

Sultan Qaboos University
Journal of Arts & Social Sciences



جامعة السلطان قابوس
مجلة الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية

Arabic Gastronomic Register: The Case of Moroccan Arabic Recipes

Sakina Alaoui

Assistant Professor

Department of English Language and Literature

College of Arts and Social Sciences

Sultan Qaboos University

sakina@squ.edu.om

Date received:

Date of acceptance:

Volume (13) Issue (4), December 2022

Arabic Gastronomic Register: The Case of Moroccan Arabic Recipes

Sakina Alaoui

Abstract

Food is vital to human existence, but perspectives about food have altered from food as an intrinsic exigency to food as a pleasurable luxury. This change runs in tandem with the birth and flourish of recipe writing. This paper looks at recipe writing in Arabic, an aspect that has been overlooked despite the ubiquitous nature of food and food preparation in the Arab world. It brings to light the verbal resources employed in Arabic culinary writing, such as the use of a type of modern standard Arabic which tolerates certain features not allowed in the “high” (or literary) variety of Arabic; the various tenses and voice, such as the present, the imperative in feminine form, and the passive; and the existence, rather than lack, of direct objects in the structure of sentences. The paper goes on to relate these linguistic features to cultural aspects of food preparation in Arab society.

Keywords: gastronomic register; recipe writing; linguistic analysis; Arabic recipe; Arabic language; Moroccan Arabic.

لغة الطعام المستخدمة في المجتمعات العربية

سكينة العلوي

الملخص

يعد الطعام أمراً حيوياً لوجود الإنسان، لكن وجهات النظر حول الطعام قد تغيرت على مر السنين؛ فبعد أن كان الغذاء ضرورة جوهريّة للحياة تحول إلى نوع من أنواع الرفاهية وتزامن هذا التغيير مع ولادة كتابة الوصفات الغذائيّة وزيادة شهرتها. تبحث هذه الورقة موضوع كتابة الوصفات باللغة العربيّة، وهو جانب تجاهلته الدراسات السابقة على الرغم من الطبيعة السائدة للطعام وإعداده في العالم العربيّ. ويسلط هذا البحث الضوء على الموارد اللفظية المستخدمة في كتابة وصفات الطهي العربيّة، مثل استخدام مستوى من مستويات اللغة العربيّة الفصحى الحديثة التي تتسامح مع بعض الألفاظ والتراكيب غير المسموح بها في مستويات أخرى من اللغة العربيّة عالية المستوى (أو الأدبيّة)، وغيرها من المكونات اللغويّة كالأزمنة مثل استخدام الحاضر، واستخدام الأمر في صيغة المؤنث، أو استخدام المبني للمجهول؛ ووجود المفعول به المباشر في بنية الجملة. وترتبط الورقة هذه السمات اللغويّة بالجوانب الثقافيّة لإعداد الطعام في المجتمع العربيّ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لغة الطعام؛ كتابة الوصفات؛ التحليل اللغوي؛ الوصفات العربيّة؛ اللغة العربيّة؛ اللهجة المغربيّة.

Introduction

Recipes are a rich resource for the study of language since, every day and on recurrent occasions, language and food overlap. One approach to exploring recipe writing is through reference to globalization and localization since, as will be shown later in this paper, there are many features which are global and therefore common and found in a large number of languages and others which are local and found in Arabic recipes only. The common features might be shared for the obvious, simple reason that the linguistic features exhibited are associated with the communicative function of this particular genre. The regularity and constancy of patterns in the genre encompass elements such as organization and semantic fields, whereas the divergent aspects relate mainly to linguistic and cultural specifics.

This paper is divided into four sections. First, it will start with a brief definition of the term ‘register’; second, it will offer a review of previous research undertaken on recipes. The third section introduces this paper’s research question, explaining the situation of recipe writing in the Arab world and how it has so far been overlooked by researchers. The fourth section offers an exploration of the linguistic features of Arabic Moroccan recipes, and the fifth furthers the discussion of similarities and differences between the Arabic gastronomic register and the Euro-American type.

