Introduction

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1. Why this volume on methods and methodology?

Linguistics is all about the study of language. However, in as much as linguists pose different questions about language, they also engage in different processes of inquiry about their subject of study. Linguistic analyses are always shaped by the kind of data used and the assumptions underlying their interpretation, regardless of whether or not this is made explicit by the researcher. This kind of “linguistic relativity” is different from the well-known and much discussed Whorfian relativity principle, which says that “all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar” (Whorf 1956: 214; see Werlen 1989a, 2002a, 2002b for the history of the idea of linguistic relativity). The “second linguistic relativity principle” alluded to here is not about how language shapes thought and perception, but rather about how linguistic data and methods in linguistics shape linguistic theory. Every linguist’s theoretical view on language is affected by the language material they work with, and by the methods they apply.

It is sometimes argued that methods (to develop and to apply methods) and methodology (to reflect and write about methods) are two completely different things. There is undoubtedly some difference between applying methods and reflecting about methods, but method and methodology go hand in hand, especially if methods and methodology concern the treatment of concrete data in bottom-up rather than top-down methodological approaches. The present volume illustrates this point and insists on the necessity of making the discussion of methods and methodology more explicit across subfields of linguistics. To modify a famous saying by Immanuel Kant, we can say that methodology without developing and applying methods is empty and research without methodological reflection is blind.

Due to different strands of linguistic research and the influence of various neighbouring disciplines, there has been a noticeable growth of linguistic methodology. The importance of methods and methodological concerns has been tackled in various ways in older as well as more recent publications: linguistic methods can be related to the theory of science in general
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(Bartschat 1996; Bierwisch 1971; Schecker 1976); they can be investigated with a focus on the dichotomy of quantitative vs. qualitative research, or on either of these approaches (see Litosseliti 2010; Johnson 2008; Rasinger 2008); their investigation can be oriented towards various linguistic subfields, such as applied linguistics (Coffin et al. 2010; Dörnyei 2009), discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer 2009), sociolinguistics (Milroy and Gordon 2003), field linguistics (Vaux and Cooper 2005), etc.; or they can serve as practical guidelines for students or researchers (Wray and Bloomer 2006).

A volume that focuses on methods and methodological aspects in a variety of linguistic subfields can promote a more profound understanding of contemporary linguistics and the diversity in the scientific study of language. At once, a thorough description of how data has been gathered and analysed illustrates that methodological decisions often cannot be separated from questions of linguistic theory.

Linguistic methodology – like methodology in all sciences – is concerned with the relationship between theory and data. According to Labov’s Principles of Linguistic Methodology (1971), methodology is the careful, serious search for error in one’s own work, where the best theory is the one that is most easily disconfirmed. This is well in line with Popper’s hypothetical-deductive approach in philosophy of science that theory cannot be verified by experience, it can only be falsified or “ singled out by means of empirical tests, in a negative sense: it must be possible for an empirical scientific system to be refuted by experience” (Popper [1959] 2002: 18). As pointed out by Bisang (2011: 238), generalizations can also be induced from the comparison of data, but the major challenge for falsification in linguistics is reproducibility, since “validity of regularities and generalizations claimed by linguists crucially depends on reproducibility, i.e., on certain factors that are necessary to define a speech situation” (Bisang 2011: 237). Reproducibility in linguistics, however, is limited due to a high amount of variation: “Functional factors create variation via the difficulty of the task faced by the speaker to comply with a large number of rules almost simultaneously...Social factors are responsible for variation because different structures may be associated with different social settings” (Bisang 2011: 240; see also Croft 2000). As shown by Kretzschmar (2009) variation is often underestimated even in linguistic approaches traditionally devoted to variation such as dialectology and sociolinguistics. In the same vein, Werlen (1977: 37) already criticized the assumption of linguistic homogeneity, and underlined that the integration of variation has to be accompanied by the serious search for adequate theories and methods.
Methodological discussion seems to be associated closely to research with empirical focus rather than to theory-centred research. In this connection it is interesting to note that one of the very first paragraphs in John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is titled “Method”: “It is therefore worth while to search out the bounds between opinion and knowledge; and examine by what measures, in things whereof we have no certain knowledge, we ought to regulate our assent and moderate our persuasion.” (Locke [1690] 1952: 93). Now it is not possible to simply equate empiricism with empirical research and we do not want to claim in any way that rationalism is less methodological than empiricism. It is the status of the data that seems to constitute a major difference between empiricist and rationalist approaches. Whereas in rationalist approaches the theory drives the interpretation of the data, in empiricist approaches generalizations can emerge from the data. Hence, methodology, i.e. concerns about the collection, understanding and analysis of data, is particularly important for empirical research. It is not astonishing, therefore, that all papers in this volume – despite all their differences – can be said to be contributions to empirical linguistics.

