

# Dutch-Moroccan Arabic Code Switching



*Jacomine Nortier*

# Dutch-Moroccan Arabic Code Switching

among Moroccans  
in the Netherlands



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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Moroccan Arabic Grammar: An Overview</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Notation and Phonology . . . . .	8
2.2 Morphology and Basic Categories . . . . .	12
2.2.1 Verbs . . . . .	13
2.2.1.1 Auxiliaries . . . . .	16
2.2.2 Personal pronouns . . . . .	19
2.2.3 Nouns and adjectives . . . . .	21
2.2.4 Prepositions . . . . .	29
2.2.5 Adverbs . . . . .	30
2.3 Syntax . . . . .	31
2.3.1 Basic word order . . . . .	31
2.3.2 Clause types . . . . .	33
2.3.2.1 Nominal sentences . . . . .	33
2.3.2.2 Raising . . . . .	34
2.3.2.3 Simple verbal clauses . . . . .	35
2.3.2.4 Complex sentences without a conjunction . . . . .	36
2.3.2.5 Relative clauses . . . . .	36
2.3.2.6 Complex sentences with <i>u</i> (and) . . . . .	39
2.3.2.7 Subordinate clauses introduced by an interrogative . . . . .	39
2.3.2.8 Conditionals . . . . .	40
2.3.2.9 Negation . . . . .	40
2.4 Moroccan, Classical Arabic and Berber . . . . .	42
<b>3 The Linguistic Situation in Morocco</b>	<b>45</b>
3.1 Morocco . . . . .	45
3.2 Individual Languages . . . . .	46
3.2.1 Berber . . . . .	46
3.2.2 Arabic . . . . .	48
3.2.3 French . . . . .	50

3.2.4	Other languages . . . . .	51
3.2.5	The Jewish community in Morocco . . . . .	51
3.3	Language Attitudes in Morocco . . . . .	52
3.4	Education . . . . .	54
3.5	Diglossia . . . . .	56
<b>4</b>	<b>The Moroccan Community in the Netherlands</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1	Moroccans in the Netherlands, an Overview . . . . .	59
4.2	Moroccans in Utrecht . . . . .	60
4.3	Social and Geographical Aspects . . . . .	61
4.3.1	Religion . . . . .	68
4.3.2	Shops . . . . .	69
4.3.3	Restaurants, cafés and coffee houses . . . . .	70
4.3.4	Groups and networks . . . . .	70
4.4	Language Proficiency . . . . .	73
<b>5</b>	<b>The Present Study</b>	<b>77</b>
5.1	Selection of Speakers . . . . .	77
5.1.1	Criteria . . . . .	77
5.1.2	Looking for subjects . . . . .	78
5.1.3	The informants . . . . .	81
5.2	The Recorded Conversations . . . . .	85
5.3	Transcriptions . . . . .	91
5.4	A Preliminary Classification Model . . . . .	91
<b>6</b>	<b>Bilingual Language Proficiency</b>	<b>95</b>
6.1	Introduction . . . . .	95
6.2	Methods for Measuring Bilingual Ability . . . . .	96
6.2.1	Self-report . . . . .	97
6.2.2	Actual use of Dutch, Moroccan Arabic and a mixed variety . . . . .	98
6.2.3	Judgement by native speakers . . . . .	102
6.2.4	Error analysis of spoken Dutch in the corpus . . . . .	104
6.2.5	Comparison between methods . . . . .	108
6.3	Characteristics of the Moroccan Arabic used . . . . .	111
6.4	Bilingualism and Code Switching . . . . .	113
6.5	Socio-Psychological Aspects . . . . .	116
6.6	Conclusion . . . . .	118
<b>7</b>	<b>Classification of the Switched Material</b>	<b>121</b>
7.1	Intersentential Code Switching . . . . .	121
7.2	Extrasentential Switches . . . . .	123
7.3	Intrasentential Switches . . . . .	124
7.3.1	Intrasentential switches between coordinated clauses . . . . .	126