Definition of Register

In this paper, the term register will be used to refer to a particular style that is occasioned by a social situation or context, namely recipe register. The term has been defined by Trudgill (1983) as “linguistic varieties that are linked... to occupations, professions or topics” (p.101). Trudgill goes on to add that registers are “usually characterised solely by vocabulary differences; either by the use of particular words, or by the use of words in a particular sense.” Register does not only include specialised lexical items, however; it also comprises adherence to preferred syntactic structures and rhetorical devices. These rhetorical devices, syntactic structures and lexical items are usually not mutually exclusive to certain registers; they might be used in more than one register, but they might be heavily employed or preferred in one more than the other because registers form a spectrum with no fixed, distinct confines.

Previous Research on Language and Food

An exploration of gastronomic register reveals a great deal of research devoted to Euro-American recipe writing, each taking a different path and shedding light on a different aspect of the genre (Bourdieu, 1984; Cotter, 1997; Fisher, 1983; Gerthardt, Frobenius and Ley, 2013; Lakoff, 2006; Lévi-Strauss, 1965; Shuman, 1981; Waxman, 2004). Lévi-Strauss (1965), for example, produced a model called the culinary triangle which attempted to capture the universality of different cooking methodologies: roasting, smoking, and boiling. He claimed that each society opts for a particular method of cooking and asserted that the structure of any society is revealed by its culinary traditions. Fisher (1983), on the other hand, examined the history of recipe writing and how it developed from a few vague, often eccentric, notes written by mothers to daughters to more elaborate ones written for the purpose of publication. Cotter (1997) also explored the language of recipes but from a slightly different angle. She compared and contrasted recipe writing in commercial cookbooks as opposed to that in community cookbooks, thus explaining how the language of recipes defines the community it is written in and for. Shuman (1981) examined another aspect of recipes, namely that of food apportioning. She explained its social consequences and its significance in social practices, equating the position of portions in recipes to their importance in society. Bourdieu (1984), through his look at the sociological aspects of food, maintained that people display their association/connection and disassociation/separation from different communities through their food preferences. Lakoff (2006) looked at recipes from a sociolinguistic perspective. She argued that a person’s culinary attitude and preferences contribute to the creation of their identity. In certain social circles in America, she maintained, knowledge of haute cuisine and the ability to discuss it adds to one’s sense of haute class.

As to Culinary Linguistics: The Chef’s Special (Gerthardt, Frobenius and Ley, 2013), it offers a compilation of articles dedicated to the inchoate interdisciplinary area of food and language. The volume is divided into four sections, each named after a course in Italian cultural ritual in meals: Aperitivo (pre-meal drink), Antipasti (first course), Primi Piatti (course consisting of pasta, following the antipasto) and Secondi Piatti (the

main course). While the first two sections offer an overview and an introduction to the volume, the remaining sections include, first, an examination of various oral and written usages of food discourse, such as those in food blogs and cookery shows, and second, an exploration of the correlation between food and culture, such as food in the workplace, food in literature and in magazines, and naming restaurants using French in Singapore.

Just as there is an abundance of research conducted on Euro-American food and recipe writing, there seems to be a paucity, if not a complete absence, of articles about Arabic recipe writing. One book that researches Arabic gastronomy is Van Gelder's *God's Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature* (2000) where the writer explores how food preparation and consumption is rendered in Arabic classical texts, such as the Qur'an and pre-Islamic and Islamic texts, and how it discloses certain aspects of the Arabic culture of the time, such as hospitality, devotion, self-discipline, and moderation.

That Arabic recipe writing has attracted no attention is hardly surprising. First, it is a relatively new genre. Second, and more importantly, it is thought to be within the domain of women and, as a result, is usually marginalized because it is considered not worth delving into. This investigation aims to redress this imbalance and fill the gap in research on the Arabic culinary register. It will showcase the linguistic features employed in Arabic recipes, capturing the regularities and principles inherent in this particular genre.