All papers in this volume are examples of how specific methods can be applied to answer linguistic research questions. Thereby, the volume is not a theory-driven systematisation of methodological approaches, but a demonstration of the diversity of scientific practices in linguistics. What we deal with here is “bottom-up” methodology rather than “top-down” methodology. Hereby we adopt the approach that explicit reflection on the methods applied in the study of language can deepen our understanding of fundamental concepts in linguistic investigations. As such, contemporary methodology enhances the significance of various processes of scientific inquiry that are unified in their aim to better understand, describe and explain forms and functions of language. In this spirit, the present volume is the product of twenty-five linguists reflecting on their methodological concerns. At this point, we would like to thank forty-four anonymous reviewers, whose rigorousness significantly improved the quality of the volume. The collection of papers demonstrates that reflection on methods is a vital and integral component of original research and thereby overrides negative attitudes towards explicit highlighting of methodological concerns.
2. Issues in attitudes towards methodology

The relevance of explicitness in methodological concerns becomes most apparent when facing positions that are critical towards methodology. However, some words of caution are in order here. First, we want to consider attitudes towards methodology here, not attitudes of researchers in general. The same author can be very explicit about some aspects of methodology without discussing some other methodological aspects in the same work. Second, being explicit about methods and methodology is not tantamount with good methodology. There are many books and articles in linguistics following rigorous methods where methodology is not discussed. In such cases researchers can be aware or non-aware of their methodological approach. Unconscious brilliant methodology is very much the same thing as good intuition, and intuition plays an important and much underestimated role in linguistics as in other disciplines. Researchers can also be aware of their methods without discussing them explicitly. Awareness, explicitness and quality of methods are thus basically three different things. In the following, we simplify a lot by focussing on two negative attitudes towards explicitness of methodology. The names given to these attitudes are our own.

A time-honoured negative approach to methodology can be called “methodological pessimism”, nicely put into a formula by the Leipzig philologist Gottfried Hermann (1772–1848): „Wer nichts über die Sache versteht, schreibt über die Methode“ (Who does not understand the matter, writes about the method) (Koechly 1874). We think that methodological pessimism rests on two misunderstandings: (i) it is possible to do linguistics without method, and (ii) reflection on method is different from doing research. Doing research and reflecting on methods is tightly connected in bottom-up methodology as practiced in this volume. We think that reflection on method is a crucial and integral component of research, especially of innovative research. To make this reflection explicit is particularly important for making approaches more accessible across most different research traditions. Explicit reflection on method can thus foster the mutual understanding of researchers in different linguistic sub-disciplines.

Of course, there may be different opinions about how much energy should be devoted to making methodical reflection explicit. With respect to this question, Miles and Huberman state that “[a]t times it seems as if the competing, often polemical arguments of different schools of thought about how qualitative research should be done properly use more energy than the actual research does” (1994: 2). A stance that seems to be the completely
opposite to methodological pessimism at first glance – “methodological optimism” – has in fact quite similar consequences. For methodological optimists, the excessive discussion of methodological aspects will do no harm, but is unnecessary, since researchers will normally do the right things anyway even without amply discussing methods. Methodological optimists have strong confidence in the researchers’ right intuitions and in their readers’ ability to understand their argument even if it remains partly implicit. Experts know what to do and readers are also experts. However, a possible danger of methodological optimism is secluded research communities, not allowing access to outsiders. A major advantage of explicit methodological discussion is its broader perspective. The present volume unites most different approaches to linguistics which is possible in particular because methodological concerns are made explicit. Explicit methodological discussion is particularly important for general linguistics, which unites all approaches to linguistics.

