

Koineization trends in Spoken Arabic across three Moroccan towns

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This paper presents a comparative study of the linguistic data collected during fieldwork in three Arabic-speaking towns in Morocco: Larache, in the north; Temara, on the central Atlantic coast; and Berkane, in the east. The goal of the article is twofold: first of all, it aims at highlighting the new dialectological findings made by analysing the three corpora separately; secondly, it attempts to clarify, by means of a comparative analysis, if there is evidence of a modern *koine* spreading from the urban areas in Central Morocco to other regions of the country. To these purposes, seven variables pertaining to the levels of phonetics, verbal and nominal morphology are selected for cross-analysis among the three corpora. Previous dialectological data on the same and other Moroccan areas are then taken into account to advance hypotheses on the spread and the ancientness of the identified phenomena of linguistic variation, and their more or less likely connection to the modern *koine*. The results show that, while there is indeed a certain degree of convergence among the three towns (with Berkane being the least involved in the converging trend), some of the phenomena identified could be explained as accommodation to other varieties having common features with the inter-urban *koine*, while others could be the result of mutual rather than one-way convergence. More sociolinguistic data are needed to clarify the doubts raised by the analysis.

Keywords: Moroccan Arabic, sociolinguistics, koinéisation, dialect contact, language change

1. Introduction¹

In the last 100 years, linguistic change across the Arabic-speaking region has mainly been affected by two interconnected social phenomena: rural-to-urban migration and the urban areas' growth in

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demographic, socio-economic and political weight.² The movement of population implied by these dynamics, in this as well as in other world regions, has led spoken varieties to undergo a certain degree of homogenization, following increase of inter-personal contacts among different urban centres or regions within and across Arabic-speaking countries. In many of these, the most prominent consequence of the rise in intra- and international mobility has been the emergence of a regional or (more often) national unofficial standard, usually corresponding to the dialect spoken in a prestigious urban centre (such as the capital city), to which residents from other towns or regions gradually accommodate from generation to generation (Miller 2007; Miller and Falchetta 2021). In the framework of this regional trend, Morocco represents a somehow special case, in that the inter-urban vernacular which is being ostensibly accommodated to across the country does not have a clearly defined geographical origin, although it appears to be mostly spoken in the big central cities, i.e. Sale, Rabat, Casablanca and possibly others.

The present paper will be based on data that the authors collected during three separate field studies, respectively carried out in Larache, Temara and Berkane. It will first and foremost highlight some of the findings from the three studies which we think add up to previous knowledge on Moroccan Arabic (henceforth MA) spoken varieties. Each of the features that will be treated here will then make the object of a comparison among the three towns, as far as the available data allow it. On the basis of this comparison and of previous data on MA dialectology, we will then attempt to discuss which features have undergone koineization, and if the data confirm that a *koine* is spreading from the Rabat-Casablanca area to the rest of Morocco, as is often claimed in the literature.³

2. Diatopic and diachronic variation in Moroccan Arabic

Building upon Heath (2002: 2-10), who has given the most detailed classification and description of MA spoken varieties so far, three main dialect types can be roughly distinguished in the territory of present-day Morocco: 1) the northern, 2) the central and, 3) the Saharan type. The first one can be found today in an area that goes from the Atlantic Ocean on the west to the Rif mountain range on the

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² For an overview of these phenomena and their relations with linguistic change in the Arabic-speaking world, cf. Miller (2007).

³ By “koinization” we intend “a dynamic process, usually of dialect levelling and mixing, of which the formation of a stabilized koine may be one stage.” (Siegel 1985: 364). We also subscribe to Siegel’s definition of “*koine*,” i.e., “the stabilized result of mixing of linguistic subsystems such as regional or literary dialects” (1985: 363).

east, and southward to the cities of Ksar El Kebir and Ouezzane. Solid communities of northern-type speakers were once also found in some old cities such as Rabat, Sale, Fes, Sefrou and Azemmour; however, internal migration fluxes have now radically changed the composition of these towns, causing these communities to become minorities and, in some cases, to scatter in other Moroccan towns. The second type, the central one, corresponds to a vast territory that stretches from the south of Larache to Essaouira and spreads inland towards the Atlas range. Most varieties in this area are said to result from the mixing and contact among a great number of linguistically diverse Berber- and Arabic-speaking tribes, with Berbers being numerically dominant. Lastly, the Saharan type spans across the southernmost part of Morocco, from the Draa valley to the port town of Tarfaya, and is usually regarded as markedly Bedouin.