Research Questions

As mentioned before, Arabic cookery books are relatively new. In the old days, traditional recipes were relayed and spread by word of mouth. They were passed down orally from generation to generation. Indeed, recipe swapping used to be a social affair, a pivotal part of female communication. When women congregated to socialize, they exchanged recipes that they had tried and succeeded in making. Today, women's interest in recipes and culinary delights has not diminished; it has morphed into an additional practice. Instead of, or alongside, oral recipe exchange, women in the Arab world now buy recipe books and magazines, read them, and follow their procedures and suggestions. The last two decades have seen a sharp increase

in the number of recipe books and magazines written and bought⁽¹⁾, so much so that they have become on the one hand a readily available option to one and all and on the other, a commercially viable enterprise. Not to mention that a surf on the internet also reveals a proliferation of recipes written in Arabic. This recent interest in writing, rather than orally conveying, recipes has resulted in various culinary books where the features, linguistic and otherwise, are getting established and calibrated, as it were. Thus, a fairly well-defined general form of Arabic recipes has only recently begun to emerge.

Some of the questions posed in this enquiry are: Are there any linguistic features which characterise the writing style of Arabic recipes? Are they different or similar to those of other languages? If they are divergent, can they reflect cultural differences, i.e. can they be cultural manifestations of the environment they are written in and for? Apart from trying to answer these posited questions, this paper will also offer some speculative suggestions as to the reasons for the particular practices and norms followed in Arabic recipe register.

Sample Selection

To answer the above questions, understand how the Arabic recipe register works, and make predictions about them, a random sample of 20 Moroccan cookbooks was selected. These cookbooks are small in size (20 cm by 14 cm) and consist of around 20 pages. This sample was deemed appropriate because these recipe books are readily available in Moroccan markets (souks), supermarkets, and bookstores. They are also very popular among women in Morocco. Therefore, they can be a representative sample that allows for generating comprehensive generalized statements in the study. The chosen sample will be used to make statements about the texts, specifically about the features of recipes written in Moroccan cookbooks, and help develop my premise and elucidate linguistic notions inherent in these texts. This sample, of course, cannot be used to make wide-ranging conclusions about the Arabic recipe register in general. In other words, the assertions offered in this study will not go beyond the representative sample. They will nevertheless constitute a starting point other researchers can base their premises on.

Recipe Register

If we trace the semantics of the term recipe from a historical point of view, we can find the first usage of the word in the 1400s. It was used interchangeably with the word receipt. Both words are etymologically related, originating from a common Latin source, 'recipere', which means 'to take or to receive'. Both words were used in the medical profession to refer to 'a prescription, or the remedy prepared in accordance with this' (OED). The word was first used, in conjunction with receipt, as "a statement of the ingredients and procedure necessary for making or compounding some preparation, esp. of a dish in cookery" in 1700s (OED). Up to 1900s, receipt was the preferred word because it was believed to have "a more distinguished ancestry, but since recipe is used by all modern writers on cooking, only the immutables insist on receipt" (Post, 1922, as cited in Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). A recipe book, therefore, refers to a collection of cooking recipes/receipts, and according to the Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology 14500-2000, "manuscript recipe-books – forerunners of modern cookbooks – survive in considerable numbers from the fourteenth century onwards" (p. 354).

Nowadays, the word recipe refers to "a set of instructions for making food" as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. The Oxford Dictionary gives a slightly longer and more specified definition to the word: "A set of instructions for preparing a particular dish, including a list of the ingredients required." In a similar vein but with a more historical perspective, Fisher (1983) defines it in the following manner: "A recipe is supposed to be a formula, a means prescribed for producing a desired result . . . There can be no frills about it, no ambiguities . . . and above all no 'little secrets'" (p. 50).

Apart from explaining that a recipe gives details about the procedures to prepare a particular dish, Fisher's definition stresses the importance of simplicity in its writing. Van den Broeck (1986) seems to agree with and validate this view, as he maintains that "cookery recipes are rather simple texts as to their structure and their organization" (p. 40). I believe this organizational and structural simplicity is an important feature because the information given in the recipe needs to be easily accessed and

filtered by readers for them to follow it effortlessly and without difficulty. The complexity of structure and organization of a text can result in a density of information which readers might find, not necessarily daunting, but rather unavoidably time consuming, taking longer to single out the salient details necessary for food preparation.

