Abstract: This thesis examines code-switching in Morocco. Specifically, it looks at the Morocco’s linguistic history and previous studies done about Moroccans code-switching from Moroccan Arabic to French. It then examines Moroccan’s conversations on Facebook, looking at which genres Moroccans code-switch and why. This exploration looks at an existing genre of linguistics that has not yet touched upon new forms of media. It argues that there is another code – an “international” code, which is a language composed of internationally understood terms.
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I. God speaks Arabic, but modernity speaks French

“Bilingualism, multilingualism, pidginization, interference, diglossia, borrowing, and code-switching are among the possible outcomes of a situation in which more than one language or variety of a language are used in a given society.”

-Uriel Weinreich, Languages in Contact

Modern day Moroccan society is defined in part by its historical trajectory: its colonial experience, its independence and its efforts towards becoming a modern state. Morocco’s linguistic environment is characterized by its historical relationship with France and its place within the Arab world. Geographically, Morocco has occupied the same territory since the beginning of the sixteenth century. However, even prior to French colonization, Morocco was not homogenous linguistically or culturally. Morocco has always been home to both Arabic and Amazigh speakers. Amazigh is an umbrella term that refers to the language Amazigh (or Berber) peoples use, which has three main dialects (Tarifit, Tamazight and Tashelhight). The language Arabic is also a misleading title that suggests homogeneity. In reality, Morocco’s relationship with the Arabic language is nuanced and complex.
The Arabic language itself is not easy to explain. It exists in three states: Classical Arabic (or Fusha), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Dialect, or Colloquial Arabic. Classical Arabic is the early Islamic Arabic that was formalized with the written version of the Qur’an in 632. MSA is derived from the Classical Arabic of the Qur’an, and is very closely linked to it. MSA is what people use today, while Classical Arabic only exists in the Qur’an and ancient texts. In this paper, I use both semi-interchangeably in discussions of modern uses because they are, for all intents and purposes, the same language. MSA is the standard used across the Arabic-speaking world, though each Arab country has its own Arabic dialect.

Because MSA has to span the entire Arabic-speaking world, different countries have developed dialects that are barely mutually comprehensible. Arabic is a “diglossic” language, which refers to Ferguson’s seminal work “Diglossia” in which he states that diglossia is a situation in which “two or more varieties of the same language are used by people in one speech community.” Each of these languages has a “definite role to play.” He divides the Arabic language into High and Low dialects (known as H and L) which function in different spheres. Fishman later expanded on this division, adding that the High and Low languages could in fact be unrelated languages. Ferguson’s table showed the following uses for High and Low languages:

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1 The following was highly influenced by HY Kim’s 2010 thesis on Egyptian Arabic
2 Ferguson 1959
3 Ibid, 325
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sermon in church or mosque</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions to servants, waiters, workmen, clerks</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Letter</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech in Parliament, political speech</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Lecture</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation with family, friends or colleagues</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News broadcast</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio “soap opera”</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editorial, news story, caption on picture</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption on political cartoon</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Use of H and L from Ferguson 1959, p.329
One can surmise after looking at the table that the High language is usually used in formal and religious situations, while personal or informal situations tend to call for the Low language. The High language tends to be learned in school while the Low language is the one spoken in the home, and the “native” language in terms of language acquisition. Prior to French colonialism, Morocco’s High language was MSA while its Low (and “native” language) was Moroccan Dialect, or Darija.

The French colonial effort began in 1912 and lasted until 1956. While the French Resident General Louis Lyautey guaranteed the relative autonomy of Morocco’s religious and political institutions, he did not guarantee the same of Morocco’s linguistic balance. The King of Morocco holds the title “Commander of the Faithful,” which means that he is the religiously vetted leader of believers in Morocco. Though Amazigh people did not speak Darija they did learn Classical Arabic at home and at school. Classical Arabic is the language of the Qur’an, and the King was connected to his Amazigh constituents through Islam, which gave him his legitimacy. France did not want to use force to crush the unifying social structures and instead aimed to break down social bonds between groups through legislation. Because Morocco was religiously homogenous⁴ France tried to break the religious unity between Moroccans. One method of this control was to break down the linguistic, religious and cultural

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⁴ Save for the small Jewish population, already separate from Muslim Moroccans in terms of legislation, though not education. The Jewish population was always governed by its own religious rules, though Jews at this time worked and were educated alongside Muslim Moroccans.
bonds extant in Morocco and then to supplement the resultant gap with the colonizing language and culture. Abdelali Bentahila claims\(^5\) that language is perhaps the biggest indicator of a common culture and civilization – significant in and of itself, and perhaps even more in Morocco because of religion. France’s push to change the linguistic and cultural make-up of Morocco was called their “Mission Civilitrice.”

