CHAPTER 5

Morocco: An Informal Passage to Literacy in ḏārīja (Moroccan Arabic)

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In this contribution, I shall deal with a recent development in keyboard-to-screen communication in ḏārīja (Moroccan Arabic). I postulate that qualitative change is taking place and that we are now reaching a stage where a further step is being crossed, from the passage to writing and deciphering that took place from the early 2000s, to literacy proper.

From the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the new technologies have allowed a spontaneous passage to writing for a language variety that has not been codified. It was led by actors from civil society who, slowly but steadily, taught themselves to read and write in ḏārīja, with a true D.I.Y. (Do It Yourself) spirit. This writing is ‘informal’, in the sense of taking place in the ‘informal sector’, i.e. first, outside of state control or regulation, and second, with the ‘coping’ behaviour of individuals who take over when the institutions are absent (by ‘coping’ I mean taking responsibility and initiative at their level).

The First Steps

In Morocco, it started within two different networks. One was the small circle of initiates who used mIRC, an Internet Relay Chatting system for computers, from the end of the 1990s. The other started in 2001 with the use of SMS on mobile phones, and rapidly developed for a wider audience (see Caubet 2004). With mIRC, people learnt to chat in Latin script, the only option available on computers at the end of the 90s. It was later replaced by a more popular web-based instant messaging device, msn (Windows Live Messenger), through which people could chat for hours, connecting from cyber-café’s, since very few

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1 DIY, Do It Yourself, the attitude developed by the punk subculture in the 70’s.
could afford to buy a computer and have a connection at home; this went on from 2005 to 2010. Unlike Facebook, the early chat systems provided users with anonymity.

Mobile phones also gave people independence – especially girls, who could exchange text messages, whereas they were not allowed to go to cyber-cafés, which sounded like “cafés” in the eyes of their families. Even for those who were not fluent in reading French, mastering the Latin alphabet could be reinvested in writing short messages in dârîja (see the case studied in Caubet 2004).

**Dârîja: A Change in Practices and Status in the Civil Society**

*Dârîja* has undergone a drastic change in practices and status in the Moroccan emerging civil society, while the institutions completely failed to follow suit.

Practice first came in the form of a passage to writing on first-generation mobile phones in Latin script. This choice was not ideological, but practical, because the only available phones and computers at the time were equipped with French keyboards. In 2006, the same young people who wrote *dârîja* in Latin script on keyboard-mediated exchanges, when given a pen, would instinctively write in Arabic script (see Caubet 2012). They would use a different script (*Latin vs Arabic*), whether they wrote on a piece of paper or on a keyboard. At the time, older people would either not be aware of – or despise – these practices.

Status came slightly later and was influenced by the development of these practices. Voices started to claim that *dârîja* was a key element for the definition of a new Moroccan identity, being the language that unites all Moroccans. Such voices came from a social and cultural movement which emerged in the early 2000s and was compared to the Spanish *Movida*. *Nayda*[^3] was the name given to a cultural effervescence that took place during the years 2005–2008.

However, the key year is 2003, when two dramatic episodes contributed to change the course of events: first, the arrest of 14 young heavy metal music lovers, their trial in February 2003, and the public mobilisation that followed; second, on May 16, seven simultaneous kamikaze fundamentalist bombings involving 14 youngsters from a neglected neighbourhood in Casablanca (Sidi

[^3]: *Nayda* is the active participle of the verb *nad* “to rise”; it was an expression used in youth language “it's moving, it's rocking”, and it became the name of the Moroccan *Movida* (see Caubet 2010b).
Moumen), causing the death of 33 people (apart from themselves), and leading to massive public questioning in Moroccan society. As a consequence, the ‘legal’ fundamentalists (the present Prime Minister’s party, the PJD) disappeared from the political life for a whole year and brought a breath of freedom. This is when the underground movement started to grow on the public scene until it became a socio-cultural movement, and was heavily mediatized from 2006 (see Caubet 2007, 2008, 2010a and the documentary Casanayda!).

4 Dârîja played a central part in the artistic productions of this new music scene, and artists claimed that it was their language and that they were proud of it. Dârîja was a means to convey things in a more Moroccan way, to try and speak the language of the people.

The status of dârîja has changed radically in the last ten years: it had been associated with illiteracy, backwardness and was considered incompatible with education or progress. Now it has become trendy and modern, considered as the language capable of accompanying the Nayda. At the same time, fierce debates about the official use of dârîja in the schooling system have been going on since October 2013. This is in itself significant: while institutions seem to have rejected dârîja once again, the fact that the question has been raised and discussed at length is a sign of change. 5 One also should not underestimate the fact that the absence of an institution and official formatting may present an opportunity for boundless communicative freedom and creativity.

