THE TRANSITION FROM TECHNOLECT TO IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION IN MOROCCAN ARABIC

A TRANSIÇÃO DO TECNOLECTO PARA A EXPRESSÃO IDIOMÁTICA NO ÁRABE MARROQUINO

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ABSTRACT

Among idiomatic expressions, technolect finds its place in the daily interactions of Moroccans. Known for its technical, specialized, or scholarly nature, technolect can serve the function of shaping or reshaping our perceptions of the world around us. Through the use of figures of speech, such as metaphor or ellipsis, technolect enriches popular culture – represented here by idiomatic expressions – with lexical precision and a rich figurative field. In this way, technolect contributes to the construction of idiomatic expressions, moving beyond the often-restricted specialized sphere and integrating into popular linguistic productions.

Keywords: idiomatic expressions, Moroccan Arabic, technolect, figure, stylistics.

RESUMO

Entre as expressões idiomáticas, o tecnolecto encontra seu lugar nas interações cotidianas dos marroquinos. Conhecido por seu caráter técnico, especializado ou erudito, o tecnolecto pode desempenhar a função de moldar ou remodelar nossas percepções do mundo ao nosso redor. Com o uso de figuras de linguagem, como a metáfora ou a elipse, o tecnolecto enriquece a cultura popular – representada aqui pelas expressões idiomáticas – com precisão lexical e um campo figurativo muito rico. Dessa forma, o tecnolecto contribui para a construção das expressões idiomáticas, saindo da esfera especializada – frequentemente restrita – e integrando-se às produções linguísticas populares.

Palavras-chave: expressões idiomáticas, árabe marroquino, tecnoleto, figura, estilística.

Introduction

The phenomenon of idiom is present in all languages, including Moroccan Arabic, which is no exception to the rule. These so-called idiomatic expressions are characterised by their imagery and fixed form. They are widely used in Moroccan culture.

Among idioms, the technolect of sewing, for example, finds its place in the everyday interactions of Moroccans. In this way, the technolect contributes to the construction of idiom, by leaving the specialised sphere - which is often restricted - and integrating popular language productions.

In our proposed study, we shall attempt to provide some answers to the following question: how does the transition from technolect to idiom take place? How is it achieved? What role do figures play in establishing this transition?

We will opt for a qualitative approach, which aims to analyse a few idiomatic expressions from a semantic and stylistic point of view, in order to understand how a given technolect can contribute to the richness of the language productions of a given culture, in this case idiomatic expressions or idiomatisms.

1. Darija (Moroccan Arabic): a language with an oral tradition

Darija (Moroccan Arabic) is an oral language, transmitted by word of mouth. It is passed down from one generation to the next through stories, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, set phrases and so on. This makes it an intangible cultural heritage, as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO):

> Intangible cultural heritage" refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them - that communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. [1]

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[1] Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 2 (32e session in Paris from 29 September to 17 October 2003). URL: https://ich.unesco.org/fr/convention#art2 (consulted on 04-06-2024).

The oral nature of Moroccan Arabic is a double-edged sword: sometimes it ensures cultural and linguistic diversity and richness, and sometimes it is an obstacle to the language's vitality.

Darija (Moroccan Arabic) is a language that does not have a dictionary; it is not written down. Admittedly, a number of Moroccan academics and lexicographers have taken the initiative to produce dictionaries of Darija (Moroccan Arabic), but a colossal amount of work remains to be done.

2. The Moroccan technolect: oral transmission

Like oral traditions, Moroccan know-how is passed on orally. Far from being the only one, the technolect of sewing is passed down from the master craftsman (maallem) to the apprentice (mtaallem).