The Mission Civilatrice was a multifold process, based first on conquest and settlement and then on subjugation of local culture. The French methodically built French school after French school, with the ostensible goal of instilling Moroccans with “the only language of civilization and advancement . . . to encourage Moroccans to forget their own culture and adopt the French one.”\(^6\) Within these schools French was the main language of instruction; children would learn French up to the level necessary to do clerical work within the colonized state, and bright or rich children would get the chance to continue education to higher levels. Classical Arabic was included in the curriculum, but only for religious studies. This is significant because while prior to colonialism MSA may have been the High language, in this new system French became the High language and MSA was relegated to a middle space between Darija and French.

\(^5\) Bentahila, 1983, 5  
\(^6\) Bentahila, 1983, 6
After establishing the structure of French schools, the French began to move against the religious connection between the Arab and Amazigh (or Berber) Moroccans. In 1930 the French issued the ignominious *Dahir Berbère*. This was a proclamation issued by the French through the Sultan which stipulated that Amazigh people would go to special Amazigh/French schools. They would not be permitted to learn Classical Arabic or MSA, which they called “The Arabic of the Qur’an.” The ostensible purpose of this *Dahir* was to divide and conquer the Moroccan people. It aimed to separate Amazigh from Arabs, not understanding the depth of the religious and cultural connection between the two peoples. This *Dahir* went further than education – it created separate tribunals for Amazigh people with “customary” law instead of Maliki Shari’a (Morocco’s Islamic Law). This was another attack on the religious connection between the two groups. This was part of their effort to systematically break down the “cultural and linguistic solidarity” between Arabs and Berbers in the country. This is a somewhat simplified view of the situation because of course, due to centuries of interaction and mixing, Arab and Amazigh culture in Morocco are interconnected on many levels. However, the French did not incorporate this history into their analysis or into their strategy. Their basic goal was to create an abrupt divide between what they saw as two distinct cultures, connected only via Islam. They also created Franco-Jewish

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7 Bentahila, 1983, 9
schools where they taught French and Hebrew, serving to further isolate the Jews, a
group already isolated from the community.\(^8\)

In this way, the linguistic aspect of education was used as a marker of cultural
unity, or disunity. As such, under French colonial rule, around three generations of
children were educated in one of these schools and linguistically influenced by the
system. Ironically, the percentage of children who completed higher education did not
grow more than 10% under the French, but the linguistic structures that they imposed
endured after independence.

The *Dahir Berbère* marked the 100\(^{th}\) anniversary of the disastrous Algerian
occupation,\(^9\) and the definitive beginning of Moroccan nationalism. Because of the
religious importance of Islam (and Classical Arabic) in Morocco, the public reacted
strongly and negatively to the *Dahir*. The issuance of the *Dahir* coincided with the
beginnings of pan-Arabism across the Arab world. The *Dahir* sparked the beginning of
the Moroccan nationalist effort, and the King (after his brief expulsion from the country
from 1953-1955) led the Moroccan nationalists to a blood-free independence in 1956.

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\(^8\) Bentahila, 1983, 7

\(^9\) French occupation of Algeria lasted from 1830 to 1962, and culminated in a bloody war stretching from 1954 to
1962. France’s occupation tactics of Algeria included confiscating religiously owned land (*waqf*) and settling
thousands of French people in Algeria. The level of violence experienced by both sides in the occupation and
subsequent war devastated both France and newly independent Algeria. Though the significance of the 100 year
anniversary was stronger for Algeria, it also served as a warning sign to Moroccans though their occupation had
been largely nonviolent and more socially and legislatively enforced.
The end of colonization acted as the impetus for discussions about the nature of Morocco as a modern country with a history unique and separate from France’s. The Moroccan King Mohammed V declared Morocco’s official language as Arabic, and officially made the language of instruction in public schools Modern Standard Arabic. However, most French schools were simply converted into private schools. The Mission Universitaire Culturelle Française maintained these schools in exactly the same way, with the simple difference that now Arabic was taught as a foreign language. In all other schools, French was to be introduced in the third year (with some variation), and was to become the language of instruction in higher education. In keeping with the former education policy, Arabic was to be the language of religious studies, but in secondary school French became the main language of instruction, especially in science. This education policy has continued to this day, with the addition of a newly standardized Tamazight in elementary school. 

