The Standard Language Ideology of the Hebrew and Arabic Grammarians of the ʿAbbasid Period

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Cover image: A fragment of an unidentified dual-script (Hebrew and Arabic) grammatical-exegetical discussion from the Cairo Genizah (Cambridge University Library, T-S Ar. 31.26). Courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal.

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3. (STANDARD) LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Put simply, a language ideology may be regarded as *the collection of beliefs and attitudes one has about their own language and/or the languages of others*. Naturally, these beliefs and attitudes shape and dictate the relationships between speakers and languages (Cavanaugh 2020, 52). Although language ideologies have tremendous power to shape society, politics, and even history—especially in the case of Hebrew and Arabic—little has been done in the way of applying linguistic anthropological theory regarding language ideology to the writings of the early Hebrew grammarians. Moreover, the fact that the language ideology exhibited in the medieval Hebrew grammarians exhibits considerable similarity with that of the medieval Arabic grammarians raises questions about possible interface and/or influence between the two. Before proceeding to analyse the primary material from the Middle Ages, then, we will first present a brief overview of the relevant literature on language ideology (and related topics) of recent decades. This will serve as the theoretical framework through which we will conduct our analysis of the primary material in the remainder of the book.

1.0. Early Research on Language Ideology

Some of the earliest work on language ideology grew out of a wider interest in power dynamics in human interactions. While this interest has long been present in scholarship with respect to

political and economic power (e.g., Foucault, Bourdieu), it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that linguists started to apply this same type of framework to explain different aspects of language use. Initially, this new approach was utilised by scholars such as Urla to better understand the struggles of minority languages. Eventually, however, it was expanded by linguistic anthropologists (especially Gal, Heller, Hill, Irvine, Silverstein, and Woolard) to address how language functions in forming relationships, motivating action, and structuring society at large. It was in this early literature that the concept of a language ideology was first explored to encapsulate the constellation of beliefs, attitudes, usage patterns, and power dynamics at play in a given linguistic context and language community. It was finally in 1994 that Woolard and Schieffelin published a seminal piece entitled 'Language Ideology', in which they defined the concept and explained its relevance, thus establishing it as a worthy field of study in its own right. This article would be followed by two edited volumes on the subject (Schieffelin et al. 1998; Kroskrity 2000), which continue to serve as foundational works in the field to this day.[7]

    Despite its origins, however, it should be noted that language ideology is unlike political ideology. While political ideologies are typically the product of the conscious choices of those who hold them, language ideologies consist of ideas and attitudes that are embedded in the shared culture of a speech community. A proper analysis of language ideology may thus unearth features

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[7] This brief review is based on that of Cavanaugh (2020, 53–54).

of a particular community's beliefs and attitudes towards language of which they are unaware themselves.

2.0. Language Ideology and Grammar

One area especially relevant for our present purposes concerns the role of language ideology in establishing, defining, and/or reinforcing the grammar of a language, as well as the power dynamics at play in such processes. In this respect, there are two relevant phenomena covered in the literature, namely that of a standard language ideology and that of enregisterment, each of which will be treated in turn.

2.1. Standard Language Ideology

Codifying the grammar of a particular language is rarely a value-neutral endeavour. Throughout history, such processes of codification have involved some degree of standardisation of language. The term standardisation generally refers to the process of imposing uniformity over what would otherwise be diverse and variegated. Language standardisation, then, involves the imposition of certain grammatical rules over what would otherwise exhibit considerable linguistic variation (Milroy 2001).

The concept of a standard language ideology, which was pioneered by Milroy and Milroy (1999; see also Milroy 1999; 2001), is thus predicated on the belief that a single *ideal* form of a particular language is superior to the others. As such, it can serve as a measuring stick against which to judge other forms of the language. Part and parcel with this belief is the idea that there

exists an idealised or standardised iteration of the language out-side of the community of its speakers. Although such a belief is common in many modern cultures (e.g., English, French, Span-ish), not all linguistic communities may be regarded as "standard language cultures" (Milroy 2001, 530–31).