7.3.2	Intrasentential switches around adverbs . . . . .	126
7.3.3	Switches inside VP (between V and NP) . . . . .	130
7.3.4	Switches between main and subordinate clauses . . . . .	131
7.3.5	Switched appositions and dislocated elements . . . . .	133
7.3.6	Switching of PP . . . . .	134
7.3.7	Switching after subject . . . . .	135
7.3.8	Switching inside NP . . . . .	136
7.3.9	Switching between P and N(P) . . . . .	139
7.3.10	Problems with the classification of intrasentential data . . . . .	139
7.4	Single Word Switches . . . . .	140
7.4.1	Word classes to which single switched words belong . . . . .	141
7.4.1.1	Nouns . . . . .	141
7.4.1.2	Adverbs . . . . .	141
7.4.1.3	Adjectives . . . . .	142
7.4.1.4	Conjunctions . . . . .	142
7.4.1.5	Verbs . . . . .	143
7.4.1.6	Prepositions . . . . .	144
7.4.1.7	Pronouns . . . . .	145
7.4.1.8	Numerals . . . . .	145
7.4.2	Syntactic classification of single word switches . . . . .	146
7.4.2.1	Single word switches inside NP . . . . .	146
7.4.2.2	Single word switches between preposition and noun . . . . .	148
7.4.2.3	Single word switches inside VP . . . . .	149
7.4.2.4	Single word switches after subject . . . . .	151
7.4.2.5	Switching of single adverbs . . . . .	152
7.4.2.6	Switching of single conjunctions . . . . .	153
7.4.2.7	Single word switches functioning as adverbial PP . . . . .	154
7.4.2.8	Switched subjects after a conjunction . . . . .	154
7.4.2.9	Word-internal switches . . . . .	155
8	<b>Constraints on Code Switching</b> . . . . .	<b>157</b>
8.1	The Notion of Matrix vs. Embedded Language . . . . .	157
8.2	Constraints on Particular Constructions . . . . .	161
8.3	Constraints Claimed to be Universally Valid . . . . .	169
8.3.1	The equivalence constraint . . . . .	169
8.3.2	The government constraint . . . . .	175
8.3.3	The subcategorization constraint . . . . .	175
8.3.4	Constraints formulated by Joshi . . . . .	178
8.3.5	The free morpheme constraint . . . . .	179
8.3.6	The size-of-constituent constraint . . . . .	180
8.4	Conclusions . . . . .	181

<b>9</b>	<b>Single Word Switches</b>	<b>183</b>
9.1	Definitions . . . . .	183
9.2	Single Words in the Present Study . . . . .	187
9.2.1	Borrowing from French and Spanish . . . . .	187
9.2.2	Single Moroccan Arabic words in Dutch sentences . . . . .	187
9.2.3	Dutch single nouns in Moroccan Arabic sentences . . . . .	188
9.2.4	Functional aspects of switched single Dutch nouns . . . . .	191
9.2.4.1	Moroccan Arabic equivalents or not? . . . . .	191
9.2.4.2	Semantic fields . . . . .	193
9.2.5	Formal aspects: the use of articles . . . . .	197
9.2.5.1	Explanations for the patterns found . . . . .	202
9.3	Nonce Borrowing . . . . .	206
9.4	Constituent Insertion . . . . .	207
9.5	Summary and Conclusion . . . . .	209
<b>10</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Transcriptions</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Borrowings from Romance Languages</b>	<b>223</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>225</b>
	<b>Author Index</b>	<b>233</b>
	<b>Subject Index</b>	<b>235</b>



# List of Figures

2.1	Indefinite NP . . . . .	25
2.2	Moroccan Arabic definite NP . . . . .	27
2.3	Dutch and English definite NP . . . . .	27
3.1	Morocco . . . . .	47
3.2	Languages attitudes in Morocco. . . . .	53
4.1	Utrecht divided into neighborhoods . . . . .	63
4.2	Utrecht: concentration of immigrants by neighborhood . . . . .	64
4.3	Eight neighborhoods with the highest percentage of immigrants . . . . .	65
4.4	Percentages of immigrants in different parts of Utrecht . . . . .	66
4.5	Moroccans in Utrecht: Age and Sex . . . . .	67
5.1	Morocco - Home towns of the speakers . . . . .	81
5.2	Model for classification . . . . .	92
6.1	Formal representation of possible language use . . . . .	99
6.2	Actual language use ordered by percentage of Dutch . . . . .	101
7.1	Intrasentential switch sites . . . . .	125