The urban varieties which appear to be the target of koineization belong to the central type, which has indeed the most composite nature. This is also the dialectal type which Heath sees as closest to what he calls the “modern koine” (Heath 2002: 10), as we will also refer to it in what follows. Caubet situates geographically and socially the ideal place of origin of this *koine*, by defining the latter as “un dialecte de citadins de fraîche date d’origine rurale” (Caubet 1993: VII), to distinguish it from the receding old urban northern-type varieties. Lévy adds to this definition by dating this phenomenon back to earlier historical processes

[c]ette dialectique entre parlers de générations différentes, entre villes et tribus arabes, semble bien avoir constitué le mécanisme qui, du XIII^e au XX^e s., a produit l’arabe marocain actuel, puissamment diffusé à partir du creuset casablancais (et rbatî) dès le début du protectorat (Lévy 1998: 23).

We will provide now a quick overview of the location and demographic situation of the three cities whose Arabic varieties are dealt with in this paper.

Larache lies on the mouth of the Lukus river, 72 km south of Tangiers (Northern Morocco). This important fishing port town is home to 125,008 people (2014 census) and falls within the area of the northern dialect-type.

Temara is located within the central dialect-type area. It is a newly formed urban centre situated immediately south-west of Rabat. Once a part of the capital’s rural outskirts, this city has undergone a huge demographic growth in the last decades, due to a massive influx of migrants from other Moroccan regions. Today, it counts at least 312,246 residents (2014 census) and virtually forms a single metropolitan area with Rabat and Sale (a big city adjacent to Rabat). Such area, in turn, is part of a

wider conurbation that runs parallel to the Atlantic coast and goes at least as far as the town of Casablanca in the south-west.

Berkane is a town located in North-Eastern Morocco, just 23 km west of the Algero-Moroccan border. It counts over 109,237 inhabitants (2014 census), among whom a certain percentage are bilingual in Arabic and Berber (Beni Iznassen variety). According to Heath's (2002) dialect classification, the varieties spoken across North-Eastern Morocco belong to the central type. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Berkani Arabic displays a number of isoglosses which bring it closer to North-Western Algerian dialects.

3. Data and methodology

The data for the present study come from a corpus of interviews and speech samples recorded during fieldwork in the cities of Larache, Temara and Berkane. Fieldwork in Larache took place between October 2009 and September 2012, and included the speech of 38 male and female consultants with different educational levels, aged between 17 and 83 years old at the time of the survey. Data from Temara include a total of 40 male consultants between 18 and 83 years old and were collected between September 2015 and August 2017. As regards Berkane, data were gathered in December 2019 and include recordings of 8 male speakers from all social backgrounds, whose ages ranged between 19 and 60 years old. All informants from Larache and Berkane were born and raised locally. As for Temara, informants who were born and partially raised in Rabat or Sale (but had been living in Temara for a consistent number of years) are also included, as no consistent linguistic differences were found to depend on having been born in one of the three towns.

4. Linguistic differences between Larache, Temara and Berkane.

In what follows we will provide examples drawn from our fieldwork data in order to briefly illustrate the differences in language use among the Arabic varieties spoken in our survey sites, i.e., Larache, Temara and Berkane. More precisely, we will show cases in which such differences could be undergoing a levelling process leading to accommodation to another variety, e.g., the modern *koine*. To this purpose, information will also be provided (when available and relevant) on speakers' attitudes towards the features involved. Such a comparative outlook should allow us to get an idea of the extent to which these varieties are actually undergoing koineization. However, in some of these cases,

hypotheses alternative to that of the accommodation to the modern *koiné* will be advanced, so that further research will be required to clear these uncertainties.⁴

4.1. Phonetics

4.1.1. Reflexes of etymological *q

The realization of the voiceless uvular *q⁵ is probably one of the best-known variables used to discriminate between Arabic varieties. In Morocco, [ʔ] and [q], the voiceless reflexes of this ancient phoneme, are more often associated with urban varieties, while the voiced [g] is usually associated with rural or Bedouin speakers. In the three towns examined, [q] and [g] are the only reflexes recorded and, since they distinguish different lexemes, have to be treated as phonemes.⁶

As in most northern-type Moroccan varieties, *q is usually realized in Larache as a voiceless uvular stop /q/, although a few instances of the velar reflex /g/ were also recorded for some lexical items. /g/ is more frequent cross-lexically in Temara, and possibly also in Berkane, although only a few lexemes have been recorded there so far (cf. *mgəṭṭaʃ* and *gəddām* in (1)).

