

Written *Dārīja*: “māšī ma‘qūl taktub-ha bi-ḥurūf al-luġa al-‘arabiyya!” *It Is not Logical to Write It with the Arabic Letters!* Media Reception of the *Zakoura Dictionary Project*

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Abstract This study investigates written linguistic practices emerging from public debate in Morocco. Although *Dārīja* is increasingly used in writing, especially in online platforms, most of its users still stigmatize it. In 2017 the Zakoura Foundation edited the first monolingual dictionary of *Dārīja*, a fervently debated initiative. So, this analysis aims to show the limits of such codification initiative, and factors which affect language ideology in Morocco. Therefore, a corpus of articles and readers' comments on the *Zakoura Dictionary* of two Moroccan digital newspapers, *Goud* and *Hespress*, has been analyzed, quantitatively and qualitatively, in order to compare the opinions about language and the language varieties in which they were expressed.

Keywords Standardization. Written *Dārīja*. Conventionalization. Orthographic Norms. Language Ideologies. Moroccan Digital Newspapers.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Theoretical Framework and Contextualization. – 2.1 (Informal) Standardization. *Dārīja* as a Written Language. – 2.2 The Centre for the Promotion of *Dārīja* and the *Zakoura Dictionary*. – 3 Corpus and Methodology. – 4 Analysis and Interpretations. – 4.1 Articles and Comments. ‘For’ and ‘Against’ Opinions. – 4.2 Articles and Comments. Linguistic Choices. – 5 Conclusions.



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1 Introduction

Briouate, *baghrir* and *ghriba*, three Moroccan Arabic names for traditional sweets, generated a fierce debate at the start of the Moroccan school year in 2018. The three terms in Moroccan Arabic (henceforth *Dārīja*), were written in Arabic script and published in school textbooks. This incident fuelled a long-standing controversy as the public opinion still rejects the use of *Dārīja* as a formalized and legitimized didactic and pedagogical tool in the school system.

Despite recent studies, such as the Fafo Report 2016 (Kebede, Kindt 2016), which proves that the written production in *Dārīja* occupies increasingly more public space (advertising, social networks, online newspapers), standardization and conventionalization of written *Dārīja* orthography remains a sensitive topic. So much so that the publication of the *Qāmūs ad-dārīġa al-maġrebiyya* (Dictionary of Moroccan *Dārīja*, henceforth *Zakoura Dictionary*, the first monolingual dictionary of *Dārīja* in Arabic script published by the Zakoura Foundation in 2017, has reopened the traditional and lengthy diatribe between promoters of *Dārīja* and defenders of *Fuṣṣḥā* (Standard Arabic).¹

Within the wider context of the sociocultural and economic changes caused by the digital revolution, this study aims to investigate the language ideologies that Moroccans (both journalists and common users) express in their written practices.

More precisely, this analysis focuses on comments and articles published online and aims, on the one hand, to observe the limits of the Zakoura Foundation initiative concerning the question of the orthographic codification of the *Dārīja* variety; on the other hand, to show how linguistic practices reflect contrasting uses and ideologies with respect to the standardization process proposed by the *Zakoura Dictionary*. This comparative analysis makes it possible to observe discrepancies between actual written practice and ideological behaviour on language attitudes.

Drawing material from the two Moroccan online newspapers, *Goud* and *Hespress*, a linguistic and ideological analysis of the media debate announcing the publication of the *Zakoura Dictionary* will be carried out. From a methodological point of view, a corpus of 10 articles and 301 readers' comments will be analyzed. The quantitative analysis will outline 'for' and 'against' opinions on the matter, and the most frequent linguistic (see syntactic and morphological) traits used by journalists and readers when writing (also) in *Dārīja*

¹ The present study represents a more comprehensive and detailed version of the contribution presented during the last conference of the Association Internationale de Dialectologie Arabe (Kutaisi, Georgia, 10-13 June 2019). The topics discussed in this paper are also part of the ongoing PhD research by the Author, which began in 2016, on the syntactic and stylistic variation of the Arabic language in Moroccan digital newspapers.

in Arabic script; while the qualitative analysis will focus on investigating the gap between attitudes (ideologies) and practices (written languages used) that rises from the public debate regarding the standardization and the conventionalization of *Darija*.

Therefore, the first part of this study concerns the theoretical framework concerning the formal versus informal standardization process of languages focusing on Arabic and on the conventionalization of written *Darija*, in particular. Greater attention will be paid to the presentation of *Zakoura Dictionary* and to the codification initiatives of the Zakoura Foundation. The second part of this study will be dedicated to the linguistic and ideological analysis of the selected corpus. Finally, the third part will focus on results and conclusions.

2 Theoretical Framework and Contextualization

2.1 (Informal) Standardization. *Darija* as a Written Language

Standardization, i.e. “the imposition of uniformity upon a class of object [...], such as language” (Milroy 2001, 531), is a phenomenon closely linked not only to the field of linguistics (with respect to the internal structure of language systems), but also to sociolinguistics (with respect to extralinguistic factors, such as the relationship between norm(s) and prestige). The standardization process as shown by Haugen (1966) involves at least four stages: “selection, codification, acceptance, and elaboration of a linguistic norm” (Haugen 1966, 922). Therefore, whereas “codification” and “elaboration of a linguistic norm” are strictly related to linguistic mechanisms, “selection” and “acceptance” are purely ideological and political choices. In other words, a (formal/official) standard variety ‘rises up’ from the status of dialect to the rank of language as a result of a language planning process promoted by actors who “select” a language variety and whose ‘authority’ is “accepted” by the language community. Hence, this claim inevitably implies that the standardization process is not ideologically neutral and is strictly related to political issues as, for instance, the development of nationalism,² as also argued by Haugen (1966).

In this perspective, Haugen’s standardization outline represents the formal standardization process – ‘standardization from above’ – a

² In the Arab-speaking countries and in other linguistic realities, the Arabic language (in both its standard and colloquial varieties) plays a symbolic role in the diffusion of nationalist ideologies, whether pan-Arab, regional or national-state nationalism(s) (Kallas 2011). This was also highlighted by Suleiman ([1996] 2013) concerning the Egyptianized form of Standard Arabic as a key tool for national identity formation among Egyptian nationalists in the perspective of nation-state construction.

linguistic codification process promoted by authoritative actors, in opposition to the ‘standardization from below’ – informal standardization or “conventionalization” of common shared language practices informally accepted by the members of a language community as outlined by Caubet (2017a) for the informal standardization of *Dārīja*.