The Moroccan constitution defines the Kingdom of Morocco as a Muslim state whose official language is Arabic. While the state may officially speak Arabic, an approximate 50% of Moroccans are illiterate and thus are conversant only in Moroccan dialect (Darija), which although connected to Modern Standard Arabic is not intelligible by speakers of MSA. Furthermore, an approximate 30% of Moroccans speak different

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10 For more information, please see the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (in French, Arabic and Tamazight): http://www.ircam.ma/
dialects of Amazigh, or Berber, and may or may not be conversant in Darija. French functions as an unofficial third language, necessary in higher levels of education and in work.

In “Language Attitudes Among Arabic-French Bilinguals in Morocco,” Bentahila maps the linguistic attitude of adults in Morocco who were educated under colonial rule and the linguistic biases and attitudes they have. One of these attitudes is that consistently, Arabic is connected with religion and French is related to modernity. In several tests, as high as 80% of recipients regardless of actual French or Arabic skill came to this conclusion.11 As such, he argues that the French may have achieved their goal of creating two conflicting mentalities within the population.

This idea is upheld in school textbooks, for example, which tend to use Arabic texts which emphasize the passive acceptance of fate and French texts which emphasize activity and quick-thinking.12 According to one social scientist, “in Morocco today the non-French-speaking candidate has no chance of getting a good government job or advancing himself.”13 Accordingly, many participants in Bentahila’s study consider that French is the language of modernity, and that Moroccans know that “God speaks Arabic, but . . . modernity speaks French.”14

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11 Bentahila, 36, 125, 146
12 Bentahila, 29
13 Bentahila quoting Gallagher, 1983, 15
14 Bentahila, 1983, 15
The way that language is used by Moroccans reflects ideas about language, as well as certain decisions speakers make about which language to use in which situation. One could assume that by simply substituting French for H and Moroccan Arabic for L, Ferguson’s table would remain accurate (see Table 1, page 4). The study of diglossia and language choice in modern Morocco is not so simple.
II. Switching Code

“The ideal bilingual switches from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in the speech situation…, but not in an unchanged situation, and certainly not within a single sentence.”15

The social and linguistic relationship between French and Moroccan Arabic is an oft-studied puzzle that no scholar satisfactorily has solved. Though many scholars write articles detailing the history of Morocco, Moroccan Arabic, colonization and the imposition of the French language, few attempt to explain the ways in which this history affects current Moroccans beyond the most superficial level.

Of the authors who do attempt to analyze the current state of Moroccan Arabic and French, most focus on code-switching from Moroccan Arabic to French. There are a few genres that every scholar agrees belong to certain languages. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is employed in religious situations, because it is the language of the Qur’an and is the language of many highly formalized religious sayings. French is generally used when speaking with tourists or in science, and Moroccan Arabic is used for everything else. This however does not account for the informal code-switching that takes place in everyday unmediated speech.

When trying to determine reasons behind code-switching, scholars either focus on grammatical rules for code-switching or on social factors that influence language choice. None of the scholars that focus on analyzing code-switching in a systematic, grammatical way are able to generate one rule that determines when a speaker uses one or the other. Instead of defining rules, authors tend to focus on finding limits, where one cannot switch code.

One of the first authors to write on grammatical rules for Moroccan-French code switching was Abbassi, who claimed that there are syntactic limitations on code-switching. Each of his arguments was disproved systematically in the seminal article “The Syntax of Arabic-French Code-Switching” by Bentahila and Davies (1983). In the latter article the authors focus on arguing first against Abbasi’s claims and then attempting to locate the real syntactic rule for code-switching. In his article, Abbassi claims that “a relative pronoun must be in the same language as the rest of its clause.” To counter this, Bentahila and Davies provide a series of examples, one of which is shown below.

Bzzaf djal l hmi:r daba lli ignorant l mxa:rba

(DAR) (FR) (DAR)
Many of the fools now who do not know Moroccans.

They also disprove Abbassi’s insistence that “it is impossible for a preposition in French to govern a noun phrase in Arabic.” They give a series of examples proving this, like the one seen below:

1.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{f} \\
\text{in the beginning}
\end{array}
\]

DAR  FR

2.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{bla autorisation} \\
\text{without authorization}
\end{array}
\]

DAR  FR
Bentahila and Davies conclude their article by determining that code-switching is “not... governed by... constraint[s].” Unable to even determine whether or not code-switching can occur within words, they close with the carefully worded statement “code switching is not possible across word-internal morpheme boundaries.” It is not surprising that directly after publishing this article, Bentahila went on to publish a book entitled “Language Attitudes among Arabic-French Bilinguals in Morocco,” focusing instead on the social and cultural reasons for code-switching among Moroccans. Because no one author has been able to provide a satisfactory set of syntactic provisions that dictate when French or Arabic is used, all instead end up focusing on the social contexts within which code-switching takes place.