Apart from its simplicity, the literature shows a consensus on the structural features that make up recipes. Fisher (1983), for example, maintains that "a good recipe . . . should consist of three parts: name, ingredients, method" (p. 23). She observes that the first part, the name, will "perforce give some sort of description: for instance, one does not simply say 'Cake' or 'Bread', but 'Golden Sponge Cake', 'Greek Honey Bread'" (p. 23). According to Fisher, the second part in a recipe, the ingredients, should be "listed in one column or two, rather than in a running sentence, according to the order of their use, and with the exact amount of each ingredient given before its name" (p. 23). The last part, the method, "should in most cases tell the temperature of the oven first, if one is needed, and in a real kitchen guide should indicate in the simplest possible prose what equipment will be used: a saucepan rather than a double boiler, a shallow skillet, a large deep bowl" (p. 24). Apart from an indication of the various sections a recipe has, there is also an emphasis on writing in "the simplest possible prose".

A study conducted by Dominika Klenová (2010) provides a comprehensive example and agrees with aspects stated in Fisher's quote. Klenová writes that a prototypical recipe opens with a title, second comes the list of ingredients, followed by the preparation procedure. She puts her findings as follows:

Every recipe normally consists of several main components. It begins with the title, which specifies the name of the dish. The title is followed by the list of ingredients (sometimes the ingredients are listed in the order in which they are needed), which are required for the preparation of the dish. Ingredients are more often than not accompanied by their quantities and/or proportions that correspond to the number of servings (if these are specified). Finally, what a vast majority of recipes includes is an ordered list of preparation steps, also called preparation procedures, preparation techniques or method (p. 9).

My own findings lend support to the above claim. The Moroccan cookbooks referred to in this research seem to approximate the norms of the Western/English cookbooks mentioned above. The format followed in all if not most of them has, in fact, a very similar arrangement: title, ingredients, then preparation method, in this given order.

While the recipes in cookbooks follow the organization stated earlier, some recipes from the internet do not follow this exact setup. While they have the title and preparation procedure, some internet recipes do not list the ingredients in a separate section. Instead, information about the ingredients and sometimes the quantities used are incorporated or merged into the preparation section. In some of them, the quantities of ingredients to be used in the recipe are not specified.

شحري بصلة مع قزبر أو معدنوس أو فلفل أو شحمة مع شويش
كامون أو طحميرة سكين جبر ملح شويش هريسة

Fry an onion with coriander and parsley and pepper and fat with a little bit of cumin and paprika ginger salt and a little bit of chilli paste.

As we can see here, there is no mention of the quantity of coriander and parsley one should use in the recipe, nor is there any specific amount of cumin or chilli paste. What does “a little bit” mean in this case? If the reader is not immersed in the culture, she would not be able to fathom what quantity needs to be added.

I would postulate here that the regularities of patterns and structural features form a model which is homogeneous in English and Arabic recipes because they are in fact part of a common fabric of recipe style found not only in these two languages but in other languages as well, such as French and Spanish.

Linguistic Features

Use of Standard Arabic

Because of the diglossic situation⁽²⁾ which subsists in the Arab World, there are two varieties of Arabic that co-exist, the high variety which is associated with a respected body of written literature, written official documents, formal speeches, lectures, and so on, and the low variety which is used in everyday situations, such as conversations with friends and family, at the market, or with government officials.

All the cookbooks used and analysed in this research are written in standard Arabic⁽³⁾, which is the high variety; however, the particular variety of standard Arabic used is an intermediate form. It is a variety closer to what is known as modern Arabic, a simplified, streamlined variety which is devoid of excessive complexities inherent in the high variety. It also allows on occasion the incursion and appropriation of lexical items from the low variety, mainly those related to ingredients, tools and utensils which might not have an equivalent in classical Arabic:

نصفها فوق لاطة مدهونة بالزبدة

We arrange it on a tray greased with butter.

