On the whole, the book is well conceived and written in an accessible manner. The fine concluding sections at the end of each chapter are extremely helpful in keeping the reader focused. Students as well as more experienced researchers interested in interactional sociolinguistics, CA, forensic linguistics, CDA, and talk-in-interaction in general might find this book most valuable.

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NILOOFAR HAERI, *Sacred language, ordinary people: Dilemmas of culture and politics in Egypt*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. xvi, 184. Hb $59.95.

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Sacred language, ordinary people is an excellent linguistic ethnography of Arabic diglossia in "an attempt at understanding the cultural and political implications of the divide between Classical Arabic and Egyptian Arabic" (p. xi). The passionate debate about Classical Arabic (the language of the Qur'an) as a facilitator of or a barrier to modernization and change is handled intelligently, though provocatively.

The book is small in size but rich and dense (*dasim*, as we say in Arabic) in content. It is an engaging discussion of a host of complex issues: the social and political significance and implications of modernizing Classical Arabic, a sacred variety that has roots in Islam; Arab leaders' appropriation of a sacred language to modernize their states; the meaning and role of Classical Arabic as the language of rituals in the daily life of "ordinary" Cairene Egyptians; the relationship between language, sites of ideology, and text regulations as cultural practices; the form/ideology dialectic and the production and reproduction of the ideologization of Classical Arabic within institutions of power (e.g. government, media, educational institutions); the complex processes of vernacularizing, and hence

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contemporizing, Classical Arabic; and finally, the politics of silencing Egyptian Arabic in print. These are far more numerous and complex questions than the size of the book would intimate.

What distinguishes Haeri's book from previous studies of the significance and implications of Arabic diglossia is, first, Haeri's ethnographic approach in collecting and analyzing her data (which are a combination of direct observation of the Egyptian community's practices in context and ethnographic interviews). Investigating Arabic diglossia with this approach is a breath of fresh air. Hearing the voices of real "ordinary" users of both varieties of Arabic (like Nadia, Fatima, and Taher), those of Hamid and Magdi, the correctors, and the voices of writers, poets, journalists, and publishers (whether in the direct spoken mode or the reported written mode) is refreshing because it translates the multiplicity of sounds and voices and their simultaneity not only in Egypt but also in other Arab countries. It also swiftly brushes away the customary interpretation of Arabic diglossia within the binary paradigm of "either/or" that focuses primarily on the unitary in the Arabic language and the homogeneous in the Arab world.

Second, Haeri does not stop, like the majority of previous studies, at simply describing Arabic diglossia in terms of "tension," "collision," or "clash" between Classical Arabic and the various dialects. Rather, she takes these notions further as she problematizes the "divide" between the two varieties of Arabic and provides provocative insights into the politics of enforcing or downplaying such a division depending upon who the social actors are, what interests are at stake, and what ideologies are at play. Third, and most important, Haeri's incisive analysis of the complex intersection between language and ideology in institutions and discourses of power and the intricate interconnectedness among culture, politics, and religion (in Egypt primarily and in the Arab world implicitly, to a certain extent), scantily researched in studies on Arabic diglossia, is remarkable. Furthermore, her special way of blending theory with empirical work sets the book apart from any previous study of Arabic diglossia.

Haeri's simple, clear style gives primacy to her astute commentaries, her incisive analyses, and sharp insights. Most of these are couched in the form of questions rather than answers. This allows Haeri, as a non-Egyptian and non-Arab, to intelligently bring to the fore sensitive and rather delicate issues that some Arab intellectuals would probably formulate either privately or, if publicly, with the expectation of being treated as traitors or conspirators against Islam, against the Muslims as an *'umma*, and against the Arabs as a united people. The perennial debate on Classical Arabic vs. the dialects, which is the crux of book, is the example par excellence because this debate, as Suleiman (2004:93) aptly states, "act[s] as a proxy for extralinguistic issues." It is used "to signal metonymically the concern with identity, modernization, tradition, change, and globalization." In other words, the debate itself generates a host of questions about language ideologies that most Arab governments (Egypt is no exception) have appropriated as theirs and not the people's, knowing that "language ideol-

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ogies and processes of language valuation are never just about language" and that "[l]anguage ideologies are, among other things, about the construction and legitimation of power" (Spitulnik 1998:164). Haeri has delicately debated this issue.