First of all, we need to define what a technolect is. Etymologically speaking, the term technolect is made up of two lexical units: -lecte and techno-. The word Lecte comes from the ancient Greek λεκτός (*lektós)*-meaning Chosen or Said-and from the Latin *lectus*, which means Chosen or Gathered.[2] As for the word techno, it is related to the Greek word tekhnê: art, process.[3]

In addition, the term Technolecte is "Constructed from 'lecte', which is a structure bringing together a cluster of differentiated linguistic features, it logically takes its place in the paradigm constituted by dialect, interlecte, idiolecte, sociolecte, etc. The 'techno' element refers to a specialist field, primarily technical but not necessarily so". The 'techno' element refers to an area of specialisation, primarily technical but not necessarily. [4]

For example, the Technolecte refers to "the set of lexical and discursive usages specific to a sphere of human activity" [5]

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[2] Wiktionnaire The Free Dictionary, https://fr.wiktionary.org/ (consulted on 07-06-2024)
[3] L. Clédat. "Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Française. Third edition, Librairie Hachette et Cie , 1914.
[4] MESSAOUDI Leila. "Les technolectes au Maroc". *Trames de langues*, edited by Jocelyne Dakhlia, Institut de recherche sur le Maghreb contemporain, 2004, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.irmc.1489.
[5] Ibid.

Leila Messaoudi also draws up a typology of technolects: the learned technolect and the ordinary technolect.

> Scholarly technolects deal with theoretical, modern knowledge of universally recognized scientific disciplines and technical fields (e.g. physics, chemistry, mathematics, the automotive industry, the pharmaceutical industry, etc.), while ordinary technolects can deal with local knowledge of, for example, agriculture, crafts or construction, as well as modern knowledge relating to car mechanics, electricity or plumbing, etc.[6]

According to this categorization, the technolect of sewing, which is the subject of our study, is an ordinary or popular technolect.

3. Idioms or idiomatic expressions

Let's move on to the notion of idiom or what we call "idiomatic expressions". These designate certain phrases whose meaning is not directly apparent from the words that make them up. In other words, access to the meaning of an idiomatic expression does not depend on access to the meaning of the lexical units that make up the idiom:

> Idiomatic expressions are defined as stereotyped phrases whose meaning is conventional and not necessarily deducible from the meaning of the words of which they are composed (Marquer, 1994; Tabossi, Fanari, & Wolf, 2008). For example, knowing the meaning of the words "jouer" and "feu" is not enough to understand the idiomatic meaning of "jouer avec le feu". [7]

4. The metaphorical use of technolect

Tropes are a category of figures of speech that seek to attribute to a word another meaning that is not necessarily their own. According to Henri SUHAMY:

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[6] MESSAOUDI Leila, (2013), "Les technolectes savants et ordinaires dans le jeu des langues au Maroc", *Langage et société*, 143(1), p.69.
[7] Hattouti Jamila, Sandrine Gil, and Virginie Laval. "The development of idiomatic expression comprehension: a literature review," *L'Année psychologique*, vol. 116, no. 1, 2016, pp. 105-136.

"The word **trope** comes from the Greek τρόπος, meaning something like *conversion*, from the verb τρέπω, to *turn*."[8]

Defined as a figure belonging to the tropes, metaphor is closely related to the category of images. It enables a given concept to be transformed by attributing new characteristics, a new meaning or essence to it. The category of images is a "(...) complex notion that evokes the work of the imagination, the use of sensory illustration, the metamorphosis of objects into signs". [9]

4.1 Idiomatism 1

نتا مقص

Phonetic transcription: **/nta mqəs/**

Literal translation: You are a pair of scissors.

Targeted Sen: You're a clever person.

The term **/mqəs/** is polysemous; it is a technolect that lies at the crossroads of several domains:

The technoleft **/mqəs/**	
Scissors	Sewing
Dissecting scissors	Medicine
Pair of scissors	School supplies
Shears	Agriculture
Scissors	Hairdresser

In the expression above, the correspondence is established between the person being addressed and the pair of scissors, which is a double-bladed instrument used in several fields to cut fabric or other materials.