نشحر البصل مع قليل من الملح و البزار

We stir fry the onion with a bit of salt and pepper.

Similarly, it borrows from other languages words of specialized ingredients and implements, especially the ones used in recipes derived from foreign places:

نصفها فوق لاطة مفروشة بورقة السولفيريزي

We arrange it on a tray covered with baking paper.

في إناء نخلط القشدة فرماج، أصفر البيض، السيبوليت

In a bowl we mix cream, cheese, yolk, chives.

The use of modern Arabic is associated with brief, direct, and precise syntactic structures.⁽⁴⁾ Consequently, there is a tendency in recipes to use simple sentences of the type:

نخلط بخلاط كهربائي الحليب، البيض، الملح، الابزار، الزبدة
والدقيق

We mix with an electric blender milk, eggs, salt, pepper, butter, and flour.

نضع في إناء كلا من الخردل، الخل، الملح، الابزار والزيت

We put in a bowl mustard, vinegar, salt, pepper, and oil.

As can be observed, these examples consist of simple sentences which explain and somehow exert the reader to a particular course of action in the process of preparing a dish. They contain the Noun Phrase subject (we), the verb (mix and put) and the Noun Phrase object (milk . . . and mustard . . .). In addition, inserted between the verb and the NP object there comes a Prepositional Phrase which describes how or where the action is performed.

Apart from simple sentences, there is an abundance of compound sentences as well, which take the form of sentence, coordinating conjunction, sentence:

يورق العجين جيداً فوق طاولة مرشوشة بالدقيق ويقطع على شكل شرائط

The dough is rolled well on a table dusted with flour, and it is cut into long strips.

نغسل الباذنجان، ننشفه ونشرحه على الطول

We wash the aubergine, we dry it, and we cut it in length.

نقشر الجلبانة، ونغسل حباتها ونسلقها في ماء مملح لمدة ١٥ دقيقة

We peel the peas, we wash them, and we boil them in salted boiling water for 15 minutes.

The above sentences are made of two (first example) or more (second and third examples) simple sentences conjoined with the coordinating conjunction “and” to express a series of actions which need to be executed sequentially one after the other.

Compound sentences are mainly coordinated with “and”; few instances were found where coordination employs “or” as a coordinating conjunction.

ندخل الآنية إلى الفرن الساخن مدة ١٥ دقيقة أو حتى يطهى البيض

We put the tray in the oven for 15 minutes or until the eggs are cooked.

ندخل الصفيحة إلى الفرن الساخن بحرارة ١٨٠ لمدة ١٥ دقيقة أو حتى تتحمر

We put the tray in the oven heated at 180 for 15 minutes or until it is roasted.

Here the choice is left to the reader as to which option is viable during their cooking/baking procedure.

No cases were found of compound sentences involving other coordinating conjunctions, such as (for, nor, yet, so).

The few complex sentences employed in Arabic recipes come under the form of:

تُقلى شرائح الباذنجان حتى تكتسب لوناً ذهبياً

The aubergine slices are fried until they become golden.

نحرك جيداً حتى يصبح الخليط سائلاً

We stir well until the mixture becomes liquid.

نحرك بمهل كي لا يتفكك

We stir gently so that it (the fish) won't crumble.

From the above examples we can observe that when complex structures are used, the information included in the subordinate clause is not of the same importance as that in the main sentence. It merely adds the extent to which one can, or in the third example cannot, continue the action of frying/stirring, respectively.

On rare occasions, we can find instances of compound/complex sentences such as the following,

نحرك من حين لآخر ونحرص أن يطهى اللحم متفككا

We stir from time to time, and we make sure that the cooked meat is separated.

The main sentence is compound, and within the second coordinated sentence, there is a smaller embedded sentence.