# List of Tables

2.1	Table of Moroccan Arabic consonants (based on Harrell (1962:3) . . .	11
2.2	The verb: perfect and imperfect tense . . . . .	14
2.3	Personal pronouns and suffixes . . . . .	20
2.4	A comparison between Moroccan Arabic, Classical Arabic and Berber	43
5.1	The speakers, by age, length of stay, place of birth and occupation . .	86
5.2	Portions transcribed of the recorded conversations . . . . .	88
5.3	Topics discussed in the recorded conversations . . . . .	89
6.1	Languages preferred by the speakers . . . . .	98
6.2	Actual language use in the conversations, in percentages . . . . .	100
6.3	Actual speech time of the informants (in minutes) . . . . .	101
6.4	Average judgements by native speaker judges on a five point scale. . .	104
6.5	Errors made in Dutch . . . . .	106
6.6	Cross-classification of self reported preference and proficiency . . . .	108
6.7	Difference between D and MA scores compared to error indices . . . .	109
6.8	Rank orders . . . . .	110
6.9	Rank order correlations between four measures of bilingualism . . . .	111
6.10	Places of origin of the speakers . . . . .	113
6.11	Code switches: main types . . . . .	114
6.12	The relation between age at arrival and proficiency in D or MA . . . .	118
7.1	Intersentential code switches . . . . .	122
7.2	Distribution coordinate conjunctions in intersentential switches . . . .	122
7.3	Extrasentential code switches . . . . .	123
7.4	Intrasentential code switches . . . . .	126
7.5	Intrasentential switching between coordinate clauses . . . . .	127
7.6	Distribution coordinate conjunctions in intrasentential switches . . . .	127
7.7	Intrasentential switching around adverbs . . . . .	129
7.8	Types of adverbs . . . . .	129
7.9	Switches inside VP . . . . .	130
7.10	Code switching between main and subordinate clauses . . . . .	132
7.11	Switched appositions and dislocated elements . . . . .	133
7.12	Switching of PP . . . . .	135

7.13	Switching after the Moroccan Arabic subject . . . . .	136
7.14	Switching inside NP . . . . .	137
7.15	Word classes to which single word switches belong . . . . .	141
7.16	Single switched conjunctions . . . . .	143
7.17	Syntactic classification of single word switches . . . . .	146
7.18	Single word switches inside NP . . . . .	147
7.19	Single word switches inside VP . . . . .	149
7.20	Single word switches after subject . . . . .	151
7.21	Types of single adverbs . . . . .	153
8.1	Constraints on code switching valid in particular constructions . . . .	162
8.2	Conjunctions involved in code switching . . . . .	164
9.1	Single Dutch nouns vs. Dutch nouns in multi-word switches . . . . .	192
9.2	Semantic fields . . . . .	193
9.3	Dutch single nouns divided among semantic fields . . . . .	194
9.4	Dutch nouns in multi-word switches divided among semantic fields . .	195
9.5	The use of articles with Dutch nouns in Moroccan Arabic sentences .	198
9.6	Contrasts between MA-Fr and MA-D switches . . . . .	201

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Over the last decades, scholars have become interested in language contact, its social context, and its consequences. Code switching, the use of more than one language in the same conversational context by bilinguals, is one of the phenomena that have attracted special attention.

In code switching research a distinction is usually made between switches within sentence boundaries (intrasentential switches), switches involving complete sentences (intersentential switches), and semi-independent stretches of discourse (extrasentential switches, such as tags).

(1) and (2) are examples of intrasentential code switching:

- (1) You can it ♦ *zondag doen*.  
['You can do it on Sunday.'] (English–Dutch; Crama and Van Gelderen, 1984)
- (2) Les femmes et le vin ♦ *ne ponimayu*.  
['I don't know anything about women and wine.'] (French–Russian; Timm, 1978)

Intersentential code switching is shown in (3):

- (3) Ik ben kritisch, hè? ♦ *ka-nqul: 9laš ka-yzešš-ni neqra?*  
['I am critical, am I not? I say: Why do I have to study?'] (Dutch–Moroccan Arabic; kalb477, this study)

An example of extrasentential code switching, in which a quote is switched, is (4):

- (4) Le díši: ♦ *"Ma aní asé?"*  
['I said to her: "What am I to do?"] (Spanish–Hebrew; Berk-Seligson, 1986)

Ideally, the field of code switching is the field in which several linguistic disciplines meet. Sociolinguists investigate why members of a certain speech community switch codes. Therefore, in this study, quite some attention is paid to a description of the speakers' social and linguistic background. A psycholinguistic orientation is required

to investigate the organization of speech ability in a speaker's mind. An attempt to determine bilingual proficiency should be seen in this light. Grammatical research is needed to establish the linguistic facts that constitute code switching.