At this point, it is germane to make a brief aside about standard language ideologies in those communities characterised by diglossia, a concept first articulated by Ferguson more than sixty years ago.[8] In diglossic societies, in which a more prestig-ious high language (H) exists alongside a more colloquial low language (L), it is necessary to differentiate between the H lan-guage and the 'standard' language. Although the H variety of the language and the standard language are often identical, this is not always so (Ibrahim 1986). Some linguistic communities are

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[8] In 1959, Charles Ferguson penned his seminal and oft-cited article 'Diglossia', in which he claimed that numerous speech communities uti-lise two distinct varieties of their language: a high (or standard) variety (H) for speeches, lectures, media, poetry, etc., and a low (or colloquial) variety (L) for informal conversations, interactions with waiters, folk literature, etc. While this article has become a staple in the field, subse-quent scholars have tended to draw too sharp a distinction between H and L. In reality, not all linguistic specimens in such societies are clear examples of either H or L. In many (or most) cases, actual language use exists on a spectrum and is conditioned by both context and compe-tence. In some instances, speakers may even intentionally make use of a limited set of specific features ideologically associated with H or L to achieve certain goals or meet certain expectations. Moreover, as Brustad (2017) has shown in the case of Arabic, sometimes the identification of supposed 'diglossia' itself is actually an ideological construct and not consistent with actual language use.

home to diverse dialects and registers without an overarching be-lief that a certain set of rules or standards should be imposed on them to create conformity with an idealised version (Milroy 2001, 530–32). We should also mention, however, that language ideology often plays a role in the identification of 'diglossia' in a given society. While in some cases diglossia is obvious and co-heres with reality—take, for example, Latin as the H language vs a given local vernacular as the L language in pre-modern Eu-rope—there are other instances in which identifying 'diglossia' in a society may itself be an ideological construct. In fact, Brustad (2017) has argued persuasively that the diglossia binary between *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya* in descriptions of Arabic is the product of language ideology rather than an accurate description of real lan-guage use.

    With the (sometimes applicable) distinction between the H language and the 'standard' language in mind, we may note some of the characteristics associated with a society possessed of a standard language ideology outlined in the literature (Woolard 1998; Milroy 2001; Agha 2003).

2.1.1. Cultural Possession

In standard language cultures, language is not so much regarded as merely a tool for communication but as a heritage to be pos-sessed. Like laws, customs, or even religion, **the language is re-garded as a 'cultural possession'** rather than a product of hu-man interaction and cognitive abilities. At the same time, how-ever, this cultural possession is not innate in the speakers who grow up in the society. Rather, the correct form of the language—

even one they already speak—must be taught to them (Milroy 2001, 537–38). It is also worth noting that, when language is treated as a cultural possession, it necessarily takes on certain moral aspects (see, e.g., Milroy and Milroy 1999, 8–9, 41). Preserving the cultural possession is a moral imperative for the society. Those who are proficient or eloquent in the standard language—i.e., those most invested in preserving it properly—are thus endowed with a certain moral authority. Note that elements of morality can also be reflected in how the complaint tradition manifests itself (see §2.1.5).

2.1.2. Single Uniform Language and Group Identity

Moreover, as the cultural possession of a particular (ethnic, religious, political, etc.) group, **the idea of a single uniform language is often advocated for and/or utilised to strengthen a sense of group identity and unity** (Milroy 2001, 549–50). Just as a standard language may be viewed as a cultural possession, so also the cultural identity of a particular group may require a standard language to reinforce it. Whether or not the canonical form is or ever was used among the majority of speakers in a particular linguistic community, there is a belief that it is indeed 'the language' of the ethnic group. It is often this tie between group identity and language that leads to a negative attitude towards foreign languages and their influence on the canonical standard. Frequently, such an attitude is instantiated in language authorities advocating for a rarely used 'native' vocabulary item over a commonly used loanword.

2.1.3. Abstract External Entity

Indeed, on this point, it is worth noting that standard language cultures are characterised by a belief that **the language exists in an ideal, canonical form outside of the production of the speakers who use it**. The rules, grammar, and norms of the language are properly seen as being external to the speaker. As a result of this belief, certain forms of the language can be deemed 'correct' or 'incorrect' irrespective of their practical functionality among or mutual intelligibility to other speakers in the society (Milroy 2001, 537–38). The forms and structures most commonly used among a majority of speakers can thus still be deemed 'incorrect' or 'improper' language use.

2.1.4. Neglected among the Masses

Implicit in the trends noted above is the idea that most native speakers are not faithful keepers of the language. Rather, **there is a belief that the pure form of the language is either neglected or even corrupted among the masses**. In such cases, there is a widespread opinion that without universal support and protection, the language will undergo—and is perhaps already undergoing—decline and decay (Milroy 2001, 537).

