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“SPEAK ARABIC!”: ARABIC DIALECT COMPARISON VIDEOS AND THE  
RECONFIGURATION OF THE MAGHREB-MASHREQ LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

by  
Jacquelyn F. Stewart-Kuhn

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion  
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies  
Croft Institute for International Studies  
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College  
The University of Mississippi

Oxford  
May 2024

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## ABSTRACT

There is a hidden power imbalance in the Arabic-speaking world. It is not related to warfare, politics, or oil, but language. For decades, Egyptian and Levantine (Mashreqi) dialects have been over-represented in Arabic language media, to the detriment of North African (Maghrebi) dialects. This imbalance has played a crucial role in reinforcing what Hachimi (2013) refers to as the “Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology,” i.e. the belief that Mashreqi dialects are superior to Maghrebi dialects. Yet in an era of social media, Mashreqi voices and dialects are becoming less dominant, and Arabic-speakers across the region are being increasingly exposed to Maghrebi voices and dialects. In this thesis, I investigate whether the growing presence of Maghrebi speakers in social media is having an impact on longstanding stereotypes about the inferiority, illegibility, and impurity of their dialects. In other words, does the growing presence of Maghrebi speakers on social media provide a new opportunity for the “Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology” to be challenged? Or is social media simply another media platform where this long standing ideology is being reinforced? To answer this question, I undertake a qualitative analysis of one particularly viral genre of social media video: dialect comparisons. Through a linguistic anthropological analysis of two dialect comparison videos, I argue that while social media can serve as a site for reinforcing the “Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology,” it also provides unique opportunities for this ideology to be exposed and thus challenged. By making this argument, I seek to provide a crucial update and important nuance to the existing literature on language ideologies, in the Arabic-speaking world and beyond.

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## Introduction

There is a hidden power imbalance in the Arab world. It is not related to warfare, oil, or politics, but language. Twenty-two countries list Arabic as their official language, but each country speaks a unique dialect. Since most Arabic Language media has historically been produced in Egypt and the Levant, Eastern dialects have become the most represented across country lines, often to the detriment of Western (Maghrebi) dialects like Moroccan Arabic (*al-darija al-maghribiyya*) (Hachimi 2013). According to many scholars, this imbalance has resulted in many Arabic speakers considering Eastern (Mashreqi) dialects of Arabic, such as those spoken in Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt, superior to Maghrebi dialects, such as those in Morocco and Algeria (Hachimi 2013, Schulthies 2014, etc). Scholars have recently described this biased perception of Arabic dialects as "The Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology" (Hachimi 2013, 270).

Arabic speakers often see Maghrebi Arabic as inferior to Eastern dialects for three main reasons: linguistic purism, foreign language influence, and relative incomprehensibility. Because of geographical proximity to the Arabian Peninsula, many Eastern varieties of Arabic are seen as linguistically close to Standardized or Quranic Arabic (Fusha) and, therefore, more "pure" (Hachimi 2013, 273). Additionally, due to French colonial influence, Moroccan Darija has many French loan words and is often viewed as more French than Arabic. In fact, Schulthies (2014) found that many Mashreqis "claimed the North African Arabics were unintelligible, adulterated

by Berber<sup>1</sup> and French” (4). This foreign language influence makes many think that the dialect is incomprehensible, as its grammatical and conjugational structures differ somewhat from other dialects, and a variety of common words do not have their origins in standardized Arabic.

In addition to ideologies that framed Maghrebi Arabic as impure, it has also been largely absent from media circulating across the Arabic-speaking world. This absence is because North African countries (excluding Egypt) were late to develop media production industries, in contrast to the Middle East (Miller 2017, 92). Egypt, being "the most influential geographic and social center of Arab media productions" from the early 1900s through the late 1980s greatly impacted the type of language used in Arabic media production (Hachimi 2013, 275). Satellite television media, therefore, was not conducted in Fusha but in what came to be known as Mashreqi Media Arabic, a slightly higher register of colloquial Eastern Arabic mixed with Fusha. Despite increased media production in the Maghreb region, the long-time proliferation of Mashreqi Media Arabic makes it difficult for Maghrebi speakers to relate to audiences or succeed in the field without switching to Mashreqi Arabic (Miller 2017, 92). Not to mention, Maghrebi speakers' exposure to Mashreqi media familiarized them with Mashreqi Arabic and enabled them to switch dialects easier than their Mashreqi counterparts, who had little exposure to Maghrebi Arabic (Hachimi 2013, 287).

Since the “Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology” was first coined in 2013, Arabic scholars have written a number of papers about the proliferation of this ideology in Arabic media, particularly satellite television (Schulthies 2014, Hachimi 2013, Caubet 2013, Davies 2018, Hachimi 2017, McNeil 2022, Taine-Cheikh 2022, Vincente 2022). However, little attention has been given to social media as a site of renegotiation of the Maghreb-Mashreq

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘Berber’ refers to the Amazigh language group of the indigenous nomadic tribes of North Africa.



hierarchy, particularly amongst younger generations. With the immense success of Moroccan artists such as Saad Lamjarred, the internet is increasingly showing itself to be a democratizing force in facilitating the spread of Maghrebi Arabic varieties despite Mashreqi Arabic's hegemonic presence (Lake, 2018). Therefore, the goal of this paper is to analyze how social media can function as a source of analysis for the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy, and, in particular, how social media provides opportunities for its increased contestation.

To study this phenomenon, this paper investigates dialect comparison challenge videos on YouTube. The standard format of dialect comparison videos consists of Arabic speakers saying the same word, such as 'spoon,' in their native dialects and discussing the differences. A secondary format for these comparison videos is when one Arabic speaker will say a word unique to their dialect, and the other participants have to guess the meaning of the word in either their dialect or in the mediating language i.e. Fusha or English.

There are many reasons why these dialect comparison videos make a fruitful source of material. The first reason is because of YouTube, the social media app analyzed. As of 2022, YouTube was the second most popular social media platform, with over 2.2 billion monthly active users (Walsh, 2022). This number is based on the number of active users who have accounts. However, since an account is not required to access content, considering the number of users who use YouTube without an account makes the actual number of users much higher. YouTube's massive international reach makes it an ideal platform to use as it provides a larger slice of social media users than more generation-specific platforms such as TikTok. Youtube's reach is proliferative because, according to the World Bank, roughly 77% of the population in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region uses the internet (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=ZQ>). Therefore, there is no

lack of internet influence across the MENA region and it is reasonable to assume Youtube is influential in this area.

Secondly, dialect comparison videos provide a unique opportunity for language interaction among participants. Videos are vital to understanding the perceptions of dialects and corresponding opinions since they "capture the entirety of behavior and processes, including language use, paralinguistic cues, gestures, mimics, and other verbal and nonverbal cues" (Szito 2020, 2). These non-verbal cues offer more nuanced understandings of participant's personal opinions regarding dialect variations.

In the following chapters, I will detail previous literature written regarding the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology. Then, my first and second body chapters will include a detailed analysis of two dialect challenge videos and how they both reinforced and negated the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. Finally, I will discuss my conclusions and what they mean for the future of the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology with the spread of social media.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

In the past, a majority of literature regarding Arabic dialects centered around the diglossic relationship between Fusha (Standard Arabic) and Arabic vernaculars. The term *diglossia*, according to C.A. Ferguson (1959) is:

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

In the case of Arabic, Fusha represents the ‘High’ variety of Arabic, while vernaculars represent the “Low” variety, considered less pure and not for use in formal spaces.

However, with the advent of the internet and social media, this perspective is changing. In recent years, researchers have found that Arabic vernaculars, particularly Maghrebi varieties, are becoming increasingly written languages instead of purely oral (McNeil 2022, Miller 2017, de Ruyter 2013, Elinson 2013). For example, de Ruyter details how recently there has been competition in oral spheres between standard (literary) and vernacular Arabic, but increasingly, “dialect has modestly begun to develop as a written language” (“la dialecte commence néanmoins modestement à se développer comme langue d’écriture”) in formal spheres (de Ruyter 2012, 78). This development is compounded by the increased use of vernacular in online

communication such as in chat rooms on Facebook (Caubet 2013) and internet forums (McNeil 2022). McNeil, in particular, does a quantitative analysis of the use of Tunisian Arabic on internet forums as compared to Standard Arabic and found that the use of Tunisian Arabic, compared to Standard Arabic, “increased from a minority (19.7%) to a majority (69.9%)” from 2010-2021 (McNeil 2022, 51). These significant changes in the use of vernacular to the detriment of Fusha suggest that the internet and social media operate as democratizing forces in dismantling the hierarchy between standardized and vernacular Arabic.

Recent literature has argued for more research into hierarchies between colloquial Arabic varieties rather than the previous focus on the diglossic relationship between Fusha and dialects. Schulthies (2014), for example, studied accommodation processes for non-Mashreqi speakers in Pan-Arab talent programs. In her study, she argues that these programs have gradually shifted from only including Mashreqi speakers, or those who could switch to a Mashreqi variety, to including both Maghrebi speakers and non-Arabic speakers by providing subtitles in Fusha. Despite growing accommodations, however, Maghrebi Arabic speakers overwhelmingly had to code-switch and speak Mashreqi media Arabic and faced ridicule from their peers (Schulthies 2014, 7).

Hachimi (2013) came to a similar conclusion when studying YouTube clip compilations from satellite pan-Arab talent shows. She summarizes what she sees as recreations of the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy in mass media in the following three points: "a. Maghreb speakers bear the communicative burden; b. Maghreb varieties are objects of mockery; c. Mashreq varieties are objects of adulation" (Hachimi 2013, 270). This hierarchy, she says, revolves around ideas of linguistic purity, mutual intelligibility, and authenticity, or who counts as a 'real' Arabic speaker (Hachimi 2013, 271). She chose pan-Arab talent shows because they bring

together Maghreb and Mashreq speakers in unique ways, allowing her to study their interactions while recognizing they are performing for audience approval.