Related issues associated to the formal standardization and conventionalization processes concern the differentiation between oral and written languages. In fact, as stated in Haugen “[whether written languages] establish models across time and space, [spoken languages] are subject to [...] linguistic change” (1966, 929). This statement confirms that the concept of ‘uniformity’, in opposition to ‘variation’, is central to the process of standardization, as confirmed by Auer on European languages, when he defines a standard variety as:

a common language, i.e. one which (ideally) shows no geographical variation in the territory in which it is used; [...] an H variety, i.e. it has overt prestige and is used in situations which require a formal way of speaking (if a spoken standard exists at all), as well as in writing; and [...] codified [variety], i.e. “right” or “wrong” plays an important role in the way in which speakers orient towards it. (Auer 2011, 486)

In addition, in a typological perspective, Auer (2011) also describes five emergence models of European national standard languages from the evolution of their dialectal varieties. In particular, the model he calls “Type A” (endoglossic), or “medial diglossia”, reflects the model of diglossia existing in Arabic-speaking contexts, such as the Moroccan one. More precisely, he states:

the standard variety is perceived to be related to the vernaculars for which it provides a roof, and which we can now call dialects. [...] [A]lthough the relationship between standard and dialect remains diglossic, this diglossia assigns the varieties to different media: the endoglossic standard is used in the written medium, the dialects in the spoken medium. (Auer 2011, 489)

Auer’s definition effectively reflects Ferguson’s concept of diglossia (Ferguson 1959), and the functional and strictly dichotomous distinction between the varieties H (‘high’, written, official, and prestigious languages) and L (‘low’, spoken, unofficial, and less prestigious languages). Therefore, in the diglossic context of the Arabic language,³

3 It must be borne in mind that linguistic practices, both through oral and written medium, reflect a more flexible and stratified situation between the two H and L poles of the diglossic continuum, rather than this strictly dichotomous schematization. For a

the Arabic *Fuṣḥā*, considered in this study the formal standard variety of Arabic language, represents the ‘standard norm’ – the product of an institutionally and socially accepted process of selection and codification (Mejdell 2017) – for written production.

As a matter of fact, in Morocco, as well as in other Arab countries, colloquial and/or informal varieties are becoming commoner in the written production, and as a consequence of this phenomenon a development has been shown to occur in these linguistic communities. From this perspective, Mejdell (2017) refers to “destandardisation” as

a development [...] where the validity of the standard is significantly challenged, in practice, as the sole variety for (public) written purposes. (Mejdell 2017, 70).

Nowadays, such development is becoming more and more current in the Moroccan language community, where middle⁴ and spoken varieties migrate from being purely oral to serving several written purposes.

Therefore, as briefly mentioned above, the process of informal standardization, or ‘standardization from below’, clearly emerges in the passage of *Dārīja* from a strictly colloquial variety to a written language. Precisely, Caubet (2017a) refers to this passage as conventionalization from a sociological perspective, claiming that

collective behavior and repeated usage [let] youth read and copy from each other, so that separate actions have an impact on the community. (Caubet 2017a, 137)

Analyzing the contemporary written practices of Moroccan artists (bloggers, journalists and slam poets), she pointed out that writing *Dārīja* in Arabic script⁵ implies two correlated dynamics: the promo-

more detailed literature about Arabic variation and its diglossic continuum see Ferguson (1959, [1991] 1996), Blanc (1960), Badawi (1973), Meiseles (1980), Hudson (2002), Boussofara Omar (2011). See also Bassiouney (2009, 2018) on diglossia in the perspective of code switching, and Mejdell (2018) for a typological perspective.

4 The narrow definition of Middle Arabic consists of “the language of numerous Arabic texts, distinguished by its linguistically (and therefore stylistically) mixed nature, as it combines standard and colloquial features with others of a third type, neither standard nor colloquial” (Lentin 2011). On Middle/Mixed Arabic see Lentin 1997, 2008; Larcher 2001; Mejdell 2006; Doss 2008. As for Moroccan dialectology, Youssi (1992) described the common features of a middle spoken variety of *Dārīja* he called “Arabe Moderne Marocain” (AMM), that is “Modern Moroccan Arabic”, namely, the educated variety of spoken *Dārīja*.

5 Moroccans first used *Dārīja* in written digital communication in 1999 in SMS, chats and online forums using a mix of Latin letters and numbers in order to reproduce a written form of spoken Arabic varieties. This written realization was called *Ṣaransiya*, from the term used by Zaidane (1980) indicating the *Dārīja*-French code switching, or

tion of *Darija* as a language ideologically belonging to a common cultural identity in all domains, and the diffusion of common writing practices (Caubet 2018). So, if ideologically the use of written *Darija* in cultural production is relevant for belonging to “Moroccanness” (Caubet 2017b), this common practice – more frequently visible and shared among digital platforms and social media –, lead to the development of an informal ‘codification’ of *Darija* norms (orthographically, lexically and syntactically). In other words, the spreading of common practices among users facilitated the process of conventionalization of a non-institutionalized *Darija* norm for writing, as well as a mutual acceptance of these norms among their users, i.e. standardization from below.

However, it is important to bear in mind that *Darija*, even if it is spreading in written productions, is far from becoming an ‘official standard language’, and most of its users still consider it a stigmatized variety. Nevertheless, several studies already investigated the processes involved in the passage from oral to written *Darija* both in formal and informal productions (Caubet 2004; Benítez-Fernández 2006; Hoogland 2013), as well as in literature and in the press (Miller 2012, 2015, 2017; Caubet 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Brigui 2016; Hoogland 2018). Indeed, most written *Darija* productions show that *Darija* is increasingly used in combination with *Fuṣṣḥā*, the standard variety traditionally used in the domain of written productions.

So, if on the one hand *Darija* spread across the public space (advertising, social networks and digital platforms) through its written form and evolved from being the oral variety expressing traditional and popular culture to the language of modernity (Miller 2017), on the other hand its users show contrasting views with respect to its legitimation in all domains and media.

In particular, the following analysis will outline the reactions and the criticisms of public opinion to the *Zakoura Dictionary* (Mgharf-aoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017), representing a semi-institutionalized attempt of codification of written *Darija*. As it will emerge from the analyzed data, the *Zakoura Dictionary* project represents an attempt of ‘standardization from above’ whose authority does not seem to have been recognized by the Moroccan language community.

more recently *e-darija*, since 2006, according to Caubet (2018, 389). Whereas until 2008-10 new technologies did not allow people to use Arabic script, after the digital revolution (2010) technological devices were implemented to use Arabic alphabet, so people started to switch to Arabic script and use *Darija* as a modern living language in writing and creative productions. For more details see Caubet 2004, 2017a, 2017b, 2018.

2.2 The Centre for the Promotion of *Darija* and the Zakoura Dictionary

The *Zakoura Dictionary* was published by the Centre for the Promotion of *Darija* of the Zakoura Foundation,⁶ a Moroccan association created in 1997 by Nouredine Ayouch, well-known publicist and member of the Higher Council for Education in Morocco. The main aim of the Foundation is to promote the human development and the education of children, youth, and women in the marginalized areas of Morocco. The Foundation's activities mainly concern the opening of educational centers in rural areas of the country where the teaching staff develops informal pre-schooling educational programs through the valorization of the mother tongues *Amazigh* and *Darija*. The annual reports published by the Foundation highlight their long-term successes,⁷ underlining the positive impact their teaching methods, including the promotion of mother tongues in their programs, have on the learning process and on the individual development of their students.