For writing in Latin script, techniques have been described (Benitez Fernández 2012, Caubet 2013, Moscoso 2009), noting variation in writing between ‘scriptors’ and even for the same writer. But over the years, people have taught themselves to write and to read (in that order), acquiring a high level of fluency that I wish to describe as a ‘passage to writing’. The phenomenon is so important that it is mentioned in columns, like Zakaria Boualem in Telquel weekly by Reda Allali; on February 21, 2016, in a paper called “Zakaria Boualem et l’école en français,” he writes:

Pendant que des commissions se penchent tous les jours, et que des théoriciens glosent, sur les choix stratégiques, des millions de Marocains, chaque minute, s’écrivent en dârîja avec des chiffres et des lettres parce qu’on refuse de normaliser ce qui devrait être notre langue.

4 A film written by D. Caubet, directed by F. Benlyazid and A. Mettour, Sigma, Casablanca 2007, in six episodes on youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRTrzRzmFQ.

5 For this debate, see Miller 2014 and Caubet & Miller 2016.

6 http://telquel.ma/2016/02/21/zakaria-boualem-lecole-en-francais_1483687.
While commissions address and theoreticians gloss daily on strategic choices, millions of Moroccans, exchange every minute in dārija, using numbers and letters because (the authorities) refuse to normalize what should be our language.

Although it was technically possible to write in Arabic script from 2009, with the Facebook Arabic interface, it takes time to change practices. But when people do switch to using Arabic, they also undergo what I will term a ‘passage to literacy’. Thus, in 2014–2016, I observed a passage from the stage of plain writing and deciphering dārija to that of an ability to comprehend and express longer, elaborate, and even literary, texts.

The Arabic Script: Literacy on Smartphones and Computers

For the general public and internet users, the passage to the Arabic script is recent and slow, simply because people find it difficult to type in Arabic. Nowadays however one can download an application that provides an Arabic keyboard for smartphones, which makes it easier. By the end of 2009, out of a million users, 85% used the French interface and only 6.5%, the Arabic one (Tancrez 2009). In 2012, the French interface had gone down to 76% – and it remained at 75% in 2014, with 7.2 million profiles; more recently, the use of Arabic went up: from 17% at the end of 2012 to 33% in 2014. The figures – adding up to more than 100% – show that a number of people use both French and Arabic interfaces.

By the end of 2009, 25 million mobile phone subscribers had sent 2.85 billion text messages. The corresponding figures for 2011 were 36.5 million/over 5 billion SMS, and for 2013 42.4 million/over 11 billion SMS. Just a comparison and a reminder about the situation ten years previously, in 2003: the number of SMS was estimated at 550 million, for 7.3 million mobile phones (see Caubet 2004). Internet penetration went up tremendously in one year, reaching 30% at the end of 2014, up from 17% in 2013.

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9 All the following figures are taken from the annual reports of the ANRT, and can be found at anrt.ma.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (end of)</th>
<th>Number of mobile phones subscribers</th>
<th>Number of SMS Issued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7.3 million</td>
<td>550 million (estim.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>25 million</td>
<td>2.85 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36.5 million</td>
<td>5 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>42.4 million</td>
<td>11 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>44.1 million</td>
<td>19.7 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the development of Arabic keyboards on smartphones and computers, people started using the Arabic script, but less so than Middle Eastern countries; while Morocco had reached 33% of the Arabic interface on Facebook at the end of 2014, Egypt already had 60% in May 2012.¹⁰

Recent figures give 12 million Facebook subscribers in Morocco in June 2016, with a 35.5% penetration rate for Facebook (See table 5.2 below).

To switch from a system of writing you master to another one, you need to have a strong motivation: either you find it easier to write in Arabic, or there are new technical possibilities (Arabic interface for Facebook and Arabic keyboards on smartphones), and your social network (your friends) is also switching to Arabic. But it may also be that you have made a political decision to write in dārija in Arabic script, because this is how your message will be conveyed to a maximum of people who are not really at ease reading Standard Arabic or French. Another reason, more political, is the idea of access to the people, in a post-‘Arab spring’ climate. The writers I interviewed are convinced that if you want to reach the people, you must write dārija in Arabic script, and this is what they have decided to do when posting on Facebook or when writing longer texts on a blog. They write in dārija for the following reasons: in order to be understood; because it is rich and authentic (ḥit ġanya u aṣila), because it is very powerful (qwiya); because you cannot lie to the people by using lughat l-khashab (< Fr. “langue de bois”, i.e. political cant).