This same literature has also argued that mass media reproduces and promotes the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology (Hachimi 2013, Schulthies 2014). In Hachimi's (2013) study, Mashreqi contestants in the Pan-Arab TV show *Star Academy* repeatedly mocked the Maghrebi contestants by speaking in pure gibberish to imitate how they believed the latter talks (Hachimi 2013, 282). By mocking Maghrebi Arabic, the Mashreqi contestants de-authenticated Maghrebis' (in this case Moroccans') linguistic Arabness and "positioned their varieties as normative," thus portraying the Maghrebi variety as weird and inappropriate for "real" Arabic conversation (Hachimi 2013, 282). The positioning of Eastern vernaculars over Western as the standard for Arabic dialects is also shown in Schulthies (2014) work where she also analyzed a pan-Arab talent show and found that Maghrebi participants unable to switch to Eastern dialects "were not accepted in pan-Arab talent contests" (2). Not to mention, when some shows began accommodating Maghrebi-speaking contestants, they were frequently subtitled in Fusha, while their Mashreqi counterparts were not (Schulthies 2014, 3). The use of Fusha subtitles for Maghrebi speakers automatically assumes the incomprehensibility of Maghrebi dialects compared to Eastern dialects, which people are expected to understand. This again positions Eastern/Mashreqi dialects as normative and Maghrebi dialects as being inferior, therefore supporting the ideas perpetuated by the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy.

However, Hachimi also mentions that the Maghreb-Mashreq ideology's place on the world stage facilitates its exposure to new criticisms by using Fairclough's (2001) theory regarding language ideologies. Because ideologies, according to Fairclough (2001), "are most effective when their workings are least visible," it is possible, in Hachimi's view, that by putting

the Maghreb-Mashreq ideology on the world stage, satellite and social media has made it vulnerable to change (71). In the past, the domination of Mashreqi pan-Arab media meant that Maghrebi speakers had few to no opportunities to participate in mediatized dialogue. However, the democratization of public discourse vis-a-vis social media makes it a key platform for the potential reconfiguration of the long-standing Maghreb-Mashreq ideology.

My paper explores these two poles: social media's ability to reinforce the language hierarchy and challenge it. As previously stated, social media can reproduce and strengthen language ideologies by further normalizing the usage of Eastern dialects and mocking Western dialects. However, I argue that social media can also weaken the dialect hierarchy because it raises awareness about and leaves the hierarchy exposed to criticisms (Fairclough 2001) and democratizes participation in public discourse. These are some of the many reasons why social media is vital to understanding the progression of language and ideologies as the digital age connects people in unprecedented ways.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

### YouTube and the “Dialect Comparison Challenge”:

For this study, I analyze Arabic “dialect comparison challenge” videos on YouTube to determine whether and how they support or challenge the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology. The standard format of dialect comparison videos consists of Arabic speakers saying the same word, such as 'spoon,' in their native dialects and discussing the differences. A secondary format for these comparison videos is when one Arabic speaker will say a word unique to their dialect, and the other participants have to guess the meaning of the word in either their dialect or in the mediating language such as Fusha or English.

The origins of the dialect comparison challenge lie with the 'accent tag' or 'accent challenge,' which first arose around 2011. This challenge involved the creation of videos by everyday people, most often vloggers, reading a list of set words how they would typically say them. These videos became popular as it allowed people to explore the differences in pronunciation and accents in the English language. Interestingly enough, this style of accent survey is the mainstream and simplified version of linguist Bert Vaux's Harvard Dialect Survey, which ran from 2002 until 2003 (Rymes and Pizzighella 2017, 6).

Over thirty thousand people took Vaux’s dialect survey. The survey consisted of a list of words to read aloud and a variety of questions about what you call certain things, for example: "What word(s) do you use to address a group of two or more people?<sup>2</sup>" or, "What do you call the

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<sup>2</sup> Such as “y’all,” “yous guys,” “you all,” etc.

kind of spider that has an oval-shaped body and extremely long legs?"<sup>3</sup> (Vaux 2003). After this research was completed, there was little public interest in such a topic for the next decade.

That changed in 2011 when people started posting videos of themselves reading the aforementioned list of words on YouTube and Tumblr. This list and the public interest in accents came to a head in 2013 when the *New York Times* (NYT) made its own survey called "How Y'all, Youse, and You Guys Talk" (Rymes and Pizzighella 2017, 6). This article went viral and became the most-viewed article of 2013 for the NYT (Rymes and Pizzighella 2017, 6). I actually remember doing this quiz with my family and friends, and we compared how we spoke and how our accents differed.

In 2020, the accent challenge experienced a resurgence in popularity during COVID-19 quarantine. It is unclear which video was the first to start the trend or if it was a combination of people who saw an increase in accent challenges and decided to participate. Here lies one of the main challenges of tracking this trend's development: though we know that the idea came from Vaux's 2002 study, it is difficult to track where the Arabic dialect challenge or the accent challenge had a secondary surge in popularity during quarantine because of the sheer volume of information exchanged across social media platforms.

There are many reasons why these dialect comparison videos make a worthwhile source of material. The first reason is because of YouTube, the social media app analyzed in this thesis. As of 2022, YouTube was the second most popular social media platform, with over 2.2 billion monthly active users (Walsh, 2022). This number is based on the number of active users who have accounts. However, since an account is not required to access content, the number of users is likely much higher. YouTube's massive international reach makes it an ideal platform to use as

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<sup>3</sup> Such as "daddy long legs," "harvestman," or "cellar spider"



it provides a larger slice of social media users than more generation-specific platforms such as TikTok.

Secondly, audiovisual content helps broaden the perspective on how people recreate or challenge the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology. Since these are viral videos often made by content creators, the desire for performativity and drama may influence the participants' behavior since performativity and drama are precisely what garner views. Videos are vital to understanding the perceptions of dialects and corresponding opinions since they "capture the entirety of behavior and processes, including language use, paralinguistic cues, gestures, mimics, and other verbal and nonverbal cues" (Szito 2020, 2). These non-verbal cues offer more nuanced understandings of participant's personal opinions regarding dialect variations.

Two videos are examined in this study: the first is a dialect challenge video from BBC Extra posted to Youtube in 2023, and the second is a dialect comparison video from Northwestern University in Qatar in 2020. The BBC video is mediated in Fusha, whereas the video from Northwestern University in Qatar is mediated in English. I selected the BBC Extra video for analysis because it opens by explicitly asking the participants what they think of their own dialects versus others. This offers a unique source of insight into the workings of the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. It is one thing to glean nuanced linguistic changes in interactions between Maghreb and Mashreq speakers, but it was unique of this video to ask explicit questions about the participants' views regarding other dialects. Additionally, the video includes a discussion of "slang" terms in different dialects. This video was also interesting because it included a borderline Mashreqi speaker, Fāṭima, who was from Libya. She was in a unique position as her dialect was both similar to and different from the Maghrebi and Egyptian dialects.

The second video was selected because of its drastically different format from the first. Firstly, unlike the first video, the language medium was in English, not Fusha, which may have removed any ideological closeness and associations between dialects and Fusha and limited the power of linguistic purity and Fusha proximity. Secondly, though both videos have a translation format (the first video going from dialect to Fusha in the guessing game), the second video uses the mediating language (English) as the starting point. Thus, the second video is based around the translation *into* dialect whereas the first involved translation *out* of dialect. The format of the second video required that each person express a phrase in a unique manner, and seemingly encouraged the participants to talk more in their native dialects than shifting to Fusha or a Mashreqi-Fusha mixture as happens in the first video.

### **Investigating Dialect Interaction**

When investigating these videos, I specifically analyzed Arabic dialect interaction and how such interactions reinforced or challenged the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology. The following is an explanation of the different Arabic dialects and the interplay between them. Unlike many other languages, such as Spanish, dialects of Arabic are not necessarily mutually comprehensible. Each dialect has its unique history and sociolinguistic influences that distinguish it from other dialects. Arabic dialects are typically broken into 5 groups: Levantine (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine), Egyptian (Egypt, sometimes Sudan), Iraqi, Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar), and Maghrebi Arabic (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania<sup>4</sup>) (Hachimi 2015). For the sake of this chapter, we will be focusing on

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<sup>4</sup> Depends on the scholar, these countries aren't always included

Levantine Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, and Maghrebi Arabic. Levantine and Egyptian Arabic are the groups that comprise the “Mashreq” in the ‘Maghreb-Mashreq’ language hierarchy, while Maghrebi Arabic comprises the ‘Maghreb.’

Each of these groups have a myriad of defining linguistic features that make them unique. In particular, Maghrebi varieties use the prefix *n-* for both first person singular and first person plural verb conjugations whereas Mashreqi varieties only use the *n-* prefix for first person plural conjugations, often opting to use the *b-* prefix for first person singular (Hachimi 36, 2015). Additionally, for first person plural, Maghrebi Arabic uses both the *n-* prefix and the *-ū* suffix. Mashreqi Arabic does not use the *-ū* suffix for first person plural. Within the Maghrebi group, Moroccan is the only dialect that uses the *k-* prefix to denote present tense, so a verb conjugated in first person singular present tense would start with *kn-*. Moroccan Arabic also tends to make the *q* (ق) into a *g* sound (ك) by utilizing a Persian letter. Maghrebi dialects have many unique words that will be denoted when relevant to this chapter.

Though both are part of the Mashreqi group, Egyptian Arabic and Levantine Arabic are quite different. It is easy to get into the weeds about the exact linguistic differences between the two, so I will only mention the distinctions that are relevant to this chapter. For starters, Egyptians pronounce the *j* (ج) as a *g* sound, though it is represented by the same letter. Egyptians (particularly those from Cairo) use the short vowel *-i* very frequently unlike both Levantine and Maghrebi Arabic which tend to use the short vowel *-a* instead. Egyptian Arabic also turns the *th* sound (ث) into either an *s* or a *t* depending on the word, though the letter itself doesn’t change. Additionally, Egyptians tend to omit the letter *q* (ق), in most words (not all!) and turn it into a glottal stop, known as a *hamza* and represented by a ’ when transliterated. Finally, Egyptian

Arabic uses the words *da* and *dī* (ده/دي) to stand in for *hadhā* (هذا) and *hadhihī* (هذه) (“this” masculine, “this” feminine) in Standardized Arabic.