The implication of the above findings (i.e., the abundance of simple and compound sentences on the one hand and the scantiness of complex sentences on the other) is that simple sentences and compound sentences are easier and clearer to follow than compound ones. The information given to the readers needs to be filtered, and too much information offered in complex structures might obscure the intended focus and henceforth the desired effect. Sometimes readers' response might be to focus on the information in the main sentence and ignore any that is supplied in subordinate clauses, considering it not noteworthy.

A further explanation for the use of this simplified sentence structure is the fact that recipes are descended from and rooted in an oral tradition rather than a written one. As mentioned earlier, recipes in Morocco specifically and in the Arab world generally were (and still are in a great number of cases) transmitted orally - told and retold among groups of women interested in preparing new dishes for their families.

Tense

As to tense, Arabic recipes display three variant patterns. In a large number of recipes, the use of directives taking the form of imperatives prevails, akin to recipes written in English.

قطيعي صدورالدجاج إلى مكعبات صغيرة

Cut chicken breasts into small cubes.

أسلقي دوائر البطاطا

Boil potatoes. Cut into round pieces.

While grammatical gender is not a feature of English, gender is entrenched in the grammar of the Arabic language, and when using the imperative, there should be a choice between the feminine and the masculine form. All the Arabic recipes using the imperative employ, without exception, the feminine gender, for the implicit intention that they are addressed to a female readership.

In some cases, the use of the imperative, and thus the choice of grammatical gender, is avoided through the utilization of the first person plural as the subject of verbs in the present tense.

نصففها، (we organize it)

نخلط، (we mix)

نحرك، (we stir)

نقشر، (we peel)

نغسل، (we wash)

Here, the writer is sidestepping directives which request the reader to perform an action and including herself in the action to be performed; so it is not only “you” who will be doing the action, but it will be “me” and “you” together. Therefore, it lessens the force of the request. The aim of the first-person plural is to invite the reader to be part of the actions and procedures described. It is a linguistic strategy which emphasizes solidarity rather than status (as opposed to the imperative). It explicitly involves the addressee/reader as part of the proposed action.

The third possible form encountered in Arabic recipe writing is the use of the passive voice.

يفرغ الخليط، (the mixture is poured)

يقطع، (it is cut)

يقلى، (it is fried)

In this particular choice, the doer or performer of the action is not central to the text. They are, in fact, dropped from the sentence, and the focus shifts instead to the actions to be performed. Who performs the action is not as important as the action to be conducted (since who performs the action is known by the writer and by the reader). The key ideas of the sentence, which are the pouring, cutting, and frying, respectively, are stressed through the use of the passive voice.

There is no single occurrence of other pronouns used in the present tense, not even the first person singular.

Presence of Direct Objects in Arabic Recipes

A salient feature of recipe writing in English is its lack of direct objects; in other words, it exhibits sentences with transitive verbs that are used intransitively. According to Culy (1996), this phenomenon, which he refers to as “zero anaphors as direct objects”, distinguishes recipe writing from other genres. Only in recipes can you find a sentence such as

Cook \emptyset until soft.

Moroccan recipes mark a divergence from this usage. Indeed, a survey of Moroccan Arabic recipes reveals that this feature is quasi non-existent; direct objects are rarely omitted in recipe register.

نغسل البادنجال و نقطعه الى شرائح طويلة ثم نقليه في الزيت

We wash the aubergine, and we cut it into long slices, then we fry it in oil.

نصب نصف صلصة البطاطس على السلطة ونخلط الكل بمهل ثم نصففها في طبق التقديم

We pour half of the potato dressing on the salad, and we mix the whole lot slowly, then we arrange it on a serving dish.

In these examples, we can observe that the direct object (underlined) is mentioned in each case either as a noun phrase or as a pronoun⁽⁵⁾.

In the rare cases where the direct object is omitted, the sentence takes the form of the following:

نحرك الى ان يطهى القمرون

We stir until the shrimps are cooked.

The direct object, in this case, is “shrimps” which, even if it does not come directly after the first verb, is mentioned at a later stage in the sentence and is used cataphorically.

Discussion

A range of linguistic features used in recipes is common to English as well as Arabic for the obvious reason that this genre has a specific communicative function, that of providing information about cooking or baking procedures of a particular dish.