Although most scholars now have abandoned their search for syntactic constraints and have begun to focus on social contexts for code-switching, they do not agree on what exactly code-switching is. Most authors struggle to define what separates code-switching from code-borrowing (or even insertion, code-mixing and a host of other words that vary author by author). Bentahila and Davies use the generic definition coined by Kachru that code-switching refers to a bilingual person’s ability to choose “one..of..two languages in a particular speech situation...being influenced

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17 Bentahila and Davis 1983, 329
by…topic or setting, etc.” They end up further specifying this definition, choosing to define code-switching as “the use of two languages within a single conversation, exchange or utterance”: nice and generic.

Lahlou, in contrast, claims that there is a clear distinction between code-switching and borrowing, though he is unable to define what this is. He ends up acknowledging that it is very difficult to tell the difference between code-borrowing and code-switching, and suggests that the reader look through the appendix and memorize which French words are part of the Moroccan Arabic lexicon.

Heath concedes that there is no real binary distinction between the two. Instead, any “rules” are idealized creations of scholars. He explains Moroccans who are switching code are all bilingual and so are able to use “code-switched forms for lexical items which have already found their way into common usage in borrowed form.”

Code-switching, according to Myers-Scotton, can be “both an index and a tool.” As the former it indexes a speaker’s self-perception either within a specific group or multiple

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20 Bentahila and Davies 1983, 302
22 Lahlou, 88. Also mention Gumperz… Sociolinguistic Significance of Conversational Code-Switching.
24 Heath, 24-25
groups. As the latter, it is used in a conversation to either “step in or step out of a presumed or expected identity.” Basically, it is a bargaining chip for identity.  

Every article agrees on one thing: code-switching happens in informal language use.  Heath, Shaffer, Bentahila and a host of non-Arabists agree that switching is confined almost exclusively to informal speech.” Wei argues that code-switching is a “conversational activity,” belonging to ‘parole’ rather than ‘langue.” According to Wei, code-switching is a tactic which speakers employ unintentionally. On the other hand, Myers-Scotton argues that code-switching is an empowering tactic which individuals employ in order to change perception within interpersonal relationships. According to her, both the elite and non-elite use code-switching as a method of empowerment.  

Whether intentional or unintentional, code-switching is fairly universal among bilinguals in Morocco. French is the primary language of status and of instruction at a higher level, meaning that all young people who have been educated in private schools, universities or who have jobs are able to navigate in French. As English is now “the international language par excellence” and Spanish is also spoken in the North, these

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26 Lahlou says that there is formal code-switching (5) but that this is of less interest because it is clearly definable...
29 Myers-Scotton, 82
young people are beginning to use both of these languages in addition to French.\textsuperscript{30}

These young people probably make up large part of the only 33\% of Moroccans who use the internet and who communicate with each other via Facebook and other social networking sites. \textsuperscript{31}
III. Facebook and the Moroccan User

The internet is a “new medium of communication” which opens the door for a new code-switching analysis. Not only does it allow for “new stylistic varieties” of language but it may usher in a new era of Applied Internet Linguistics. David Crystal explains that the internet is a medium which must be “characterized in terms of its formal character,” which is different from both conversational speech and writing. Cardenas-Claros argues that written language “tends toward structural complexity, formality…” while spoken language “is more context dependent and structurally simpler.” As a form of computer-mediated communication (CMC) internet communication “blurs” the distinction between spoken and written.

In a study about code-switching in emails with Arabic/English bilinguals, Warschauer proved that Egyptians most often used a Romanized version of Egyptian Arabic in informal emails and chats, mostly when expressing personal content. This suggested that code-mixing was the most common form that language took on for these

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33 Crystal, 1
bilinguals online. Several other scholars undertook studies on Spanish language use in blogs, coming to similar conclusions.\textsuperscript{35}

While some authors have investigated use of Spanish and (to a lesser degree) Egyptian on social networking sites, the field of “internet linguistics” has yet to examine any Moroccan Arabic speakers and their internet language use. This project explores Moroccans and their use of language on social networking forums, usually Facebook as an example. Bentahila’s research suggests that Moroccans will use Darija, French and/or English (and possibly MSA) in specific genres of conversation. This project will identify genres of conversation, and analyze the code-switching that occurs in these genres.