Levantine Arabic has its differences, but in this video, Rānīya and the others only use a few unique qualities of Levantine Arabic most prevalently the *b-* prefix for present tense verb conjugations, the Levantine verb *I want* (*bidī*), and the difference between the regular pronunciation of the feminine case marking *-a* (ة). The difference between the feminine case ending pronunciation in standardized Arabic and Levantine Arabic is that in Levantine Arabic, the feminine case ending is pronounced “-ey” or “-ay” instead of just *-ah*. The following sections will explain how this video both recreates and contests the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy.

### **Chapter 3: Video One Analysis: Re-creating of the Maghreb-Mashreq Hierarchy?**

#### **Introduction:**

To better understand how the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy operates in dialect comparison videos, we must first understand how the video content reinforces the hierarchy, and then examine if/how the video contests this hierarchy. In this chapter, I discuss a BBC Arabic “dialect comparison challenge” video and how it both recreates and contests the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. It is divided into two main sections: aspects that support the hierarchy, and details that negate the hierarchy.

#### **Basics of the Video:**

The first data source for analysis is a 2023 video from BBC Arabic titled “Arabic dialect challenge: How many words’ meanings can you guess?” This video consists of four participants, roughly in their twenties, each from a different country, and who speak a different dialect. The participants are Fathī (Egyptian), Rānīya (Jordanian), M’ādh (Moroccan), and Fāṭīma (Libyan). The video starts with basic introductions then goes on to ask three questions in Fusha (the language medium): 1. What makes your dialect unique? (*ma aladhī yumayyaz lahijatak?*); 2. Which dialect would you like to learn? (*ma allahija alatī twaddu t’limha?*); and 3. What’s the hardest dialect in your opinion? (*ma allahija al’aṣ’b fī nazrak?*). The final part of the video is a

game between participants where each chooses two words from their native dialect and the others try to guess its meaning.

In the following section, I will show how elements of this video both reinforce and contest the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology. Aspects that support this language ideology include the preferential status of Mashreqi Arabic, mocking of Moroccan Arabic, and unequal burden of accommodation. On the other hand, several interactions in the video challenge this hierarchy, such as moments when participants show a lack of familiarity with certain Mashreqi terms and when participants celebrate their linguistic connections with each other.

### **Recreating the hierarchy:**

#### ***Preferential status of Mashreqi Arabic via dialect accommodation***

Throughout the video, M'ādh switches out of his native Moroccan dialect and into either Fusha or a Fusha-Mashreqi mixture. His continuous accommodation of the other Mashreqi speakers emphasizes the latter's preferential status. In the beginning of the video, the Moroccan contestant, M'ādh, introduces himself and explains what makes Moroccan Darija unique in his native dialect. When asked the aforementioned question (“What makes your dialect unique?”), M'ādh says two things of note: one, that Moroccan Arabic is “very difficult” (*s'aba bzāf*) and that Mashreqi speakers are unable to understand Moroccans. M'ādh starts his answer by saying “our [Moroccan's] dialect is very difficult” (*alḥdra diyālna s'aba bzaf*). Interestingly, this negative perception of Moroccan Darija by Moroccans has been a very common thread I've found in my interactions with them. It is interesting that M'ādh immediately portrays his dialect in a negative light, which signals his own internalization of the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy.

Secondly, M'ādh says that Moroccans speak more quickly as compared to other Middle Eastern dialects, but then continues on to say, “We are able to understand them [Mashreqi speakers] but they are not able to understand us” (“ḥna knqdrū nafhamū ‘layhum walakin hum makayqdrūsh yafhamū ‘layna). By saying this, M'ādh expresses the expectation that Moroccans must know and understand other Arabic dialects, but the same does not apply in the opposite direction. Here, M'ādh speaks in entirely Moroccan Arabic. He utilizes the *kn-* prefix and *-ū* suffix unique to the Moroccan conjugation of first person plural verbs. He uses the same unique Moroccan Arabic formatting of third person plural verbs in the *ky-* prefix with the verb *qdr* (to be able to)<sup>5</sup>.

M'ādh's negative view of his own dialect is further highlighted when he discusses his desire to learn Lebanese Arabic. When the moderator asks the participants which dialect they would like to learn, M'ādh responds:

| Speaker | Original:   | Translation:   |
|---------|---|--|
| M'ādh   | Āna kmān al-lugha illī bidaīt ata‘lmha hiya lubnānīa wa al-lahaja bal-lubnānīa, āna baḥab al-lahaja al-lubnānīa ‘abl ma ājī lilubnān ya‘nī ‘hal’a shūū <sup>6</sup> , bisirtt a‘m taḥkī lubnānī | I also would like to learn the Lebanese dialect. I love the Lebanese dialect, like “now <i>shūū</i> (what)” like it’s pleasing when I speak Lebanese |

To start, it’s noteworthy that, despite expressing how he wants to learn Lebanese Arabic, M'ādh demonstrates a noticeable proficiency in Lebanese Arabic and expresses said desire *in* Lebanese Arabic. He shows his proficiency in Lebanese Arabic in a variety of ways. First, M'ādh uses the Levantine form of *also* (*kmān*) instead of the Moroccan Darija version *ḥta ana*,

<sup>5</sup> Egyptians also use the verb *qdr*, but the *q* is replaced by a glottal stop, and is usually used in the *ism fa'l* form (meaning the *doer* of an action, such as ‘writer’, or ‘wearer’) therefore pronounced as ‘*ādr*’.

<sup>6</sup> He draws out the *ū* sound here.

indicating an immediate switch to Mashreqi Arabic, a significant break from his previous response which was entirely in Moroccan Arabic. He then uses the Levantine *bdaīt* (I wanted) instead of the Darija *bghīt*, followed by the Fusha conjugation of the verb *to learn* by substituting the Moroccan *kn-* prefix for the standard *a-* prefix for first person singular. He again uses both the Levantine verb and conjugation for the verb “to love” *ħab*, saying *baħab* instead of the Darija *knbghī*. The rest of the sentence is a mixture of Fusha and Levantine, shown by the replacement of the *q* in *qabl* (before) with a *hamza*, use of the ‘*am*’ form in Levantine Arabic meant to indicate the gerund form in English (e.g. I am speaking, I am writing). Finally, he uses the filler phrase *ya ‘nī* (equivalent of using “like” as a filler in English) instead of the Moroccan *za ‘ma*. Since *za ‘ma* is such a common filler word in Moroccan Arabic, the use of *ya ‘nī* is very intentional. Not to mention, he also evokes the auditory pleasantness of Lebanese Arabic when speaking it. All of these linguistic changes (Lebanese conjugation forms and use of Lebanese lexical terms and filler words) to Lebanese Arabic indicate a total shift of M‘ādh’s way of speaking, from Moroccan Arabic to fluent Lebanese.

There are also various instances where M‘ādh ‘slips up’ and starts speaking in Moroccan only to then switch to a Mashreqi dialect which further demonstrates the preferential status of Mashreqi Arabic. One such instance of M‘ādh changing to a different dialect mid-sentence is during the guessing game when he asks

| Speaker | Original:                             | Translation:  |
|---------|---------------------------------------|---|
| M‘ādh   | Shnū–ay hiya ma’na alkalama ‘sharjm’? | Wh (starts with Moroccan term)—what’s (switches to Egyptian term) the meaning of the word “window” ( <i>sharjm</i> )? |

He starts the question using the Moroccan word for ‘what’ (*shnū*), pauses, then uses the Egyptian term (*ay*) instead. He does something similar the first time he suggests a word for the others to guess when he says



| Speaker: | Original:                        | Translation:                                       |
|----------|----------------------------------|--|
| M'ādh    | Alkalama an nqūlha hiya “fikron” | The word I am saying is “turtle” ( <i>fikron</i> ) |

Here, the way he says “I am saying” is a form of accommodation. He uses the *n*- prefix to indicate first person singular, which is unique to the Maghrebi dialect group, but he does not use the *k*- prefix as is common with Moroccan Arabic as he did earlier in the video. Additionally, he pronounces the *qaf* (ق) as a *q* sound instead of the Moroccan *g* sound. Though all of the other participants do change their ways of speaking to a more ‘educated’ register of Arabic, meaning that they incorporate more Fusha, the “burden of accommodation,” as Hachimi calls it, lies predominantly on M'ādh's shoulders as he constantly shifts to Eastern Arabic varieties to make it easier for the others to understand him (Hachimi 2013, 273). Therefore, despite this video's purpose being to show Arab linguistic diversity, instead of continuing to speak in Moroccan Arabic for the duration of the interview, M'ādh switches to a mixture of Lebanese and Fusha very early on.

### ***Mocking Moroccan Arabic***

There are two main instances that display a mockery of Moroccan Arabic: video editing to exemplify the perceived incomprehensibility of Moroccan Arabic during M'ādh's introduction, and explicit belittling of Moroccan Arabic. As mentioned earlier, M'ādh is asked in the beginning what makes Moroccan Arabic unique. He first says that Moroccans speak more quickly than other Arabic speakers, but then says in Moroccan Arabic that “We are able to understand them but they are not able to understand us” (“*hna knqdrū nafhamū 'layhum walakin hum makayqdrūsh yafhamū 'layna*”). As if to emphasize M'ādh's point about the

incomprehensibility of Moroccan Arabic for other dialect speakers, the video is edited in such a way that there are question marks popping up above the heads of the other participants, thus mocking Moroccan Arabic.