The sharp characteristic of the scissors is assigned to the person, so they become sharp and hurtful -symbolically- like a blade that doesn't miss its target.

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8 SUHAMY Henri, "Les figures de style", collection Que sais-je? 14ᵉ , 2020.
9 Ibid.

The clever and cunning character trait is compared to the scissors, that meticulous tool that accomplishes its mission and fulfils its function, that of cutting material (paper, fabric, etc.) with great finesse and subtlety.

The abstraction of cunning and malice has been concretised and chosified by the evocation of the technolect of sewing, alluding to a very precise mechanism in the operation of scissors: refinement and subtlety. A common denominator between a cunning and clever person and scissors: subtlety and efficiency.

4.2 Idiomatism 2

نتا معلم

Phonetic transcription: **/nta mƐəllam/**

Literal translation: You are a master (craftsman).

Meaning: You're a genius.

In the expression above, the correspondence is established between the person being addressed and the master craftsman (maallem). The latter embodies expertise and highly qualified know-how.

This is a classic example of a metaphor where the compared and the comparator share the same characteristic, which is know-how. The craftsman is known for his craft skills in the same way as the person is endowed with intelligence (his know-how and interpersonal skills), which enables him to handle a difficult situation well and overcome it.

In both Idiomatism 1 and Idiomatism 2, the use of technolect in idiomatisms helps to paint a picture of the object of the representation and illustrate it further. It is used metaphorically to make certain abstract notions more concrete (malice, cunning, intelligence, etc.), taking advantage of the lexical precision of a technolect, insofar as each word in a given technolect describes a very specific reality, skill or instrument.

5. The elliptical use of technolect

The dictionary of the Académie française (9e edition) explains the etymology of the term "ellipse": it is borrowed from the Latin ellipsis, meaning "removal of a word", and from the Greek elleipsis, which is derived from elleipein and means "to leave out" or "to neglect".[10] The notion of ellipsis consists in the deletion of a constituent normally expected[11] . It refers to a lack due to deletion or omission.

A native Moroccan is expected to detect what seems acceptable and correct in his mother tongue, and will be able to detect linguistic or syntactic turns of phrase deemed to be in formal use or reference in Moroccan Arabic. They will be able to tell whether a statement formulated in Moroccan Arabic adheres to the standards of the Moroccan linguistic community.

This idea, according to which talking about ellipsis presupposes the existence of a reference language structure, was expressed by Haroche and Maingueneau :

> Since the 16th century, and T. Linacre and F. Sanctius in particular, the ellipsis has played the role of an operator for completing structures considered incomplete in relation to a model that saturates the syntactic positions: "A construction... in which nothing is missing, in which nothing is in excess, or nothing is displaced or changed" (Linacre)[2] ; a concept that would be clarified some three centuries later in Saussure's formula, according to which recourse to the ellipsis implies "that we know a priori how many terms the sentence should consist of".[3] " [12]

In her course entitled *Les figures de rhétorique, Méthodes et problèmes (Figures of speech, methods and problems)*, Jenny Laurent, professor at the University of Geneva, presents the ellipsis as one of the syntactic figures such as parallelism or anacoluthe, which *"bring into play relationships between sentence construction forms".[13]*

[10] Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (9e edition), online version, consulted on 09/08/2024
[11] Oswald Ducrot and Jean-Marie Schaeffer " Nouveau dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage " , Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1995
[12] Haroche Cl., Maingueneau Dominique. L'ellipse ou la maîtrise du manque. In: *Histoire Épistémologie Langage*, tome 5, fascicule 1, 1983. L'Ellipse grammaticale: Études épistémologiques et historiques, edited by Catherine Fuchs. pp. 143-150. DOI : https://doi.org/10.3406/hel.1983.1152
[13] Jenny, Laurent (2003). "Les figures de rhétorique, *Méthodes et problèmes*. Geneva: Département de français moderne URL: http://www.unige.ch/lettres/framo/enseignements/methodes/frhetorique/ (accessed 10/08/2024)

5.1 Idiomatism 3

شعر الحرير

Phonetic transcription: **/šƐər lḥərir/**

Literal translation: Silk hair.