Many people outside the field view code switching as incomplete and careless language use. Poplack (1980), however, has shown that only balanced bilingual Puerto Ricans are able to use code switching effectively. McClure (1977) has made clear that children do not use intrasentential code switching intensively before the age of eight. Both findings indicate that a high degree of bilingual proficiency is required in code switching. Berk-Seligson (1986) has found, on the other hand, that balanced bilinguals, L1-dominant bilinguals, and L2-dominant bilinguals switch codes in very much the same way.

The related phenomenon of borrowing is often considered a degeneration of a language. Bentahila and Davies (1983), like many other authors, have pointed out that it is important to draw a distinction between code switching and borrowing: "The latter refers to the use in one language of items which originate in another language, but which are currently felt to form an integral part of the borrowing language." (1983:302) Phonological and morphological integration are sometimes viewed as a criterion in the distinction between code switching and borrowing, a view that is not held by Pfaff (1979) and Bentahila and Davies (1983). More reliable criteria are functional in nature: borrowing occurs, for example, in the speech of both monolinguals and bilinguals, while code switching requires proficiency in both languages under consideration (Sridhar and Sridhar, 1980; Kachru, 1982). Shaffer (1975) has remarked that "... switching is confined almost exclusively to informal speech." (1975:489) As an example of borrowing Bentahila and Davies (1983:302) mention the Moroccan Arabic word *bisri*, which originates from French "épicerie".

In a number of studies on code switching syntactic constraints on possible switch sites have been formulated. The first major constraints have been formulated by Poplack (in several publications, in cooperation with others), mainly on the basis of Spanish-English language material. Many constraints have been developed since.

Some proposals for universally valid constraints are:

#### **Equivalence constraint, Poplack (1980)**

Code switching is only possible at points where the two languages have the same word order.

#### **Free morpheme constraint, Poplack (1980)**

Code switching is not possible within words.

#### **Government constraint, DiSciullo et al. (1986)**

Code switching is not possible between a governing and a governed element.

#### **Subcategorization constraint, Bentahila and Davies (1983)**



All items must be used in such a way as to satisfy the (language-particular) subcategorization restrictions imposed on them.

### **Closed class constraint, Joshi (1985)**

Only constituents can be switched, with the exception of closed class items.

### **Size-of-constituent constraint, Berk-Seligson (1986)**

Higher-level constituents (sentences, clauses) tend to be switched more frequently than lower-level constituents or smaller ones (i.e. one-word categories) with the exception of nouns which comprise the greatest number of switches.

The number of language pairs involved in code switching research is still too limited to allow statements about the universal validity of these constraints. I do not intend to add to the available list of investigated language pairs with this study. Neither do I think that it is necessary to investigate all possible language pairs. However, evidence from typologically distant languages is required to further determine the factors conditioning code switching (see also Clyne, 1987) and this book should be viewed as a contribution towards this end.

French-Moroccan Arabic code switching has received a fair amount of attention in several publications of which I will mention the especially valuable work by Bentahila and Davies (1983), Abbassi (1977), Ennaji (1988), Saib (1988) (all based on Moroccan material), and Nait M'Barek and Sankoff (1988) (based on material collected among bilingual Moroccan students in Canada). In my own work I hope to be able to contribute to this research tradition. However, the setting in the present study differs from that in earlier studies: Moroccans in the Netherlands belong to an ethnic minority group that generally has low social status. The pressure of Dutch society is enormous.

