P.H. NELDE (ed.)

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ON STRUCTURAL DETERMINISM IN BORROWING: MOROCCAN ARABIC

Jeffrey Heath, Harvard, U.S.A.

1. Background

In this brief report we summarize some of the findings of a study of code-switching and especially borrowing currently observable in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic (MCA). A more detailed monograph is in preparation.¹

MCA is the overwhelmingly dominant spoken vernacular of Morocco. A substantial minority speaks one of three Berber languages, but since MCA is the interethnic language and since non-Berbers usually do not speak Berber well, current diffusional pressure is from MCA on Berber rather than vice-versa. However, MCA is undergoing very extensive diffusional pressure from French (Fr), Spanish (Sp), and Classical Arabic (CA), which in the present context subsumes Koranic and Modern Literary Arabic.

Fr has been a significant factor since the beginning of the French Protectorate (1912), which covered most of the country. The Fr presence was especially strong in Rabat, Casablanca, Fes, and Meknes, while the southern area around Marrakech was colonized indirectly. Fr-MCA bilingualism among native Moroccans was limited in most of the Protectorate period due to restrictive educational policy. In the post-Protectorate period, 1956—, the educational system expanded greatly, and many subjects were taught in Fr. In recent decades the growth of broadcast media (in Fr alongside MCA, CA, and Sp), and the influxes of European tourists (mostly Fr-speaking), have contributed to a notable growth of Fr-MCA bilingualism in the native population, though
MCA is clearly dominant and there are many monolinguals.

Sp influence along the northern coast is apparent from a number of old, precolonial borrowings in nautical and related domains. Actual colonial penetration occurred during the Spanish Protectorate, which was simultaneous to the French one. The Spanish zone, however, was confined to a small area around Tetouan, though Tangier was also within the de facto Spanish influenced region. Sp has not enjoyed the same postcolonial success as has Fr, partly because of the small size of the Spanish zone and partly due to the relative lack of interest by recent Spanish governments in promoting postcolonial educational and cultural ties. However, Sp can now be heard almost all day on television and radio broadcasts easily received around Tetouan, and in view of the Moroccan addiction to television this is an important factor in maintaining the visibility of Sp. Outside of the former Spanish zone, however, with the exception of the neighboring coastal area down to Casablanca, there has never been extensive Sp-MCA bilingualism, nor is there currently much interest in Sp as a language of study in schools. Sp was the colonial language in the Western Sahara to the south, now the subject of a prolonged conflict between Moroccan forces and the Polisario guerrillas, but this desolate, thinly-populated territory has not been a factor in diffusion affecting the major Moroccan cities. Aside from this, we can briefly mention Judeo-Arabic (Ladino), spoken by Jews in the far north among themselves, but apparently of little significance as an agent for diffusion into Muslim dialects of MCA.

CA is now a major factor in schools (which are phasing Fr out and CA in at all levels), newspapers, radio-TV, and theological discourse. Teachers must
be proficient CA speakers, and a reasonable knowledge of the language is necessary for post-primary study.

CA is to MCA roughly as Anglo-Saxon to modern English, and must be learned as a second language.

In the Fes/Meknes area, where fieldwork was concentrated, Fr and CA material (code-switched and borrowed) is extensive in MCA utterances, but much more so among educated multilinguals than among others. Sp borrowings in this area are indirect, coming from the north (and west) through MCA dialect diffusion. In the north, direct Sp influence continues, so that there we have a borrowed lexicon from Sp corresponding to the Fr-based lexicon of the rest of the country.

English borrowings are beginning to occur, e.g., in connection with drug-culture slang, though many Eng terms may really be entering MCA via Fr slang. Eng is now very popular as a language of study, though actual proficiency is low due to the lack of out-of-class opportunities of usage (American films appear with Fr dubbing). German is also a language of study and there are some Ger-speaking tourists, but the only loans from Ger recorded in my data are a few slang words: dihuq-a 'prostitute' (die Hure), nay 'no!' (Nee), and kurtuvn 'potatoes' (Kartoffeln); the usual MCA terms are qbb-a, la, and b'tat-a, respectively.