In this book, published in honour of Iwar Werlen, methodological diversity in linguistics is illustrated with examples that are biased towards Switzerland. Innovative methodological aspects have always played an important role in Swiss linguistics (with the attribute Swiss being interpreted geographically, i.e. as standing for ‘having worked in Switzerland’). To provide just a few of the less well known examples, first, Louis Gauchat’s (1905) findings on variation in the patois of Charmey, based on data from speakers of three different generations – long before variation took centre stage in linguistics – should be mentioned here. With his error analysis of French, Henri Frei (1929) can be called a pioneer of the functionalist approach. Renward Brandstetter (1893, 1903) can be mentioned as one of the first linguists who applied the classical comparative method beyond Indo-European, more specifically to the large Austronesian language family ranging from Malagasy to Maori. As impressive examples of methodological vigorousness in sociolinguistics and dialectology, finally, Erika Werlen’s (1984) considerations on speakers’ individuality and language attitudes in dialectological methodology and Andres Kristol’s (1984) long-term study of language shift in the multilingual village of Bivio in the canton of Grisons can be mentioned. They underline that Iwar Werlen’s ambition for innovative and well-considered methods – to be considered in more detail in Section 3 below – can be said to be an integral part of a well-established tradition in Swiss linguistics.
3. Iwar Werlen’s approach to method and methodology

As different questions about languages, their structures and usages call for the application of different methods, the breadth of linguistic interests shapes the richness of the methodological experiences of a researcher. Therefore, a linguist like Iwar Werlen with a research agenda comprising dialectology (Werlen 1976, 1980, 1983a, 1985a, 1986a, 2005a), sociolinguistics with a main focus on the German-speaking part of Switzerland (Werlen 1988a, 1993a, 2004), multilingualism (Lüdi and Werlen 2005; Werlen 2007; Werlen, Rosenberger, and Baumgartner 2011), conversation analysis (Werlen 1979, 2001, 2006), the theory of rituals (Werlen 1983b, 1987, 1994), linguistic relativity (Werlen 1989a, 2002a, 2005b), studies on the languages of the Philippines (Werlen 1993b, 1996a, 1996b), onomastics (Werlen 2008, 2010a), and modality (Werlen 1982, 1993b; Bader, Werlen, and Wymann 1994) can resort to a large inventory of methods and a rich experience with methodological questions. He does not take an “instrumental” stance by reducing the methodological concerns to ‘what works’ (Angouri 2010: 31), but is constantly involved in philosophical and theoretical debates related to the methodological choices that he makes. This section is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of methods in Iwar Werlen’s oeuvre, but a descriptive selection of methodological issues in his major fields of interest which exemplifies his distinct awareness of methodological concerns.