(1) ⁷	<i>āna</i>	<i>m-gəṭṭaʃ</i>	<i>gəddām=hum</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>hūma</i>	<i>ka=y-qəllb-u</i>
	1SG	PTCP-tear	before=3PL	and	3PL	TMA=IPFV.3-see-PL
	<i>ʃla</i>	<i>l=libra</i>				
	on	DEF=needle				
	“I was ripped open before them while they were looking for a needle [to stitch my wounds]”					

⁴ The list of features chosen for the comparative analysis is by no means aimed at covering all the forms that are subject to accommodation in the three towns. Our attempt has been to select some of the most salient and frequently used features so as to highlight the diversity of outcomes and directions of accommodation that emerges from a detailed analysis of these dynamics, and thus to question the idea of a single *koiné* spreading across Moroccan Arabic varieties. Other features were discarded either because they would not have added much to the discussion or because no salient difference among the three towns was noticed (the latter was the case of, e.g., the vowel system).

⁵ The historical form of this phoneme, i.e., its pronunciation as it was presumably heard in the Arabian Peninsula at the beginning of the Islamic conquest, is still a matter of dispute and could have varied among different tribes (cf. Taine-Cheikh 2000: 12: “Le *qāf* connaît diverses réalisations et on discute encore pour savoir quelle est la réalisation ‘originale’ de cette unité en arabe ancien. Cependant les dialectologues considèrent quasi unanimement que l’on peut opposer deux grands types de réalisation [[q] et [g]] et que chacun d’eux était caractéristique d’un certain type de locuteur”).

⁶ Some examples of minimal pairs found in Larache are *ḥriq* “fire; pain” – *ḥriq* “illegal immigration,” *ṣūq* “market” – *ṣūq* “drive!” *qāf* “bottom” – *qāf* “all” (Guerrero 2016; the same ones were also observed in Temara).

⁷ In glossing our examples, we followed the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie *et al.* 2008) to which we have added the gloss “TMA” indicating the Temporal-Modal-Aspectual verbal prefix.

The more widespread use of /g/ in these two towns could be due to the greater influence of Bedouin-type varieties. However, it should be noted that an inter-generational comparison of homolexical /q/-/g/ alternation carried out in Temara showed how /g/ clearly recurs less frequently in the idiolects of younger speakers, i.e., those who grew up in a fully urbanized town with greater exposure to other urban varieties (Falchetta 2019). Connected to this, the distribution of the phonemes appears to be much more diffuse in Temara than in Larache, as an obvious consequence of higher recent immigration rates to the former town: Table 1. shows how eighteen items were recorded there as alternating between the two phonemes, against one (*qāl* ~ *gāl*) in Larache.

Besides dialectologists, also laypeople are fully aware of this variable and usually evoke it in their metalinguistic discourses. The fact that it appears to be receding in Temara has been interpreted as a consequence of the young generations having more social contacts with the big adjacent urban centre Rabat as a consequence of – mainly – increased connection and improved job opportunities in the tertiary sector. A feature indexing rurality such as [g] may be perceived as inappropriate and even stigmatized in the capital city, so that frequently commuting Temari youth tend to use

Meaning	Larache	Temara
Blue	<i>zrəq</i>	<i>zrəq ~ zrəg</i>
Route, way	<i>ʔrīq</i>	<i>ʔrīq ~ ʔrīg</i>
Hanging (adj.)	<i>mʕəlləq</i>	<i>mʕəlləq ~ mʕəlləg</i>
Above	<i>fūq</i>	<i>fūq ~ fūg</i>
Before	<i>qbəl</i>	<i>qbəl ~ gbəl</i>
A little before	<i>qbīla</i>	<i>qbīla ~ gbīla</i>
To suffice; to be able to/capable of (vb.)/ Size (noun)	<i>qədd</i>	<i>qədd ~ gədd</i>
In front of	<i>qəddām</i>	<i>qəddām ~ gəddām</i>
To turn over	<i>qləb</i>	<i>qləb ~ gləb</i>
Heart	<i>qəlb</i>	<i>qəlb ~ gəlb</i>
Bridge	<i>qənʔra</i>	<i>qənʔra ~ gənʔra</i>
To say	<i>qāl ~ gāl</i>	<i>gāl</i>
To find	<i>lqa</i>	<i>lqa ~ lga</i>
To meet	<i>tlāqa</i>	<i>tlāqa ~ tlāga</i>
To stop (intr.)	<i>wqəf</i>	<i>wqəf ~ wqəg</i>
Standing	<i>wāqəf</i>	<i>wāqəf ~ wāgəf</i>
To stop (tr.)	<i>wəqqəf</i>	<i>wəqqəf ~ wəggəf</i>

Table 1. /q/ - /g/ lexical diffusion in variable lexemes in Larache and Temara.