2.1.5. Complaint Tradition

This leads to what Milroy and Milroy (1999; see also Milroy 1999, 20; 2001, 538) have termed **'the complaint tradition', which involves language users bemoaning the state of the (standard) language among the wider population**. While such

complaints often emanate from 'authoritative' voices on language, one does not have to be proficient in the standard to decry its decay among the wider population. There can be a sort of self-deprecatory 'complaint tradition' among more typical language users. On this point, it should be noted that such beliefs are not altogether unfounded. As a cultural possession, some forms of the language may require special care to be preserved for generations to come. The complaint tradition thus serves an important role with respect to the maintenance of the standard language (Milroy 2001, 538).

2.1.6. Legitimisation and Maintenance

The concept of standard language maintenance is closely related to the process of legitimisation. **Both social and political forces confer legitimacy on a particular 'standard' form of the language and then maintain it**. In addition to the complaint tradition, which serves to direct public opinion towards maintaining the standard language, more practical steps can be taken as well. In some cases, this involves imposing or structuring a school curriculum that privileges teaching of the standard language. The codification of a long tradition through "authoritative accounts of the language" like grammar books and dictionaries also serves to maintain and legitimise the canonical form of the language (Milroy 2001, 538–39).

2.1.7. Institutionalisation

We might also refer to some of the more structured aspects of this process as 'institutionalisation'. Though largely overlapping with

legitimisation and maintenance (see §2.1.6), **we may regard institutionalisation**—or "institutionalised standardisation" as Milroy (2001, 542) calls it—**as an official imposition of "uniformity of usage" on various forms of the language** (Milroy 2001, 533–34). It is important to recognise that while such institutionalisation can be wide-reaching, as in government administration or the school system, it can also be limited to a single work with limited circulation. Note that the codification of grammar in a book, for example, irrespective of the size of the readership, entails a sort of institutionalisation. Grammar is, after all, a sort of institution in itself. Not only does the codification of grammar set out rules and standards for a particular language, but it also demarcates a particular variety of the language itself, thus establishing the language *qua* language and limiting the degree of permissible diversity, fluidity, and malleability of form.

2.1.8. Historicisation

As hinted at above, **historicisation is one of the key components in legitimising a particular form of the language.** Although all forms of a language—various dialects, the colloquial form, the prestige form, etc.—generally have their own long histories in one way or another, standard language cultures often present only the canonical form as having a long, storied, pure, unbroken, and thus authoritative history. Other forms of the language are commonly regarded as degenerate imitations of the standard form. Influence from other languages can often be regarded as contributing to the deterioration of the standard. When

there is a dispute about whether a current linguistic form is 'correct' or 'incorrect', grammarians often appeal to historical corpora to justify their claim that a certain form is 'correct' over against another. Further, there is often a misguided apprehension that the ancient form of the language and the modern language either *are* the same or *should be* the same (Milroy 1999; Milroy 2001, 547–50).

2.2. Enregisterment and Transference

If up to this point we have outlined trends of standard language cultures in operation, we must now also consider what forces, circumstances, and societal developments lead to a particular form of the language being regarded as the 'prestige', 'canonical', and/or 'standard' variety in the first place. After all, the presence of a standard language implies the pre-existence of certain historical and cultural developments—and similar ongoing processes—that serve to index certain linguistic forms as 'standard' or 'prestigious' in the society.

In recent decades, linguistic anthropologists have developed a framework, known as *enregisterment,* for explaining how various social meanings (e.g., prestige) come to be associated with various linguistic forms and choices. Sets of such linguistic choices are what may be understood as language varieties. Central to this framework is the concept of indexicality. When a sign—a linguistic form, a gesture, a particular appearance, etc.—co-occurs with its meaning, it is considered indexical. Johnstone (2016, 633) cites as an analogy the sound of thunder, which, because it typically co-occurs with a storm in the physical world,

can be used by itself to conjur the idea of a storm in a staged play. In a similar way, the use of certain linguistic forms—whether a specific word or pronunciation—due to their regular or frequent occurrence in particular social contexts, may evoke (or establish) a social identity by itself. *Enregisterment* thus refers to the processes by which certain performable (linguistic) signs come to be identified and grouped with registers that are imbued with social meaning. Agha (2003, 231) defines *enregisterment* as the "processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms" (Silverstein 1993; Silverstein 2003; Agha 2003; Agha 2007; Johnstone 2016).