Facebook use in Morocco is limited to those who have consistent access to both a computer and the internet for personal use. Only a project 33\% of the population has access to the internet, while 60\% of women and 35\% of men are illiterate, giving Morocco a combined total of 48\% illiteracy.\textsuperscript{36} This fact necessarily limits Facebook use to literate Moroccans and to Moroccans in cities, with at least some education and money (to sign up and to pay for at least an internet café). My data consists of a series of


\textsuperscript{36} http://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ma and http://www.indexmundi.com/morocco/literacy.html
conversations between groups either of friends or classmates. Every individual is Moroccan and lives in either Rabat or Fez, two of Morocco’s biggest cities. These conversations take place on large Facebook posts of pictures – these pictures sometimes wish everyone happy holidays, sometimes deal with academic topics, and are often just for fun. The poster (the person who posts the picture) will tag (notify) multiple people in these photos, who will then go to the photo and have conversations with each other, usually about the topic presented in the photo. Any conversation with a non-Moroccan was discarded during the data compilation process.

Most Moroccan Facebook users I observe have at least a basic knowledge of French, English and Darija. As a result, most users do indeed use each of these languages at least once. However, after sorting through conversation after conversation, I was able to identify three discrete groups of users, each of which tends to use specific languages. Every user uses Darija the majority of the time, but one group tends to rely on French, another on English, and yet another will usually not use any other language than Darija. I refer to these as the French, English and Darija groups, though the distinctions of course are not without overlap. The first two groups have generally been educated in either a French or an English school, and their friend groups rely on one of the two as their solid “Western” language. The group of Arabic speakers, who use nothing other than Darija (and possibly MSA), are not usually as educated, and though they may use some English or French phrases, they do not use them correctly.
I use the term “code-weaving” to describe each conversation on Facebook. While code-mixing refers to when “speakers use two or more language below clause level within one social situation” what happens on Facebook is more complex. There is no base language, and most of the time there is no language to switch to or from. No author has convincingly demonstrated a distinction between code-switching, mixing or insertion, so I use the general “code-weaving” as an alternative term. Moroccans weave codes together to form coherent sentences that are understood by their co-Facebook users. I treat all MSA as MSA whether it is transliterated in the Roman alphabet or not, and the same with Darija. There are no rules that people follow for this, and it seems that it has more to do with facility of typing than anything else. Each poster is identified by first and last initial to protect privacy.

It is almost impossible to identify when language switches happen. A sentence that exemplifies this dilemma is a response to a French poem with an English caption and a discussion taking place in three languages (English, French, Darija):

thx habibi pour le tag, l3ez bik khoya

(EN) (DAR) (FR) (DAR)

thank you, sweetie, for the tag [facebook term], blessing to you, brother.

37 Cardenas Claros and Isharianty, 68
What language is this sentence in? It has three languages, but is there a dominant language? After examining several similar sentences, one can identify certain words that are no longer markers of specific languages. Among these words are:

\textbf{thanks, merci, hi, lol, peace, oui, yo (or yow) and bye.}

These words are used so universally that they are not borrowed from any language in particular, and instead make up their own code: the “international code.” It is a quasi-code because it is not yet fully developed and only present on Facebook, but these words are so internationally known that use of these words no longer signify a “switch” into another language.

Determining the genre of a conversation is more difficult than it seems, partially because some conversations belong to more than one category and also because the way that people interact on Facebook is very not rule bound and is more fluid. Therefore, although there are some very clear situations (like religious quotes), other interactions are more playful (eg “I like it!”). Many of these situations are nuanced and belong to more than one category. To reflect this nuance, I separated the genre of religion into “purely religious” and “celebratory (celebrating religious holidays).” In purely religious conversations, posters will share either religious sayings or duties, or very religious photos. My categories consist of Academic, Playful/Friendship, Purely Religious and Celebratory Religious.
In my analysis, I begin with the Academic genre and go into what I call the “Purely Religious” genre. Then I look at Celebratory Religious conversations, followed by Playful/Friendship conversations. Each of these conversations could ostensibly fit in another category, but one tone tends to dominate.

A. Academic

The use of language in the Academic genre is the most consistent. A post by an English group member about English projects generates responses all in English, which is all pretty much grammatically correct. At one point, an interesting innovation takes place. One poster asks another:

do you want me to put this pic as foto de profile??

The words in this sentence are all in English save for the preposition “de,” which means “of” in French. Though knowledge about English words, this person obviously did not know how to grammatically express possessive in English. As a result, this person wove English words on top of a sentence that was grammatically a Romance language sentence. This is not code-switching, because all of the words are in English, but it is multi-layered form of speech. This situation, which I refer to as “code-weaving” is present in all of the other categories as well, though it is less immediately clear.

B. Purely Religious

One might assume based on sociolinguistic research on code-switching that a subject with a religious topic would be in the language of that religion. While MSA is inextricably linked with MSA, not all participants in religious conversations employ MSA. Instead, the Darija group is the only one which uses only MSA in religious situations.