¹⁰ See http://www.spotonpr.com/facebook-arabic-triumphs: this is the last data available on the question and it has probably grown in Morocco in 2016.
Some of the authors I have been following for over two years had a link with the 20th February movement (#Feb20); not with the more politicized students who would use Standard Arabic, the language of politics, but with the *oulad cha3b* of more popular origin. Some of them have been jailed on fallacious pretexts, like Mouad L’7a9ed who spent one year and eight months in jail over a period of three years, or Mohamed Sokrate, a blogger who was sentenced to two years in June 2012; a sign that shows how disturbing they were for the system. Others were members of the Feb20 *lejnat el-ibda3* (Creative Committee).

**New Literacy: Examples of Elaborate Texts**

The idea of writing and reading in *dārija* has become commonplace and does not constitute a problem any longer in civil society. The general attitude is ‘informality’ and ‘tolerance’, and the absence of an official norm gives total

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12 From Sept. 2011 to Sept. 2014; for more information, see [http://www.npr.org/2012/01/06/144798285/rappers-imprisonment-tests-moroccan-reforms](http://www.npr.org/2012/01/06/144798285/rappers-imprisonment-tests-moroccan-reforms) and [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/apr/17/el-haqed-morocco-hip-hop-revolutionary](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/apr/17/el-haqed-morocco-hip-hop-revolutionary). In January 2016, he asked for political asylum in Belgium, which he was granted in February 2017.
freedom to the writers, as to which script to choose. No one is being reproached for his choice or for his spelling; everyone naturally understands the others without raising any issue.

What I present here is new material that I have been collecting since 2014; I witnessed a qualitative change in the texts published on the internet: writing of long elaborate prose texts in dārīja, passing from basic communication to literacy proper.

What is remarkable is the massive character of the process – which concerns millions of youths in Morocco, and in the Arab world – for languages without any official recognition, and whose status is given by the civil society and not by the state. I will present three authors: 1) rapper Mouad L7a9d, 2) blogger Harabish and 3) slammer Mustapha Slameur (for a wider range of authors, see Caubet forthcoming 2017).

**Mouad**

Mouad is a rapper, but in February 2015, he published two stories, “T7arbichat” number one and two,¹⁴ where he writes about his memories of the first demonstration of February 20, 2011. The title comes from “7arabich”, i.e. the name the members of the lejnat el-ibda3 (Creation Committee) of the Feb20 chose for themselves. We will also see texts by a close friend of his, who blogs under the name Harabish (see below).

In late 2015, Mouad decided to leave Morocco and come to Europe, because it was impossible for him to express himself there: well-known as he is, he had not been able to perform in a concert of his own; they were all banned. The only times he went on stage was when he was invited unannounced by fellow rappers, like L’Moutchou (Mobydick).¹⁵ The general tendency is not towards solidarity with Mouad L7a9d among rappers, and very often on the two-faced grounds that he is not a good rapper ...

In Belgium, he wrote more prose texts and on 13 February 2016, he announced the publication on his l7a9d page: “Stay tuned for Mouad l7a9d’s exclusive diary on goud.ma”:

The series is published under the title “Men 3okacha l Molenbeek” (From Okacha to Molenbeek); the publication started on 18 February 2016 and came out regularly two or three times a week (parts 1 to 15).

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¹⁴ Text 1 has 464 words, 2413 signs; T7arbichat means stories about 7arabich guys.
¹⁵ See https://www.facebook.com/lmoutchou/?fref=ts.
With the present text, we are witnessing his first steps in the domain of writing. This extract is the second part of *T7arbichat* number 1 (in bold the terms whose spelling will be discussed below):

I said to myself, all this is going to end, it must stay lit, we must shout; the time of silence and fear has ended. And in an instant, a guy named Lhocine – whom I would get to know later – jumped up and he told a guy who was filming 'Stop filming!' and he started to shout 'Let the Makhzen leave!' and people repeat it after him; the guy with the camera went home and a girl came in, and she too started to speak.
After a while, we saw the van and mikes being plugged in, and nearly everyone gathered on the left corner of the Pigeon Plaza, and a voice could be heard, someone speaking; I went with my friends to see what was happening, we found a group of people who had brought the van and put a ladder to climb on top, and a guy talking; they all had stuck badges that said 20 Feb, and they had formed a circle, forbidding people to get in if they were not wearing that badge on their shoulder ...

Awwaaah, aš had ši ... škon hadu? Ana o 3ešranī b9a fina l7al; škon hadu 3laš idiro b7al hakka? Škon lli 3tahom l7e99 yheđro b-smiyt ši 7aja? kifaš nađo ras-hom 9iyada 3lina?

Heyyy, what's this? Who are these guys? We didn't like it, my friends and me ... Who are they? Why are they doing this? Who gave them the right to speak in the name of a movement? How did they find themselves ruling over us?