2. Data Base.

The data for this project consist of: lexical material on loanwords based on some eight months of participant-observation (mostly in Fes and Meknes) in 1979-81; recorded texts; some transcriptions of broadcasts (soccer game, interviews); supplementary elicitation (e.g., to get inflected/derived forms of attested stems); and limited parallel material elicited in other locations (Tetouan, Marrakech, Algeria) and from speakers of Jewish dialects. This recent material can be partly collated with data in
existing dictionaries and with earlier lists of borrowings, notably Brunot (1949) on Fr loans.

These data will be presented in appendices to the monograph. One appendix lists representative CA borrowings in educated MCA, illustrating major patterns of adaptation. Two other appendices give more comprehensive (not merely representative) lists of recorded Fr, Sp, or other European borrowings (i.e., items which are at least partly adapted to MCA and/or which are reasonably common in MCA), one appendix for verbs and the other for other word classes (nouns, adjectives, adverbs). About 1000 European stems are listed, though some of the verbs are actually internal denominative derivations. Each entry lists recorded dialect variants and unpredictable inflected or derived forms (plurals for nouns, etc.). These appendices list only European loans attested in Fes, Meknes, and/or Marrakech; items attested only in other locations, or found in earlier literature but not recognised by my informants, are discussed elsewhere. Overall, the data base is quite substantial for Fes/Meknes and is more than adequate for my analytical purposes.

3. Determinism in Borrowing

The theoretical question which I wish to raise is whether prior structural analysis of two languages suffices for accurate prediction of the mechanics of borrowing. Given the structures of MCA, CA, Fr, and Sp, can we guess how MCA will adapt the foreign material? We leave aside the question of which items will be borrowed and focus on mechanics of adaptation of those items which are borrowed. We emphasize Fr and CA borrowings since they are the ones now directly entering the dialects best studied.

It will be recalled that Weinreich (1953) was heavily concerned with this issue. He discussed
phonological adaptation of borrowings between Swiss German and Romansh, in both directions, starting with structural analyses of the two considered separately (phonemes and distributional restrictions), then used them to predict how words were likely to be reshaped or reanalysed in connection with borrowing. The predicted conversion routines involved over- and under-differentiation, reinterpretation, and phone substitution. With some allowance for interfering factors such as hypercorrection and back-formation, Weinreich concluded that this structural comparison did in fact predict the attested conversion routines accurately.

I cannot here attempt a reanalysis of Weinreich's own case study, but I will address the same general question using the Moroccan corpus. My general point is that a deterministic structural model is not very successful in this case, because a) often two or more structural principles conflict, so that arbitrary and perhaps unpredictable and inconsistent choices are made, and b) there are some random patterns not relatable to any obvious structural factor.

4. Phonology

CA borrowings are almost entirely predictable in their phonology. For verbs, CA vowels are dropped or reduced to accord with MCA canonical-shape patterns; thus CA sa?al-a → MCA s?l 'he asked'. For nouns the usual process is based on segmental (phoneme-to-phoneme) conversions with no such canonical reshaping: CA su?al- → MCA su?al 'question' (noun).

The segmental conversions are largely consistent even where there would seem, a priori, to be two or more possibilities. CA affricate ɣ → MCA fricative ɣ, never the cluster dɣ (though Eng ɣ now
comes in as $\ddr$, hence $\ddr \mu \ddp$ 'job'). CA $\ddr$ splits into MCA $\ddr$ and (pharyngealized) $\ddr$, but the split is determined with very few exceptions by vocalic environment. CA interdental fricatives $\ddr \theta$ become MCA alveolar stops $d t$ (never $z s$, though the latter would seem to be equally good candidates). These conversions seem to be not merely automatic adjustments, rather (in part) analogical routines based on normal CA-MCA correspondences in true cognates (and in earlier borrowings). The only real fluctuations in CA borrowings involve presence/absence of CA glottal stop $\ddz$ in borrowings (more recent CA borrowings retain $\ddz$ while some earlier ones drop it), and optional shortening of CA vowel before consonant cluster, hence CA $\ddmud\ddm-a \rightarrow$ MCA $\ddmud\ddm-a$ or $\ddm^{\ddd}\ddm-a$ 'period of time'.