The Darija group is the group more likely to use Arabic script when discussing religion, as well as using MSA to the exclusion of all other languages. In one example, Facebook poster AE posts a picture with the word “Allah” (God) written in Arabic in a bush. The responses are in Arabic and Roman script alike, but they consist solely of very religious phrases in MSA. Responder IS replies to the original post with a phrase, and DJ reacts to IS’ post with his own. SS then responds in translated (but still vowelled) MSA, and DJ reacts again.

IS:

أَلْهُ أَكْبَرَ

MSA

(allahu) (akhbar)

God is the Greatest

DJ:

مَا شَاءَ أَلْهَ

MSA

(ma) (sha’) (allah)

God has Willed it

SS: allaho akbar

MSA

God is the Greatest

SE: ما شاء الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

MSA

(ma) (sha’) (allah) (l) (hom) (sully) (3la) (al-nuby)

God has willed it to you pray to the Prophet

The conversation continues in this fashion. In no case does a respondent use Darija — though DJ and SS use the Roman alphabet, these are still MSA phrases. In fact, every single one of these phrases is a highly formalized religious saying, complete with vowels. In Islam, it is unacceptable to read or write a religious phrase or Qur’anic verse aloud with incorrect vowels. This is a formality that seems to resonate very high with the Darija group, which consistently uses correctly vowelled responses in highly formalized structures in religious situations.
Unlike their Darija-group counterparts, the English and French groups tend to weave codes even more in religious conversations. For example, poster Mo (in the English group) posted a picture with a very long Arabic hadith (saying of the Prophet) in Arabic script. Some users responded in Arabic and in English. One exchange illustrates one reason that users switch codes.

YE: بارك الله فيك

(MSA)
barak allah fik

blessing (of) god (in) you

Mo (poster): و فيك بارك

MSA
wa fik barak

and on you blessing

This seems standard – she responded to him with a formal Arabic blessing and so he responds in kind. However, then he continues with

Mo: by the way, hwo r you doing Yassine? take care

YE: Never been so Good l7amdollah what about you brother

41 “Thank God” in Darija chatspeak. See Appendix.
Mo: I’m doing well thx Allah. I wish you success and good luck Regards

This conversation illustrates two things. First, Mo’s use of “thx Allah” directly mirrors YE’s use of “l7amdollah,” which is a formalized, religious Arabic statement. While YE expresses this saying in Darija chatspeak, Mo simply places English words on top of Arabic structure, much as the poster did in the Academic example. “I wish you success and good luck” is a direct translation of an Islamic phrase that one says in response to well wishes (bsafa wa-l-3fiya). This conversation also illustrates how the genre of conversation shifts and how this alters language use.

When the genre of a conversation changes and one person changes languages, participants in the same conversation are more likely to follow suit. In this example, what was a religious conversation becomes personal, and in becoming personal it becomes English. Mo posted a hadith completely in Arabic and spent time going back and forth in Arabic. However, when he changed languages in order to ask YE a personal question, she responded in kind. While in the religious conversations between members of the Darija group the only responses surround religion, in the English group the responses is able to switch languages as genres also shift. While the subject is still religious, once English is introduced the speakers remain in English except for the odd Arabic phrase (l7amdollah).
Similarly, poster BV (from the French group posted a religious duty list in the Arabic script and gets a variation of responses. Each response consists of “haha,” “hhhh” or “lol.” Where the Darija group responds to religious topics religiously, there is more variation within the French group. This is not to say that members of the French group are not very religious, but may in fact be due to the fact that many Moroccans who attend private school are unable to actually read or write in MSA. One user responds in the same Arabic script as the poster by posting a long hadith (saying of the Prophet), and gets the responses:

```
BB: salah t’as fais la traduction en arabe………
FR
(name) you made the translation in Arabic
BV (poster ) : looooooooool salah sge3
INTL (name) DAR
```

Nobody responds in Arabic, and it is treated as a joke. I found this consistently with the French group. This may in fact be due to their inability to read Arabic, or a difference from the Darija in the way they treat religious imperatives. They may feel that highly formalized responses are unnecessary.

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C. Celebratory Religious

In celebratory religious conversations, English or French words tend to be interjected in responses that are largely Darija. On the other hand, the Darija group posts a similar wish in all Arabic script. This gets only Arabic script responses. A member of the English group posted a picture with the Arabic script saying “Happy Eid” and responses were all in Darija except for the following:

K: mabrouk 3idek….b sa7a ou hapiness…..