In the above discussion of the structure of recipe writing in Arabic, there were a number of features which displayed certain similarities to English recipe writing. Simplicity of structure and of organization is one of these features. The use of simple structures

rather than complex ones and the use of a simplified, streamlined variety of Arabic were revealed. A recipe that is simple and easy to follow and prepare seems to be a modern enticement in present-day society, be it Western or Arabic/Moroccan. As Naccarato and Lebesco (2012) put it, “in a society devoted to the ‘ideology of ease’, the promise of simplicity and swift gratification is a powerful ideological force” (pp. 108–109). Because of a number of reasons, most important among which is the fast-paced nature of life nowadays, people opt for the simple, quick way to make recipes, and of course, cookbooks comply with this ideology.

Apart from simplicity, the use of a similar textual organization was also raised earlier in the paper. The fact that all recipes are divided into title, ingredients, and preparation makes the text easily recognizable as a recipe. A point that should be raised here is the fact that Arabic recipes are the mirror image of English recipes because Arabic uses a right-to-left writing system, as opposed to the left-to-right system of English.

Another point of closeness is the semantic field that is referred to in the recipes, a semantic field that is almost exclusively related to food. For obvious reasons recipes, in Arabic as well as in English, rely heavily on strong collocations to food and food preparation.

A further feature which became clear in the textual analysis of recipes is the interpersonal link between text and reader which is created through the use of the pronoun “you” in the imperatives employed in some recipes. And even though, when it addresses the reader as “you”, the recipe appears to be addressing a general audience, its scope in Arabic recipes is limited to a particular audience because of the use of the feminine grammatical gender. It includes the female readership and excludes the male one.

The use of the directives, specifically imperatives, in recipes seems to be a prevalent trait in many languages. In their analysis of recipes written in Germanic, Romance, Slavic, and Hungarian languages, Brdar-Szabor and Brdar (2009) note that recipes are grouped under the rubric of “instructional speech act as a particular type of directives” belonging to a procedural genre (p. 108). They also found that 10 out of the 15 languages they examined utilize the imperative in their sentence construction.

Even though most recipes use directives through the imperative mood of sentences, there is a divergence from the normal use of directives in that recipes never employ politeness formulas. This is not because they intend to be more direct or more forceful but because the actions to be carried out are beneficial to the reader, helping her to manage the cooking process of a successful dish—a fact which is clear and obvious to the writer of the recipe as well as to the reader of the text. Brdar-Szabor and Brdar’s (2009) analysis supports the point made here about the lack of politeness formulas in recipe writing. They explain it thus:

Cooking recipes are devoid of any kind of politeness strategies. It is obvious that instructions in recipes can be performed bald-on-record, and do not need any explicit mitigating devices, such as please, as they are not FTAs (face-threatening acts). Since instructionals, unlike requests, do belong to the obligative speech acts, and since H can act at his/her own convenience, this scenario lacks all the unpleasant aspects linked to a face-threat or immediate sanctions (possibly by S) if H fails to respond appropriately (pp. 115–116).

The differences that exist between the Moroccan recipes investigated here and the Western recipes are mainly a result of cultural disparity. The assumptions, values, and beliefs a group of people hold are part of their cultural identity, and this is exhibited in the practices of this group. The Moroccan society is a collectivist not an individualistic society (Balambo, 2014) and “cultures vary in their ‘individualist’ versus ‘collectivist’ orientations... These differences give rise to ‘egocentric’ versus ‘sociocentric’ selves.” (Gregg, 2007, p. 3). The way Moroccan recipes address apportioning clearly shows the collectivist nature of Morocco. Portions and apportionment as discussed by Shuman (1986) are important in Western recipes, and according to Shuman, their importance is exhibited in their positional occurrence in the recipe. In western recipes, they frequently occur after the ingredients section and specify “individual” servings. This is given importance and weight in the culture as well as in the recipe. In the Moroccan recipes analysed in this research, servings are not mentioned at all. This supports Shuman’s argument because apportioning is a culturally foreign concept to Arabs in general and

Moroccans specifically; after all, cooking is usually done for the group rather than the individual. It is a collectivist notion: When a cook is preparing food, she would not be thinking about how many individual servings it can offer (i.e., how many “persons” it can serve), but rather how large the group it can feed is (i.e., the question might be can it serve a group of five to ten or ten to twenty?).