We started shouting, my friends and me, we weren't pleased with the situation, we started provoking them with their slogans, so one guy wearing a badge came up to us

I shall go on later, if it pleases us ...

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Expressivity is also marked by duplication of letters in Arabic script.
He actually published a series of 23 texts between February and May 2016 on goud.ma.

**Harabish**

Harabish, the author of the blog حريشات من البعد الآخر 7arbich men l-bozd l-aḥer (“7arbichates” from another dimension), is a very close friend of Mouad and he has engaged with him in artistic projects. He is present on several clips and has recorded a number of tracks with him since his 2014 album, *Waloo* and “Nothing”, his voice is more on the reggae side.

Previously, he was trained as a blogger in Casablanca for a project entitled “Reinforcing the capacities of Arab bloggers and journalists for the promotion of Human Rights”, in 2013 by the Arab Institute for Human Rights, a regional NGO based in Tunisia. His blog won one of the three awards presented on 14 December 2013 in Tunis. His idea was to blog in his own language, as Harabish puts it:

هذ المدونة ديال وحد مبتدأ، التدوينات بالادارة المغربية القصيدة، كنتناقش مواضيع
اجتماعية وسياسية ومواضيع خري لا علاقة، تقدر تعمجكم تقدر متعجكم الموهيب هو أنا
عاجاني.

This blog is the work of a novice; the entries are written in harsh Moroccan Arabic; it deals with social and political issues, and also with other subjects that have nothing to do with this. It may appeal to you and it may not appeal to you; anyways, what’s important is that it appeals to me.

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17 Stories by a 7arabich, i.e. a member of Feb20 Creation committee.
18 See the tracks on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGFprugyos0.
19 168 bloggers were trained coming from nine Arab countries from February 2012 to January 2014 by the Arab Institute for Human Rights; Harabish created his blog during the training and went on writing. In the following report, this training is developed; see particularly p. 4:
The blog counts 29 texts (20,700 words). It has been running since 26 February 2013 and the last text was posted on 3 August 2015. When a new text is posted, it gets over a thousand readings, according to Harabish.

We'll present two extracts from a text called مشاهد (scenes),20 where he makes abundant use of understatement, humorously stating in fous7a that nothing is true: “لا شيء حقيقي”

 المشهد الأول:
دخل للكوميسارية، قصد البيرو دياش الشاف و گاليه (ملی الشاف شاف فيه بوحد
الشوفة دياش شنو باغی؟)
- یغیت نديکلاری بالضیعة
الشاف: شنو ضاع لیک؟
- ضاعت شيء حاضمیها وطن

El-mašhed l-uwwel:
Dẖel le-l-komisariya, qṣed l-l-biro dyal š-šaf o gal lih (melli š-šaf šaf fih b wa7ed š-šofan dyal šño bagi?)
  – Bжить n-dikli (Fr. déclarer) be-d-diý3a
  Š-šaf: šno daemon lik?
  – daemon ši 7aja smiytha “waṭan”

Scene one:
He went in the police station and went directly to the chief’s office (when the chief gave him a look that meant: what does he want?)
  – I want to declare a loss
The chief: What have you lost?
  – What is lost is something named “homeland”

 المشهد الثاني:
مشهد: ولماش، المكان: طوبیس عامر بزاف ولي واقعین کدر من الی گالسین
  - طلبات للطوبیس و بقات كنشور فيه.
El-mešhed t-tani:
(Mešhed: Samt, lmakan: ṭobis ẓamer bezzaf o lli wağfin kter men lli galsin)
  – ťel3at le-۷-ṭobis o ẓagat katşof fiḥ.
  – ۷ta howa ẓagayṣof fiḥa ۷it ۷rɛfha, hiya l-bent lli ۷endo fel-lazi7at al-۷asdi9a fel-faycebook, o lli dima katkteb ۷awl maw9u3 el-mosawat bin r-rajel o le-mra o belli rahom b7al b7al, lli idiro r-rajel, tdiro ta hiya.
  – ma zal katşof fiḥ ta hiya o ۷essat belli rekkez ma3ha bezzaf o howa kayṣof fiha.
  – tlef bezzaf o ma b9aş źaref chno ydīr.
  – ۷essat bih metwutter bezzaf o ma b9aş merta7.
  – Ma ۷a ma idir, jbed ktab men škarto bda kaygra fiṭh baš ma yeb9aş yṣof fiḥa o hiya katdir fiḥa šofat el-mešš le-۷jaʃan, baʃ ynœd o ۷haliha tegles f-blaʃto ۷it kayn ez-z7am o ۷it ġatt3ani bezzaf ۷it hiya ġir bent.

