Personal communication of Salim Cheikh to my colleague D. Caubet in February 2010.

The dubbing of TV novelas opens the paths for many sociolinguistic issues regarding language changes in Morocco. Here I will focus on two important sociolinguistic dynamics:

The first one is the present trend toward the functional expansion of Moroccan Arabic, particularly in the Media, and the impact it might have or not in homogenising/standardizing an eventual Moroccan Arabic koinè.

The second one is the sociolinguistic changes induced by urbanization and rural migration since the 20th c., which led to an important shift in urban linguistic practices, and indicate an important transformation of urban models

Whereas the first dynamics is rather recent, the second one is a far deeper structural process. But both processes interact with each other. The urban sociolinguistic situation influences heavily the representation, attitudes of the speakers towards their vernaculars, and their view concerning eventual promotion and expansion. The Media might influence or try to influence people's attitudes. The question remains whether media are indeed key actors of language changes.

Through the critics and the jokes that accompanied the broadcasting of *Ana*, through the leitmotiv of "language of the street" and "vulgarity", I wonder if the dubbing of this TV novela, together with many other mediatic events (such as the phenomenal success of the film *Casanegra*)⁸ symbolizes a step in the urbanization process of Morocco. Does it consecrate the growing influence of the Casawi metropole, in a country where regional specificities are very strong? Or does it consecrate more the growing influence of a new economical class linked to the liberal market (telecoms and media)? Or both?

2. The functional expansion of Moroccan Vernacular Arabic:

As already mentioned, a number of Moroccans wish to establish/promote Moroccan vernacular not only vis à vis MSA and French but also vis à vis other Arabic vernaculars. This stand was clearly expressed by some French-speaking internet users commentating the dubbing of the TV novela on the website casafree:

Posté par thomado le : 13/05/2009 0:09

/.../ et pkoï po,piske tt le monde exporte sa langue mère ou son dialecte a travers les films et les séries **pett ke ds 1 ou 2 ans en zappant on vas trouver un de ces feuilleton doublé en darija diffusé sur une autre**

⁸ In 2009, the release of the film *CasaNegra* by film-maker Lakhmari was a mediatic 'bomb'. Featuring two young lads speaking "street darija", it got a tremendous popular success (best audience of the year with 300 000 spectators, more than any US block-starters) and raises the harsh critics of "conservative" groups like PDJ members (Al-Atri, al-tajdid April 2009).

chaîne non marocaine et comme ça le marocain dialectal ne sera plus une langue des extraterrestres qui nécessitent du sous titrage pour les citoyens du monde arabe....

« as everybody is exporting his mother tongue or his dialect through films and series, maybe in one or two years, when zapping, one will find one of this series dubbed in darija broadcasted on a non-Moroccan channel and like this Moroccan dialect will not be anymore an extra-earth language which needs subtitles for the citizen of the Arab world..”

Posté par Tropicana le : 01/09/2009 15:52

...Je trouve que c'est vraiment une excellente chose que l'on cesse de consommer les autres traductions arabes toutes faites. On en arrive à un moment où l'industrie cinématographique et télévisuelle marocaine a vraiment les moyens (matériels, techniques, talents) de s'imposer au niveau régional. **Faut se donner les moyens de la réaliser, notre révolution culturelle. Et ça commence par affirmer l'usage de notre darija.**

« I think it's excellent that we stop consuming ready made Arabic translations. We are at a time where the Moroccan media industries has the means to impose itself at the regional level. We must access the means to realize our cultural revolution. And this starts by confirming the use of our darija”

Posté par moihalim le : 03/09/2009 2:04

Moi aussi je trouve que c'est une bonne initiative. **pourquoi les libanais nous impose leur dialecte et non pas les marocains.je veux dire le dialecte marocain;**

« I too think it's an excellent initiative. Why do Lebanese impose their dialect on use and not us imposing the Moroccan dialect?”

In the last five years, the functional expansion of Moroccan Arabic in the Media has been particularly perceptible in domains like advertising, radio and TV broadcasting, Internet and sms writings, and start to enter other written domains such as some Arabic newspapers (like *Nishân, al-Jarîda al-'Awla, al-Masâ*’, etc. which all appeared from 2005) and novels, as well as a few translation from French into Moroccan Arabic.⁹ This functional expansion widens the opportunity of styles/code mixing. Exclusive use of MSA as well as exclusive use of French appears to become more and more restricted at the oral level, even in formal contexts like media.