Nouredine Ayouch, a controversial public figure belonging to the Moroccan economic elite, has always played a leading role in the promotion of mother tongues, and of *Darija* in particular, especially through the academic side of Zakoura Foundation. He organized several international conferences giving scientific legitimation to the Zakoura pro-*Darija* projects, including the *Zakoura Dictionary*. In this respect, three academic events deserve to be mentioned in order to underline Nouredine Ayouch's role as one of the actors in the promotion of *Darija* development. In 2010 he organized an international conference, *Language, Languages* (Zakoura Education 2010) – with the participation of experts and international scholars, such as Ahmed Boukous, Claude Hagège, Zakia Iraqui Sinaceur, Chérif El Shoubashy, Djamel Eddin Kouloughli, Abderrahim Youssi, Francisco García Moscoso, Ahmed Benchemsi – to underline the importance of language planning policies. This conference highlighted common linguistic issues in several multilingual contexts, where national language policies led to language reforms, as the case for example of Turkey and Greece (Miller 2017, 107). The second conference, *Le chemin de la réussite* (Zakoura Education 2013) pointed out weaknesses affecting the educational system in Morocco. Its goal was to submit legislative proposals to the Parliament, underlining the importance of the institutionalized introduction of mother tongues in the educational system. This conference was attended by leading personalities in the

⁶ <https://www.fondationzakoura.org>.

⁷ Projects and annual reports on their activities can be found on their website: for the annual report of 2018 see <https://www.fondationzakoura.org/assets/publications/c2294-rapport-annuel-2018-web.pdf>.

economic and political fields, including ministers of education of the Moroccan government as well as royal advisers (Miller 2017, 107-8). The conference had an impressive impact in the media and echoed through the public opinion from 2013 to 2015.⁸ In this media storm, Ayouch was hailed as the destroyer of the Arabic language. Despite having presented the promotion of *Darija* as a scientific tool to improve Arabic literacy creating a bridge between *Darija* and standard Arabic, Ayouch’s commitment was interpreted as “a Trojan horse that will reinforce the prestige of the foreign languages” (Miller 2017, 108), a serious accusation, the more so, on reason of Ayouch’s belonging to the economic (and francophone) elite.

Despite the aforementioned criticisms, in 2014, the Zakoura Centre for the Promotion of *Darija* organized a workshop on Arabic lexicography, *Journée d’étude sur la lexicographie arabe* (Casablanca, 12th April 2014),⁹ the third scientific event attended by international scholars, including Zakia Iraqui Sinaceur, Jordi Aguadé, Peter Behnstedt, Mohamed El Madlaoui, Khalil Mgharfaoui, Abdellah Chekayri, Abdelouhad Mabrou. The workshop focused on the creation of a theoretical and methodological support to produce the first *Darija* monolingual dictionary, finally published in 2017.

The *Dictionary* project was coordinated by Prof. Khalil Mgharfaoui (University of Chouaib Dukkali in El Jadida), Prof. Abdelouhad Mabrou (Chouaib Dukkali University), and Prof. Abdellah Chekayri (Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane). They presented the language of *Zakoura Dictionary* as the “modern Moroccan Arabic language”; as Mgharfaoui himself states:

De langue basse, unique expression des analphabètes, l’arabe marocain est aujourd’hui une revendication portée par des intellectuels, artistes, écrivains, linguistes, qui le considèrent comme la langue de l’identité et de la créativité. La langue qui pourrait réconcilier le Marocain avec lui-même et avec la modernité. [...] C’est dans la dynamique entre ces deux forces, le conservatisme d’un côté et l’évolution de l’autre, que se trouve un espace pour bâtir une langue arabe marocaine moderne. (Mgharfaoui 2018)

The importance of *al-luġa al-wuṣṭā*, ‘middle language’, i.e. the middle Arabic language emerging from actual linguistic practices, is under-

⁸ As pointed out by Miller (2017, 107-8) the public debate/duel between Nouredine Ayouch and the Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui, aired on the TV channel 2M, reached a very high share, but despite the wide resonance the criticisms did not seriously discussed the kind of *Darija* proposed, neither any insights about their methodological approaches.

⁹ See the detailed program in <http://www.zakoura-education.org/uploads/articles/e768b6bd1d068c1954b35f95b31caef6f6e8f1c4.pdf>.

lined in the *Dictionary*'s introduction. According to the authors, the literacy of this middle language will implement a deeper mastery of Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā*, and in general will improve language skills in all domains (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 19). For this reason, they clearly and repeatedly specify that the language in the *Dictionary* represents a bridge linking *Darija* and Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā* and that the *Zakoura Dictionary* is not an ideological tool to destroy the Arabic language.

Furthermore, as Mgharfaoui clarifies, the *Zakoura Dictionary* was conceived as a pedagogical tool for all Moroccans to learn Moroccan Arabic. Therefore, they “elaborated” (Haugen 1966) a set of orthographic norms to write (‘proper’) *Darija*:

En effet, le dictionnaire décrit la langue et délimite en même temps les contours de ce qui relève de l’usage acceptable, pour ne pas dire “le bon usage”. Nous sommes là devant une des premières spécificités de ce dictionnaire. Il ne s’agit pas d’un dictionnaire qui consigne les occurrences telles qu’elles sont attestées. C’est plutôt un outil pédagogique aidant à l’apprentissage de la langue arabe marocaine. Il fallait donc faire des choix pour rester dans un parler marocain médian largement partagé et compréhensible de tous. (Mgharfaoui 2018)

Therefore, the first challenge they had to face in order to “elaborate” (Haugen 1966) a *Darija* orthographic norm, was the problem of the “selection” (Haugen 1966) of the variety to be introduced in the *Dictionary*. In order to define “un parler marocain médian” widely shared and mutually understandable, they relied on the results of the Fafo Report (Kebede, Kindt 2016) which showed that *Darija* is the first written language in the region of Rabat, followed by French, Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā* and *Amazigh* (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 8). Thus, the major problem they encountered concerned the wide regional linguistic variation of *Darija*.¹⁰ For this reason, they decided to only include in the *Dictionary* the variety of the central regions of the country (Rabat-Salé-Kenitra and Casablanca-Settat). These areas are, in fact, the regions which gather about a third of the Moroccan inhabitants¹¹ whose *Darija* is understood by most Moroccans (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 10).

Moreover, a second challenge they had to face concerned, on the one hand, the ‘selection’ of lexical entries, and, on the other, their

¹⁰ For contributions on Moroccan dialectology see Colin 1938; Marçais 1961; Durand 1994; Aguadé 2003.