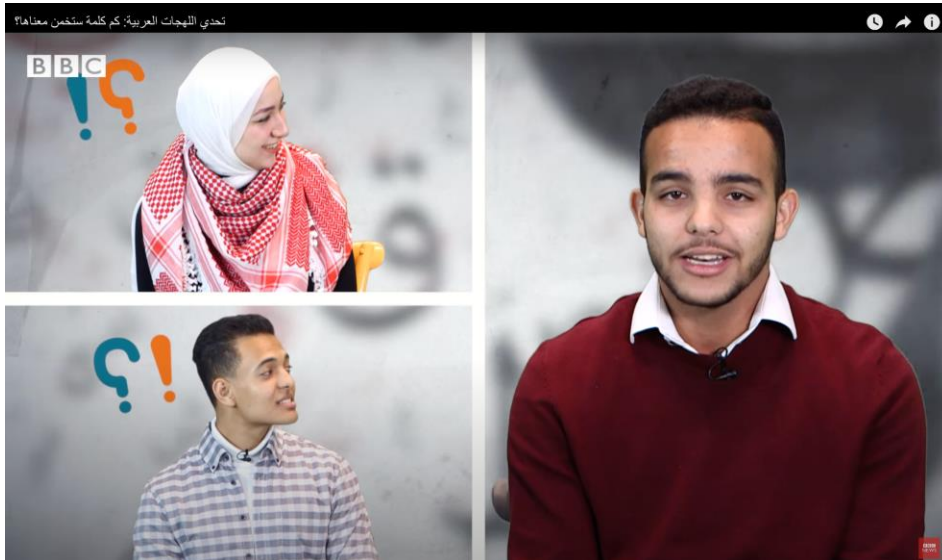


Image 1: M'ādh's introduction in Moroccan Arabic where Rānīya and Faṭḥī have question marks over their heads. (BBC News 'rabī 2023, 0:00:28)

When the other participants explained their dialects, there was no additional editing or joke about how nobody could understand them. However, when it came to M'ādh speaking in Moroccan Arabic, the video creators, by emphasizing the supposed confusion of the other guests, perpetuated the stereotype that Moroccan Arabic is incomprehensible, thus making a mockery of it.

Interestingly, upon further research I discovered that the woman who edited the video, Maryam al-Toumi, is Moroccan. This aligns with what Hachimi noted in her research about pan-Arab talent shows in which she states, "It is critical to recognize that several self-identified Moroccans aligned with the dominant Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology" (Hachimi 2013, 285). That idea is important to keep in mind. Something can still be mocking Moroccan Arabic

and supporting the Maghreb-Mashreq language hierarchy even if it's created or promoted by a Moroccan person.

Another example of mocking Moroccan Arabic comes with Rāniya's (Jordan) declaration that Moroccan Arabic is weird (*gharīb*) and doesn't belong to Arabic. When asked which Arabic dialect she would like to learn, Rāniya responds by saying she would like to learn Moroccan Arabic. She does not say such because she thinks the language is interesting or she enjoys the culture, rather, she says "because it's really weird, like, I feel like it doesn't belong to Arabic" (li' anu katīr ghurīb ya 'nī ma baḥis-ha al-lugha al-a' rabīya"). This highlights Hachimi's point that the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology often focuses on the 'deficiency' of Maghrebi Arabic instead of its differences, and it uses concepts of intelligibility and purity which define who is an 'authentic' Arabic speaker (Hachimi 2013, 271). At no other point in the video does anybody speak of another dialect as not 'belonging' to Arabic, only Moroccan Darija.

### **Contesting the Hierarchy:**

#### ***Not understanding Jordanian or Egyptian slang***

Despite Mashreqi Arabic holding a preferential status in this video, neither Jordanian nor Egyptian slang were easily understood or guessed by the participants, whereas the Maghrebi terms surprisingly were. This undermines one of the main tenets of the Maghreb-Mashreq ideology: Maghrebi dialects are considered incomprehensible to Mashreqi speakers. The first dialect word introduced in the guessing game was the word 'stubborn' (*dīkr*) from Rāniya (Jordan). After the participants guessed for a few seconds to no avail, Faṭḥī (Egypt) went so far as to say "To be honest, to even guess is difficult, impossible" (*biṣrāḥa ḥta altawaqa' ṣ'b, mustaḥīl*).

| Speaker: | Original:   | Translation:  |
|----------|---|---|
| Rānīya   | Al'awal kalama hīya "dikr"  | The first word is 'dikr'  |
| M'ādh    | Shū <sup>7</sup> ?  | What?   |
| Rānīya   | Dikr  | <i>Dikr</i>   |
| M'ādh    | Dikr  | <i>Dikr</i>   |
| Fathī    | biṣrāḥa ḥta altawaqa ' ṣ 'b, mustaḥīl                               | To be honest, to even guess is difficult, impossible  |
| Rānīya   | Aaaam okay raḥ ḥṭhum jumla āna bināqish, bināqish fī bas hūwa dikr. | Ummm okay I'll give them a sentence. Like when you debate and debate but he is just stubborn. |
| M'ādh    | Y 'nī rāsu qāṣḥa <sup>8</sup> ?                                     | Like, he's hard headed?   |
| Rānīya   | Ā 'nīd <sup>9</sup> , 'nīd!   | Yes! Stubborn, stubborn!  |

Rānīya then has to give an example and only then is M'ādh able to guess the meaning. This entire interaction took sixteen seconds. Interestingly, M'ādh's correct guess (*rāsu qāṣiḥa*) is a distinctly Moroccan Arabic phrase. Though *qāṣiḥ* does exist in Fusha, the specific way in which M'ādh uses it to mean somebody stubborn is unique to Moroccan Arabic. Despite 'hard headed' being a Moroccan phrase however, Rānīya knew the meaning immediately and then translated it into the Fusha version 'nīd. Though it is impossible to know exactly how Rānīya has a familiarity with Moroccan Arabic terminology, her knowledge correlates with what Hachimi (2022) discusses regarding how popular music has become a new and important site for the spread and use of Moroccan Arabic; with the immense success of Moroccan singers such as Saad Lamjarred, Moroccan Arabic in music is more widespread than ever. Therefore, not only is

<sup>7</sup> This is a Levantine term, the Moroccan term is *shnū*

<sup>8</sup> This is a Moroccan term

<sup>9</sup> This is a Fusha term

Jordanian Arabic not easily guessed in this situation, but Moroccan Arabic is easily translated by a Mashreqi speaker. However, it is worth noting that, upon asking native Jordanians, the word *dikr* is not very common, with most Jordanians opting to use *'nīd*. Therefore, this word may also not have been guessed easily because of its regional specificity.

Another example of Mashreqi slang not being universally-understood is with the participant's inability to guess Fathī's Egyptian slang word "to mutter" (*yibarṭm*). The conversation goes as follows:

| Speaker: | Original:  | Translation:  |
|----------|--|---|
| Fathī    | Āh ay m'na yibarṭm?                                  | What does 'yibarṭm' mean?                             |
| Rānīya   | Y'nī yaḥkī katīr, yaḥkī no?                          | It means to talk a lot, no?                           |
| M'ādh    | Shū Fathī?   | What Fathi?   |
| Fathī    | La'  | No  |
| Fāṭīma   | Yemzaḥ?  | To joke around?                                       |
| Fathī    | La'. maslān, baṭl barṭma wa itkalim m'āī 'dīl maslān | No, like, stop the muttering and talk to me straight. |
| Rānīya   | Ā ḥakī fādī?   | Ohhh, to talk nonsense?                               |
| Fathī    | **Gives a 'sort of' gesture**                        | **Gives a 'sort of' gesture**                         |

Despite Rānīya being very close, nobody is able to guess the meaning of the word. In the entire game, in which eight words are asked about, this Egyptian slang term (*barṭm*) was the only one not guessed. This is surprising considering that Fathī gave a fairly useful, if not dialect-heavy, sentence in which the term would be used. The other participants' inability to guess, even with the provided sentence only further emphasizes their lack of understanding of the Egyptian colloquial.

There is a similar difficulty with guessing with Fathī's second word, 'ecstatic' (*muza'ṭaṭ*):

| Speaker : | Original:  | Translation:   |
|-----------|--|--|
| Fathī     | Y'anī ay kalama muza'taṭ?  | What does <i>muza'taṭ</i> mean?  |
| M'ādh     | Muzakhrāf?   | Decorated?   |
| Fathī     | 'ndī... tamaam   | I have...okay  |
| Rānīya    | Okay fahiyeh jumla kawayyisa šifa ḥamīda y'anī šifa kawayyisa                | Okay so it's a good sentence, a benign adjective, like a good adjective      |
| Fathī     | La la la wala ḥamīda wala mish ḥamīda  | No no no it's not positive or negative                                       |
| Fathī     | Maslan inta lay muza'taṭ anhārīda ya Mohammad? Ay illī ḥṣal anhārīda mathlan | Like, Why are you <i>muza'taṭ</i> today Mohammad? Like, what happened today? |

Here, Fathī doesn't clarify whether the adjective is positive or negative, and uses an extremely basic example for its meaning. M'ādh guesses "smiling, happy" (bashūsh, mabsūT) which Fathī says is correct. So, the word in and of itself was not particularly difficult but Fathī seems to have gone out of his way to make it more difficult to guess. This is very different from M'ādh and Fāṭīma, who chose basic nouns and gave hints about their meanings. Rānīya chose slightly more difficult words, but gave very clear examples which led the others to guess their meaning.

Overall, the Moroccan and Libyan slang words were guessed much more quickly than the Egyptian and Jordanian slang terms. M'ādh's first word, 'turtle,' (*fikrun*) was guessed by Fāṭīma within ten seconds, much to M'ādh's surprise. She then said she was familiar with the word, which is of Amazigh origin. Lest this video give off the impression that M'ādh's words were only guessed by the other Maghrebi speaker, his other word, 'window' (*sharjm*) was guessed by Rānīya. Rānīya guessed 'window' (*sharjm*) in thirteen seconds. Both Libyan terms were guessed in two seconds and eleven seconds respectively. The purpose of mentioning the times is that on

average, the time it took for the participants to guess the Jordanian words was eighteen seconds, and for Egyptian words it was twenty six seconds, with one not even being guessed. However, with the Libyan and Moroccan terms, it took an average of about seven seconds for the Libyan terms and eleven seconds for Moroccan colloquialisms. Therefore, although the Maghreb-Mashreq ideology has led many Arabic-speakers to believe/assume that Mashreqi Arabic is more widely understood, this guessing game ends up poking holes in the assumption with the quick and accurate guessing times of the Maghrebi terms.