Scene two:
(Scene: silence; place: a very full bus where more people are standing than seating)
  – She climbed on the bus and she kept staring at him.
  – He too, started looking at her, because he knew her; she is the girl he has on his list of friends on Facebook, who is always writing about the subject of equality between man and woman, and that they are the same: what man does, she can do it too.
  – She goes on staring at him because she felt that he is thinking of her and that he is staring at her.
  – He was lost and did not know what to do.
– She felt that he was very tense and he was not at ease anymore.
– He did not find what to do, so he picked up a book from his bag and began to read, in order not to look at her anymore; she was giving him a hungry cat’s look for him to get up and let her sit in his place, because there was a crowd, and it would take care of her, because she is a girl …

Harabish sometimes posts long texts or extracts from his blog texts on his Facebook profiles on which he has nearly 5000 “friends”. He is a student and it is not always simple for him to connect, with very little means to do so.

_Slam Poetry_

Slam Poetry or ‘Spoken Word’ is poetry in performance; it started in the 1990s in the United States with African-Americans poets who were explicitly following what the Beat Generation and the “Négritude” poets had done previously when they declaimed their texts.21

El Mssati, when he organized Café Slam in February 2015, gave a good definition of Spoken Word for young Moroccans using youth language and comparing it to rap:22

hint slam ra machi howa iketba, slam ra howa dek soont lli, fech katkoun tale3 open mic o kat7awel t3aber 3la dek text lli nta katbo, o fech katbghit sjejlo, t9der tsemih Spoken word. Poetry ... (his original spelling)

because slam is not just writing, slam is that stuff where, when you go on stage for an Open Mic, and you’re trying to recite that text that you wrote and when you want to record it; you can call it Spoken word. Poetry ...

He organized a Thé Slam in 2016,23 and this is how he addressed the potential poets (original writing), and what were the languages at stake (sic: their original spelling):

Vas-y Parle.. B’dârija TKLM personne ne te stopera ! Le Micro est ouvert pour tous ceux qui souhaite déclamer, partager leur poésie, leur texte et leur état d’ame en toute liberté loin de toute censure; que ça soit en darija, francais, anglais ou meme bien japonais venez nous faire part de

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22 For the complete text, see Caubet forthcoming 2017.
23 https://www.facebook.com/events/1743195605924179.
Poets compete with intense emotion during public Slam sessions. This genre is very new in Morocco and is found more in the form of videos posted on internet than performed live, due to the lack of events. The languages used can be MSA, French but mostly dārija, sometimes with some codeswitching.

Mustapha Slameur is a former rapper who started very young in the late 90’s under the name Steph Raggaman. He began slamming around 2012 and he was the first to publicize this art on the social networks where is very active. He regularly posts videos of slam texts on his youtube channel, Le Slam de Mustapha. In 2015 he initiated slam workshops at the Institut Français of El Jadida, the town where he works as a teacher. On his Facebook profile, he regularly posts long texts or very short videos giving his point of view, or defending street arts in general, and a street artist from Algiers in particular (January 16, 2016). He has texts in French, and more recently in Standard Arabic (because he aims at Francophone and Arab audiences), but the language he uses most naturally is dārija, which he calls “al-Magharibiya; en référence au Maghreb. A la base on n’est pas des Arabes, mais des Maghariba, Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc”, referring to the Maghreb and not just Morocco. And he adds, defining the language: “Donc forcément il y a des mots en français; une super grande ouverture sur l’espagnol”.

24 Come on! Speak up, in Dārija, tklm (talk), no one will stop you! The mike will be open to all those who want to declaim, to share poetry, their text and their state of mind in complete freedom, far from any censorship; whetheit in Dārija, French, English, or even in Japanese, come and share your poetry. We’ll be happy to meet you ... Transcription of Dārija: Yallah, hder, tkellem, ta 7ad ma ɣayrebsek! Hadi hiya el-forSa baš ey wag7ed baği yeqber, yešre3 o yšarek mzana el-7asis dyalo ydirha b-koll 7orinya o bidon ragha. B-ed-dārija, b fronsi, b-longli o 7ta b-el-jaboniya, ila micro meto7 likom! Ajio biha ssebt 13 febrayer l Café les Artistes baš tšharko mzana s-še3yr dyalkom.

25 All the quotations come from an exchange we had on facebook messenger, 18 January 2016, mostly in French. “Initially, we’re not Arabs, but ‘Maghariba’ (Maghribians). “So inevitably there are French words; a great opening on Spanish”.
Slameur claims the right to mix languages, because a) it is common in North Africa; and b) as an artist, who defines himself as a ‘rime hunter’: “Je suis un chasseur de rime. Entre arabe, dârîja, espagnol ou français, Je me sers. La sonorité prime et les mots ont une charge f le sens spécial qui donne forcément un punch aux phrases.” He also uses English (see below). When he reads out his texts, this mixing is extremely well-done and sounds perfectly natural, and very dramatic as is the habit with Slam. He does not publish his texts apart from the videos. The lyrics have to be found on internet and for the title chosen here, it was published by Don Badr. Nevertheless, we will examine the way this person writes dârîja.