¹¹ According to the Higher Planning Commission’s survey (2014), *Darija* is the most used language in urban areas (96.3%) as well as in rural areas (82.7%); on the other hand, the three varieties of *Amazigh* are used by the 20.4% of the population in urban areas and by the 34.8% in rural areas; *Hassaniyya* keeps a very low frequency of use (1.2% in urban areas and 0.3% in rural areas); see Higher Planning Commission 2014..

orthographical reproduction. The entries were based on the list of about 8,000 words of the *Diccionario español-árabe marroquí* (Spanish-Arabic Moroccan Dictionary) by Prof. Francisco García Moscoso (2005). The team adapted and updated this list by deleting the words they considered too regional and adding the neologisms currently circulating and attested in the press and in audio recordings¹² (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 8). When choosing the orthographic norm, they decided to adapt the *Darija* spelling to the orthography of Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā*. Mgharfaoui explains that they compared the different occurrences attested in their sources and then they chose to include in the *Dictionary* the occurrences orthographically closest to Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā*. For instance, between أرط ‘arṭ (variant 1) and أرض ‘arḍ (variant 2) ‘earth’, they chose the second variant (Mgharfaoui 2018).

Further orthographic choices, exemplified in the paragraph الإملاء في قاموس زكورة *al-‘imlā’ fī qāmūs zakūra*, ‘Spelling in *Zakoura Dictionary*’ (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 11), follow the principle of adaptation of *Darija* to *Fuṣṣḥā*, as outlined below.

The orthographic choices adopted in the *Dictionary* concern phonetics and morphosyntax issues related to Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā* and *Darija* language. In terms of phonetics the choices include:

1. The addition of three consonants corresponding to specific *Darija* phonemes that do not exist in Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā*, i.e., /g/, /v/, /p/ (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 12). However, words which present phonetic variations, such as قال /qāla/ ‘to say’, pronounced in *Darija* both /qāla/ or /gāla/, follow the Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā* norms (Mgharfaoui 2018).
2. The retention of interdental letters such as ث /t/ and ذ /d/ despite being respectively pronounced in *Darija* as /t/ and /d/ (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 13).
3. The addition of vowel signs to disambiguate words that have the same spelling, but different pronunciations (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 11).

Whereas on morphosyntax the choices include:

1. Prepositions: simple prepositions, as *bi- ‘in’*, pronounced /bə/ in *Darija*, are directly affixed on the lemma, as it is in Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā*. However, the preposition في *fī ‘in’*, whose *Darija* pronunciation is /fə/, is orthographically spelled in the *Dictionary* as it is in *Fuṣṣḥā*, (في *fī*) in order to adapt its pronunciation to the morphological coherence of the Arabic language system when adding suffix pronouns (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 12).

¹² They do not specify the data they used (which newspapers, magazines, or other written production) neither which audio recordings they refer to.

2. Suffix pronouns: the third-person masculine singular suffix pronoun which in *Darija* has a greater phonetic variation (i.e. *-/o/*, or not pronounced), is orthographically spelled in the *Dictionary* as it is in Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā*, i.e. *-/h/*. As previously mentioned, this choice reflects the principle of coherence with the Arabic language, since in Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā* both the masculine and the feminine suffix pronouns are realized with the same letter, i.e. *-/hu/* (masculine) and *-/hā/* (feminine), and consequently, their choice reflects the adaptation and coherence to the Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā* system (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 13).
3. Morphemes: the authors decided to separate single lemmas from *Darija* verbal morphemes, for example the separation of the preverbal morpheme *kā* of prefixal conjugations from its conjugated verb as in “*كا ينمشي بجنب البحر*” *kā yətəmšī biġānəb əl-baħr* ‘you are walking near the sea’ (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 12), as well as the separation of negative morphemes. For instance, double negative verbal morphemes *ما mā* and *شي šī* are orthographically separated from the verb, as in this sample “*ما قرا شي*” *mā qərā šī*, ‘He did not study’ (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 12). Negative nominal morphemes follow the same orthographic choice, as in this sample “*ما شي شي حجة كبيرة*” *mā šī šī ḥaġġa kəbira*, ‘it’s not a big thing’ (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 12). Despite the different pronunciation of the morpheme *šī* according to the nominal or verbal negation, they decided to retain only the orthographical *شي šī* realization.¹³

It becomes clear from these points that the authors aimed at the codification of *Darija* orthography, and especially focused on exemplifying the characteristics of *al-luġa al-wuṣṭā*, a ‘middle language’ in the Moroccan language community. In other words, to them this ‘middle language’ is a sort of Middle Moroccan (educated) Arabic, whose characteristics, according to the authors, are the wide use of *Fuṣṣḥā* lexicon, adapted to *Darija* pronunciations and morphosyntactic structures, as well as the elimination of regional/local peculiarities, thus remaining accessible to anyone from different geographical areas (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 15).

However, at the end of the introduction of the *Zakoura Dictionary*, the authors state:

¹³ This last choice is probably due to the need to disambiguate the tens digits from negative morphemes. They underline that for example the number ‘thirteen’ can be written in *Darija* as “*ش.انلاد*” *š.əlātāš*, i.e. with the tens digit abbreviation *š* (where *š* means ‘ašra, ‘ten’) suffixed to the units (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 12-13).

فباللغة الدارجة لغة في طور التشكيل وفي حاجة لوضع معايير لكتابتها وتقنينها قاموس زكورة خطوة أولى في هذا الاتجاه وفق معايير إملائية مضبوطة. وهو خطوة في الاتجاه الصحيح باش يتجمع جزء من تراثنا الشفوي وباش نحافظو على هذا الكنز من الكلام الموروث. (Mgharfaoui, Mabrou, Chekayri 2017, 16-17)

Darija is a language that is being shaped and it is necessary to establish standards for its writing and codification.

Zakoura Dictionary has established accurate spelling standards. It is a step in the right direction in order to group a part of our oral heritage and to preserve this inherited treasure.¹⁴

Hence, their aim to standardize *Darija* becomes evident. Bearing in mind the prescriptive dimension of the standardization process, i.e. the enforcement of categories of “correctness” and “incorrectness”,¹⁵ and the consequent elaborated standard norm, the *Zakoura Dictionary* would become the only prescriptive ‘authority’ in matters concerning the appropriateness of *Darija* orthography.

In brief, the *Dictionary* represents the tension between formal/informal standardization, standardization from above/below, formal standardization versus conventionalization. The following analysis of media reaction to the *Zakoura Dictionary* project will try to illustrate this tension in order to observe to what extent the ‘Zakoura authority’ earned the ‘acceptance’ of the Moroccan language community.