In this respect, Morocco follows a trend common to most Arab countries, a trend which started some decades ago in countries like Egypt or Lebanon (Rosenbaum 2000, Mejdell 2008). In Morocco, this trend started rather late but seems to accelerate quickly. Among the reasons that might explain why it started late, we can note that the urbanization rate of the country was low up to the 1980s (38% in 1980, compared to 59.8 in Egypt and 60,6% in

⁹ See Caubet 2005 & 2009, Moustawi 2010, Aguade 2006, Benitez-Fernandez 2008, Miller 2009, etc; A recent case of translation is the famous St Exupéry's book 'le Petit Prince' by Moroccan linguist A. Youssi in 2009.

Lebanon for the same period), that the urban intellectual elite who could have acted to promote the vernacular was more French-oriented than Arabic-oriented and that the cultural domain and the cultural market was rather poor compared to other Arab countries like Egypt or Lebanon. Up to 2000, Morocco produced only 2-5 films a year and did not have a musical industry. The number of Moroccan novels written in Arabic was limited and few Moroccan writers dare to introduce vernacular elements in their novels (Aguade 2006). Even theatre, the most productive and creative artistic domain in the 1960s-1980s remained somehow restricted to 3-4 groups, including that of the national radio (Touzami, 2003). Between French and MSA, there was little room for the vernacular in formal contexts. All the attitudinal surveys undertaken in the 1980s-1990s (particularly among students) indicated that only a minority of Moroccans considered that Moroccan Arabic should be used in more official domains (cf. the various surveys on languages attitudes in Morocco quoted or done in Ennaji 2005, de Ruiter 2006)

The actual acceleration in the process of functional expansion of Moroccan Arabic started in the 2000 and is due to a convergence of societal, political and economical factors. It coincides with the beginning of the reign of King Mohamed VI and with the rising of a generation of businessmen wishing to promote the image of a “New Morocco”, open to the world, in phase with the globalization. And indeed, in a decade, the opening of the Moroccan economy to new economic sectors has been considerable, at least in the main urban centres.

At the ideological/political level, the functional expansion of Moroccan Arabic in the media is an indication of change in terms of national identification, a step away from the strict adherence to MSA that dominated in the 1970-1980, and also a step away from the strong domination of the French language. This point has been largely described (Benitez-Fernandez 2009) and I will not discuss here. The expansion of *dârija* in the public sphere occurs in a political context where linguistic and cultural plurality became officially recognized by the Moroccan kingdom, as an integrant part of the national identity and heritage. It took place at the same time that the Berber movement succeeded to obtain the official recognition of the Berber language (Amazigh) as a national language.¹⁰

As mentioned by some key figures, the expansion of *dârija* is not conceived as an exclusive process and does not seek to impose itself over all existing languages (MSA, French, Amazigh etc.). *Dârija* is supposed to reflect the diversity of the country and is often presented

¹⁰ Among the numerous publications on this topic, see Rachik 2006, Boukous 2008. The first official step toward the acknowledgement of the Berber language was King Hassan's II discourse in 1994. The creation of IRCAM (Institut Royal de la Culture Amazigh) in 2001, which is in charge of promoting the Amazigh language is the concretization of this political recognition.

as a blend of Arab-Berber culture as expressed by one of its most prominent advocate, A. Benchemsi, the Chief editor of TelQuel, in his editorial of 9th of May 2009:

« Many streams successively joined our original Amazigh culture (Arabic and Muslim of course but also Jewish, French, Spanish, Portuguese and even recently Anglo-saxons in big urban centres). This is the true Moroccan identity: the result of an historical blending which continues to evolve. Linguistically what is the result? The darija of course! It's the only language, the one we all speak and think in and that we should rather call the Moroccan, that integrates all the hidden aspects of our identity”¹¹

This rather idyllic representation of the *dârija* as a symbol of Moroccan plurality and an oral *lingua-franca* between the various Moroccan communities seems to reach now a rather wide consensus. But this does not mean that everybody agrees on what *dârija* is exactly and on its potential official role in the society. There is no consensus about what should be the official status of this language, the necessity to write or standardize the *dârija*, to promote it as an official language and to eventually dissociate it from MSA. The Moroccan newspapers regularly publish papers and columns on those issues. A very recent and violent attack against people supporting promotion of *dârija* has been made by Moroccan linguist AbdelQader Fassi-Fehri in a long interview in the weekly *al-hayat al-maghrebiyya* 18-24 March 2010 (Hafiz 2010).¹² Even among the most famous advocates of *dârija*, one finds different opinions of how, when and why promoting it. A. Benchemsi calls for a standardization/unification of the language, in a conception close to the French model :