Target: Beautiful hair or silky hair.

This idiomatic expression is made up of two nouns **/šƐər/** (hair) and **/lḥərir/** (silk). The second noun, which is **/lḥərir/** (silk), acts as a complement to the noun **/šƐər/** (hair).

We note that we are talking about ellipsis. This figure of speech "consists in not using elements in a sentence that should be there"[14] . Thus, **/šƐər lḥərir/** is a truncated version of /šƐər **dyal lḥərir/** (silk hair, hair made of silk). The word /dyal/ is a preposition in Moroccan Arabic that can be translated as "of", but discursively it can mean "made of" or "manufactured of", which is the case if we take the context into account.

The ellipsis here serves to highlight the softness and beauty of the hair. To this is added the use of the technolect of sewing, in this case **/lḥərir/** (silk), to bring out the effect of contrast and accentuate the appreciative description of the hair.

It's worth mentioning that the ellipsis expressed in idiom 3 allows us to focus on the two elements in the scene (the silk and the hair), thus creating a metaphorical image and establishing an analogy between silk - a material that is soft to the touch - and hair. As a result, ellipsis is used in the service of metaphor, something that makes a transfiguration of reality possible.

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[14] SUHAMY Henri, op. cit.

5.2 Idiomatism 4

عينين ليبرا

Phonetic transcription: **/Ɛinin libra/**

Literal translation: Needle eyes.

Meaning: Small eyes (could have a pejorative connotation).

The term **/libra/** is polysemous, a technolabel that is used in several fields

The technoleft **/libra/**	
Needle	Sewing
Injection	Medicine
Syringe	Medicine
Syringe	Tattoo

This idiomatic expression is made up of two nouns **/Ɛinin/** (eyes) and **/libra/** (needle). The second noun, **/libra/** (needle), acts as a complement to the noun **/Ɛinin/** (eyes).

We note that this is an ellipsis. Indeed, **/Ɛinin libra/** is a truncated version of **/Ɛinin dyal libra/** (needle eyes). The word /dyal/ is a preposition in Moroccan Arabic that can be translated as "of".

It should be mentioned that the ellipsis expressed in idiom 4 is used to juxtapose the two elements of the comparison: the eyes are the compared and the eye of the needle is the comparator, without the tool of comparison being mentioned. So we have a metaphor. The metaphor provides a well-illustrated image of eyes so small and tiny that they take on the size of the eye of a needle, known for its thinness and its small pierced hole. In conclusion, the ellipsis is used in the service of metaphor. Once again, the figure helps to transfigure reality.

5.3 Idiomatism 5

عينين لغرزا

Phonetic transcription: **/ɛinin l-ġərza/**

Literal translation: Eyes of the dot.

Meaning: Small eyes (could have a pejorative connotation).

The term **/ġərza/** is polysemous and belongs to several fields:

The technoleft **/ġərza/**	
Stitch	Sewing
Stitches	Medicine

This idiomalso has the same mechanism as idiom 4: the ellipsis is used in the service of the metaphor to establish an analogy between **/ġərza/** (dot) this meticulous pricking and **/ɛinin/** (eyes). In this way, **/ġərza/** (dot) is used to describe small eyes.

Conclusion

Known for its technical, specialised or scholarly nature, technolect can act as a figuration or transfiguration of our perceptions of the world around us. Using figures of speech such as metaphor and ellipsis, the technolect allows popular culture, represented here by idioms, to benefit from lexical precision and a highly fertile figurative field, where the imagination and creativity of the popular and collective mind proliferate.

However, the figurative and stylistic richness of the technolect poses a major problem when it comes to translating idiomatic expressions in which the technolect appears. The polysemy of technolect in Moroccan Arabic poses a problem in terms of translation.

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