3 Corpus and Methodology

In order to observe actual linguistic written practices and language ideologies concerning *Darija* conventionalization, a corpus of articles and readers’ comments has been selected. The corpus includes 6 articles from *Goud*,¹⁶ and 4 articles from *Hespress*.¹⁷ They are quoted as follows, according to author, column, and date of publication:

Goud:

- G1, Anonymous, آش واقع, *āš wāq*, ‘What is happening’, 2016-12-07;
- G2, Zaid Hamid, آراء, *ārā*, ‘Opinions’, 2016-12-08;
- G3, Elbaroudi Siham, آراء, *ārā*, ‘Opinions’, 2016-12-09;
- G4, Socrate Mohamed, آراء, *ārā*, ‘Opinions’, 2016-12-16;
- G5, Ouchoun Omar, آراء, *ārā*, ‘Opinions’, 2016-12-17;
- G6, Akannouch Abdellatif, آراء, *ārā*, ‘Opinions’ 2016-12-18.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are made by the Author.

¹⁵ See for example the aforementioned description of Auer (2011) for a standard variety.

¹⁶ *Goud* website www.goud.ma.

¹⁷ *Hespress* website www.hespress.com.

Hespress:

H1, Chabil Abdellah, مجتمع, *muġtama’*, ‘Society’, 2016-12-07;

H2 Allali Ismail, منبر هسبريس, *minbar hespress*, ‘Hespress Tribune’, 2016-12-20;

H3 Abdellaoui Naima, كتاب وآراء, *kuttāb wa-ārā’*, ‘Writers and Opinions’, 2016-12-23;

H4 Charqaoui Abderrahim, مدارات, *mudārāt*, ‘Orbits’, 2016-12-29.

All articles were published in December 2016, after the press conference organized by the Zakoura Foundation on 6 December 2016¹⁸ for the promotion of its *Dictionary*. Although the *Zakoura Dictionary* official date of publication was 2017, it is possible that it was already available in late December 2016.¹⁹

Goud is a digital newspaper created by Ahmed Najim, its current editorial director. In 2011, after the definitive closure of the weekly *Nichane*,²⁰ Ahmed Najim decided to start with *Goud* his new editorial project. Both *Goud* and *Nichane* mean ‘direct’ in *Dārīja*. *Goud*’s editorial line is in fact in favor to the use of *Dārīja*; it is an independent and generalist newspaper targeting all genre of audiences, and it pays great attention to the news which most interest Moroccan society.²¹

Hespress was created in 2006 by Hassan and Amine Guennouni, chief and editor directors. It is a generalist newspaper and it collects a heterogeneous range of contents, international and national news, focusing on the Moroccan youth and on contemporary society. The newspaper leaves abundant space to readers,²² not only through comments on articles, but also on a column dedicated to the readers’ opinions.²³

In total, 301 readers’ comments were collected from the above-mentioned newspapers (respectively, 27 from *Goud*²⁴ and 274 from

18 On 1st December 2016 the Moroccan TV channel 2M announced the Zakoura press conference, see <https://bit.ly/3dyuqE8>.

19 For instance, H2 article quotes examples from *Zakoura Dictionary*, whereas G1 article published within the text also a picture of *Zakoura Dictionary* cover illustrating the 2017 as the date of publication. Both articles were published in December 2016.

20 See Miller 2012, 2015, 2017; Brigui 2016; Hoogland 2018.

21 Information collected during an interview with Ahmed Najim in Casablanca on 30 April 2018.

22 *Hespress* is the fourth most visited website in Morocco, according to ALEXA 2015.

23 The two “against” articles were published in the two opinion columns of *Hespress*: *minbar hasbriss* (Hespress Tribune) is the opinion column where readers submit their articles, which, if accepted by the editors, are then published, and *آراء بائكة* *kuttāb wa-ārā’* (Writers and Opinions) is the opinion column where journalists, intellectuals and well-known personalities collaborate regularly with *Hespress*. Information provided during an interview with Mohamed Belkacem, *Hespress*’ journalist, held in Rabat on 23 March 2018.

24 As a matter of fact, *Goud* readers write comments on the official Facebook page of the newspaper, whereas *Hespress* comments were collected directly from the news-

Hespress). The articles were selected by searching for news on the *Zakoura Dictionary* in the online archives of the two newspapers.

From a quantitative point of view, ‘for’ and ‘against’ opinions were initially identified, both in articles and comments; results were organized into three categories: ‘for’, ‘against’ and ‘other’.²⁵ Then, the categories ‘*Fuṣṣḥā*’ (F), ‘*Dārīja*’ (D), and ‘Mixed’ (M) were created to assess the general distribution of the different language varieties in the data. It should be noted that, due to the phenomenon of bivalence, data were interpreted in their whole syntactical context as it is not always possible to clearly define whether a single word belongs to the *Fuṣṣḥā* or to the *Dārīja* variety.

The overview on the distribution of varieties allowed to qualitatively compare which language variety was used when expressing ‘for’ or ‘against’ opinions on using *Dārīja* expressions or other varieties.

4 Analysis and Interpretations

4.1 Articles and Comments. ‘For’ and ‘Against’ Opinions

The 4 *Hespress* articles express mostly negative opinions: 2 ‘against’ (H2 and H3), 1 ‘for’ (H4), and 1 ‘other’ (H1) – an expository article. Instead, across the 6 *Goud* articles, the opinions are evenly distributed: 2 ‘for’ (G1, G3), 2 ‘against’ (G4, G6), and 2 ‘other’ (G2, G5).

Arguments in favor of *Zakoura Dictionary* in *Hespress* articles concern the aims of the initiative, as Professor Mgharfaoui claimed in the following example from H4 article:

(1) علينا بناء جسور وليس حصون، والعمل من منطلق تنمية اللغة وليس الخشية عليها،
قبل أن يشدد على القول بأن لغتنا هي هويتنا؛
(H4, 2016-12-29)

We must build bridges, not fortresses, and work to develop the language, instead of being afraid of it before he stressed that our language is our identity.²⁶

Similarly, the *Goud* ‘for’ articles underline the importance of this initiative since it helps to reconsider *Dārīja* as the language belonging to all Moroccans (example 2); likewise, article G3 considers that the *Zakoura Dictionary* is an important initiative to promote *Dārīja* (example 3), nevertheless it asks for more information about its fund-

paper’s webpage.

²⁵ The category “other” includes off-topic and ambiguous opinions.