[q] more than [g] after becoming conscious of such inappropriateness (Falchetta 2019). However, the stigmatization of a feature does not always imply its recession: in Larache, the realisation [gāl] has been considered as an innovation attributed to the influence of Bedouin-type dialects (Guerrero 2015: 50); this, notwithstanding the fact that, even in Larache, [g] is stigmatized as a “country bumpkin”’s feature (2015: 51). Interestingly, Hachimi (2005, 2007, 2011) reports on a very similar case in which speakers of another northern-type variety (Fassi MA) living in Casablanca, where most residents speak a central-type variety (and thus use [g] more often), only switch the word [gāl] to [g], while at the same time scorning speakers using [g] for their rural accent.⁸ The switch to [gāl] parallels the speaker’s desire to merge in the rest of the Casablancon society by adopting a feature that he/she positively defines as *ħrəṣ*

⁸ She motivates this peculiarity by attributing what Errington (1985) calls “pragmatic salience” to the lexeme /qāl/ ~ /gāl/.

(“rough”) and by distancing him/herself from “snobbish” non-adopters. These similarities in language speech *and* attitudes between Larachi speakers and Fassi speakers in Casablanca will be observed for another feature as well (cf. *infra* Section 4.2.1), and will then be discussed in Section 5.

4.1.2. Affrication of /t/

A further phonetic variable is the realization of the voiceless dental stop /t/. This phoneme has undergone a phenomenon of lenition in many MA varieties, which has yielded a voiceless alveo-dental [ts] in most cases (Brunot 1950: 37; Cantineau 1960: 37). This pronunciation can be heard, for instance, in northern-type varieties such as those of Tetouan (Singer 1958: 110) or Larache (2). However, in the conurbation along the Atlantic coast (including Casablanca, Rabat and Sale), a marked voiceless alveo-palatal type of affrication [tʃ] has been spreading among young speakers in the last two or three decades, becoming the phonetically unconditioned pronunciation of this phoneme. Temara (3), being in the middle of this conurbation, is also part of this trend, which mostly concerns Temari speakers under 40. Most speakers over 40 also show a slighter affrication of this phoneme, although the phenomenon is much less marked and stable than it is among younger speakers and oscillates between an alveo-palatal [tʃ] and an alveo-dental [ts] place of articulation (thus standing closer to the affrication heard in Larache; cf. Falchetta 2019 for more details). A totally different situation is found in Berkane, where /t/ is usually not affricated; a look at this isogloss in North-Western Algeria might suggest that this is a Bedouin feature, as there is no affrication of /t/ in the Bedouin dialects of the area (Grand’Henry 2011: 54).

The “Atlantic urban” alveo-palatal affrication [tʃ] has turned into a distinctive feature of Casablanca youth talk, often stigmatized in metalinguistic discourse (personal observations), although it is now widespread in several towns across Morocco. In Meknes and Casablanca itself, it is indexed as “working-class” or “vulgar” (Ziamari *et al.* 2020: 35).

(2) ḥna ma ka=nə-mšī-w=šī n al=mdrāb-āt^s
 1PL NEG TMA=IPFV.1-to.go-PL=NEG towards DEF=tuna.fishery-PL
 “We don’t go to the tuna fisheries”

(3) l=bnāt^s u š=šrāb
 DEF=girl.PL and DEF=alcoholic.drink
 “Girls and alcohol”

4.2. Verbal morphology

4.2.1. 2nd person singular gender distinction: prefixal conjugation

Gender distinction at the 2nd person singular of the prefixal (imperfect) conjugations is quite variable across Morocco. By comparing just three regional varieties (Hrizi, Fessi and Filali) with the paradigm most widespread in Casablanca, Hachimi (2018) highlights the differences illustrated in Table 2. across varieties.