There are a number of cases in which the processes or consequences of enregisterment are relatively obvious, even for the non-specialist. Perhaps the clearest examples of enregisterment concern speech patterns associated with specific locales. While a full set of phonological features associated with a region constitute what may be referred to colloquially as an 'accent'—note the Cockney accent in the UK or the Boston accent in the USA—sometimes a single feature (or even lexeme) can enregister a regional or social identity. In Jordan, for example, pronouncing the Arabic letter ق as [g] is a characteristic of residents of Zarqa. Similarly, the use of the second-person plural pronoun *yunz* or *yinz* is characteristic of the variety of English spoken in Pittsburgh. Presumably, one conversation (or performance) at a time, hearers encounter these features in speakers associated (via various other social clues) with these locales. As a result, the linguistic features

themselves come to take on the social values and traits of those who carry them (Agha 2003; Johnstone 2016).

Sometimes, however, there can be an intersection of social associations that lead to multiple possible avenues of enregisterment. For example, while the Cockney accent is regionally associated with East London, it also carries class undertones in that it is considered a working-class accent. Similarly, while pronouncing the Arabic letter ق as [g] may simply indicate that one is a resident of Zarqa, residents of Amman that pronounce ق as [g] may sound more masculine (and less urban) in that context, where most pronounce ق as the glottal stop [ʔ]. Depending on the range of social clues in any given situation, then, one hearing these features may enregister them by region, ethnicity, class, social status, wealth, educational background, or even by various personality traits of the speaker. Various linguistic signs can also be enregistered to specific (and limited) times, settings, or activities. In many cases, two people hearing the same speaker—depending on their own background and experience—may enregister the linguistic signs differently. It is thus not difficult to imagine how the dynamicity of social clues can result in the intersection of several possible targets of enregisterment. This also underscores how enregisterment is a constantly ongoing and dynamic process; it is never static (Agha 2003; Johnstone 2016).

Moreoever, though we might not think of it at first, even the opposition between 'correct' and 'incorrect' is enregistered to a degree, which plays into the concept of a standard language ideology. Widespread ideas about how language works, such as

the belief that non-standard speech is not just different but actually 'incorrect', can determine how distinct varieties are enregistered, which has significant ideological implications for how speakers of non-standard varieties are regarded in the society. For those who hold such a belief, a non-standard linguistic sign might simply be enregistered as 'wrong'. This, in turn, can lead to a disparaging view of speakers of certain varieties. Note, for example, how many English speakers are quick to deride [ˈæks] as an 'incorrect' pronunciation of the word *ask*. For those without such a belief about non-standard language, however, the same sign is likely to be enregistered with greater sensitivity to the social background of the speaker, whether regional, ethnic, urban vs suburban, etc. (Johnstone 2016, 639).

While the examples cited above illustrate what happens during the process of enregisterment on a granular level, such interactions must occur countless times for the enregistered varieties—i.e., language 'registers'—to be recognised throughout the society. Integral to this wide-scale social transmission of cultural values embedded in language, which occurs one speech event or message at a time, are the sociohistorical processes of valorisation and circulation. Valorisation may be regarded as the association of some societal value with certain linguistic signs and/or language varieties. Circulation, on the other hand, involves the widespread dissemination of certain cultural values embedded in these language varieties. Both valorisation and circulation are necessary for a particular variety to be widely regarded as the 'standard' or 'prestige' form of the language (Agha 2003, 231–32, 243, 246–47, 264, 270).

For Agha, one of the principle sociohistorical practices involved in the process of enregisterment (of a particular variety as the 'standard' or 'prestige' form of the language) consists of certain linguistic forms being perceptually associated with certain 'exemplary speakers'. Such exemplary speakers can be language teachers in schools, invented characters in literary works, famous people in society, or even popular figures from history. As various linguistic signs come to be associated with certain exemplary speakers, the societal values associated with the speakers gradually (and subtly) come to be transferred to the particular form of the language itself. Certain linguistic registers thus come to have social currency and developing proficiency in these registers is incentivised. In this way, we may speak of the 'valorisation' of certain registers (Agha 2003, 251–52).

In some cases, however, such valorisation may initially be restricted to a limited 'audience' of grammarians or language enthusiasts. For such registers to be widely recognised as 'prestigious' or 'standard', linguistic materials and behaviour that further such sociolinguistic associations must undergo wide circulation. For Agha (2003, 246–47), as noted above, the social transmission of cultural values embedded in language occurs one speech event or message at a time. This can occur in casual conversation, public speeches, formal instruction, popular media, or even in written discourse. In all of these contexts, the cultural values associated with certain forms of the language must be reinforced by those associated with the speaker or author of the message. In many cases, however, the social transformation of a particular register into a widely recognised 'standard' is mediated by widely

circulated genres of metadiscourse. This may involve certain pre-scriptivist features of a more specialist work (e.g., grammatical treatise) being popularised in a more accessible or widely circulated genre, such as a novel or a popular handbook (Agha 2003, 251–52). Public performances characterised by certain linguistic forms can also serve the process of circulation.