What is missing in her analysis of the "dilemmas" that she is addressing in her book, however, is an exploration of how the boundaries between Classical Arabic and Egyptian Arabic are changing, owing to the spread of technology and despite the government's "policing" of the institutions over which it has monopoly and power. The heavy emphasis Haeri places on the regimentation, compartmentalization, and separation of the two varieties of Arabic leaves any reader unfamiliar with Arabic diglossia with an incomplete picture of the current situation in the Arabic-speaking world, which is characterized by the changing relationship between the two varieties of Arabic. Such a reader may be left with "the impression that domains of usage of either variety never change, touch or merge," as Haeri herself has warned previously (2000:66), or that Classical Arabic indexes nothing but Islam or emblematizes solely Qur'anic teachings. Haeri's quick dismissal of the label "Modern Standard Arabic" may account for the total conflation of Classical Arabic with Islam. Schoolchildren do use Arabic to learn arithmetic, history, geography, drawing, and poetry. Besides, even though the textbooks are in Classical Arabic, it is highly likely that either the instructors or the students use some Egyptian Arabic in the classroom.

Egyptian Arabic, like other dialects, has slowly, if shyly, crept into print. The boundary between the two varieties is not as hermetically sealed as the book seems to suggest. Egyptian Arabic, for example, is being used in domains that have traditionally been reserved to Classical Arabic. And the two varieties of Arabic are, in fact, dynamically shaping and reshaping each other's linguistic and sociolinguistic boundaries. The media, in particular satellite television stations, are increasingly creating dynamic loci for the intersection and mixture of the varieties of Arabic as skillful "sets of language practices" (Walters 2003), giving rise to fluid and less demarcated arenas of use of either variety of Arabic. Such practices have gradually contested and maybe eroded the traditional centralization and monopolization of the media by Arab government the state's compartmentalization, and regimentation of the two varieties, and especially have shaken the linguistic essentialism implicitly advocated by policy and decision makers.

The great overlap and constant leakage between the two varieties of Arabic, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Boussofara-Omar 1999, 2003, in press) and as Haeri 2003 rightly but briefly states, occur in both directions (from the dialect to Classical Arabic and from Classical Arabic to the dialect). The general tendency in studies on Arabic diglossia, however, has been to claim that the influence is unidirectional, from Classical Arabic to the dialects, a claim that silences the dialect and, in a way, supports the state's official discourse and Arab intellectuals' valuation of Classical Arabic as the symbol of a homogeneous and united

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nation. I believe that the growing practice of switching between the two varieties of Arabic has broadened the notion of what spoken Classical Arabic is – a notion of what Classical Arabic means for users when they speak it, rather than how it should be spoken. I also believe that the practice of switching may eventually give rise to a conventionalized spoken standard Arabic that is dialectal in its underlying structure but Classical Arabic in its surface realization. Such convergence is not surprising when one recalls that diglossia is a case of prolonged contact between two varieties of the same language. Such a form of Arabic may eventually be used in print. If it does, it will be the much-needed compromise to pull Classical Arabic down "from its lofty heights" (77) and to elevate the dialect that is "explicitly denigrated, associated with ignorance, illiteracy, backwardness and so on," to borrow Haeri's words (117). This may be another way to answer Haeri's central question of the book: "What does it mean to modernize a sacred language?" (x). It also answers another, more important question, which the book addresses indirectly: "Who modernizes a sacred language?" Governments, intellectuals, academies have failed to engineer the modernization process. Users have not.

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Florian Coulmas, *Sociolinguistics: The study of speakers' choices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. 263. Pb $29.99.

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In his new textbook, Coulmas provides readers an easy introduction to sociolinguistics, using speaker choice as the central notion for discussion. In a comfort-

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