Slam is by definition ‘spoken word’ and, unlike the previous texts, it is not meant to be read. I am including it as a form of elaborate text, composed by an author. Apart from Mustapha, young artists have emerged in 2014 or 2015, like Hamza El Mssati (whom we saw above) or girls, like Salma and Loubna, who post videos regularly. I chose to give long extracts of a text. It is the first of a series called “Taire-bouche” (a word play with the Moroccan word terbus “Fez, brimless cap”, and the French 'Taire bouche’ [lit. hush up-mouth]) – a collaboration with three other authors who are rappers, L’Morphine, Mehdi Black Wind and Magma (published in September 2014, counting over 251,000 views in February 2016). Mustapha speaks against injustices, corruption, the lack of social equality, the lack of trust in politicians, etc.; all these themes are also present in some rap texts (see Caubet 2010b). His motto, printed on T-shirts, is self-explanatory: kedbou3lina ... كذبنا عليّا “they lied to us”. This is an extract of Mustapha Slameur’s piece; I must thank Mustapha for the help he gave me for the translation:

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26 “I am a rime hunter. I help myself to Arabic, Darija, French, Spanish. The sound has priority and gives words a load in a special sense, and it inevitably adds some punch to the sentences.”

27 The lyrics, as published by Don Badr, count 420 views: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4afbLTUIS2Q.

28 For Salma Slameuse, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPDn_JSNNtS; for Loubna La Slameuse, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKo_WSmjChU, where we get a glimpse of her note book, which shows that she writes Dârîja by hand in Latin script; for Mssati, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whsj-LEX_jI, Slam f Dlam “Slam in the Dark”, with the lyrics in Latin script.

29 For more extracts see Caubet forthcoming.

I wish for a world where people do not stare angrily at each other, where they do not spit aggressively at each other in the street, A world, where everyone minds his own business and cultivates his garden.

In this country, our mothers don’t have time to experience the “baby blues”,

All you do is give birth and throw him on the street and (for men) swell your balls by eating almonds.

In this country they want you to steal and to sell chips at the corner

Even if everyone talks about religion, the minds are filled with sins.

In this country, the youth is lost in a virtual world,

Living with “Sharapova’s string”, they don’t care about the way she plays (tennis)

Everyone, my friends, wants a sky “blue Ferrari”

Je m’en fous - Need for speed
Candy Crush
نص حياة ديا ناس ... النص لأخور
ولى علاء الدين من غليشة (متصترطلتش)
James Dean
GPS

فهاد البلاد بنادم موضرو وخا عندو
صافي على ل - l’buzz
d vague
surf é

مرحببا بكم كاملين ف قلباي
كلكي لوش
la fista social club
“Need for speed” (a video game) on my “phone, I don’t care” I’ve driven nearly every type of car. 

Half his life was spent sleeping, the other half playing “Candy Crush”, “James Dean” or Ala’ Eddine, who will he choose to be? (I can’t swallow this!)

In this country people are lost even if they have a “GPS”

Just “surf on the wave of the buzz” and buy Bayn and “TPS”

Welcome to you all to the “turn around” your “Vista31 social club”;

everything is weird (Fr. louche)

People’s mouths smell bad because of the lies, they need “a mouthwash”.

The fqih … the fqih, whose benediction we are waiting for, entered the mosque with his shoes

What can you expect from a “chromosome” who only educates by way of fatwas?

Because what is forbidden to us, we keep giving it a “César”,32 everything that needs a “César”

He (a politician) got up and took the election signs and posters, and he stripped us of our sheets (and blankets)

31 Word play between gelleb el fista “turn your jacket around”, i.e. “change your mind”, and (Buena) Vista Social Club.

32 The “Césars” are the equivalent of the Oscars in France.
The “arrivist” (social climber) looks very nice, as usual, and the posters are well printed. The “tie” suits him nicely, wow … from “bisara” (“broad-pea soup”, the poor man’s meal) to “Carbonara”. He lives in a street where the pizza “delivery guy” does not set foot. He set up a “tent” in Dar El Amane, near the yellow kiosk. Because we are used to publish a “hashtag” when we set a knife in the watermelon. He is a tough guy, but it is impossible to visit the Mellah at three in the morning. There are men, and there are “dogs for life” wearing a ring in their hands …

Although spoken word is meant to be performed orally, it goes through a phase where it is written down, either on paper or on a keyboard by its author before it is read aloud. Its poetic texts are considered elaborate and pertain to literature.