Over time, all these processes can work together to transform and entrench a particular form or register of a language into the 'standard' canonical form in the society. If this is the case, then the existence of a standard language culture in a given society implies that a series of significant sociohistorical developments have already taken place. As such, identifying a standard language culture can be just as illuminating for sociohistorical purposes as for linguistic ones.

Nevertheless, despite the clear value that the theoretical framework of enregisterment has for linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, one wonders how applicable it is to the data to which we have access from the medieval grammarians. After all, for most linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists, the process of enregisterment necessarily involves performances (or speech events) encountered in real time, so that linguistic signs (and language varieties) can gradually become associated with social types. Because of the chronological gap between us and the object of study of the present work—not to mention the limited data we have from the period—it is difficult or even impossible to access the societal values associated with the speakers or the social

contexts in which the link between form and type was made. Theorising about such societal values and social contexts is bound to result in at least some speculative reconstruction.

Nevertheless, while we must admit that we cannot apply this theoretical framework to the medieval grammarians in precisely the same way (or with the same degree of certainty) as linguistic anthropologists do for modern languages, it may serve as a helpful heuristic. After all, we do have some societal values associated with linguistic form communicated to us through the writings of the grammarians. In other cases, they may be only implied. In either case, even if we do not have access to the real-time performances and speech events through which processes of enregisterment undoubtedly occurred during the medieval period, the consequences thereof are likely refracted throughout the texts we have at our disposal. Moreover, it is likely that some of the processes of enregisterment were based in textual artefacts themselves. As we will see, because the 'standard' language championed by the grammarians was closely associated with written corpora of 'ancient' times, their readers would have had to imagine or envision the original social types associated with the linguistic register. In this respect, our vantage point is perhaps closer to their perspective than the chronological gap might otherwise entail. Therefore, even though it involves some degree of speculation, applying the theoretical framework of enregisterment may serve as a helpful heuristic for at least parts of our analysis. The potential insight is worth the speculation, especially considering the fact that the overall argument of the book would

likely be unaffected if our utilisation of the framework of enregisterment is found to be inapplicable.

Moreover, for our own specific purposes here, we might also expand on the work of linguistic anthropologists with respect to enregisterment. While the process of enregisterment is often described as happening in the context of real-time 'live' performances and speech events, we might suggest that a wider phenomenon of *transference* might help explain certain data points for which access to real-time speech events is not possible. In the present work, we will use the term 'transference' to refer to cases in which the social types associated with certain linguistic signs are shifted to other social reference points that may be thought to co-occur with those same signs. A clear example of this phenomenon would be how a particular language variety associated with a limited group of speakers comes to be associated with a much wider demographic of which they are a part. In many cases, this is due to the fact that those outside of the group and the wider demographic might have much more exposure to the limited group, which they might mistakenly perceive as representative of the wider demographic.

An example of this phenomenon in modern times may be found in how those who have never been to the United States might misunderstand the linguistic portrayal of certain groups in media or film as generally representative or even characteristic of a much wider demographic to which they belong. A similar phenomenon likely occurred in medieval times, largely due to the fact that members of society might only have had limited access (e.g., through the written text) to certain groups. Naturally,

this phenomenon is especially applicable when looking to the past for linguistic exemplars. This concept will feature prominently later in the book as we consider how both 'ancient' and contemporary sources of the standard language were viewed and described by the medieval grammarians.

3.0. Language Ideology and Performance

In cultures with a standard language ideology, there is often a high premium placed on 'performance' of the standard canonical language in various societal contexts. While 'performance' can have a variety of connotations, it may be defined, in a linguistic context at least, as "verbal art" or a "mode of speaking" that often occurs in a specific setting in which at least one speaker or performer is elevated (Bauman 1975, 290). Performance is often accompanied by a number of distinct features that set it apart from normal speech (Bauman 1975; Bell and Gibson 2011).