“The darija should be standardized (an easy exercise for our linguists), used as a vector of teaching in our schools, generalized on the public TV (the private radio have already done it) and at the end constitutionalized. Nobody at the political level support this option. Although it's the more logic and coherent option, that would help our self-reconciliation...”¹³

¹¹ “A notre culture amazighe originelle, de nombreux affluents se sont successivement greffés depuis 15 siècles (arabo-musulman bien sûr mais aussi juif, français, espagnol, un peu portugais et même depuis peu dans les grands centres urbains anglo-saxons). Voilà la véritable identité marocaine : le fruit d'une fusion historique qui ne cesse d'ailleurs d'évoluer et de s'enrichir. Linguistiquement ça donne quoi ? La darija bien sûr !!! Seule cette langue que nous parlons et dans laquelle nous pensons tous –et que nous devrions plutôt appeler le « marocain » intègre toutes les facettes occultées de notre identité ».

¹². Thanks to A. Youssi for giving me access to this interview.

¹³ A. Benchemsi, TelQuel 9th of May 2009 “« C'est elle (la darija) qui devrait être standardisée (un exercice largement à la portée de nos linguistes), utilisé comme vecteur d'enseignement dans nos écoles, généralisées sur la télé publique (les radios privées l'ont déjà fait sans complexe) et à terme... constitutionalisée. Politiquement personne ne soutient encore cette option. C'est pourtant la plus logique, la plus cohérente, celle qui pourrait réconcilier tout le monde. Et surtout nous réconcilier avec nous-mêmes. Cela n'en vaut-il pas la peine ? »

But Driss Ksikes, former Chief editor of *TelQuel* and founder of *Nishân* (one of the first Moroccan journals mixing *dârija* and MSA), novelist and theatre writer, seems more cautious. He believes that the codification of *dârija* will take time and has to pass through a phase or artistic creation at the oral level. Talking about his experience with *Nishân* he recalls:

« We are not going to create the *dârija* today, we are not going to make *dârija* a written language whereas it is not yet codified, but we are going to accompany the movement that will lead to the Moroccan language and we are maybe going to speed up History because we are in the Media ... But the *dârija* cannot be thought independently of Arabic. To think the *dârija* as an autonomous entity will benefit to Whom ? Because *dârija* is still a depreciate form of transmission of knowledge. We must first solve our self-comprehension at the oral level before *dârija* can function at the written level”¹⁴

The Moroccan situation raises wider questions that concern most Arab-speaking countries:

In countries, where vernaculars (nor vehiculars) have not been recognized as official national languages, and therefore not subjected to what a number of linguists have called standardization or grammatization, what variety or level or style of vernacular will be considered as appropriate to be promoted? Who has the legitimacy to set up the norms? Is there a shared common norm? Can promotion of the vernacular/vehicular occur without conscious standardization, in a kind of spontaneous movement? Can it occur without a serious debate about the dialect situation of the country and about what this dialect situation tells about the social fabrics of the country? In a growing context of linguistic hybridity and code-switching, does it still make sense to look for the standardization of the vernacular?

In many countries in the past, promotion of vernaculars and eventually standardization were done by a literate urban class such as professors, writers, journalists, etc. closely linked to the urban bourgeoisie. We know that printing has been considered one of the key changes that progressively induced the writing of the vernaculars languages and their promotion towards literary vehicle. Today it seems that the most prominent actors of the promotion of *dârija* in Morocco are in the field of audio-visual communication like advertisers, radio and TV animators, singers, film-makers, some press journalists, etc.¹⁵ Their choices might be guided by commercial or pragmatic interest as much as ideological/intellectual ideas. Whereas the functional expansion of Moroccan Arabic in the media, is somehow a “conscious” process

¹⁴ Interview with D. Ksikes by C. Miller May 2009, Rabat.