DAR\textsuperscript{44} EN

happy Eid in health and/or happiness

“Hapiness” here is either intended to be a translation of sa7a or an extension of this wish. Because “ou” is “and” in Darija and “or” in French, this is difficult to determine. This is another example of an English word being placed on top of a formal religious saying. The same conversation continues and someone responds at a later point:

“…Aid mobrek said….3lik o \textit{la famille} bssa7a…”

\textsuperscript{43} Eid is a Muslim holiday.
\textsuperscript{44} The reason that I have listed the following examples as Darija and not MSA (even though they are formalized Arabic sayings) is the transliteration. It is very sloppy, without vowels, and is very much Darija though the structure comes from MSA.
Eid happy happy to you and to your family in health

This injection of one French word into an otherwise completely Arabic sentence insinuates a certain playfulness with language. The poster is weaving languages together, but has no question that the other members of this conversation will understand and be able to respond.

This weaving of both structure and words is also present in English conversations. A similar post wishing everyone happy Eid in both Arabic and English\textsuperscript{45} gets the response:

HMA: Thnx bro, You too Happy \textbf{feast elfitr} with all the happiness of the world…

The words “feast elfitr” is clearly an incorrect translation from Arabic. Eid al-Fitr literally means “Holiday of Breaking Fast.” The possessive in Darija is used here in English, mirroring the other examples in which the poster puts English words over a non-English structure. This person was trying to use English to convey a formalized religious sentiment. This kind of word/structure divide appears over and over again, though some posters account for the grammatical difference between the two. Another response to this post says:

\textsuperscript{45} http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1507922290601&set=a.1276867234369.2042110.1010617534
MEM injects the word “happy” instead of “sa’id” and changes the structure to English. While in Arabic he would have said “Eid Sa’id,” he says “Happy Eid.” When he returns to a completely Darija sentence, the structure of the sentence is an Arabic one. Though the former is the more prevalent of the two structural accommodations for English, the latter posters are very conscious that they have to change sentence structure if they change language.

Like the English Group, the French group respondents tend to respond to these wishes in mostly French or the “international code.” One post simply stating “Eid Mubarak” \(^\text{46}\) gets 15 responses saying “merci” with more French wishes tacked on. One interesting response is poster HB’s, who says:

```plaintext
merci       bb       diali       a toi aussi       jtm
INTL       FR (slang)       DAR       FR       FR (slang)
```

thank you darling of mine to you too i love you

---

This response is a combination of international code and chat-French, clearly meant to demonstrate HB’s love for her friend. HB uses all slang, perhaps because this is how HB relates to her friends, and assumes that her friend will understand. This sentence does not belong to one specific language group, and the structure of the sentence is at first Darija (in French possessive pronouns go before the noun) and then French (a toi aussi). This response showcases how most responses to religiously celebratory posts are simply playful.

This playfulness extends to other posts that are technically religious, but also seem to be just fun conversations between friends. The same French group also all had a conversation on another post the same day, which consists of a picture of a girl with her sheep (on Eid al-Fitr sheep are sacrificed), making rabbit ears and saying “Happy Ba3 Ba3 4 everyoneOne (k).”

The responses are mostly “lol” and “merci.” No one language dominates. Though this is the French group, the responses are equally in Darija, English and French, and all responses seem to surround not eating too much. Like the former example, this post illustrates how for the French and English groups, religiously celebratory posts are largely playful discussions between friends.
D. Playful/Friendship

People are more playful with their friends. This suggests that people tend to be more playful with language use with their friends. There is no motivation for this language playfulness other than fun and there is no rhyme or reason for this playfulness. The insertion of words in Language A on top of Language B’s structure continues, and nouns from multiple languages may make up an entire sentence. Some sentences are almost illegible because when the members of the conversation have references specific to their groups of friends, they are able to put languages together in ways that make sense only to them. Even the Darija group uses languages other than Darija though they do not speak them.

With the Darija group there is no reason to use English because nobody speaks English. However, in friendship situations it seems that people think it’s fun to use. Consider the exchange posted by a non-English speaker. The phrase “I love My Friends” is responded to with “I love the language Englishlink.” Clearly, this has been translated via English translator. Regardless, other members of the conversation continue on in Darija and do not comment on the use of English or the misuse of English. These playful uses of English are far and few between. Most playful conversations take place totally in Darija. A more typical post, for example, is a joking

post that features a very scandalous picture of a woman. This picture gets responses only in Darija, all laughing and expressing entertainment or disgust.  

In this genre, the English and French groups blend together, and use so many languages they create an international code of their own. See the below response (by the poster) to a French/English posting about friends:

mercì also Sarita .Égalment sparkling wellah

thank you also Sarita. Same here, sparkling, by God.

This sentence seems to have no more purpose than just to thank a friend, but use every language possible. There is no specific “genre” to this except for friendship.

This extreme mixing is also seen in the following post, which received responses in all kinds of languages. This post was just names of friends in Arabic, with the caption in English saying “I respect you all.”