These are minor fluctuations and are relatable to structural conflicts which we will not detail here. By contrast, Fr borrowings show much less phonological predictability. Some of this is expectable and involves inconsistent handling of non-MCA sounds. Thus Fr $\ddr$ ("eu") $\rightarrow$ MCA $u$, $\ddr$ (new phoneme), or either of these interchangeably, depending on the particular item. Fr $\ddr$ becomes MCA $u$, $\ddr$, or $\ddi$ (new phoneme), all three outputs multiply represented.

More seriously, even shared Fr-MCA phonemes show some unexpected fluctuation. Numerous exx. of random shifts involving sonorants $l n r$ are recorded, e.g., MCA $\ddgri\ddu\ddn$ from Fr $\ddgr\ddai\ddn\ddeur$ 'assistant to bus driver', $\ddf\ddu\ddpar\ddr-a$ alongside $\ddf\ddu\ddlar\ddr-a$ from Fr $\ddf\ddoul\ddla\ddn$ 'kerchief'. Some such changes have to do to some extent with metathesis, dissimilation, and the like, but there is much inconsistency from one item to another and often several variants are found for a single borrowing. Vowels are not immune, hence unexpected $\ddf\ddr\ddu\ddnu\ddr\ddv$ alongside expected $\ddf\ddr\ddu\ddnu\ddr\ddv$ and $\ddf\ddu\ddnu\ddr\ddv$ 'stoplight' from Fr $\ddf\ddeu\ddrou\ddge$.
Some additional unpredictability is due to conflicts between local segmental conversions and higher-level distributional patterns. In MCA, phonetic œ, œ, and back a are only surface allophones of phonemes /u ɪ a/ when next to pharyngealized consonants. Thus a phonetic sequence idi or ede is acceptable, interpreted as phonemic /idi/ and /idi/, respectively, but phonetic ede or ide does not occur (unless there are pharyngealized consonants elsewhere in the same word in an appropriate position). Borrowings may have to be rearranged to conform with these distributional rules (which, of course, do not apply to Fr). Often two or more equivalent reshapings are attested, and individual details seem unpredictable. Thus Fr militaire becomes MCA militir (phonetically raising the last vowel) or militir (pronounced mileter, hence lowering the second vowel). Sometimes the reshaping runs against the pattern set by the Fr vowels, as in the case of Fr bordel, where we would expect burdil (phonetic bordel) but in fact get burdil 'noisy place' with two high vowels.

5. Morphology

We can only briefly mention some major problem areas here. First, there is the matter of interparadigmatic identification; given that source and target languages are both heavily inflected, which particular form is borrowed and which of several paradigmatic forms does it become?

In the CA borrowings this is not an issue, since CA and MCA have parallel morphological structures. The borrowings are verb-to-verb or noun-to-noun and affixation follows regular MCA patterns. Fr and Sp borrowings are messier. In early loans we find word-class shifts, hence MCA kumir 'long French bread' from Sp infinitive comer 'to eat'. Even in
verb-to-verb loans there is inconsistency as to which paradigmatic form is borrowed.