¹⁵ This does not mean that other less “public” persons are not acting for the promotion of vernaculars. Around the association AMAPATRIL, a few Moroccan linguists like A. Youssi and Z. Iraqi-Inaceur act for the acknowledgement of Moroccan Arabic as a rich linguistic system.

induced by specific social actors in a rather short span of time, it's also a "spontaneous process" largely left to individual choices. These individuals are themselves the product of their personal social itinerary in a society where social stereotypes and class contrasts are very strong. How far do these new social actors coming from the media and the economic sectors, extremely influenced by globalization trends are promoting a new urban model compared to the older one? How far do they reflect the practices of the general society? How far can they impulse new dynamics?

3. Shifting stylistic boundaries and going public

Whereas the expansion of Arabic vernaculars vis à vis MSA or foreign languages (French, English) is often strictly analyzed in terms of political/ideological issues (neo-nationalism), it seems important to replace it in a more wider social context. As a matter of fact, the functional expansion of Moroccan Arabic co-occurs with social changes that affect the ethic/moral values of the society and lead to new discursive practices. The boundaries between public and private are shifting, new topics are discussed in public forum like radios and TVs, new ways of speaking are spreading. In the radio, the increasing use of Moroccan Arabic is largely due to the dominance of "participative program", where auditors are invited to express their ideas and feeling and discuss with the radio-animators or the different experts (doctors, engineers, artists, etc.).

Among these new ways of speaking in public is the transgression of a number of taboos concerning man-women relationship, love affairs, sexuality, transposition of insults in movies and drama, etc., all practices that again attract many comments and critics (cf. the case of the film *Casanegra*). Many young artists claim to look for a "real or "daily" language that reflects the harsh reality of their life and want to break away from an "aseptized" *darija*.¹⁶

But speaking "real" or "direct" in public settings, transgressing the code of unsaid politeness is not yet an anodyne act and very often raises either indignation or at best laughing, as if the spectators try to cover their embarrassment through laughing. What made so many young Moroccans laugh when listening to the Mexican series in *dârija* were the direct translations of the love declarations, as exemplified by the ironic column of Reda Allali (member of the

¹⁶ Searching for "real daily language" is a claim common to most young singers as well as young film makers such as Hicham Lasri (cf; in a public discussion organized by the French Institute around his film *L'os de Fer* and the documentary *CAsanayda* in November 2008, Rabat)

famous musical group Hoba Hoba Spirit) featuring a fictive Moroccan character, Zakaria Boualem (Allali, TelQuel 13th of June 2009):

« Zakaria bursts into laugh , Ignacio is telling his love to beautiful Isabella in these words “chetti ya Isabella, ana kan mout 3alik, oullah.. makantkhiylch el hayat bla bik.. rani 3iit ». And Isabella answers him “Ana machi dial tfelia, ila kounti baghi chi haja dial bessah, 3ayet lwalid ou chouf m3ah chi hal...”. Zakaria’s laugh is logical, for him Ignacio, being foreigner, cannot speak darija. And this Ignacio has a strong accent from Hay Hassani. .. This laugh is vexing because we do not react to see Comanche Indians speaking French in the westerns. But the use of darija, in our minds, is systematically associated at best with humour and derision, and at worst with vulgarity. We cannot take Ignacio seriously when he expresses his feelings in darija because Moroccans themselves avoid to speak about it, or even to have feelings. They built a language which is romantically under-developed /.../ This laugh is serious, it shows that the situation is serious, that we have strong complexes. A people that considers that his everyday language is ridiculous cannot have a high opinion of himself”.

This last sentence is important and I believe that although all Arabic vernaculars have been more or less scorned by the intellectual elite for decades, representation towards the vernacular varieties varies widely from one country to another, from one region to another and it’s well known that within the same country some dialectal varieties have lower status than other, particularly rural ones.

For anyone familiar with Egyptian series and their recurrent love declarations, it seems awkward /bizarre to imagine that speaking about love can raise a problem in Moroccan Arabic. Why should *beHabbek* sound normal and *kanbghik* sound crude? Apart from different social traditions (*Hshûma* and shame remain extremely important social values in North Africa, compared to Cairo), I do think that the main point is the fact that Casablanca Arabic is associated with a popular/rural register and is not yet conceived/accepted as a refine urban vernacular, in spite of the considerable demographic weight of the city.