Moroccan Arabic is a language that has received relatively little attention compared to other languages spoken in the Netherlands. There is no such thing as a "Standard" Moroccan Arabic and it is not automatically the native language of all Moroccans. Fortunately, over the last decade scholars have shown a growing interest in Moroccan Arabic as an object of research. Apart from the existing language courses and (mostly) normative grammars, studies on Moroccan Arabic syntax, phonology and sociolinguistics are now appearing in Morocco as well as in other countries. Generative syntactic and phonological studies on Moroccan Arabic have been carried out by scholars like Ennaji (1980, 1982), Boudali (1984), and Heath (1987). Recently I have also received some work by Moroccan students and scholars from Prof. Condon in the United States. Unfortunately, I have not had time to incorporate these studies in the present research, but in the bibliography some of them have been included (i.e. Ben Jilali (1984), Drissi (1986), El Ayadi (1984), Belahnech (1986) and El Medkouri (1986)). Work on sociolinguistics in Morocco has been carried out by Abbassi (1977), Gravel (1979), Bentahila (1983a, 1983b, 1987), Bentahila and Davies (1983, 1988), Saib (1988), Heath (1989), and Ennaji (1988).

One of the papers sent to me by Prof. Condon also concerns Moroccan Arabic sociolinguistics (Mahi, 1986). In the Netherlands Otten has done work on Moroccan Arabic; he has written a Moroccan Arabic-Dutch dictionary that I have used frequently in preparing this book (Otten, 1983). De Ruiter has recently completed a dissertation about young Moroccans' acquisition of Dutch in the Netherlands (De Ruiter, 1989). There are certainly other, and more recent publications concerned with Moroccan Arabic linguistics, but they are not available in the Netherlands.

The reason for my concern with Moroccan Arabic is connected with the growing interest in Moroccan Arabic in general. Compared to the amount of work on other ethnic minority languages in the Netherlands, Moroccan Arabic has been underrepresented in scholarly investigations. It is in close contact with Dutch, which will undoubtedly have consequences for the development of Moroccan Arabic in the Netherlands. This book is an attempt to describe what happens in the Dutch-Moroccan Arabic contact situation. It is not the place to predict the future of Moroccan Arabic in the Netherlands. The contact situation between Moroccan Arabic and Dutch is far too young, not much older than twenty years. Those who view code switching as a first step to (future) language loss have reasons to be pessimistic about the future of Moroccan Arabic in the Netherlands, since code switching between Dutch and Moroccan Arabic occurs frequently in the speech of bilingual Moroccans. On the other hand, frequent code switching may also be viewed as a phenomenon that helps to sustain bilingual skills (Pedrasa et al., 1980). Moreover, in Morocco, where code switching between French and Moroccan Arabic is part of normal everyday conversation, neither Moroccan Arabic, nor French has disappeared (see chapter 3) from the speech community.

This study deals with code switching between Dutch and Moroccan Arabic in a corpus of tape recorded conversations. It represents an attempt to combine the two topics that have been outlined here: code switching between two typologically distant languages on the one hand, and code switching behavior among speakers whose native tongue is Moroccan Arabic, on the other.

Many readers of this book will not be familiar with Moroccan Arabic, so chapter 2 provides a rough outline of Moroccan Arabic grammar. This outline is not meant to be exhaustive. It only presents some general facts and syntactic descriptions, in particular concerning syntactic constituents that will eventually be involved in my analysis of code switching. I will not present a grammatical overview of Dutch, but relevant facts about Dutch grammar will be presented throughout the text. Those who want to know more about Dutch are referred to Donaldson (1981).

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the background of the speakers who have been included in the present study: chapter 4 sketches the Moroccan community in the Netherlands, and in particular Utrecht, where the study was carried out, while chapter 3 deals with the highly complicated linguistic situation in Morocco, where the speakers were born and have lived for at least a few years.

People who switch codes frequently are often not aware of doing so. In order to observe code switching, it is important to keep the setting as informal as possible,

since code switching is highly informal behavior. Chapter 5 explains how the best possible situation for eliciting code switching was created.

In chapter 6 matters concerning bilingual proficiency will be discussed. It has been shown in several studies (Poplack (1980), among others) that speakers should be balanced bilinguals in order to switch codes effectively. Problems in determining bilingual ability will be discussed and I will suggest a solution to these problems. Bilingual proficiency will also be related to the use of certain code switching patterns. In the last section, an attempt will be made to relate bilingual proficiency to socio-psychological factors. In this study this was only possible to a limited extent, though, mostly due to the homogeneity of the group of informants.

The language proficiency of each individual speaker will also be considered in chapter 6. In chapters 7, 8 and 9, where code switching phenomena are discussed, the group of speakers will be treated as a whole, because the corpus is not large enough to differentiate for each speaker and each type of code switch and it may often be a matter of coincidence that some speakers did not use certain types of code switching, while others did so frequently, because there is a high variety in speech time and, accordingly, the number of switches used. In chapter 7 the code switches that were found in the corpus are classified according to switch types.