The second difference between western and Moroccan recipes concerns nutritional information. Moroccan recipes frequently lack nutritional information. This, again, can be explained in terms of culture specifics. Only a small minority of highly educated Moroccans pay attention to the nutrition and calories subsumed in food. The rest hold the implicit assumption that food, whatever it is made of, is God-given *نعمة الله*; therefore, it is full of nutrition.

Conclusion

This paper has worked under the assumption that there is a useful taxonomy of stylistic features for Arabic recipes, a taxonomy that can be uncovered through close inspection of cookbooks. A crucial suggestion is that it can serve as a prompting trigger to the study of the language of food in non-Euro-American cultures. It brought to light the linguistic features inherent in recipe writing, such as the use of a simplified modern standard Arabic variety, the use of the imperative in the feminine form, the present tense or the passive voice, the use of direct objects, and the lack of politeness strategies. It also unmasked some differences between Western and Moroccan recipes and related them to the cultural systems which support divergent core cultural values.

1. There are no statistics available on this issue. The comment made here is based on personal observations and answers to questions conducted by the author.
2. A diglossic situation exists in a society when it has two distinct codes which show clear functional separation; that is, one code is employed in one set of circumstances, and the other in an entirely different set.
3. I found in some sites on the internet some recipes written entirely in Moroccan Arabic dialectal form, an example of which is quoted at the end of the section on Recipe Register.

4. As opposed to the Arabic High Variety which is especially known for highly complex grammatical structures (Ferguson, p. 32).
5. Note that in Arabic pronouns which function as direct objects are suffixes attached to the verbs.

References

- Balambo, M. A. (2014). Hofstede’s Model revisited: an application for measuring the Moroccan national culture. *International Journal of Business Quantitative Economics and Applied Management Research*, 1(3).
- Beal, P. (2008). *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology: 14500-2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brdar-Szabo, R. & Brdar, M. (2009). Indirect directives in Recipes: A Cross-linguistic Perspective. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 5.1. Special Issue on Speech Actions, (pp. 107–131).
- Cotter, C. (1997). Claiming a piece of the pie: How the language of the community defines community. In A. Bower (Ed.), *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories Histories*. Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Culy, C. (1996). Null objects in English recipes. *Language Variation and Change*, 8 (pp. 91–124). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954394500001083>
- Ferguson, C. A. (1959) *Diglossia*, *WORD*, 15:2, 325-340, DOI: 10.1080/00437956.1959.11659702.
- Fisher, M. F. K. (1983). *The Anatomy of a Recipe*. In *With Bold Knife and Fork* (pp. 13–24). New York: Paragon books.
- Gerhardt, C., Frobenius, M. and Ley, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Culinary Linguistics: The Chef’s Special*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gregg, G. S. (2007). *Culture and Identity in a Muslim Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Klenová, D. (2010). *The Language of Cookbooks and Recipes*. MA thesis. Masaryk University.
- Lakoff, R. (2006). *Identity à la Carte*. In De Fina et al. (Eds.), *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1968). *The Origin of Table Manners*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shuman, A. (1981). The Rhetoric of Portions. *Western Folklore*, 40(1), (pp. 72–80).

Naccarato, P. and LeBesco, K. (2012). *Culinary Capital*. London: Berg Publishers.

Van den Broeck, R. (1986). Contrastive Discourse Analysis as a Tool for the Interpretation of Shifts in Translated Texts. In J. House & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlingual and Intercultural Communication*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen.

Van Gelder, G. J. H. (2000). *God's Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Waxman, N. (2004). Recipes. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America* (pp. 247–250). Oxford: Oxford University Press.