In terms of language, speakers (or performers) tend to make use of an array of linguistic features distinct from those at play in other contexts, such as everyday conversation. This is particularly common at the beginning of a discourse, during which archaic codes or opening formulae may clue the audience in to the fact that a performance is coming. In certain ritual or liturgical contexts, a performance can only be validated if the speaker performs certain clear and prerequisite signals. Beyond opening formulae and ritual signals, a performance mode of speaking may also be characterised by other grammatical and stylistic features such as metaphor, rhyme, vowel harmony, and parallelism. Mod-

ifications to speed of speech, pitch, voice quality, and vocalisation may also go along with performance (Bauman 1975; Bell and Gibson 2011). Generally speaking, performance modes of speaking are also frequently characterised by "exaggerated linguistic forms" (Bell and Gibson 2011, 558).

As such, a performance mode of speaking should not be regarded as a unidirectional activity. It also requires an audience keenly aware of the expectations associated with a particular performance. By engaging in performance, the speaker (or performer) submits themselves to be held accountable by the audience. The audience, in turn, evaluates their performance to make sure it meets the criteria afforded by the context. The performer is expected to display linguistic and rhetorical proficiency in their communiciation. This mutual understanding leads to a highly charged situation in which the performer strives to show utmost linguistic ability, on the one hand, and the audience endeavours to subject them to increased scrutiny, on the other. If the performer succeeds in meeting the expectations of the audience, they may achieve a higher status in the society, even if only temporarily. Failing to meet the expectations of the audience, however, can turn the performer into an object of ridicule (Bauman 1975; Bell and Gibson 2011).

While the term 'performance' might drum up images from the sphere of the theatre for us as moderns, it actually encompasses a wide variety of settings and activities. Public speeches, recitation of poetry, sermons, prayers, and chanting a sacred text

in a religious context are all examples where these principles apply. This is especially important to remember as we consider performance in medieval Jewish and Muslim contexts.

Although many of the features of performance apply in a relatively localised context, its cumulative impact on society should not be minimised. Drawing on some of the principles outlined above (see §2.0), we may call attention to the fact that performance as a societal phenomenon is a prime candidate for reinforcing the cultural values associated with certain linguistic registers. Because prestige and status may be conferred on successful and accomplished performers, it is one of the most significant participants in the processes of valorisation and—assuming it is popular—circulation of certain cultural values embedded in certain types of language. In this way, it helps shape the language ideology of the society at large, one performance at a time.

4.0. Conclusions

The relevance of these topics for the Hebrew and Arabic grammatical traditions of the Middle Ages will become more and more apparent as we proceed through the primary material in the remainder of this book. What is worth reiterating here, however, is that, when dealing with language ideology, the object of study is not the language itself, at least not first and foremost. Rather, a language ideology framework is concerned primarily with language users' *beliefs and attitudes* regarding their languages and the languages of others.

As such—and this is the critical point—describing the language ideology of a given individual or community is unlikely to

produce an account that accurately maps onto the facts on the ground. In fact, it is quite common to find that the beliefs and attitudes of language users are often in conflict with actual language practice as analysed by more objective metrics. A clear example of such would be how many native Arabic speakers today believe that Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic are essentially the same entity. In reality, there are differences in phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon.[9] Note, for example, how the specific phonological features of CA or MSA exhibit variation according to the regional dialects of the readers and/or local pronunciation traditions. Similarly, we might also mention how there is a belief among many Arabic speakers that when two Arabs from different regions meet, they speak in Modern Standard Arabic for the sake of mutual intelligibility. In actuality, such meetings generally result in a somewhat elevated or accommodating version of dialectal Arabic rather than full-on Modern Standard Arabic. Finally, there are more subjective or aesthetic beliefs about language—for example, that the language of the *Qurʾān* is insurpassable in beauty—that are not necessarily possible to prove one way or another.

All of this underscores the importance of realising that an analysis of language ideology should not be mistaken for an analysis of language. As we proceed through the primary material in

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[9] The differences between CA and MSA may, however, be exaggerated by some scholars. Note that MSA is much more narrowly and prescriptively defined than CA. This is especially the case in syntax. The lexicon of MSA has also expanded to cope with modern terminology, new contexts of use, etc.

the remainder of this book, then, we may find that the language ideology of the grammarians paints a picture at odds with what is known about Hebrew and Arabic of the Middle Ages from other sources. This should be regarded as a feature, rather than a bug, of this approach. When what people believe about language is in conflict with actual linguistic practice 'on the ground', we can learn much about the sociolinguistic and sociohistorical contexts in which both the ideology and the practice coexisted.