An aspiration for convergence of dialectological and linguistic approaches is present in his early studies on the dialect of Brig in the Valais (Werlen 1976, 1977). Iwar Werlen believed that dialectological work can profit from the explication of various phenomena by the integration of linguistic theory, and linguistics can enlarge its horizon and refine its theories with respect to language variation. He criticized the assumption of linguistic homogeneity and urges for a more serious investigation of variation accompanied by the search for adequate theories and methods (Werlen 1976: 37). He tackled issues on variation and its internal structure that are still of importance more than thirty years later, by stating that “it does not seem plausible to me that language should be a homogeneous system: this calls even more for an explanation than the per se a lot more plausible assumption that there is relative chaos in the language” (Es scheint mir nicht so sehr plausibel, daß die Sprache ein homogenes System bildet: das scheint mir sogar sehr viel mehr der Erklärung wert als die an sich viel plausiblere Annahme, daß man es in der Sprache mit einem relativen Chaos zu tun hat.) (Werlen 1977: 353, translated by the authors).
His emphasis on sociolinguistic issues can be illustrated with two examples. In the KISS study (*Kommunikation in einer Schweizer Stadt, communication in a Swiss city*), which was carried out in the framework of interpretative sociolinguistics, it is shown how the implementation of the theoretical concept of communication culture is methodologically problematic (Lieverscheidt et al. 1989, 1995; Werlen and Lieverscheidt 1989; Werlen 1989b, 1992, 1995). As only communicative behaviour is observable, this can serve as the basis for the underlying rules. By observing participants and conducting interviews and audio-recordings at different public places (hair studios, community centre, etc.), the different communication cultures in a Swiss City are reconstructed. In doing so, a distinction is made between descriptive parameters of communication cultures and interpretative means. The investigation of language biographies of second-generation immigrants (Werlen 1986b, 2002c) is an example of sociolinguistic research where interviews provide the majority of data. These interviews are not only analysed with respect to the content of the narratives (social data, academic achievement, acquisition of the different languages, functions of the languages involved, language loyalty, bilingualism and language competence), but also as the medium of data collection itself, which means that the interview is considered in more general terms as constituting a social event.

Identifying and analysing the logic of ritual communication, Iwar Werlen resorts to corpus data (Werlen 1983b) and speech data from church services, radio shows or doctor–patient-interactions (Werlen 1987, 1996c). In his investigation of how people deal with different everyday life experiences in speech in highly diverse contexts such as celebrating the holy mass and getting over a personal failure in a game show, he studies the role of language in human action and defines the linguist’s primary role as that of an observer for the purpose of reconstruction. He conceives of the work of a linguist as being descriptive, not prescriptive (Werlen 1988b: 79). The linguistic elements under scrutiny with respect to the interaction of language and ritual cover the areas of modal verbs (Werlen 1983a) and particles (Werlen 1983b).

The project about second dialect acquisition by people moving between different parts of the Alemannic-speaking region of Switzerland is shaped by the fusion of dialectological and sociolinguistic issues. The data combines interviews and elicited production data with analyses of the social network. How people produce a specific dialect feature in free and in prompted speech, and how consistent they are, is taken to reveal how much they have acquired of their second surrounding dialect, and how this dialect
behaviour eventually relates to their social networks and other variables (Werlen et al. 2002; Matter and Werlen 2002).

Overall, Iwar Werlen’s approach to language focuses on the use and function of linguistic means, be it the analyses of particles in Swiss German dialects, showing that they fulfil a ritual function (Werlen 1983b), or the analysis of modality as the ways speakers express (un)certainty about the content of an utterance (Werlen 1985b). This becomes most obvious in the study of multilingualism in society as well as in individual speakers (Werlen, Tunger, and Frei 2010), and when dealing with the linguistic competence of individual speakers (Werlen and Zimmermann 1996; Werlen 2010b).

4. The structure of this volume

The volume at hand takes the methodological breadth of Iwar Werlen’s work as an inspiration and tries to replicate it – in that the contributors of this volume were selected as representatives of coming from diverse methodological backgrounds. It is divided into five sections: core domains, cross-linguistic and language-internal diversity, dynamic language, writing, and a section entitled “language, space and society”.