Coming back to the dubbing of Ana, what raises problems or attracts attention is the fact that the Moroccan characters of the novelas speak with a popular Casawi accent (cf. Reda Allali mentions here Hay Hassani, a popular district of Casablanca). As we have seen in the website, some spectators were not happy with this Casawi accent because they consider that Casablanca Arabic did not reflect the dialectal plurality of the country and that the level was a “street language”. Hicham Chraïbi, the head of the Cie admitted the fact that the translators and the actors were from Casablanca and did not consider it as a problem (Chaaba, Le Soir,

25th of June 2009). The translator Imam Lajjam, from Fez, was told by the Cie that “his darija was looking too old, like a darija of a grandmother” whereas they felt that “speaking Casawi was looking more modern”. He, himself, was among the people who felt that the translation was sometimes too “Casawi”.

This point raises the issue of the norm/standard at the national level, in a country where urbanization trends have led to important sociolinguistic changes. The contested status of Casablanca Arabic indicates that the idea of a common shared vernacular is not 100% accepted, in spite of the demographic and economic weight of the city. This might be due to the rather specific sociolinguistic background of Morocco. The generic term *dârija* (and it remains to study since when exactly this term imposed itself as a label) masks somehow the dialectal diversity of the country and the ways the various Moroccan Arabic vernaculars are perceived.

4. Urbanisation and Sociolinguistic changes in Morocco

Morocco used to be a dominant rural country which became slightly more urban at the end of the 20th c., beginning of the 21st. It raises from 25,3% (1950) to 38, 1% (1980), to 53,8% (2005) and estimated 60% in 2009. Like most Arab cities, this urbanization process was largely due to internal migration.

The spread of urbanization concerns all the country but is particularly important in the central Atlantic coastal part of the country, from El Jadida to Kenitra which concentrated almost 50% of the Moroccan urban population. With more than 4 millions inhabitants today, Casablanca is not only the biggest city of Morocco but is one of the big cities of the Arab world after Cairo (13 million), Baghdad (6 million), Riyadh (4.2 millions).

City	1860	1920	1950	1980	2005
Casablanca	700	102,000	700,559	2,136,088	3,569,988
Rabat/Salé	40,000	55,000	200,763	782,035	1,670,618
Fez	88,000	71,000	177,578	420,232	983,751
Marrakech	80, 000	140,000	213,159	415,354	842,288
Agadir	-	-	4, 610	179,433	787,976
Tanger	8000	50,000	50,000	247,999	685,781
Meknès	50,000	37,000	138,976	311,367	542,571
Tétouan		38,000	90,382	209,989	464,390

Source: Geopolis Database, Paris (kindly provided by E. Denis in 2007).

Needless to say, this urbanization trend had important social and cultural consequences, including linguistic ones, in a country characterized by multilingualism as well as a high Arabic dialect diversity (Aguade 2007).

Urban dialects in Morocco have been categorized into two main types, according to Arabic dialectal categories:¹⁷

- pre-Hilali or Andalusian sedentary dialects, i.e. old-city dialects characterizing mainly the former imperial cities like Fès, Tetouan, Sale, Rabat as well as Tangier, Sefrou, Taza in Northern Morocco. Those dialects are usually referred to as *mdîni* or *shimâli* dialects in Morocco
- Koinized or mixed urban dialects, characterized by the mixture of urban features and rural-Bedouin Hilali (known in Morocco as *3urubi*) features, like the dialects of cities like Casablanca, El Jadida, Essaouira, Marrakech, and Oujda.

Relying on this classification, the linguistic urban studies done in the last two decades have indicated two main trends related to migration and urbanization: one is the decline of the old-city dialects, the other is the spread of the mixed urban dialects of the Central Atlantic coast.

The old *mdîni* dialects of the main Moroccan cities such as Fez, Rabat, Salé, once considered as prestigious and associated with the pre-colonial Moroccan urban society as well as with the urban Jewish communities (who in some cities represented a very important part of these old cities), has considerably diminished in the public space, whereas new urban speeches mixing between old *mdîni* dialects and *3urubi* dialects have considerably spread due to the influx of massive migration trend. This led a number of linguists such as Leila Messaoudi, Mohamed El Himer, Zakia Iraki Sinaceur etc. to distinguish between “*vieux parlers citadins*” (old-city vernaculars) and *neo-parlers urbains* (new urban vernaculars).¹⁸ It is not yet very clear if specific local features are developing

¹⁷ The traditional dialectal classification of North African dialects between pre-hilâli and Hilâli dialects has been established by the “Fathers” of French North African dialectology like W. & P. Marçais, Colin, Brunot etc. and has been later on refined in further categories (including Andalusian, Jbala etc. see Aguade 2007, Behnstedt & Benabbou 2005, Heath 2002, Levy 1998, etc.). However these categorization are not very well known in Morocco, and popular classification seems to be a mixture of regional (north/south/east/west) and social (Urban/rural) criteria (see El Himer, 2008, Ech-Cherfi 2009)

¹⁸ See the various papers in Aguade et al 1998, as well as El Himer 2001, Messaoudi 2002

in some cities or if all these new urban vernaculars tend to merge in a common national koiné. It seems that regional specificities remain strong.