The analysis of the switches is presented in chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 8 deals with the constraints on code switching as they have been formulated in the literature. A distinction is made between specific and universal constraints. Also in chapter 8 these constraints are confronted with the Dutch-Moroccan Arabic material. In chapter 9 attention is focused on single word switches which constitute almost half of all recorded code switches. The question whether we are dealing with borrowing here, or perhaps with other language contact phenomena will be discussed in depth.

This book should by no means be viewed as an exhaustive treatment of code switching. Many issues could not be taken up. I have already mentioned the socio-psychological factors that influence language behavior. Functional aspects of code switching are also related to the socio-psychological background of the code switchers, but I will not go into the functions of code switching in detail in this book. In discussing the single word switches (chapter 9), however, their function will be touched upon briefly in an attempt to explain the patterns that were found. In Schatz (1989) a functional model for the analysis of code switching and borrowing is presented in which (grammatical) constraints and motives for code switching are related to each other. A combination of a functional analysis and an analysis of grammatical constraints seems a promising avenue for future research.

In this study, I will concentrate on a description of the speakers' social and linguistic background, a detailed analysis of bilingual proficiency, and on the grammatical aspects of the Dutch-Moroccan Arabic switched material. I have limited myself to Dutch-Moroccan Arabic code switching. Berber-Moroccan Arabic and Classical-Moroccan Arabic code switching will have to wait for a later study.

In the literature the terms code switching, code mixing and code alternation are used frequently, but there is no unanimity as to which term should be used for which

phenomenon. For instance, Bokamba (1988) uses code switching to indicate switches between sentences and code mixing for switches within sentence boundaries. I will follow Clyne (1987:740) who employs the term code switching in the sense of "the alternative use of two languages either within a sentence or between sentences." and Bentahila and Davies (1983:307) who use the term code switching to refer to the use of two languages within a single conversation, exchange or utterance. The result is in either case an utterance or interaction of which some parts are clearly in one of the bilingual's languages while other parts are in the other language.

## Chapter 2

# Moroccan Arabic Grammar: An Overview

The literature on Moroccan Arabic covers only a limited set of titles. This may be a consequence of the fact that there does not exist a broadly accepted written variant. Furthermore, the low social status of Moroccan Arabic may play a role in this matter. Linguistic studies on Moroccan languages are mostly concerned with (Classical) Arabic and in recent years Berber languages have also moved to some degree within the scope of scientific interest.

The most important classical studies on Moroccan Arabic are generally descriptive: Brunot (1950), Harrell (1962), Sa'id (1950), Abdel-Massih (1973), Mercier (1956), among others. Dutch contributions to the literature on Moroccan Arabic are among others, Hoogland (1983), Otten (1983), Van Mol (1983). In recent years some detailed theoretical studies have been carried out, mainly on syntactic aspects of Moroccan Arabic: Ennaji (1980, 1982), Boudali (1984), Condon et al. (1987). Heath (1986) has concentrated on phonology and more recently he has written extensively on borrowing, in which all grammatical levels are represented (Heath, 1989).

The orthography of Moroccan Arabic as it is used in this dissertation will be discussed and explained in section 2.1; in the same section some phonological phenomena will be treated briefly. In section 2.2 Moroccan Arabic morphology will be the central theme, while in section 2.3 syntax will be discussed.

I do not intend to give an in-depth and exhaustive description of Moroccan Arabic: this short grammatical overview is meant to give the reader who is not familiar with Moroccan Arabic a rough idea about the language. Only those constructions in which frequent code switching occurred in the corpus will be discussed in more detail.

Examples are, whenever possible, taken from the Dutch–Moroccan Arabic corpus used in the present study. In the glosses, the following abbreviations will be used:

PF	perfect tense
IMPF	imperfect tense
IMPERAT	imperative mode
SG	singular
PL	plural
M	masculine
F	feminine
DU	durative
PC	pronoun clitic
PTC	participle
N1	first part of discontinuous negation
N2	second part of discontinuous negation
DUA	dual
DEM	demonstrative
DEF	definite article
FU	future particle

When the meaning of the sentence is not directly interpretable from the gloss translation, a free translation is given as well.