YB: …li dartì lia, et surtt ana ou tamane au mém…”

to me i’m good to me, and above all i or of course at the same

---


This actually does not make sense. It is the equivalent of linguistic stuttering. There are no responses to this particular comment and he later clarifies his meaning in Darija.

Others respond to the main post in kind, one of which stands out

MY: safi you respect only boys, what about girls?

DAR EN

That’s it/that’s all, you respect only boys, what about girls?

The poster responds to her in English, to which she responds “…you should have mention it!!!! i’m just kiddin I know u well.”

The structure in this response is English, and despite the grammatical errors it seems that MY has studied enough English to be able to switch into true English at will. She inserts “safi” in her first response because she knew that the poster would understand, and she was able to count on his ability to respond to her in English as well as Darija.

Playful posts do not always require long sentences as responses but these short responses also demonstrate the wide-ranging use of language in both the French and English groups. In the French group someone posted an advertisement (all in French) for a party.\footnote{http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1463959592961&set=t.1295226826} Every single response is “thank you” or “merci” or “shukran.” There is no one language that dominates because they are all internationally
understood. This is the same as another post, where a small French poem about friendship is posted along with the caption “Je Vous Aime Tous My Friendsssssssss.”

One responder responds with

LA: “u are the bestos hhhhhhhhhhh 3a9l 3la lblaan.”

EN                        INTL              DAR
You are the best hahahahahahahaha the root of the situation

LA may speak French, LA may be English or LA may not speak either. The use of language here is obscure. Similarly, a post by a French-group member about Arabic grammar gets responses all in Arabic script, most of which are ١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١١٢

The Playful/Friendship genre serves to illustrate the fluidity with which members of the French and English groups weave languages together at both structural and lexical levels. While the Darija group plays with language by translating English phrases using online translators, it is almost impossible to gauge whether or not members of the French and English groups actually are literate in the languages they use. They are adept as mixing languages to such an extent that they are understood, and there is no one base language for their conversations. Though through observing other genres of conversation one can place these individuals within the French or English

groups, when these individuals are weaving languages together and having fun it is impossible to tell the difference.
IV. Conclusion

This study suggests two very important explanations for how and why Moroccans use language online. First, individuals superimpose words on top of the structure of another language. While members of the English group use English words, they layer these words on top of either French or Arabic sentence structures. This is also most clear with religious phrases. Members of the French and English groups layer either English or French over formalized Arabic religious sayings. This layers the two languages, and while the sentences are “in” one language, the structure is still highly formalized and religiously symbolic.

Secondly, when one person changes languages the rest are more likely to follow suit. If the language posted with is English, then people tend to respond in English regardless of their main language. The same applies to French, MSA and Darija. This change in languages is often due to a change in genre. While in Purely Religious situations members of the Darija group just use MSA, the members of the French and English groups are always more playful with language. Still, in Purely Religious or Religious Celebratory situations they are more likely to layer French or English on top of still-religious Arabic sentences. In Playful/Friendship conversations, members of all groups use languages fluently. For this reason it would be inaccurate to refer to Moroccans’ language use on Facebook as “code-switching.” There is no switch between
defined languages, but there is instead a weaving between multiple languages and structures.

This code-weaving is exaggerated by the heavy use of the international quasi-code and chatspeak. The informality of Facebook fosters the creation of new forms of communication, both through posts between friends and through the use of words that are internationally understood. The internet mediates the universal comprehension of these words and this is reflected in the conversations between Moroccans in all three language groups.

On social networks, language use can be more fluid because it takes place between friends. If other sociolinguists have determined that genre dictates when code-switching does or does not take place, then Facebook blurs the boundaries of conversation genres. Who is to say that a specific conversation is personal, religious, serious, humorous, or any other number of things? The internet is a more fluid, less rule-bound medium and conversation taking place on the internet is less party to rules that exist in both written and spoken speech.

These Moroccans are creating a new internet-based code which is a hybrid, and they are doing so organically. This new quasi-code may in fact become a complete code in the future while rules and limitations of code-weaving become more developed. It will be the job of the linguist to determine what, if anything, determines how language is used in internet communication.
V. Appendix: Arabic Chat Library

The following is a table of the Arabic chat transliterations from Wikipedia. This is the standard from which most Moroccan Facebook users are operating. Many letters are distinguished from others by a simple dot above or below a letter, so transliterations often use the same number to represent a letter with a comma or apostrophe before or after. Wikipedia gives the example of ٣ which is represented by the numeral 3’ and an apostrophe.

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ou / oo
w, o(:), u(:)
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j, i(:), e(:), a(:)
ei / ai / a
VI. Works Cited


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