The concept of “parler citadin” in French has an important cultural connotation, highlighting as much a way of life than a way of speaking. We note among some Moroccan authors (like El Himer) a tendency to idealize the *mdîni* way of life, associated with sophistication, complex politeness rules, etc. In the popular representation, old-city vernaculars tend to be associated with womanless and over-sophistication, a fact that had led men originating from old-cities to shift to neo-urban variables (at least in public spaces) in order not to look effeminate.¹⁹ And when people suggest refine vernacular they almost always mention the Fassi ways of speaking (Hachimi 2007, Ech-Charfi 2009)

The vernacular of Casablanca is the strongest example of a new urban koinè, mixing between Bedouin/rural (i.e. 3urubi) features and *mdîni* features.²⁰ Due to the role of Casablanca, as the biggest city and the economic hub of the country (but not the political capital), this new urban koinè is supposed/expected to act/become the national lingua-franca of the country.

However, it is obvious that the term Casablanca Arabic is a kind of “abstract invention” that does not take into account the multiplicity and fluidity of individual practices. One of the key problems is to identify among all the diversity of practices recorded in Casablanca, which one(s) are eventually considered as “proper Casawi Arabic” and eventually accepted as “proper Moroccan Arabic” and by whom?

There are still few attitudinal research concerning the various Moroccan Arabic vernaculars.²¹ We can quote Moumine (1995) and Hachimi (2005, 2007) on Casablanca Arabic, Bennis for the area of Beni Mellal (Bennis 2002), Ech-Charfi for Northern and central Morocco (Ech-Charfi 2009). Up to now, it is clear that no single urban dialect in Morocco had succeeded to impose itself as a share standard of reference for the all country and the all speakers. Northern cities like Tangiers, Tetouan, Fez keep a number of regional specific features. The Fassi bourgeoisie established in all the main cities of the kingdom does not adopt a number of Casawi features that they considered too rural or popular and the representation of popular 3urûbi features remains extremely ambivalent.

¹⁹ Association between old-city dialects and women appears to be a common trend in most North African countries. See Miller 2004 for bibliographical references on this topic.

²⁰ Note that Casablanca Arabic is not included in the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, which includes 14 lemma on Arab cities, but a number of unpublished PHD in France & Morocco deal with the phonological and morphological aspects.

²¹ There might be far more references, mostly unpublished MA or PhD theses not easily accessible.

And here we come back to Ignacio speaking with the accent of Hay Hassani, or actors speaking the language of the street (zzanqa). What is at stake is not only the expansion of Moroccan Arabic but the mediatisation of a type/level/style of speech associated before with rurality (3urubi), reallocated into “popular” and associated to the popular districts of Casablanca and starting to become more “in”, “real urban” through the mediatisation of young singers and film makers.

5. To conclude

Migration trends have slowly but surely impact the languages practices of the Moroccan cities, helping the emergence of new urban speeches that have integrated many features associated with the 3urubi dialects. But certain features of these new urban vernaculars were still considered as too rural or too popular or too vulgar to be adopted by the former urban elite, who either stick to older city-vernacular or often adopt French or MSA in more public setting.

Today, the hip-hop movement, together with certain film makers, are identifying themselves with the global youth urban culture symbolized by the Ghetto, the Black American, the Bad guys, etc. and are spreading new language and cultural practices with the idea that Casablanca is indeed a tough metropolis.²²

This new urban culture praising values like movements, energy, dynamism, etc. fits very well with the Advertising ways of life, and Ads are recycling very quickly the hip hop style and more largely the urban Casawi breed. Having in mind that, in 2004, the generation of the 15-34 y. old represents 36.3% of the total Moroccan population (HCP 2004) and that most of the people working in the new radios, journal, advertising Cies, movies, new medias etc. are themselves young and mainly urban, it’s not a surprise that they consciously or not develop this new urban style.