²⁶ All quotations are henceforth translated by the Author.

ing and clarification on any “secondary” goal behind this project, as stated in the examples below:

(2) خطوة كبيرة ومهمة فإطار النهوض بالدارجة المغربية لي هي اللغة الأم ديال نسبة كبيرة (2) ديال المغاربة [...] ولكن مازال خاص الخدمة حيث بزاف ديال الناس المؤدلجين كايعتابرو الدارجة لغة الزنقة و كايحتاقروها بزاف ديال الناس كايعتابروها حرب على اللغة العربية [...] الدارجة ديال المغاربة كاملين! واش ماشي من حقنا نديبها فيها و نرضو ليها الاعتراب؟ (G1, 2016-12-07)

A big and important step **in** the context of promoting Moroccan *Darija* **which** is the mother tongue **of** a big portion of Moroccans. [...] Nevertheless, more **has to be done, since a lot of ideologized** people consider *Darija* a street language and **they despise it!** **Many people consider it** a war on Arabic language. [...] *Darija belongs* to all Moroccans! **Isn’t it our right to take an interest in it and to keep it in the right consideration?**²⁷

(3) هاد الخطوة خطوة مايمكن اعتبارها إلا خطوة إيجابية. السيد جاي من مجال الاقتصاد و عارف بلي فاش كانقدمو شي مشروع للناس ديما كانهضرو على الكرمومة (G3, 2016-12-09)

This step cannot be considered other than a positive step!

Mr. [Ayouch] comes from an economic field and **he knows that when we present some** projects to people **we always speak about cash!**²⁸

‘Against’ opinions in the *Hespress* criticize the contradiction of using extensively Arabic *Fuṣḥā* rather than (only) *Darija*, as claimed in the following example from H2 article:

(4) فدعوى صعوبة اللغة العربية التي ادعاها عيوش، تدحض/ تسقط عند أول نظرة في معجم (4) الدارجة المغربية، حيث عمد واضعو معجمه على شرح الألفاظ الدارجة العربية الفصحى، مما يعني - منطقيا- أن اللغة العربية الفصحى أبسط من الدارجة (H2, 2016-12-20)

The Ayouch’s assertion, on the difficulty of the Arabic language, is refutable / falls at first glance to the Moroccan *Darija Dictionary*, in which the authors of the *Dictionary* explain the terms of *Darija* on the basis of the Arabic *Fuṣḥā*, which means - logically - that the Arabic *Fuṣḥā* is simpler than the *Darija*.

²⁷ Emphasis added here and henceforth: bold items highlight *Darija* variety.

²⁸ The word *l-garmūma* ‘money’ belongs to informal/slang lexicon.

H2 does not seem to consider the definition of ‘middle language’, repeatedly evoked in the introduction to the *Zakoura Dictionary*, however H3 expresses a more interesting criticism concerning the ‘standardization from above’, when she claims:

كنت، ولا أظنني الوحيدة، أشعر بها دارجة مفروضة علينا، أفهمها كأى دارجة أخرى (5) ولكنني لا أتبناه
...قاموس الدارجة...
يحمل من الفقر والسطحية ما يجعلنا نتساءل عن المنهجية التي صيغ بها وعن التكوين
المعرفي والنوايا الحقيقية للقائمين عليه
(H3, 2016-12-23)

I feel, and I think I am not the only one, that a *Darija* is imposed on us, I understand it like any other *Darija*, but I don’t adopt it!
[...] The *Darija Dictionary* [...] displays poverty and superficiality, which leads us to question the methodology with which it was formulated, as well as the cognitive training and the real intentions of its proponents.

Contrarily, the ‘against’ opinions in *Goud* openly accuse Ayouch and his legitimation as ‘authoritative’ actor of *Darija* promotion. Specifically, G4 emphasizes that money should be invested in initiatives which already acknowledge cultural productions in *Darija*, rather than initiatives such as the *Zakoura Dictionary* which, indeed, did not really use *Darija*, as stated in (6) below:

كإمتداد لتجربة نيشان واصل موقع كود اغناء محتوى الدارجة فالويب المغربي، و (6) ماشي غي بطريقة كتابة الخبر والعناوين، بل أنه تبني شباب لي مالقاو فين ينشروا ويكتبوا بالدارجة، ونشر ليهم الإبداع ديالهم بدون رقابة، فحرية تامة تامة، على عكس أي منبر آخر [...] بينما كود أغنت ساحة الكتابة بالدارجة بروائع لحد الآن تعتبر من أحسن ما تكتب بالدارجة
الفكرة زوينة أه قاموس بالدارجة، ولكن كيفاش تدارت وعلاش تدارت هذا هو الموشكيل
حيث من خلال مايقوم به عيوش كيبان أن آخر همه هو الدارجة، حيث بصح كون بغاها كان
استثمر فمواقع وصفحات كاينين مغاربة ناطقين بالدارجة ومحتواهم زوين، أو كان تبني
النشر للمغاربة لي كيتبوا بالدارجة باش بصح ديك الساعة يمكن تدير قاموس للدارجة
المغربية.
(G4, 2016-12-16)

As an extension of *Nichane’s* experience, *Goud* website has continued to enrich the Moroccan web with content in *Darija*, **not only** with news and headlines [in *Darija*], but also because it was chosen by the young people **who did not have any other place** to write and publish in *Darija*, it helped in spreading their creations without any censorship, **in** complete freedom, unlike any other platform. [...] While *Goud* enriches the scene of writing in *Darija* through masterpieces until now considered the best written *Darija* productions [...].

A nice idea, **yes**, the *Darija Dictionary*, but **how they did it and why they did it**, this is the **problem**, since through what Ayouch does, **it comes to mind** that his interest is other than *Darija*; because, **if he really wanted it**, he would have invested in websites and web pages **where** Moroccans speak in *Darija* and whose contents are **niche**, or he should have taken into consideration the publications of Moroccans **who write in *Darija* in order to write** his dictionary.

Socrate is G4 author, as well as one of the young pioneers in promoting written *Darija* through his literary production as a blogger. In 2014, having just spent a year and a half in prison for drug trafficking – an accusation for which many other young people and militants in the 20 February Movement, such as Socrate, were convicted (Caubet 2018) – Socrate was invited by Hamid Zaid, *Goud’s* satirical journalist, to write his memories.²⁹ In 2014 his collaboration with *Goud* began with the publication of a serial novel in *Darija*, titled مذكرات محمد سقراط فالسجن *muḍakkirāt muḥammed soqrāt fə-səġən*, ‘Memories of Mohammed Socrates from Prison’. He has been writing in the Opinions’ column of *Goud* using *Darija* since 2014, and undoubtedly his opinions reflect the point of view of a pro-*Darija* activist, who certainly enriched the written production in *Darija*. Thus, the open accusations he moves to Ayouch, addressing the commercial interest of his projects, could be read quite clearly.

Similarly, G6 article’s criticism of the *Zakoura Dictionary* initiative derives from the impression that Ayouch imposed himself, ideologically and politically, as a national language planner of a hypothetical *Darija* standardization process (that should be instead a state responsibility) as shown in (7) below:

عيوش] دار من راسو الشخص الوحيد اللي يمكن ليه "يمأسس" الدارجة، ويرجعها] (7)
 "لغة رسمية" بغا للي بغا، وكره للي كره... لأنه مللي كاتوصل لدرجة تدير "ديكسيونير" للغة
 ما، كيف ماكانت، معناه أنك رجعتيها "رسمية"، والقموس للي وضعتيه ليها، صبح المرجع
 ... "الإجباري" للحديث بها وللكتابة بها

(G6, 2016-12-18).