Regional varieties	Person/ Number / gender	Imperfect
Casablanca	2SG.M	<i>t-ktāb</i>
	2SG.F	<i>t-kātb-i</i>
Hrizi	2SGM	<i>t-kātb-i</i>
	2SG.F	<i>t-kātb-i</i>
Fessi	2SG.M	<i>t-ktāb</i>
	2SG.F	<i>t-ktāb</i>
Filali	2SG.M	<i>t-ktāb</i>
	2SG.F	<i>t-kātb-i</i>

Table 2. 2nd person singular forms of the prefixal conjugation (adapted from Hachimi 2018: 6)

The Larache corpus shows the same verbal paradigms as Fessi Arabic, as exemplified in (4), while Temara follows the same as general Casablanca Arabic, as in (5) (both examples are addressed to female interlocutors). These data are coherent with the general picture drawn by Heath for Muslim Moroccan dialects, according to which northern towns like Larache use the (suffixless) masculine ending for both imperfect 2nd singular forms, whereas the rest of Morocco (where Temara is located) generally distinguishes 2nd singular masculine from feminine (Heath 2002: 215). As for Berkane, data on this variable are absent.

According again to Hachimi (2018), 2nd singular gender distinction is very often under the radar of social judgments about language in Casablanca, because of the indexical meanings carried by each form as a consequence of the stereotypical characterisation of the speakers that (are believed to) typically use it. In particular, she shows how Casablancans of Fessi origin consistently maintain the 2nd singular merger in the imperfect, despite of most Casablancans distinguishing genders. Since Fessis

explicitly attribute a superior status to their own lifestyle and way of speaking, with respect to those of other communities in Casablanca (cf. Hachimi 2005: 2012), Hachimi maintains that this elitist ideology is what underlies the maintenance of this minority morphological form. Interestingly, a very similar type of stance is found among Larachis, who justify the cultural uniqueness of Northern Morocco through their claim for a certain geographical and historical closeness to Spain. The experience of the Spanish protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956) and, more recently, the creation of international networks resulting from emigration to Spain have presumably reinforced this feeling of closeness.

- (4) *ma ka=t-məššt=u ma wālu*
 NEG TMA=IPFV.2SG-comb=3SG.M NEG nothing
 “You (fem.) do not even comb your [hair]”

- (5) *tā=t-əlqā-y šəff dyāl d=dyūr ã⁹ fas mla šəff mdyāl¹⁰ d=dyūr*
 TMA=IPFV.2-find-SG.F. row POSS DEF=house.PL in face with row POSS DEF=house.PL
 “You used to have two rows of houses facing one another”

4.2.2. 3rd feminine singular person of the suffixal conjugation

The main two alternative forms that this suffix takes across MA varieties are *-ət* and *-āt* (e.g., *kətbət* and *kətbāt*, “she wrote”).¹¹ According to Heath’s (2002: 222-23) data, the distribution of the two variants overlaps in most of Morocco, including in Rabat and Casablanca, but *-ət* seems to dominate in northern varieties and even in the variety of the Zaër (Aguadé 1998: 145; based on Loubignac’s data), who inhabit a region adjacent to Temara. In the Larache corpus, *-āt* is present as a minority form and could be a recent import from Bedouin varieties, just like the [g] in [gāl], although *-ət* remains dominant (Guerrero

⁹ De-italicized forms in the transcription indicate code-switching with another language system. In this case the code-switched French form (*en face*) is joint with the MA preposition *m̄la* “with” to form a single prepositional locution meaning “opposite” or “facing.”

¹⁰ Alternative form of the genitive marker *dyāl*, used by a few speakers in Temara.

¹¹ Hollow and defective verbs often take irregular forms of this subject suffix, and therefore are not taken into account in the present discussion. By converse, geminate verbs are concerned, although they take irregular suffixes in a minority of MA varieties. Also, cases in which vowel-initial suffix pronouns follow the subject suffix are not considered, as the subject suffix often becomes *-āt* as a result of this suffixation, even when its unmarked form is *-ət*. (cf. Heath 2002: 222-225).

2015: 197; (6)); in Temara, *-āt* appears to be by far the prevalent choice by speakers of all ages (7). In Berkane, not enough data were collected on this variable.

- (6) *kātb-ət* *n* *əl=mudīr*
 write-PFV.3SG.F to DEF=director
 “She wrote to the school head”

- (7) *īla* *tšāwb-āt* *ā=t-ṭlāʕ* *rxīš-a*
 if be_fixed-PFV.3SG.F FUT=IPFV.3SG.F-rise cheap-F
 “It’s cheaper to fix it.”