These discrepancies in guessing times (i.e. Moroccan Arabic words being guessed more quickly than Egyptian words) comes down to three aspects: degree of linguistic accommodation, bad explanations, and a potential decrease in Egyptian Arabic's popularity in media. Though Fathī uses words common in Egyptian Arabic, he presents a verb and an adjective, and explains the words in Egyptian Arabic. M'ādh, however, provides basic nouns and gives out hints to the others to help them guess it more easily. Ultimately, M'ādh used many tactics of accommodation (i.e. by choosing simple nouns) to help the others guess his words whereas Fathī did the exact opposite (i.e. by choosing verbs and adjectives and explaining them in pure Egyptian Arabic). This difference in accommodation highlights an internalization of the hierarchy between Maghreb and Mashreq dialects because Fathī (Egypt)'s use of adjectives and verbs as well as his explanation in Egyptian Arabic comes with the assumption that he could explain everything in Egyptian and use more complex words because the others would likely have a familiarity with Egyptian slang. This expectation of familiarity, however, does not extend to Maghrebi dialects, which explains why M'ādh chose basic terms. Therefore, the quickness in guessing Moroccan Arabic terms could either come from a familiarity with those terms, or the fact that M'ādh chose very basic words and the others did not.

Additionally, Fathī in the examples above, did a poor job of explaining “ecstatic” (*muza ’tat*), particularly when he tells Rānīya that the word is neither negative nor positive, despite it being a positive term. Lastly, there is a possibility that Egyptian Arabic is not as dominant as it used to be in Arabic media. Though Egyptian Arabic at one time was the “voice of the Arabs,” according to the *Economist* “if the internet offers a new home for Egyptians, it does the same for other Arabic dialects” (2018). Therefore, many believe that the internet’s democratizing power has caused Egyptian Arabic to be on the decline. This means that in this guessing game situation, the Egyptian Arabic words could have been unknown to the other participants because the newer generations do not have the same ties to Egyptian media as their parents. Therefore, the inability to guess the Egyptian words does somewhat support the hierarchy, as the difference in degree of accommodation between Fathī and M’ādh represents an internalization of the hierarchy. However, this discrepancy in words guessed could also represent a shift in the playing field, which has caused Egyptian Arabic’s proliferation in media to decline.

### ***Finding and Appreciating Linguistic Connections***

An interesting point of note is how Fathī both finds and appreciates linguistic similarities to Egyptian Arabic. Fāṭima’s first word, ‘quickly’ (*khat fit*) was guessed in two seconds by M’ādh. After M’ādh guesses the answer, Fathī responds by saying “In Egypt we have ‘speaking very fast’, meaning to speak quickly” (*’indnā fī miṣr khitf al-klām mthlān y ’nī tikalam bisr’a*). He says such because the Egyptian version *khitf* sounds very similar to the Libyan *khat fit* and has the same meaning. By saying this, Fathī is happily finding a linguistic connection between his Mashreqi Egyptian and Fāṭima’s Maghrebi Libyan dialect. Both M’ādh and Rānīya express how they find that connection interesting, with M’ādh saying “‘*khat fit*’ took an accent” (*khat fit*



*khadat nuqṭa*). His joking about how the Libyan phrase must have come from Egyptian furthers Fathī's goal of finding linguistic connections between the two dialects. Therefore, in this interaction, instead of emphasizing difference and deficiency between the dialects, Fathī finds similarities and connections.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, this dialect comparison video demonstrates how social media can both reinforce and challenge the Maghreb-Mashreq language hierarchy. The deauthentication of Moroccan Arabic's arabness by Rānīya and the participation of the Moroccan editor in mockery of Maghrebi Arabic both support the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. Additionally, the differences in linguistic accommodation in the guessing game between Fathī and M'ādh coupled with M'ādh's constant switching to Mashreqi Arabic function as examples of the internalization of the hierarchy. However, these examples do not diminish the importance of the parts of the video that negate the hierarchy. In particular, the fact that the other contestants were ignorant of modern Egyptian colloquialisms while easily guessing Maghrebi phrases and words is indicative of a major shift happening amongst the dialects. Whereas previously there was no doubt of Egyptian Arabic's hegemony in the Arab world, this video displays how there may be a generational shift in the dialect hierarchy due to the internet's democratizing abilities. This shift has major implications for the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy and presents the opportunity for major contestation.

## **Chapter 4: Video Two Analysis: Exposing the Maghreb-Mashreq Language Ideology?**

### **Introduction:**

To provide another example as to how the Maghreb-Mashreq dialect hierarchy operates in dialect challenge videos, I analyze a second video. In this chapter I evaluate a dialect challenge video by *the Daily Q*, a student-run news channel from Northwestern University in Qatar, to determine how it both reinforces and challenges the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology. This video differs from the previous one in multiple ways. Firstly, this video is primarily conducted in English, and rather than having a word guessing game or asking the participants questions about their dialects, each participant is given an English phrase which they then have to translate into their dialect. This difference allows for a clearer examination of the treatments and opinions of Maghrebi dialects when there is a clear linguistic difference and comparison between them. This change facilitates the identification and analysis of opinions and reactions to spoken Maghrebi Arabic, as all of the participants speak in their native dialects for the entirety of the video, unless they are speaking English. Additionally, the use of English removes Fusha from the equation and thus any ideological closeness to certain dialects in the opinions of its speakers. This creates a more equal playing field for Arabic dialects. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this video includes elements that expose the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology to criticism, particularly in how it gives Maghrebi speakers the opportunity to expose Mashreqi hypocrisy regarding foreign language influence on their own dialects.

## Basics of the Video:

The data source for this analysis is a video titled “Students Speak Different Arabic Dialects,” by *The Daily Q*, a student-run publication from Northwestern University in Qatar. It has over 2.5 million views and was released in February of 2020. Northwestern University is an American university, thus the video prompts are given in English though most of the dialogue is in Arabic. This video has five participants, all of whom are college students at the university, and each speaks a different dialect for the video though two of them know the same one (Moroccan Arabic). The participants are as follows: A’isha, who is Egyptian from Alexandria and speaks the Egyptian dialect; Shaadi, who is Korean and Moroccan and speaks Moroccan Arabic for the video; Omar, who is Lebanese and speaks Lebanese Arabic; Noora, who is Palestinian and speaks Palestinian Arabic; and Hajar, who is Moroccan and Qatari, but speaks Qatari Arabic for the challenge. Unlike the BBC video, this segment’s format consists of basic introductions, then the participants are given a list of words and phrases in English that they then translate into their native dialects and compare the results.

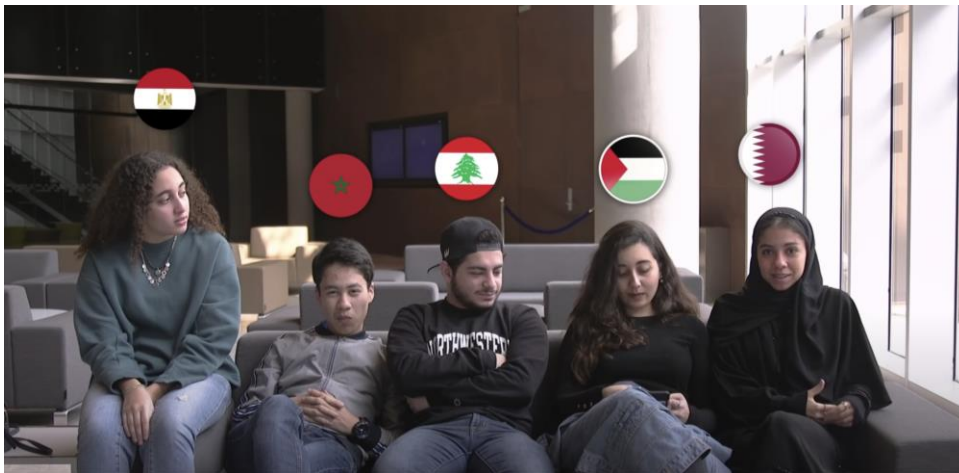


Image 2: A screenshot from the beginning of the video. From left to right the participants are as follows: A’isha (Alexandria, Egypt), Shaadi (Morocco), Omar (Lebanon), Noora (Palestine), and Hajar (Qatar). (The Daily Q 2020, 0:00:23)

The interactions in this video overwhelmingly reinforce the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy such as: persistent ridiculing of Moroccan Arabic, mock-gibberish (AKA stylistic ‘junking’) impersonations of Moroccan Arabic, and a higher status afforded to Levantine Arabic. Nonetheless, there are moments of the video that challenge the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy in the following ways: all of the dialects are targets for being made fun of, instances where the others defend Shaadi, appreciation of dialect differences (and similarities), and the disproving of previous notions regarding Mashreqi linguistic purity.

## Supporting the Hierarchy

### *Ridiculing Moroccan Arabic*

There are numerous instances throughout this video where other participants ridicule and demean Moroccan Arabic, Omar (Lebanon) being the main culprit. The first occurrence is in the very beginning of the video, where the editors took a clip where Omar says “Berberish, Spanish, Franish [French]” when talking about Moroccan Arabic, and used it as the introductory clip for the entire segment. Where this joke comes from is about four minutes into the video, when the participants are asked what their dialect words are for ‘cigarette.’ The conversation goes as follows, with bold denoting phrases spoken in English:

| Speaker(s): | Original:                             | Translation:  |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Narrator    | <b>Cigarettes</b>                     | <b>Cigarettes</b>   |
| Hajar       | Aaaa sigāyir                          | Uhhh <i>sigāyir</i>   |
| Noora       | bitkūn y’anī imma sigāyir imma dukhān | It’s like, sometimes/either <i>sigāyir</i> or <i>dukhān</i> |
| Omar        | Aaa nufs alshaī, dukhān aow sigāra    | Yeah, same thing, <i>dukhān</i> or <i>sigāra</i>            |

|                  |  |   |
|------------------|--|---|
| A'isha           | sigāra   | <i>Sigāra</i>   |
| Shaadi           | laughs)  | (laughs)  |
| Shaadi and Hajar | gāroooooo! (they high five)  | <i>Gāroooooo!!</i>  |
| Omar             | <b>You guys actually say “gāro”?</b>   | <b>You guys actually say “gāro”?</b>  |
| Shaadi           | Gāro   | <i>Gāro</i>   |
| Noora            | a'ṭīnī al gāro   | Give me a 'gāro'  |
| Hajar            | <b>I think it's Spanish, no?</b>   | <b>I think it's Spanish, no?</b>  |
| A'isha           | <b>Yeah, it sounds Spanish</b>   | <b>Yeah, it sounds Spanish</b>  |
| Noora            | Antū ay shī 'spanish' ay shī 'french,' wain al 'rabī? Wain al 'rabī?           | It's like this [word/thing] is <b>Spanish</b> , this thing is <b>French</b> , where's the Arabic? Where's the Arabic? |
| A'isha           | <b>It's all French, Spanish—</b><br>*makes a hand gesture signaling etcetera** | <b>It's all French, Spanish—</b> *makes a hand gesture signaling etcetera**   |
| Omar             | <b>Berberish–Berberish, Spanish, Franish...uh Franish</b> (laughs)             | <b>Berberish–Berberish, Spanish, Franish...uh Franish</b> (laughs)  |