## 2.1 Notation and Phonology

I will use the Latin alphabet to represent Moroccan Arabic words and sentences, as has been done by many of the authors cited. Although in Morocco the Arabic alphabet is sometimes used for this purpose (Hoogland, 1983), I have decided not to do so in this dissertation for the following reasons:

- Moroccan Arabic has more phonemes than Classical Arabic. Besides, in Classical Arabic short vowels are usually not written, while in the Latin alphabet they are.
- When the Arabic alphabet is used, a word-for-word translation to English will be problematic, since Arabic is written from right to left, while English is written in the opposite direction. This could easily cause misunderstandings.
- In order to achieve maximum accessibility, also for those who are not familiar with Arabic, the Latin alphabet is preferred over the Arabic script.

The notation is based on the one Otten has used in his dictionary (Otten, 1983). The main difference with Otten's notation is that, where Otten uses a dash to indicate pharyngalized sounds, I will use a dot. Besides, I will use *ʕ* to refer to the pharyngeal consonant. I have also adjusted the examples taken from the literature to conform to this convention. In order to avoid redundancy and to accomplish maximum adequacy, only semantically distinctive sounds (phonemes) are used. In other

words, I have adopted a phonological notation. Before the symbols and their pronunciation will be presented (in alphabetical order) some remarks about Moroccan Arabic are in order.

To people who are not familiar with Arabic languages, the presence of guttural sounds is probably most striking. These are uvulars and pharyngals. Also typical are the so called emphatic consonants. In fact, they are pharyngalized, which gives the impression of emphasis, so the consonants are often called emphatic. I will use the term pharyngalized consonant, since it refers to their phonetic quality. About the way they should be pronounced Harrell (1962) writes:

There are eight emphatic consonants, *b*, *m*, *t*, *ḍ*, *ṣ*, *z*, *l*, and *r*. These sounds are lower in pitch than their non-emphatic counterparts. They are pronounced with greater muscular tension in the mouth and throat and with a raising of the back and root of the tongue toward the roof of the mouth. The English speaker can notice this contraction of the throat very easily by prolonging the "l" in "full", since this English "l" is exactly like the Moroccan *l*. (1962:8)

Vowels are "darkened" when they are accompanied by one or more pharyngalized consonants, or by *q*, or *ḡ*.

The symbols which have been used to represent the sounds of Moroccan Arabic are presented here with a rough approximation of how they are pronounced:

- a Full vowel; the pronunciation varies from *a* in the English word *man* to *a* in *father*. Its quality depends on the surrounding consonants: in the neighborhood of pharyngalized sounds it is approximately pronounced like in English *father*.
- b Not different from English or Dutch.
- ḃ Pharyngalized *b*, rarely used.
- ḍ About the same pronunciation as English *d*.
- ḍ Pharyngalized *d*.
- e Schwa, pronounced as the second *e* in *heaven*.
- f Not different from English or Dutch.
- g As in English *good*.
- ḡ No English or Dutch equivalent; it is pronounced as the French uvular *r* in *Paris*.
- h As in English and Dutch.

- ħ Pharyngalized *h*, the sound of someone breathing on a mirror in order to clean it.
- ī Full vowel; the pronunciation varies from the sound in English *beast* or Dutch *pier* to the one in English *beer*. The latter only in the neighborhood of pharyngalized consonants.
- k As in English or Dutch.
- l As in (British) English or Dutch.
- ļ Pharyngalized *l*; it sounds like *l* in American English or in the dialect of Amsterdam (the velarized *l*).
- m As in English or Dutch.
- ṁ Pharyngalized *m*, rarely occurring in Moroccan Arabic.
- n As in English or Dutch.
- q No equivalent in Dutch or English; Harrell (1962) about the pronunciation:  

The *q* is similar to the *k* except that contact between the upper surface of the tongue and the roof of the mouth is further forward for *k* than for *q*. (1962:5)
- r Pronounced as Dutch (or Scottish) trilled *r*.
- ṛ Pharyngalized *r*.
- s As in English or Dutch.
- ṣ Pharyngalized *s*.
- š Pronounced like the initial sound in *show*.
- t About the same as in English, usually pronounced with a noisy release which sounds similar to *s*: *ts*.
- ṭ Pharyngalized counterpart of *t*, but unlike *t* pronounced without the *s*-sound.
- u Full vowel; pronounced as in English or French *tour*, or Dutch *goed*. Before or after a pharyngalized consonant, *ṡ* or *q* it sounds like *ô* in French *tôt* or Dutch *boot*.
- ū Unstable, short vowel; sounds like English *u* in *put* when syllabic or as the onset to a syllabifying sonorant, as in *xūbz* (bread).
- w Pronounced with rounded lips as in English, unlike Dutch.



