

“Blacklisted”: Gender and verbal hygiene in a globalized Arabic-speaking world

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This paper is an effort to understand gender and metalinguistic discourse in an increasingly globalized and mediatized Arabic-speaking world. It explores in particular the contestation in online metalinguistic discourse from the perspective of the Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology—the hierarchical relationship between Middle Eastern (Mashreq) and North African (Maghreb) vernacular Arabic varieties (Hachimi 2013). Specifically, data come from a Facebook page created by Moroccans and dedicated exclusively to the ‘Blacklisting’ of co-national artists who converge to Middle Eastern Arabic varieties in mediatized pan-Arab encounters. The paper examines these artists’ communicative practices made available in embedded videos and their metalinguistic and metapragmatic framings by the Facebook community. The analysis draws on the insights of the ‘third wave’ of new media sociolinguistics where discourse, technology, multimodality, and ideology are key organizing principles. The paper shows the ways in which the ‘Blacklisting’ is informed by a gendered form of folk “verbal hygiene” (Cameron 1995) that demands national dialect loyalty, especially from female cultural figures. It argues that the anxieties and language ideological debates implicit or explicit on the Facebook page are not exclusively about language, but more broadly, they unravel the complex relationships between linguistic/communicative practices, morality, and today’s conceptualizations of Moroccan national identity.

References

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