In this situation, the Moroccan word for cigarette (*gāro*) is of Spanish origin. After Hajar and A'isha agree that the word sounds Spanish, Noora follows by saying how Moroccan Arabic is full of Spanish and French, but she isn't sure where the Arabic is. Both Omar and A'isha echo similar sentiments, with Omar ending the conversation by counting off on his fingers as he says that Moroccan Arabic is “Berberish, Spanish, and Franish,” which is the clip shown at the beginning of the video. Though the laughter following Omar's use of the word 'Franish' instead of “French” seems to derail the conversation, what Omar and the others said was still important.

The positioning of Moroccan Arabic as not being 'real' Arabic is a common phenomenon mentioned by Hachimi in one of her previous works (2013) where she describes how Moroccan

Arabic is devalued in comparison to other dialects because it is seen as a dialect polluted by other linguistic influences. Therefore, the mentioning by all three Mashreqi Arabic speakers that Moroccan Arabic is just a combination of Berber, Spanish, and French, reinforces the idea that Moroccan Arabic is not ‘real’ Arabic, and positions Eastern dialects as being superior because they are ‘real’ Arabic.

Additionally, the clip’s placement at the beginning of the video is interesting as the opening sequence of any video is meant to draw the viewer in. According to Rhymes and Pizzighella, the general purpose of opening sequences in YouTube videos is “[to] establish a connection with viewers and outlines the video content” (2018, 8). The specific purpose of the opening sequence outlining the rest of the video’s content also means that it sets the tone for the rest of the video. Therefore, by opening with a part of the video that explicitly mocks and deauthenticates (Couplan 2007) Moroccan Arabic, the video surreptitiously asserts the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy.

***Mock Gibberish/Stylized ‘Junking’ of Moroccan Arabic***

One of the main elements of this video that supports the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy is the repeated use of garbled gibberish to imitate how Shaadi speaks Moroccan Arabic as well as various comments about how Shaadi does not speak clearly. The first instance of mocking the way Shaadi speaks happens a little over a minute into the video and the conversation goes as follows:

| Speaker: | Original:                    | Translated:                  |
|----------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Narrator | <b>I don’t want anything</b> | <b>I don’t want anything</b> |
| A ‘isha  | mish ‘īza ḥaga               | I don’t want ḥaga            |

|        |   |   |
|--------|---|---|
| Shaadi | ma baghaītsh wālū   | I don't want <i>wālū</i>  |
| Group  | *laughter*  | *laughter*  |
| Noora  | ma bghaītsh waaaaaaaalūūūū  | I don't want <i>waaaaaaaalūūūū</i> .  |
| Hajar  | <b>You cannot laugh every time</b>  | <b>You cannot laugh every time</b>  |
| Shaadi | *gets up and pretends to storm out*<br>khlaṣ!!  | *gets up and pretends to storm out* I'm<br>done!!/Enough!!  |
| Noora  | <b>No, no, t'āla, everyone, kulna<br/>kulna, we answer normally and<br/>then there's shaadi</b><br>'wujwushee...wushjwujwujwuj''  | <b>No, no, come back, everyone, all of us,<br/>all of us, we answer normally and then<br/>there's Shaadi</b><br>'wujwushee...wushjwujwujwuj'' |
| Hajar  | <b>And Omar like</b> *imitates crossing<br>her arms, looking down, and<br>shaking her head like Omar does<br>when Shaadi speaks** | <b>And Omar like</b> *imitates crossing her<br>arms, looking down, and shaking her head<br>like Omar does when Shaadi speaks**                |
| Shaadi | khlāṣ, <b>bye bye</b> **storms out<br>again**   | Enough/I'm done, <b>bye bye!</b> *storms out<br>again*  |



Image 3: Shaadi storming out after Noora makes fun of his speech. (The Daily Q 2020, 00:01:52)

There are many things that happen here. First, as soon as Shaadi speaks and says “I don’t want anything” (“ma baghaītsh wālū”), the rest of the group tries to stifle their laughter but fail, with Noora immediately following up by mocking the way Shaadi speaks and repeating what he said, focusing on extending the vowel sounds for the word “nothing” (“waaaalooooo”). The reason why the others hark so much on the word “nothing” (wālū) is because *wālū* is a distinctly Moroccan Arabic term which originates from the Fusha *wa la shī*. This is an interesting word to focus on since the Egyptian word for “thing” (*ḥaga*) is also unique to Egyptian Arabic, though it also stems from Fusha (*ḥaja*), but nobody comments on its difference. In fact, the others focus so much on mocking how Shaadi speaks that none of the other participants ever translate the prompted phrase into their dialects.

After doing a slightly exaggerated impression of how Shaadi speaks, Noora then goes on to comment on how everybody speaks clearly except Shaadi and proceeds to make random sounds so as to imitate the incomprehensibility of Moroccan Arabic.

| Speaker: | Original:  | Translated:  |
|----------|--|--|
| Noora    | <b>Everyone kulna kulna we answer normally and then there’s Shaadi</b><br>“wujwushee...wushjwujwujwuj” | <b>Everyone all of us all of us we answer normally and then there’s Shaadi</b><br>“wujwushee...wushjwujwujwuj” |

Her use of random sounds here to mock the way Shaadi speaks is called “stylistic junking” (Couplan 2007, 183). The purpose of such gibberish is “both to index social identities and at the same time to mark the fact that these were not identities that they [people who use stylistic junking] authentically owned or inhabited” (Couplan 2007, 183). In this situation, Noora is explicitly deauthenticating Moroccan Arabic’s place as being a ‘real’ Arabic dialect by portraying it as incomprehensible to other Arabic speakers including herself. Like the previous



video with M‘ādh, Noora is highlighting the ‘deficiencies’ of Moroccan Arabic rather than its differences, thus positioning Shaadi in a subordinate position and reaffirming the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. The same ‘junking’ happens a second time just a minute later except this time it comes from both A‘isha and Noora.

| Speaker:   | Original:   | Translation:  |
|--|---|---|
| Narrator   | <b>A cup of tea, please</b>   | <b>A cup of tea, please</b>   |
| A‘isha   | Kubāyat shaī min faḍlik   | A cup of tea please   |
| Narrator   | *Makes a confused sound*  | *Makes a confused sound*  |
| Noora and A‘isha                                 | kubāyat shaī min faḍlik   | A cup ( <i>kubāya</i> ) of tea ( <i>shaī</i> ) please                           |
| A‘isha   | kubāya, <b>like cup, of shaī like tea,</b><br>kubāyat shaī <sup>10</sup>        | <i>kubāya, like cup, of shaī like tea.</i> A cup of tea.                        |
| Shaadi is smiling, Omar is fighting back a smile | Shaadi is smiling, Omar is fighting back a smile                                | Shaadi is smiling, Omar is fighting back a smile                                |
| Shaadi   | shī gās dalataī lafḍik  | A cup ( <i>gās</i> ) of tea <sup>11</sup> ( <i>ataī</i> ) please.               |
| Everyone bursts out laughing                     | Everyone bursts out laughing  | Everyone bursts out laughing  |
| A‘isha   | <b>Sorry, <u>what</u><sup>12</sup>?</b>   | <b>Sorry, what?</b>   |
| Shaadi   | *laughing* khlāṣ <b>bye bye</b>   | *laughing* enough, <b>bye bye</b>   |
| Noora  | <b>Also, like, you’re not even saying it clearly you’re like “zzzzzzzzzzda”</b> | <b>Also, like, you’re not even saying it clearly you’re like “zzzzzzzzzzda”</b> |

<sup>10</sup> Her explanation was prompted by indiscernible sounds of confusion from the people behind the camera. I presume they gave her a confused look as both A‘isha and Noora try to break down what A‘isha said.

<sup>11</sup> While *gās* is the Moroccan pronunciation of *Ka’s* from Fusha, *ataī* differs significantly from *shaī* which is the word used by other dialects for “tea”

<sup>12</sup> This part of “what?” had increased vocal inflection and she increased her volume to demonstrate her incredulity.

|                |   |   |
|----------------|---|---|
|                | *flicking her hand to show the speed*   | *flicking her hand to show the speed*   |
| A‘isha         | (at the same time): <b>you’re like</b> “zzzzdadadadada” *also flicking her hand*                  | (at the same time): <b>you’re like</b> “zzzzdadadadada” *also flicking her hand*                |
| Omar and Hajar | *Omar gestures confusedly, Hajar is almost falling over laughing*                                 | *Omar gestures confusedly, Hajar is almost falling over laughing*                               |
| Shaadi         | <b>Want me to say it clearly?</b> *he gets really close to the microphone* shī gās dalatāī lafḍik | <b>Want me to say it clearly?</b> *he gets really close to the microphone* A cup of tea please. |
| Omar           | <b>Fine</b>   | <b>Fine</b>   |

Once again, in this situation Shaadi’s differences in speech are followed by laughter and stylistic junking, though this time from both A‘isha and Noora. It’s especially interesting that when A‘isha first says the Egyptian translation of the prompt (*kubāyat shaī min faḍlik*) and there is sounds of confusion from behind the camera, both Noora and A‘isha work together to explain the translation. Everybody is respectful of the differences in pronunciation.<sup>13</sup> However, when it comes to Shaadi’s linguistic differences, everybody laughs and nobody takes the time to help him explain, nor does Shaadi himself take any time to break down the phrase. This is especially peculiar because Hajar is a Moroccan Arabic speaker, and instead of helping Shaadi with explanations or clarifying words, she prefers to laugh. However, it is worth noting that there are multiple moments where she admonishes the others for their mocking of or laughter at Shaadi and the Moroccan dialect. Additionally, unlike the past video where the Moroccan, M‘ādh, explained his dialect terms, Shaadi refuses to break down the phrase, and A‘isha (Egypt) as a Mashreqi speaker *does* break down her phrase. This reversal of linguistic accommodation from

<sup>13</sup> I say ‘pronunciation’ here because Lebanese and Palestinian Arabic use the same word for ‘cup’ (*kubāya*) just pronounced slightly differently (in Levantine it is ‘*kubāyeh*’).

the first video shows that while the mockery of Shaadi’s speech supports the hierarchy, the lack of understanding regarding Egyptian colloquial again suggests that Egyptian Arabic is on the decline, and that the hierarchy is vulnerable to change.