[Ayouch] **considered himself** the only person **who could “institutionalize” *Darija*, making it an “official language”, like it or**

²⁹ Information that Mohammed Socrates gave to the Author in an e-mail interview on 27 May 2018. In the same interview, he underlined the value and the importance of the free space that *Goud* offered him by allowing him to express himself freely, when he said: *al-ḥurriyya llī fi-h w-llī makāynš f-mawāqī’ ḥrā, wa-ḥāliyan ‘anā kanantamī li-gūd ka-fīkr wa ka-namat ‘ayš* ‘the freedom that exists [in *Goud*] is not found in other websites, I actually belong to *Goud* as an idea and as a lifestyle’.

not,...because **when you decide to create a dictionary** of any kind of language, it means that **it is you who make** the language official, and the dictionary **in which you place it becomes** the forced reference for anyone who wants to speak it and write it...

These examples show that in *Hespress* and *Goud* different kinds of criticism are expressed towards the *Zakoura Dictionary* initiative, and this divergence reflects the peculiarities and the editorial lines of the two newspapers. Where *Hespress* has a more expository approach, even in the Opinions’ column articles, *Goud* reacts more directly. *Goud* represents one of the various public spaces in which the *Dārīja* ‘standardization from below’ has developed and expanded. Hence, the tension between formal and informal standardization becomes evident.

The comments, on the other hand, present more varied arguments although, in most cases were found to be off topic. Readers’ comments clearly show ‘against’ opinions on the *Zakoura Dictionary* in both newspapers. In the small sample of comments in *Goud*, most appear to be off topic and no ‘for’ comments were found. The arguments against the *Dictionary* clearly reject the project and perceive it as a tool that would favor the legitimation of *Dārīja* as an official language. Differently, in the *Hespress* readers’ comments focus on several arguments: the negative impact that *Dārīja* can have on the educational system, the impossibility to choose a *Dārīja* (standard) variety, as well as direct and satirical criticisms against Ayouch. The examples below show the above-mentioned views:

(8) السبي عيوش أنا بغيت ولادي يتمكنوا من اللغات الإنجليزية والفرنسية أما الدارجة راني خليتها ليك أنت واللغة العربية الفصحى خليتها للفقهاء والشيوخ والمشعوزيين
يجب إصلاح التعليم أما ما نراه اليوم فهو مجرد تعمية وضبابية وتعتي
(in H1)

Mr Ayouch I would like my sons to master English and French, instead, **I leave the *Dārīja* to you and** the Arabic *Fusha* to the scholars, Sheikhs, and the **charlatans**.

We must reform the teaching, certainly what we see today is blindness, ambiguity and murkiness.

(9) المشكل ماشي مفعمچ انما اش من دريجه غادي يدبر هد السيد واش ديال الغرب ولا شرق ولا ديال الشمال اولاً الجنوب هدا اولاً ثانياً خصو يصنع الحروف ديالها مشي معقول تكتبها بحروف اللغة العربية
(in H1)

The problem **isn’t the *Dictionary*** but **which *Dārīja* will this gentleman introduce?** The one **of** the West, of the East, **of** the North or of the South? **This** is the first issue, and secondly, he **should** elaborate **its** letters, **it is not** logical to write it with the Arabic letters!

ما هي حدود الدارجة إذا علمنا أنها خليط هجين من ألفاظ من عدة لغات و لهجات و (10) ابتكارات لفظية لا تخضع لقواعد ثابتة: تكريفيص،...، عيق،...، قسر، طروطوار، تشرميط، قابور
بمعنى آخر، ما هي المقاييس التي تجعلنا نقبل كلمة ما في هذا القاموس أو نرفضها؟
(in H4)

What are the limits of *Dārīja*? If we learn that it is a hybrid mixture of words from several languages and dialects and verbal innovations that are not subject to fixed rules: **sacrifice/distress, [...] to pose, [...] coercion, trottoir, to behave as a whore, free...**

In other words, according to which criteria do we accept or reject a word in this dictionary?

الابن أظهر الزين اللي ف السينما و الأب سيظهر الزين اللي ف الدارجة (11)
(in H1)

The son honored the [Moroccan] cinema, his father will take over with the *Dārīja*.

These comments show interesting issues concerning *Dārīja* and the ‘standardization from below’. Precisely, in (9) and (10) the problem of “selection” (Haugen 1966) of a variety, clearly emerges especially when questioning the criterion to use in order to accept or reject words in the *Dictionary* (10). Similarly, the problem of the orthographic norm emerges when the author of comment (9) paradoxically claims that writing in *Dārīja* with the Arabic script does not make sense, and yet, that is exactly what he does.³⁰ Finally, the author of comment (11) ironically accuses Ayouch of vulgarity. In his comment, he refers to the film *الزين اللي فيك* *ez-zīn lī fīk*, ‘Much Loved’, by Nabil Ayouch, Nouredine Ayouch’s son, that was censored in Morocco because it was considered an offence to the moral values of the country. This explains the irony of the comment and the negative connotation attributed to *Dārīja*. In comment (11) *Dārīja* is stigmatized as a vulgar language, the same criticism addressed to the film directed by Ayouch’s son, and consequently the project of Mr. Ayouch (senior) is considered vulgar as well.

Unlike the articles, the comments show not only the rejection of the *Zakoura Dictionary* project, but also a greater wariness towards

³⁰ The choice of scripts in writing Arabic dialects is a sensitive issue. For instance, when the Lebanese Said Aql in the 1970s proposed to codify spoken Lebanese Arabic using Latin script his proposition was rejected because it implied sensitive factors, such as the separation from his own culture (moral and religious values, for instance), and a convergence towards ‘other’ cultures (i.e. European culture, the culture of French colonizers, for instance). For more details on Lebanese linguistic issues see Bizri 2013.

Dārīja, since many common readers continue to stigmatize it by associating it with ignorance and vulgarity. However, as the comments reveal, those who stigmatize *Dārīja* still use it. Common linguistic features of the *Dārīja*, used both in articles and in readers’ comments, as well as divergences with *Zakoura* orthographic choices, will be outlined below.