**Remarks on the Spelling of dārija**

The spelling of dārija differs from one author to the other, but they are many more points in common than there are differences. Mouad l7aqd, for example, has a much more phonetic approach than Harabish and Don Bader, who wrote down Mustapha Slameur’s text.

**Regularities**

The texts are not vocalized and bear no diacritics: short vowels, germinations and assimilations are not written down.

*prepositions* $f$ and $b$, are attached to the following nominal group: فهاد البلاد “in this country”.

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33 In the popular neighbourhood of Hay Mohammadi in Casablanca; meaning that this the only way he can spend his holiday.

34 In the old medina of Casablanca.
The spelling of /g/

The /g/ is written ڭ, as is normally the case in Morocco whether it is etymologically a qaf: (gal lih “he told him”), or a jîm: (galsin, yegles “sitting, he sits”) (Caubet 1993:12).

The future particle

The future particle in dārija is igraphy. 35 It is often reduced to ґa, leading to the same question as for the preverb ka- (see below); ґa- can be spelled غ or غ. The most common spelling is the short form:

- Mouad uses the full form: ґadi netzerref zalih “I will get to know him”; and the reduced one: ґa-yala “it will end”.
- Harabish uses the reduced form: ґa-teyya “she will get tired”.
- Mustapha Slameur’s text has it written it with an alif: lemen ґa yšbeh “who will he look like?”

Variation

There is variation in some points of phonology or morphosyntax where there is hesitation, and often the same scription is inconsistent in his choices, but never to the point of incomprehension or ambiguity.

Assimilation

- The article

When the first consonant of the noun is “solar”, it is assimilated to the “л” of the preceding article, and is perceived as a gemination. the article can be elided: ٠ادبملادحاو wa7ed-l-le7da > wa7ed le7da; but in the next paragraph, it is written: ٠ادبملادحاو (Mouad “a badge”)

Harabish also writes both ways; elided: بواحد الشروفة ٠ادبملادحاو, and present: ٠ادبملادحاو In Mustapha’s text, the article is nearly always written ٠ادبملادحاو (d)-dماج
The verb *gal* and its complement *li-h* are written as one word: كاليه 
(*galih* < *gal lih* Harabish); the final *l* of the verb and the *l*-preposition are assimilated, producing a gemination, thus written as one letter. This is extremely frequent on the web, in Latin script too: *galihom galik*

Mustapha’s text has a similar case (see negation below): مكوصييش

**Treatment of interdentals**

Etymological interdentals realized in *dārija* as stops, are written phonetically, especially in the demonstratives: بحال هكا، هاد شي، هادو

In Harabish’s texts as well: هد، حيث، الثاني

In the slam text, the demonstratives are written as stops, but for the rest, there are some interdentals (that are realized as stops): فهاد البلد;

There are other interdentals, like: الثلاثة and Mustapha Slameur’s motto, which is even printed on T-shirts and gives an idea of his position, is: “they lied to us”: كذبو علينا

**The relative *lli***

The relative *lli/elli*, is written in slightly different manners.

- Harabish writes it regularly in a simple form: لى; but curiously he writes the conjunction *melli* (> *men elli*), in an etymological (and complicated) way: من ملي، when ملي would be a much simpler solution ...
- Mouad writes is like Harabish: لى.
- In Mustapha's texts, it is regularly written with two “l”: لى.

Both spellings are common in *dārija*.

The variation probably reflects a difference in style or in level of speech, Mouad’s first texts being close to oral speech,36 whereas the others are more elaborate, even in their writing, with literary ambitions; but, they are all constructed texts. All three of them are used to posting fairly long texts on their

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36 As we saw earlier he is presently working on more elaborate texts in view of publication.
Facebook profile, where they express a point of view or comment an event. Mouad and Mustapha have smartphones from which they can write directly. When asked to read one of his texts, Mouad read it directly from his phone. Harabish writes on a computer.

They all have a long habit of reading and writing in dārīja, and so have their numerous followers. On Facebook, the page l7aqd has 52,000 followers, Le Slam de Mustapha, 16,000 followers. On Youtube, in February 2016, Mustapha has up to 785,000 views for Chri Chri, 255,000 for Taïre-Bouche and over 125,000 for other slams. L7aqd has nearly 2,000,000 views (11 February 2016), for the clip Waloo, on which Harabish sings with him. Tracks from the Waloo 2014 album have from 125,000 to 792,000 views on youtube.

A New Literacy or Just a Step Forward?