	Labio dental		Apical		Palatal		Velar		Uvular		Pharyngeal		Glottal
	Bilabial												
Voiceless Stops:	-	-	t ṭ	-	k	q	-	'					
Voiced Stops:	b ḃ	-	d ḏ	-	g	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Voiceless Fricatives:	-	f	s ṣ	š	-	x	ħ	h					
Voiced Fricatives:	-	-	z ẓ	ẓ	-	ġ	9	-					
Nasals:	m ṡ	-	n	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lateral:	-	-	l ḷ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Flap-Trill:	-	-	r ṛ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Semi-Vowels:	w	-	-	y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 2.1: Table of Moroccan Arabic consonants (based on Harrell (1962:3))

x As *ch* in Scottish *loch* or in Dutch/German *Bach*.

y As the initial sound in English *you* or Dutch *jongen*.

z As in English *Zappa* or Dutch *zee*.

ẓ Pharyngealized counterpart of *z*.

ž As in French or Dutch *jus*.

9 Pharyngeal consonant. Its pronunciation is close to *a* in English *father*, but unlike *a* it is a voiced fricative.

' Glottal stop. It rarely occurs, except in some originally Classical Arabic words and is often omitted in Moroccan Arabic. It sounds like the break between vowels as heard in the exclamation "uh oh" (Harrell, 1962:7). The glottal stop (or *hamza* in Arabic) is considered a consonant.

Schematically the consonants are organized as in table 2.1.

There are three full vowels, *a*, *i*, *u*, and two unstable short vowels: rounded *ũ* and unrounded schwa, (*e*). The full vowels are articulated clearly, and if there are several of them in the same word, the stress pattern tends towards even and staccato. (Heath, 1989:31)

There are also a few sounds which appear only in loanwords: [è], [é], [o], [ö], [p], [ü].

To conclude this section, some phonological phenomena will be discussed briefly.

Similar to English and unlike Dutch, Moroccan Arabic does not have voiced stops that change into voiceless stops when they occur word-finally: *wad* (river) sounds like [wed], not like \*[wet].

Generally speaking, a consonant cluster in Moroccan Arabic consists of no more than two different consonants; more consonants in a cluster are only allowed as a consequence of the process of doubling (cf. 2.2.1: *tbeddlat* she changed).

The word-internal order of consonants is fixed, whereas vowels may change place, a process to which the unstable vowels *e* (schwa) or *u* are sensitive. In fact, it is one of their main characteristics. The vowels in question can only occur before a consonant cluster or a final consonant, not in open syllables (i.e. before a single non-final consonant). If verb conjugation or suffixation would necessitate such clusters, one of the following patterns occurs (which can be analyzed in the model of McCarthy (1981)):

- The variable vowel is absent. When *šifet* (he sent) is followed by the suffix *-u*, the resulting form is not \**šifet-u*, but *šift-u* (he sent him).
- The variable vowel occurs elsewhere. If *žber* (he found) is made plural, *-u* is suffixed. The resulting form is not \**žberu*, but *žberu* (they found).

## 2.2 Morphology and Basic Categories

Characteristic for the morphology of Arabic languages is the great number of regularities with relatively few exceptions. Some of the regularities with respect to Moroccan Arabic verbs and nouns will be discussed here.

In Moroccan Arabic, most words are built on a basic consonantal skeleton called the "root". The consonants in this root are also called "radicals". The root has a basic meaning which can be modified by combining the radicals with vowels and other consonants according to fixed patterns. The root *k-t-b*, for example, always has something to do with writing. By using different patterns, different words can be formed like *ktab* (book), *kteb* (he wrote), *ka-nketbu* (we are writing) and *mektaba* (library).

Word classes and root types are closely related: Verbs usually consist of three radicals (sometimes four), although there are exceptions. The same can be said about adjectives and nouns. Members of most other word classes consist of fewer than three radicals.