4.2.3. Change in stem syllabic structure

Another interesting variable has to do with the prefixal conjugation of regular verbs. In the 2nd singular feminine and in all plural forms, the addition of feminine and plural suffixes (*-i* and *-u*) would entail the occurrence of a short vowel in open syllable, e.g.: *yāfhām* + *-u* → **yāfhāmu*.¹² However, it is well known that Maghrebi Arabic dialects have developed different devices to avoid short vowels in open syllables. For instance, most Moroccan varieties solve this problem through metathesis, which allows to preserve the stem-initial short vowel. While this is also the case in Larache (8) and Temara (9), a different solution may be observed in Berkane (10) where, in addition to the metathesis, the first consonant is geminated to preserve the short vowel in the subject prefix (a common feature among several Algerian varieties; cf. Marçais 1986).

- (8) *ka=y-šəṭḥ-u* *hākka* *u* *yə-tʃaššā-w*
 TMA=IPFV.3-dance-PL like_this and IPFV.3-have_dinner-PL
 “They dance like this and have dinner”

- (9) *ḥna* *ta=n-həḍr-u* *ʕla* *Tmāra*
 1PL TMA=IPFV.1-speak-PL about Temara
 “We’re talking about Temara”

¹² It should be recalled that Larache Arabic lacks gender differentiation in the imperfective 2nd singular person. In this variety, the (suffixless) 2nd singular form is used for both masculine and feminine.

- (10) *š=šəlḥ-a wāld-i=yya yə-hhədr-ū=ha*
 DEF=Berber-F parent-PL=1SG IPFV.3-speak-PL=3SG.F
 “Berber, my parents do speak it”

4.2.4. Preverbal TMA markers

Many Arabic dialects make use of preverbal TMA markers (Agius and Harrak 1987); these are prefixes to the imperfective verb form that add temporal, modal or aspectual information which the verb form alone would not convey. The most common preverbal TMA markers in the dialects of MA are *ka-* and *ta-*, which both carry meanings of duration, reiteration or universality. While the two forms are semantically identical, and therefore interchangeable, they are differently distributed across the Moroccan map, with *ka-* dominating the north and *ta-* the south (Heath 2002: 210). However, a wide area of overlap is found in the middle, with many speakers alternating both prefixes in what appears to be free variation. *ka-* is believed to be originally characteristic of northern-type varieties,¹³ a fact that might account for its prevalence in Larache (11), where *ta-* has nevertheless also been recorded in the speech of a few informants. *ka-* is the only attested variant in Berkane, although verbal forms without marker and with the same modal-aspectual functions are also frequent in our data (12). This suggests a link between Berkani Arabic and the varieties spoken on the other side of the border, as most Algerian dialects lack this type of markers. On the other hand, the two prefixes are clearly co-present in Temara (13).

- (11) *ka=yə-kmi s=sbāsa d əl=kīf mʕa t=talaba*
 TMA=IPFV.3SG.M-smoke DEF=pipe.PL POSS DEF=hash with DEF=student.PL
 “He smokes hash pipes with the students”

- (12) *lə=ḥrīra y-dīr-u fī=ha l=qušbūr*
 DEF=ḥrīra IPFV.3-do-PL in=3SG.F DEF=cilantro
 “They add cilantro to the ḥrīra¹⁴”

¹³ Cf. Aguadé (1996: 198). The author mentions pre-Hilali varieties, which correspond to Heath’s northern type in the Moroccan dialect area.

¹⁴ Traditional Moroccan soup.

- (13) *ma ka=t-ʕəʒb=ək=š l=lūǧa fhəm-ti ma*
 NEG TMA=IPFV.3SG.F-please=2SG=NEG DEF=language understand-PFV.2SG NEG
- ta=t-ʕəʒb=ək=š wāḥad l=lūǧa*
 TMA=IPFV.3SG.F-please=2SG=NEG INDEF DEF=language
- “You don’t like the language, do you see? [Like when] you don’t like a language”

4.3. Nominal morphology: annexation particle

In MA, analytic possessive constructions exhibit three main genitive exponents: *dyāl*, *d-*, and *ntāʕ*, with its reduced alternative *tāʕ*¹⁵. The first two are used in the modern *koiné*; as for *(n)tāʕ*, it is quite common across the rural areas of Central and Southern Morocco (cf. Heath 2002: 461), although it was also used in Larache until the first half of the last century (sometimes pronounced *mtāʕ*: Alarcón 1913: 10, 26, 83; Klinghenben 1927: 79). Today, *dyāl* and *d-* are by far the most common genitive particles in Larache (Guerrero 2015: 156-57; (14)) – which parallels the available data on North-Western Moroccan varieties – and in Temara (15); however, in the latter *ntāʕ* was recorded from several residents over 60, most of whom had been raised in other rural regions (and were therefore not taken into account in the present comparative analysis). This suggests that *ntāʕ/tāʕ* is either abandoned or discarded by locally-born young generations in both Larache and Temara. A different situation may be observed in Berkane, where *ntāʕ* and its cognate *tāʕ* are more common, but still less frequent than *dyāl* (76% of the occurrences; (16)). Curiously, a frequency count shows that *dyāl/d-* is higher among speakers aged above 40. This fact goes against the rest of the Berkane data that hints at a predominance of Algerian-like features in the speech of (especially elder) Berkani speakers.