For Sp verb-to-verb borrowings (in the north) the Sp infinitive predominates, becoming the MCA stem (with zero affix, the 3MSg perfective or the Sg imperative): frenar 'to brake' becomes MCA frinar 'he braked (car)' or 'break!', and with affixes frinar-t 'I braked', mas n-frinar-u 'we will brake', etc. However, there are attestations in older literature of a Sp imperative entering MCA as imperative, as with Sp larga! 'cast off!' becoming MCA larga! (whence affixed forms like y-larga 'he casts off'). Another type is seen in MCA dala 'he was obsessed with' and imperfective y-dali, from Sp imperative dale! 'give him!' via reanalysis and semantic shift (this item now occurs widely in Morocco). Here -le in dale is a pronominal suffix:

Fr verb-to-verb borrowings, which are now common in most of Morocco, can either come in as short, consonant-final "strong" stems or as longer, vowel-final "weak" stems (with final a alternating paradigmatically with i). Hence, from Fr déranger, we now usually get dirazha 'he bothered', imperfective stem (including imperative) -dirazi, showing the productivity of the weak type, but strong diraz (form of stem unchanging) occurs in a few older dialects. In the productive weak type it is evidently the imperfective stem -dirazi which is actually the form borrowed, but we cannot tell whether this is Fr infinitive déranger, participle dérangé, imperative or present "vous" form dérangez, or past imperfective dérangeais/t. Efforts to identify more precisely the prototype form, using minor Fr conjugation classes, indicate that no single form is consistent with all data. The infinitive, in particular, is not the borrowed form for -ir/-re verbs.

Fr/Sp contaminations are also a common complica-
tion preventing easy predictability of forms of borrowings. Since Sp has never been well known in most of Morocco, many Sp borrowings which have spread by dialect diffusion from the north are secondarily associated with Fr words. Thus MCA bal-a 'shovel' is thought to be from Fr pelle, but is actually from Sp pala. Suffix -a (FSg in MCA as well as Sp, by coincidence) appears to have been added to the Fr form here, and by analogy to several cases of this type we find -a added gratuitously to some new Fr loans, hence bakiy-a 'pack, packet' from Fr paquet (not Sp paquete). There is no simple rule for predicting which new Fr borrowings receive this suffix, which is absent from many such borrowings and has nothing to do with grammatical gender in Fr forms. There are also many hybrid Fr/Sp borrowings, usually due to a Fr overlay on an early Sp borrowing. Hence MCA antiris 'interest (payment)' shows initial vowel from Fr intérêt, last syllable from Sp intéress, and middle syllable from either (intiris, direct from Sp, is recorded in earlier reports on northern MCA dialects). Such contaminations create minor pseudo-correspondences which may extend by analogy.

6. Language Mixing, Creolization, and Pidginization

In an important case study of a multilingual village in India, Gumperz and Wilson (1971) report that frequent shifting from in-group to out-group language, combined with long-term preservation of language differences as ethnic symbols, produces a partial creolization of the languages characterized by lowest-common-denominator grammatical reductions.

I have shown elsewhere (1978) that this has not happened among Australian Aboriginal languages in an equally intense contact zone (of a rather different sociolinguistic type); Here, however, I want to make a different point: in MCA we find a partial pidginiza-
tion (not creolization) applying to borrowed lexical items (not extending to native material). Hence several Fr borrowings, some in common use, show a single invariant form, refusing MCA FSg suffix -a, Pl -in, etc. (let alone ablaut Pl): 豸on 'young' (jeune), kliir 'evident' (claire). More significantly, several Fr items have become invariant adverbs of a sort rare in traditional MCA: 豸a rutar 'he came late for work' from 豸a 'he came' and Fr en retard; 豸rb-ha kliru 'he chugged it (drank it in one draught)' from 豸rb-ha 'he drank it' and Fr clairon (musical instrument held in hand at angle like beer bottle); ana ruppu 'I am off work' (nonverbal predicate) from ana 'I' and Fr repos 'rest'; cf. ana himri 'I am hungry' from Eng. In the last ex. and some others we find ambiguous or variable word-class treatment, here adjective vs. noun, the latter seen in fi-ya l-himri 'I am hungry' (lit., 'in me is hunger'). Of course, many borrowed stems show regular, complete MCA paradigms, but there is also a set of these more rudimentary, pidgin-like stems showing no morphological variation and sometimes of unclear or shifting word class.

I hope to extend all of these observations in the forthcoming monograph.

Footnote
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Bibliography