There are also comments from Noora and A’isha about how Shaadi “doesn’t even say it [his phrase] clearly” and both use ‘junking’ and gibberish coupled with quickly waving their hands to convey Shaadi’s perceived incomprehensibility. This once again ties to Hachimi’s idea about how the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy highlights Maghrebi dialects’ deficiency rather than their differences (Hachimi 2013). Not to mention, the stylistic junking ties to Couplan’s concept of “deauthenticity” in that both Noora and A’isha use unintelligible combinations of sounds to portray Moroccan Arabic as being something ‘other’ than Arabic because they, as Mashreqi Arabic speakers, do not understand it. All of these tactics and reactions to Moroccan Arabic support the Maghreb-Mashreq language hierarchy.

## **Challenging the Hierarchy**

### ***Mocking Mashreqi Dialects***

Though there are many instances of Moroccan Arabic being mocked or laughed at because of its differences from the other dialects, one of the ways in which this video contests the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy is in the mutual ridiculing of the other dialects. Such mockery occurred for three main reasons: foreign language influence, unexpected/entirely different words for everyday terms, and unique pronunciations of letters. The example that comes to mind when referencing foreign language influence was a continuation of the “a cup of tea please” prompt when Omar gives his answer and Shaadi takes the opportunity to mock him back.

|          |           |              |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| Speaker: | Original: | Translation: |
|----------|-----------|--------------|

|        |                           |   |
|--------|---------------------------|---|
| Omar   | Kubāyat shaī...           | A cup of tea...                                   |
| Shaadi | *cutting him off* Blīz    | Please ( <i>Blīz</i> )                            |
| Omar   | ...Blīz                   | ...Please ( <i>Blīz</i> )                         |
| Shaadi | <b>You say blīz, yeah</b> | Shaadi: <b>You say please (<i>blīz</i>), yeah</b> |
| Hajar  | ‘āla “blīz” (laughing)    | Hajar: He said ‘ <i>blīz</i> ’                    |

Here, Omar starts out saying his translation, then pauses before saying ‘please,’ before which Shaadi says the word for him. Shaadi seemingly says the word first because he knows what it’s going to be and wants to make fun of Omar. Omar’s hesitation to say a word that originates from a foreign language happens a few times throughout the video. Here, his short hesitation could indicate his unwillingness to admit the use of the English word “please” in Lebanese Arabic, so as not to seem like Lebanese Arabic isn’t ‘true’ or ‘pure’ Arabic (Soulaimani, 2019). Hajar finds Omar’s use of *blīz* funny, and gestures at Omar and laughs. Another interesting detail of this interaction however, is that Hajar switches to the Mashreqi form of conjugation to say “he said” (‘āla). It’s ambiguous as to why she’s doing this, but these are two ways to read it: one, this was an unconscious switch to Mashreqi Arabic, and two, she is mocking Lebanese Arabic. The second option is more likely, particularly since she emphasizes her dialect switching with flicking her hands in an exaggerated way, which is interesting since Levantine dialects are often associated with femininity.



Image 4: Hajar flitting her hands around while saying “he says please (*blīz*).” (Daily Q 2020: 00:02:30)

As previously mentioned, Hajar could also unintentionally be switching to Mashreqi Arabic. In Qatari Arabic, her spoken dialect in the video, the Arabic phrase ‘he said’ (*qāla*) would be pronounced as *gāla*, as Gulf Arabic speakers tend to pronounce the *qaf* as a *g* sound. Therefore, even though there is a negation of the hierarchy here in that Hajar is making fun of Lebanese Arabic for its foreign language influence, she is still switching to a Mashreqi form of conjugation, which in turn supports aspects of the hierarchy as outlined in chapter one. However, it is significantly more likely that this switch is meant to increase the burn of her mockery as she

is explicitly making fun of Omar and his way of speech, particularly coupled with her flamboyant hand movements.

*Open Season for Mockery: Dialect Weirdness*

Next, there is an instance of mutual mockery when presented with entirely unfamiliar words for common terms. When A‘isha asks everybody what they say for ‘socks,’ she, Shaadi, and Omar have very different words. What follows is a bit of a comparison game to see whose term is ‘worse,’ as in, weirder.

| Speaker: | Original:  | Translation:   |
|----------|--|--|
| A‘isha   | <b>Oh, socks</b> , shrāb                           | <b>Oh, socks</b> , shrāb   |
| Omar     | Shrāb?   | <i>Shrāb?</i>  |
| A‘isha   | <b>Yeah</b> , shrāb                                | <b>Yeah</b> ,  |
| Shaadi   | Shrāb? <b>Like</b> shhhhhewp                       | <i>Shrāb?</i> <b>Like</b> shhhhhewp (slurping noise) <sup>14</sup> |
| A‘isha   | <b>Yeah</b> , shrāb                                | <b>Yeah</b> , <i>shrāb</i>   |
| Shaadi   | Tkāshr   | <i>Tkāshr</i>  |
| Omar     | Shū?   | What?  |
| Shaadi   | Tkāshr   | <i>Tkāshr</i>  |
| A‘isha   | <b>Okay that’s worse than what I said, come on</b> | <b>Okay that’s worse than what I said, come on</b>                 |
| Shaadi   | <b>You say shrāb, I mean...</b>                    | <b>You say <i>shrāb</i>, I mean...</b>                             |
| Omar     | Kelsāt   | <i>Kelsāt</i>  |

<sup>14</sup> Shaadi makes a slurping noise because the Egyptian word for socks, *shrāb*, has the same root and sound as the Arabic verb ‘to drink’ (sharaba). Therefore, when A‘isha says *shrāb* it sounds like she’s saying ‘drink.’

|        |                              |                              |
|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| A‘isha | KelsĀT <sup>15</sup> ?       | <i>KelsĀT?</i>               |
| Noora  | <b>That’s not any better</b> | <b>That’s not any better</b> |
| A‘isha | Kelsāt!!                     | <i>Kelsāt!!</i>              |

In the above conversation, A‘isha was the one who introduced the prompt ‘socks’ to show the difference in how Egyptians say the word compared to other dialects. The word ‘socks’ (*shrāb*) is immediately joked about because of its proximity to the Arabic word “to drink” (*sharab*). For the other participants, this is an unexpected word for a common term, particularly since Arabic is a root-based language, therefore the words often have similar meanings to the meaning of the original three letter (or sometimes four) root. However, here, socks (hopefully) have nothing to do with drinking, so the other participants laugh at the similarity in sound but significant difference in meaning. This negates the Maghreb-Mashreq language hierarchy for two reasons. First, many of the participants seem surprised at the Egyptian term in the first place, meaning they did not have a familiarity with it, which is surprising considering the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy is built upon the assumption that Mashreqi dialects are more widely understood. The second way this challenges the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology is that it makes Egyptian Mashreqi Arabic the butt of the joke, entirely reversing the traditional understanding of Maghrebi Arabic experiencing mockery.

Additionally, the Lebanese word for ‘socks’ (*kelsāt*) garners a lot of laughter and incredulity, especially from A‘isha. A potential cause for this laughter is that the word *kelsāt* likely comes from the French word *calecon* which actually means underwear. Moments earlier, Omar was making fun of the Moroccan Arabic word for socks (*tkāshr*) but once he offered his

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<sup>15</sup> The capital letters indicate an increase in volume and enunciation.

word, with an attitude as though he thought his would be ‘better,’ he was met with laughter. Noora specifically tells him that his word is not any better than the other two. Therefore, despite being a Mashreqi dialect, the Lebanese dialect is lumped into the ‘weird’ category in this situation, which challenges traditional notions of the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy.

**Appreciating Dialect Differences**

The last situation in which other dialects experienced mockery was regarding letter pronunciation differences. Hajar, speaking in Qatari Arabic, briefly encounters some jokes about her dialect when she introduces the prompt “I love you.”

| Speaker:         | Original:                                | Translation:                 |
|------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Hajar            | <b>Okay, I love you</b>                  | <b>Okay, I love you</b>      |
| Shaadi           | Kanbghīk                                 | <i>Kanbghīk</i>              |
| A ‘isha          | Baḥabak                                  | <i>Baḥabak</i>               |
| Omar             | Baḥabik                                  | <i>Baḥabik</i>               |
| Noora            | Baḥabik                                  | <i>Baḥabik</i>               |
| Hajar            | Aḥabich                                  | <i>Aḥabich</i> <sup>16</sup> |
| A ‘isha and Omar | Aḥabichhhhhh (drawing out the -ch sound) | <i>Aḥabichhhhhh</i>          |

In this small example, we see how the change of the typical pronunciation of the second person singular pronoun suffix from *-k* to *-ch* brought about comments from the others. Though this mockery is not negative or derogatory in nature, it still represents a shift in that instead of

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<sup>16</sup> Hajar’s pronunciation of the *-* ending representing the second person singular ‘you’ differs from the others and becomes a *-ch* sound.



ridiculing or commenting on Maghrebi Arabic, the others are singling out Gulf (Khalījī) Arabic. It is also worth noting that since Hajar herself brought up the prompt, she purposely did so to show how her dialect differed from the others. This again subverts the Maghreb-Mashreq language hierarchy because it celebrates the differences between dialects compared to Mashreqi Arabic instead of focusing on deficiencies as noted by Hachimi (2013).