When Ignacio Bustante is speaking like a Casawi through the voice of Chouaib Khalili, and is heard by more than 5 millions spectators every day, he certainly contributes in the spread of this way of speech. When we consider that TV2M reaches the highest audience among Moroccans, thanks to this series²³, that Morocco has the highest rate of advertising

²² This was very evident in recent films released in 2009 like Casanegra, l’Os de Fer, Harash, Souviens toi d’Adil, etc;

²³ TV2M audience is rising growing from 23,6% in March 2009 to 27,3% in March 2010, whereas Al-Awla goes down from 16,8% in 2009 to 13% in 2010 (Chabâa, Le Soir 14/04/2010). The whole Moroccan TV channels (Al Awla+ 2M+ Al Maghribiya+ Arryadiya) attract 48.6% of the Moroccan audience. Non-Moroccan TV like Arab

market in North Africa²⁴ and when we take into account all the personal connections between the circles of the new urban culture, the new media and the economic sector of communication, we definitely see the economical weight and the mediatic influence of this new urban class.

We can therefore wonder if they are becoming the main agents of the promotion of Moroccan Arabic and if they have a clear picture of what kind of MA they want to promote. Today the Moroccan media offers a very large linguistic spectrum with all kinds of combination including classical Arabic, mixed Educated Spoken Styles, mixed French-Arabic, mixed Amazigh-Arabic, sophisticated Fassi Arabic, mixed dialectal Arabic, rural 3urûbi and least but not last Casawi Hay Hassani speech!!!

In a paper presented at the 1st American Annual Symposium of Arabic Linguistics, Ferguson (1990) recalls his long experience with “Myths about Arabic” and how in the early 1950s, most Arab intellectuals deeply believed that “some form of Classical Arabic” was going to win out with the spread of literacy and mass media. Forty years later, there were sufficient evidences that mass-media did not succeed to evacuate Arabic vernaculars. But they certainly participated in the spread and popularization of what is known now as mixed-styles or Educated Spoken Arabic. And Ferguson continues pointing the importance of studying standardization processes:

“I would like to suggest that we can study language standardization in progress. Standardization is taking place in various parts of the world, a fascinating process not at all well understood either from the social networking side or from the linguistic structure side. Arabic is undergoing standardization on a vast scale and in an unusual language situation. In most cases where a diglossia changes into a single standard-with variation situation there is a center -whether cultural, economic, political, communicative, or a combination of these - that becomes the chief source of the standardizing variety. /.../ A number of observers have claimed that a new supradialectal norm of ESA is coming into existence, and other observers have documented unmistakable trends toward diverse regional standards. Now is the time to study these conflicting trends, as a prime contribution to the understanding of standardization processes in Arabic and in general” (Ferguson 1990: 49).

channels (Al Jazeera, MBC2, MBC4, Iqra) and European channels attract the remaining 51.4%. Note that the French TV attracts only 0,5% of Moroccan audience according to Marocmetrie for the period April-August 2008, (quoted in TelQuel 11 Octobre 2008 and le Soir du 24/April 2009)

²⁴ Total North African ad market is 580 millions Euros with Morocco taking 398 millions Euros , three times the Algerian market. The 3 biggest North African Advertisers are 3 Moroccan Phone Cie: Maroc Telecom (37,2 million Euro), Meditel (33 million Euros) and Wana Corporate 22,2% Euros.

In 2010 and twenty years latter, the issue remains to see if the main Arabic urban vernaculars succeeded to become regional/national vehicular and are on the way of becoming regional/national standard. This paper has been just but a small contribution to this topic. It highlights the potential role of a new Moroccan urban class linked to the metropolization of Casablanca and to the spread of the new media. Is it enough to make them a kind of communicative centre acting for the standardization? What makes Morocco a particularly interesting place is the fact that many dynamics co-occurred within a very short span of time. Whereas it appears that mixed Moroccan-MSA styles are definitely spreading in more official oral settings such as radio/TV etc and could become kind of national standards, I'm not sure that the "spontaneous" standardization of Casablanca Arabic is yet 100% achieved and that people will agree on its correctness and non-correctness. But a class of younger artists and advertisers already want to push the limits of acceptability by spreading what they consider to be the "real daily way of speaking".

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