- (14) *l=kwāǧəʔ dyāl=ək*
 DEF=paper.PL POSS=2SG
 “Your papers”

¹⁵ Consider that, unlike *dyāl* and *ntāʕ/tāʕ*, *d-* can only be followed by a noun.

- (15) *bazzāf d əl=ʔamākin¹⁶ dyāl=ha*
 many POSS DEF=place.PL POSS=3SG.F
 “Many of their places [of settlement]”

- (16) *ʒ=ʒnān tāf lə=mzāḥ*
 DEF=orchard POSS DEF=medlar
 “The medlar orchard”

5. Discussion

Three of the cases of language variation shown above concern features which appear to be recent innovations in Larache, i.e., the reflex [g] for *q, the 3rd person feminine singular suffix *āt* for the suffixal conjugation and the preverbal TMA marker *ta-*. All these features are more typical of central-type dialects and have presumably just started spreading into some Larachis’ speech because of immigration from other, more southward areas in Morocco (Guerrero 2015: 50, 112).¹⁷ This is confirmed by their absence in previous corpora of Larachi texts and in most northern varieties.

The three recently imported features suggest that Larachi speakers are indeed partially accommodating to a central-type variety. Does this mean that a *koiné* is spreading from the Sale-Rabat-Casablanca conurbation to reach the northern town? The answer to the question depends on who are the importers of these forms to Larache, a town on the periphery of the northern region with central-type varieties being spoken in surrounding villages like Laouamera and Tleta Rissana. In fact, if immigrants from this close-by area contributed these features to the Larachi linguistic repertoire, then we may be dealing with a different, local *koiné* arising from the contact between the urban and the imported rural varieties, just as happened in cities such as Rabat or Sale. Nevertheless, the presence of civil servants, who (according to interviewed consultants) usually come from more southward areas, could also play a role in the spread of those features, in which case their origin might very well be the wide inter-urban modern *koiné*. More in-depth sociolinguistic data on who are the users of these forms would be needed to provide a more definite answer.¹⁸

¹⁶ Codeswitching with Modern Standard Arabic.

¹⁷ However, it should be noticed that most immigrants in Larache are from the Jbala region (Guerrero 2015: 201), where these features are absent.

¹⁸ On the one hand, it is well-established that the media do not cause directly either the adoption or the disavowal of phonological or morphological forms in the context of dialect contact (Trudgill: 1986: 40, 41). On the other, they may play an

Looking at the other features analysed, more arguments may be brought against the idea that the modern *koine* is always the converged-to variety. As many of the variables analysed in the Berkane corpus hint at a similarity between the Arabic spoken there and the dialects beyond the Algerian border, we may interpret the partial use of the preverbal TMA marker *ka-* as a recent adoption in this town. However, the fact that *ta-*, unlike *ka-*, has not been accommodated to by Berkanis, even though the *ka- ~ ta-* alternation is widespread in the area considered to be the origin of the modern *koine*, could indicate that Berkanis are accommodating to some other, possibly geographically close-by varieties; the adjacent north, where only *ka-* is used, is a plausible candidate. Even more interesting is the case of the annexation particle *ntāf*, which appears to be gaining importance in young Berkanis' speech despite the fact that *dyāl* and *d-* are clearly dominant in the more widespread central urban *koine*. Is this also due to immigrants importing this form from near-by rural areas, as could be the case in Larache? If so, why does this form win over *dyāl*, while the opposite occurs in other places (such as Temara)? If not, what makes *ntāf* more appealing than *dyāl* to Berkani youth? Besides, why are other forms not accommodated to by the majority of speakers (see the cases of alternative stem syllabic structure change and of omission of the preverbal TMA marker, which represent divergence from most MA varieties)? To answer these questions, more data on language use, immigration and social indexation of forms in Berkane are needed.