Whether it be in Slam or in elaborate prose texts, dārīja is being used and accepted more widely and openly than ever in today’s Morocco. The conservative government tried to impose an Arabization of TV programmes, launching a debate on the new Media “Book of technical Specifications” (Fr. “Cahier des charges”), among which the disappearance of French and the massive extension of the use of Arabic from 2012. Initially it imposed 80% of Arabic (and Hassaniya!) and 20% of Amazigh for Al Aoula. The TV channels (mostly 2m) cunningly translated “Arabic” into the massive introduction of “Moroccan Arabic”, and developed what they had already started doing from 2009: the dubbing of Turkish and South American series in dārīja (see Miller 2012b and Ziamari & Barontini 2013). They also used darija in magazines and programmes and in political debates.

Conclusion

As early as June 2014, the journalist Reda Zaireg (2014) wrote a paper in the weekly Telquel, called “Tendance: dārīja, langue littéraire” (A new trend: dārīja, a literary language. A prison Journal, poverty and exploitation chronicles, memories of a prostitute ... texts written in dārīja and posted on social networks are becoming a real literary phenomenon):

37 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dT4yOKnT5zI. See the tracks from the album Waloo by Okacha Family, Mouad’s band: https://www.youtube.com/channel /UCkaZdJwJxhXqHoRtPLsqdTA.
38 Initially it imposed 80% of Arabic (and Hassaniyal) and 20% of Amazigh for Al Aoula.
For a few months, writing in dārija has had the wind in its sails. With the help of the social networks, it has bypassed the traditional publishers who are reluctant to welcome dārija, managing to reach its audience directly. Slam is meant to be performed and heard, whereas blogs and posts are meant to be read on screens. Long texts have to present enough interest – whether through their content or their form (aesthetic, literary) – to foster a desire to read. This reading goes beyond the stage of basic communication and has to be dealt with as a novel passage to literacy.

If “reading is the motivated and fluent coordination of word recognition and comprehension,” how does one cope with rapid word recognition when there is variation in the spelling of lexemes and grammatical morphemes for a language – dārija – that has undergone an informal pragmatic D.I.Y. language-planning with no institution to standardize it? How does one acquire fluency when there hasn’t been any school-type learning and when you had to teach yourself to read? In the Moroccan case, this can only be done through practice and experimentation. Gunvor Mejdell (personal communication) suggests the use of the sociological concept of ‘conventionalisation’, through collective behaviour and repeated usage; youth read and copy from each other, so that separate actions have an impact on the community.

Together with its new visibility in the civil society, intense practice has lead dārija to being written more and more naturally and profusely on Internet, resulting in the first strands of literacy. People are gaining security, fluidity and fluency in their handling of written dārija. For the kind of elaborate texts that I have examined here, it would be interesting to confirm this hypothesis by the organisation of reading tests in order to study the speed of comprehension for completely unknown dārija long prose texts. Over the years, most connected Moroccans have reached a decisive stage where written expression and creation is at work and the exchanges have acquired a deeper dimension. The wave is moving fast with new authors trying out dārija; and among them, Ahlem B., who has been publishing short stories in French on her blog and on Facebook since 2012. On 28 February 2016, she published the translation of the first story of character Sam Lgaouri in dārija written in Arabic script.

Another kind of elaborate text has appeared under the form of what the authors call “educative” videos that use dārija for extremely technical and legal

40 Also see Caubet forthcoming 2017.
explications on societal problems. A site like *Aji Tfham* (An educative Site)*42* tackles a question – like the banning of VoIP communication*43* their video is a scientific demonstration in *dārija*, with fast and precise diction; drawings, words or expressions in Arabic script in *dārija* (MSA or French when necessary for technical reasons), and long extracts of legal texts in MSA can come to illustrate. In an eight minutes’ video, the issue is dealt with and made clear to every citizen: a performance ... in *dārija*!

But is there, or should there be, an ambition to move into the publishing world? Can literacy on keyboards and screens be exported to printed paper and books? These texts are only published on the internet for the time being. Some authors dream of a printed version, a book, which would give a different social status to their writings; but is the world of publishing ready to cross the (language) barrier? And anyway, Internet offers a much wider audience than could ever be given to a book in Morocco.

Is this kind of practice the gateway in the process of promoting a standard variety, even when the language has no recognition? It is felt as a necessary passage by the authors in their wish to express themselves and share their feelings on screens; they produce long writings in *dārija* without thinking about their status or their potential role, but as a natural but decisive step in the promotion of their language, *dārija*.

### References


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43 VoIP communication was blocked the Moroccan National Telecommunications Regulatory Agency (ANRT) in February 2016. *Aji Tfham* video has over 250,000 views (accessed 18 Oct. 2016): https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PL3-8epn8USDASNYWS3VwS6RIl_Ddg6Ar&v=Qt-V59aebHNg. VoIP was finally restored in November 2016 on the occasion of Cop 22 in Marrakech.


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