### *Not-So Pure Dialects*

Another way in which this video challenges the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology is in the shared linguistic connections between Moroccan Arabic and Lebanese Arabic, particularly in terms of French influence. Whereas Moroccan Arabic’s French influence is seen as polluting it, and this is even noted in the opening scene when Omar jokes about how Moroccan Arabic is just Berber, Spanish, and French, Lebanese and Egyptian Arabic typically don’t receive the same treatment. A few minutes into the video, when given the prompt ‘shoes,’ Omar and Shaadi have a conversation where Omar tries to make fun of one of the Moroccan Arabic words for shoes, but then realizes that he says the exact same thing.

| Speaker:  | Original:                                     | Translation:                                  |
|-----------|---|---|
| Narrator: | <b>Shoes</b>                                  | <b>Shoes</b>                                  |
| A ‘isha:  | Gazma   | <i>Gazma</i>                                  |
| Shaadi:   | Spirdīla o sbbāt                              | <i>Spirdīla or sbbāt</i>                      |
| Omar:     | **laughs as do the people behind the camera** | **laughs as do the people behind the camera** |

| Speaker:  | Original:  | Translation:   |
|-----------|--|--|
| Narrator: | <b>Shoes</b>   | <b>Shoes</b>   |
| A 'isha:  | Gazma  | <i>Gazma</i>   |
| Shaadi:   | Spirdīla o sbbāṭ   | <i>Spirdīla</i> or <i>sbbāṭ</i>                                |
| Omar:     | sbbāṭ  | <i>sbbāṭ</i>   |
| Hajar     | <b>Why are you making fun of him?</b><br>(referring to Shaadi) | <b>Why are you making fun of him?</b><br>(referring to Shaadi) |
| Omar      | La' huwa huwa 'āl ashīā 'bl (hada)<br>a 'īda                   | No, he he said something before that,<br>say it again          |
| Shaadi    | Spirdīla   | <i>Spirdīla</i>  |
| Omar      | Spirdīla   | <i>Spirdīla</i>  |
| Shaadi    | <b>It's spadḅī in French it's spadḅī<sup>17</sup></b>          | <b>It's spadḅī (shoes) in French it's<br/>spadḅī (shoes)</b>   |
| A 'isha   | spadḅī! <b>Yeah</b>  | Spadḅī! <b>Yeah</b>  |
| Omar      | <b>It's spādrī, naḥna n'ūl spādrī</b>                          | <b>It's spādrī, we [also] say spādrī</b>                       |
| Shaadi    | <b>It's french colonization my friend,<br/>high five</b>       | <b>It's french colonization my friend,<br/>high five</b>       |

In this conversation, Hajar directly calls out Omar for making fun of Shaadi though he used the same word *sbbāṭ*. Omar initially tries to defend himself pointing out the weirdness of the other word Shaadi used *spirdīla*. However, once Shaadi explained it came from the French word for shoes, *espadrille*, Omar paused and said that Lebanese people use the same term, just pronounced a little differently. This is interesting because as Hachimi points out, oftentimes, Maghrebi Arabic's influences from other languages, such as French, are typically seen as

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<sup>17</sup> The upside down 'R' (ⵝ) represents the French 'r' sound as per the International Phonetic Alphabet

pollutive and lend credit to the idea that Maghrebi dialects are not ‘pure’ or ‘authentic’ Arabic. Omar initially behaves as if agreeing with this idea, and attempts to deauthenticate Shaadi’s Arabic by portraying the word *spirdīla* as ridiculous and incomprehensible. However, once he’s told the French origins, there is a visual shift in Omar’s expression and he unhappily concedes that Lebanon uses the exact same term. It is interesting that though Lebanese Arabic also has a lot of French influence, it is rarely viewed as being polluted. The interaction in the video thus challenges the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy because where Omar initially wanted to portray Moroccan Arabic as impure and incomprehensible, he is forced to change his perspective when he realizes that by deauthenticating Shaadi, he would be deauthenticating his own dialect. This shows that other dialects, even Mashreqi dialects, are just as influenced by foreign languages as Maghrebi Arabic at times, which negates the idea that Maghrebi Arabic is less understandable because of its foreign language influences. This directly negates the idea of Mashreqi dialects’ linguistic purity as compared to Maghrebi dialects as is promulgated in the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology

Notably, once Shaadi says “it’s French colonization my friend” as a joke, he holds up his hand for a high five to Omar. However, Omar ignores Shaadi and keeps his arms crossed, so Hajar high fives him instead. Originally, I thought maybe Omar didn’t see Shaadi’s hand, but upon watching it multiple times, it seems Omar chooses to ignore him. Hajar even points directly in front of Omar to Shaadi’s hand and says “French colonization haha!” and Omar *still* ignores the high five. When he sees Hajar and Shaadi high-five right in front of him, he never comments about the high five being for him. This is odd, as the video itself has a very joking and upbeat tone, but in this scene Omar sits with an unhappy expression and his arms crossed, refusing to acknowledge or agree with the sentiment that Lebanese Arabic has French colonial influence.

Both Omar's body language and his ignoring of Shaadi's high five indicate his realization that Lebanese Arabic is not as 'pure' as he perhaps thought, and potentially even some embarrassment in realizing he is acting hypocritical. Overall, this scene provides insight into the potential for recognition of Western language influence in Mashreqi dialects and therefore reconciliation with stereotypes about Maghrebi dialects.



First image: Hajar points to Shaadi's hand while Omar ignores him. Second Image: Hajar reaches over to high-five Shaadi while Omar sits with his arms crossed. (The Daily Q 2020, 0:01:33)

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, this dialect challenge video illustrates how social media has the power to both reinforce and challenge the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. Unlike the previous video, this segment shows the more blatant, arguably uglier side to the real-world impacts of the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. Though much of the video recreates negative stereotypes regarding Moroccan Arabic, that does not make the aspects that defy such expectations any less important. If anything, the true value of this video lies in the repeated instances where Mashreqi speakers are reminded their dialects are not as 'pure' as they thought by Maghrebi speakers. These examples and the recognition of outside linguistic influence or even similarities with Moroccan Arabic suggest the ability for change in the opinions of Maghrebi Arabic moving forward. If

Mashreqi speakers recognize their dialects' external influences do not make them incomprehensible for others, perhaps they can apply that same logic to Maghrebi Arabic dialects. Such an occurrence provides the potential to break down long-standing language barriers and stereotypes so as to dismantle the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy, one dialect comparison video at a time

## **Conclusion**

Since the creation of the term “Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy” (Hachimi 2013), scholars have largely focused on how satellite media supports the supremacy of eastern Arabic dialects over their western counterparts. However, social media presents itself as a new source for investigating the applications of the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy among younger generations that were raised on unadulterated access to the internet. In recent years, the internet has functioned as a democratizing force amongst Arabic dialects since Arabic social media content can come from anywhere and is not limited by regional media development as is the case with pan-Arab satellite television. The internet connects people in entirely unprecedented ways, and allows for the popularization of previously neglected Arabic dialects, such as the case with Moroccan Arabic both following Saad Lamjarred’s rise to fame and Morocco’s success in the World Cup (Hachimi 2022).

Throughout this article, I have argued that social media content, in particular dialect comparison videos, have the capability to both support and negate the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology. On one hand, these videos supported the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology by showcasing repeated mockery of Moroccan Arabic, whether that be through making jokes, laughing, or stylized junking (Hachimi 2013). At times, particularly in the first video, repeated code switching on M’ādh’s part emphasized elements of linguistic accommodation which corroborated the ideas found in the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. On the other hand, these videos prove how social media can be a platform for negating the hierarchy, such as by finding

linguistic connections, mutually mocking dialects, exposing the impurities of Mashreqi Arabic, and subtle signs of Egyptian Arabic's decline in media prowess (Fairclough, 2001).

The sheer diversity of the ways in which social media reinforces or negates the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy shows just how little we understand about this phenomenon. There is a gap in source material when analyzing the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy as previous scholars chose to emphasize Pan-Arab satellite television because of how it allows dialects to interact in entirely new ways. I seek to build upon the foundations of other scholars such as Hachimi and Schulthies, both of whom were trailblazers in the use of satellite media as a source of investigation regarding the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy. Hachimi, in particular, mentioned in her 2013 article how social media could be an interesting source for potential negation of the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy, and even lists a few of the YouTube comments as evidence in support of the hierarchy. A new emphasis on social media would expand this field to include the socio-cultural developments of the younger generations, such as Gen Z, and even generation Alpha, who, having grown up in a largely digitized world, have shown themselves to be quite different from previous generations. Therefore, it is vital that scholars investigate social media and its impact on the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy.

Another interesting source of research would be comment sections underneath popular videos such as these dialect comparison challenges. Originally, I wanted to include comments from the videos in this paper, but ultimately the videos provided more content than I expected, so I chose to omit them. However, there is no doubt that seeing the public response to ideas promoted in dialect comparison videos or other sources of analysis would greatly improve our understanding of the position of the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy in a social media setting. In particular, comment sections provide a source of input from people of various backgrounds, and

operate as an equal playing field for comments as the only ‘hierarchy’ within a comment section is determined by the number of likes a comment has. Therefore, the more popular a comment, the more people agree with it. Analyzing the popularity of comments and their opinions on content would aid in understanding the average person’s response to ideas regarding the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy.

It is important to note that YouTube should in no way be the only social media platform analyzed, as platforms like TikTok and Instagram have taken off in recent years and the existence of both audio and purely visual content adds yet another layer to how the Maghreb-Mashreq hierarchy can be expressed. Hence, we as social scientists should pay attention to how social media can change language ideologies while also reinforcing them. Conclusively, in this paper I have argued that social media, while in some aspects supporting the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology, presents a new opportunity for changing the narrative of the Arabic dialect hierarchy in unprecedented ways that will likely impact its power in the future.



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