Also Temaris – who are supposedly native speakers of the modern *koine* – appear to be accommodating to other (maybe northern-type) varieties when they increasingly substitute [q] for [g] in a number of lexical items. Incidentally, this is probably one of the few variables in which koineization actually seems to be at work: Temaris, Larachis and even Casablancan Fassis (as shown in Hachimi's studies) are all separately tending towards the acquisition of a repertoire in which, among all the lexemes concerned by the alternation [q]~[g], they only assign [gāl] to [g]. This parallel development cannot be explained other than as a result of the speakers' "participation in a relatively uniform set of social norms" about language (Labov [1966] 2006: 298), which leads them to make similar judgments on what is the appropriate combination of phonetic reflexes and related lexemes – as long as they have

indirect role through the (re-)production of sociolinguistic stereotypes, which can affect the speakers' attitudes towards certain forms and, therefore, their inclination to abandon or adopt them; cf. Benítez-Fernández and Guerrero (2022) and Falchetta (2022) for two analyses of Moroccan comical TV shows exploiting linguistic variation for the reproduction of stereotypes. Falchetta (2022), for instance, shows how Moroccan media authors exploiting linguistic variation in the writing of scripts in MA for TV series can implicitly elect a specific register to "ideal" or "standard" speech among all the other registers used by the community. In any case, for accommodation to take place, face-to-face contact with speakers employing the accommodated-to feature is always necessary.

been sufficiently exposed to both [q]- and [g]-pronunciations. Besides that, factors such as the mentioned pragmatic salience of [gāl] can be decisive as to which lexemes are assigned to which phonological class.¹⁹ Positing a similarity in the social evaluations of language may also help explain why two other features present in the central Atlantic *koiné*, i.e. the marked affrication [tʰ] and the gender distinction in the 2nd person singular of the prefixal form, have not made it to Larache so far: their stigmatized status is not compensated by any positive indexation, and therefore lag behind in their spread with respect to [gāl]. Further studies on language representations could clarify if social evaluation also plays a role in another clear case of convergence between Larache and Temara, i.e. the abandonment of the (minoritarian) annexation particle *ntāf* for *dyāl* in both towns.

6. Conclusion

The data exposed and the analysis carried out in the present article suggest that neither Larache nor Berkane, two towns located in different regions of Morocco, can definitively be proven to be accommodating to an inter-urban *koiné* originating from the big conurbation including Rabat and Casablanca. This, however, is not to say that convergence is not taking place among the three towns: by importing central-type features, Larache is getting closer to the varieties of more southward urban centres, while increased use of *ka-* in Berkane is introducing the marking of a category (verbal tense, mood and aspect) that has been expressed through the use of a preverb for a long time in the rest of Morocco, but not in the importing town. However, in both cases, such convergence cannot be definitively proven to target a single variety, i.e., an inter-urban modern *koiné* supposedly emanating from Central Morocco. The comparison between the Temara and the Larache corpora also showed that convergence is not necessarily uni-directional.

Further research will have to be carried out on Temara to integrate female consultants in the sample, and on Berkane to add more (including female) speakers. Besides that, in order to make more solid analyses of language variation and change in MA varieties, detailed comparative studies such as the present one should be carried out more often with the double purpose of identifying trends of convergence and divergence between different areas and of filling in the many blank points still

¹⁹ Following an analysis of the /q/~g/ variation in verbal interactions recorded during an elicitation test, Falchetta (2019: 266-267) suggests that the spread of /q/ in Temara may be due to the combined effect of contact with ancient Rabat dwellers, who use /g/ much less frequently, and of school, which prescribes [q] as the correct pronunciation of lexemes coming from the corresponding roots. Schooling, however, should be taken (just like the media) as exerting an indirect rather than direct influence, as it causes the association of [q] to contexts of formal learning, literacy and, ultimately, to a certain type of prestige.

present in the dialectological map of Morocco.²⁰ Another necessary task is research on language attitudes, aimed at grasping the existing social norms about language. Kerswill and Williams (2002) and Hachimi (2018) convincingly argued that such norms are most relevant for a given form to become salient for the community of speakers and, as a consequence, for the accommodation or maintenance of certain linguistic features. Knowledge of the unequal power relationships that link the different groups within a single community (e.g., locals and newcomers, rurals and urbanites, etc.) is a further desideratum in order to fully comprehend the background of the norms of social evaluation.

List of glossing abbreviations

DEF	definite	PL	plural
F	feminine	POSS	possessive
FUT	future	PTCP	participle
INDEF	indefinite	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfective	TMA	tense, mood, aspect
M	masculine	1	first person
NEG	negation	2	second person
PFV	perfective	3	third person

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²⁰ An earlier, more comprehensive comparative study of this kind is the one by Sánchez and Vicente (2012).

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