4.2 Articles and Comments. Linguistic Choices

From the examples shown in the previous paragraph it is possible to claim that *Fuṣḥā* (F) is the most used variety in *Hespress* articles, unlike *Goud*, where it is possible to find many constructions in *Dārīja* (D) and in Mixed varieties (M). However, it is interesting to note that although many of the comments from *Hespress* are written in F, most ‘against’ opinions are expressed using D items, i.e. most people writing in/with D and M are against a *Dārīja* dictionary.³¹

The main characteristics of written *Dārīja*, collected in the corpus, concern an extended use of morphosyntactic structures of *Dārīja* adapted to a lexical base in *Fuṣḥā*. Specifically, the characteristics of D in the data concern the use of the particle *dyāl* *ديال*, ‘of’ – see examples (2), (6), and (9) for the annexation; the invariable relative nouns *llī*, ‘which’ – see examples (2), (6), (7), and (11); the use of *māšī* *ماشى* for the nominal negative constructions – see examples (2), (6), and (9); the preverbal morpheme *kā* *كا* in prefixal conjugations – see examples (2), (3), (6), and (7); the affixation of the preposition *f/* ‘in’, such as in *f’itār* *فيطار*, ‘in the context’ (2), or *f-l-wīb* *فالويب*, ‘in the web’ (6), and *fə-mu’ḡam* *فمعمجم* ‘in the dictionary’ (9). However, the heterogeneity of *Dārīja* orthography is the most evident peculiarity, see for example the personal spelling choices of G6 author (7) regarding the repetition of letters when they are geminated, or the realization of the invariable relative noun *llī* spelled as *الللي* instead of *لي*.

At the same time, these variable orthographic realizations show that actual writing practices diverge from the proposals in the *Zakoura Dictionary*, especially concerning the nominal negation, the use of *jo/* instead of *ho/* for the suffix pronoun – see in (9) *ḥəṣṣo* ‘he should’ – as well as the affixation of preverbal morphemes or prepositions. While in *Zakoura Dictionary* it has been chosen to separate the individual lexical base in *Fuṣḥā* from morphosyntactic *Dārīja* items, in common linguistic practices (or at least from the data analyzed in the present study) this principle is not taken into consideration, on the contrary it is noted that the same authors can re-

³¹ In *Hespress*, out of a total number of 60 comments with *Dārīja* items, 25 express an ‘against’ opinion, and 14 a ‘for’ opinion (21 comments are off topic).

produce the same elements in different ways in the same text – see for example in (9) the variation between *had* هاد and *hada* هذا ‘this’.

Another important feature of the use of written *Dārīja* concerns the stylistic variation emerging from the different lexical or morpho-syntactic choices. See for example in (3) the lexical slang choice for ‘money’: *al-ḡarmūma* الـڠرمومة ‘cash’; or the use of *bəllī* بلي ‘that’, as complementizer introducing a declarative sentence. These linguistic choices mark the switch to a register closer to full colloquial *Dārīja*, in opposition to the “*Arabe Moderne Marocain*” (AMM) or “Modern Moroccan Arabic” according to Youssi (1992), who stated for instance that in AMM declarative clauses are introduced by the complementizer *ənnu*, whereas *bəllī* is used in Moroccan Arabic (Youssi 1992, 279).

Furthermore, stylistic variation also emerges according to the different choices of linguistic varieties and/or their combination producing mixed styles, using code switching. In particular, the code switching strategy is extensively used in order to emphasize specific topics. For instance, Socrate generally uses this strategy in his Opinions’ articles, where *Fuṣḥā* and *Dārīja* are functionally combined. Contrary to his literary production, where his language is characterized by “authentic *Dārīja*, with rare terms [...] or a humoristic youth language expression” (Caubet 2018, 394), in Opinions’ articles he usually switches from *Fuṣḥā* to *Dārīja* as a device to catch the reader’s attention. See for example that in (6) the bold items highlighting the switch to *Dārīja* underline important passages of his message, such as “no other places” than *Goud* to freely write in *Dārīja*. Finally, the code switching strategy is also connotatively used. In (8) for instance, the writer uses *Dārīja* items when addressing and criticizing Ayouch directly, and switches to *Fuṣḥā* when expressing ‘serious’ ideas (i.e. about the school system). This kind of strategy shows that other users still consider *Dārīja* as a medium that is not ‘serious’ enough to express important issues, as well as a ‘vulgar’ language, as expressed in (11). This combination of *Fuṣḥā* and *Dārīja* offers examples of mixed styles; hence, this syntactical/lexical alternation produces different (more or less) formal registers.

Although Moroccans increasingly use *Dārīja* also in written production; the semi-institutionalized/private standardization of *Dārīja* promoted by the Zakoura Centre for the Promotion of *Dārīja* does not seemingly take into account the relevance of the ‘authoritativeness’ in the standardization process, and the concrete challenges that their attempt to a semi-formal standardization poses.

5 Conclusions

Despite the increasing written production in *Dārīja*, *Fuṣḥā* still remains the dominant variety in writing, both in articles and readers’

comments. However, expressions containing elements in *Dārīja* occur in articles (specifically in *Goud*, a newspaper that ideologically promotes the use of *Dārīja*, defining itself as a free public space dedicated to *Dārīja* production) as well as in comments.

In the analyzed corpus, the texts that present *Dārīja* elements show the characteristics of a ‘Modern Middle (educated) Moroccan Arabic’, i.e. the use of morphosyntactic elements typical of Moroccan *Dārīja* applied to a lexical base in *Fuṣṣḥā*.

Stylistic variations affect the syntactic structures and lexical choices, marking the switch to the strictly Moroccan variety (i.e. the “*Arabe Marocain*” (AM) according to Youssi (1992). This communication strategy, as well as code switching (Arabic>*Dārīja* and vice versa) is adopted by journalists (from *Goud*) when their communicative intention aims to openly criticize Ayouch and the *Zakoura Dictionary* project. Journalists who generally use *Dārīja* in *Goud*, like Socrate, still criticize the *Zakoura Dictionary* initiative, because they do not accept the imposition of rules that the Foundation has arbitrarily decided, as well as Ayouch’s role in the standardization process. Their orthographic norms make the “*parler marocain median*” (as defined in Mgharfaoui 2018) an abstract and artificial language, since it is already conventionalized in common users’ practices (standardization from below).

Furthermore, many readers still perceive *Dārīja* as vulgar, even if they use it in their written production. This stigmatization reflects the perception that (non-linguists) Arabs hold towards their language, based on Eisele’s theory of the four cultural tropes - unity, purity, continuity and competition (Eisele 2003). This means that, ideologically, the Arabic *Fuṣṣḥā* continues to be considered the only variety that guarantees the unity of the Arab-Muslim community.

Another factor related to the tension between formal/informal standardization concerns the process of informal conventionalization which, as stated by Caubet (2017a), allowed the development of the written production in *Dārīja* in a natural way. Consequently, as a result of this freedom, anyone who wishes to express oneself in *Dārīja* “naturally understands the others without raising any issue” (Caubet 2017a, 121-2).

The spread of (written) ‘educated *Dārīja*’ is certainly an interesting phenomenon that needs closer observation. The latest *Zakoura* publication, (emblematically) titled *al-‘arabiyya ad-dārīġa* (*Dārīja* Arabic, i.e. a *Dārīja* grammar manual), coordinated by El Medlaoui, and presented in Casablanca on 22 November 2019, may raise more complex questions about standardization.

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