By Core Domains we mean the domains traditionally taught first in linguistic introductions, viz. phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. We do not mean, however, that these domains are treated in a traditional fashion in this volume; rather, all chapters deviate from the research prototype in these fields in one or several respects. Siebenhaar and Leemann attend to methodological reflections on the phonetics–phonology interface in the domain of intonation. Can phonetics clearly be delimited from phonology? Siebenhaar and Leemann corroborate their line of argument with examples retrieved from a corpus of natural Swiss German speech. Schmid, in a similar vein, discusses phonetic and phonological approaches to speech rhythm in Italo-Romance dialects. Morphology is covered in a contribution by Wälchli, entitled Indirect measurement in morphological typology. Wälchli critically assesses the extent to which indirect methods – as frequently applied in the natural sciences – could be useful in morphological studies. Next, Bucheli Berger, Glaser, and Seiler address conceptual and practical aspects of examining syntactic structures in the context of dialect geographical research. Van der Auwera and Diewald survey methods that are currently used in the study of modality, such as conceptual analysis, typology, and monolingual and parallel
corpus linguistics. The first section concludes with a contribution by Ender and Wälchli, who assess the creation of making a festschrift and shed light on this process from the perspective of Iwar Werlen’s definition of the ritual as an expressive institutionalized action or sequence of actions (Werlen 1984: 81).

Section two of this volume includes contributions collected under the guise of Cross-Linguistic and Language-Internal Diversity. The articles tap into typology, multilingualism, koineisation, and second language acquisition. Zúñiga addresses the relationship between language documentation and linguistic typology. Berthele explains the epistemological and methodological debates in multilingual research designs. Reflections on methods in dialect contact research, e.g. in the context of linguistic accommodation or second dialect acquisition, is addressed in Britain’s contribution. Ender addresses the question of how second language learners deal with variation in their everyday input by highlighting some of the methodological challenges that emerge in this new line of research. Finally, von Waldenfels rounds off this second section with a discussion and illustration of methodological benefits and pitfalls of research based on parallel corpora; at the same time, he compares these aspects with the usefulness and drawbacks of translated language.

Section three, entitled Dynamic Language, goes beyond classic sociolinguistic areas of research and proceeds with methodologies applied in historical linguistics as well as in psycholinguistics. However, we do not claim that only these approaches to linguistics are dynamic. Many other papers in this volume reflect various aspects of dynamicity in linguistics. This section embraces dynamic language both in a diachronic and in a procedural performance perspective. Busse’s Historical text analysis: Underlying parameters and methodological procedures introduces historical aspects of corpus linguistics while focussing on methodological and interpretative issues. Writing from a historical linguists’ point of view, Bielmeier evaluates the traditional historical-comparative method and examines how it can be successfully applied beyond Indo-European languages to varieties of Tibetan, usually referred to as “Tibetan dialects”. The next contribution in this section is van Driem’s Etyma, shouldered adzes and molecular variants, which reflects on the usefulness of an interdisciplinary approach towards historical linguistic reconstruction. Vorwerg, finally, evaluates experimental approaches and the experiment itself towards the examination of language processing.

The fourth section carries the title Writing and includes two rather different contributions. Perrin addresses media discourse, where news items are generated, from a production perspective. More specifically, he dis-
discusses the application of Dynamic Systems Theory to the field of news-writing. By the same token, Boyes Braem discusses methodological issues encountered by signed language linguists which arise due to production and perception differences in visual/corporal modality of spoken and signed languages.

The final, fifth, section incorporates topics that revolve around Language, Space and Society. De Stefani proposes an interactional approach towards studying place names, by observing how they are used in naturally occurring conversations, thus connecting traditional onomastics with interaction studies. Grünert analyses the applicability of the territoriality principle on the example of the smallest of the four national languages of Switzerland, Romansh, placing the discussion in a legal context, thus relating linguistics and law. The volume concludes with a contribution by Lüdi, Höchle, and Yanaprasart, who address the status and use of English in Switzerland, with a particular focus on workplace communication. Methodologically, this contribution combines different approaches to the investigation of the use of English in Switzerland and collects attitudes towards its use.

All these contributions place emphasis on methodology as an integral part of any innovative research in contemporary linguistics. As each paper is embedded in concrete linguistic research questions, the volume as a whole follows a bottom-up approach to methods and their status in contemporary linguistics. The collection of articles illustrates the diversity in the study of language in linguistic sub-disciplines and thereby strives to promote a more global understanding of linguistic investigation.

Notes

1. We would like to thank Walter Bisang, Volker Gast, and Bruno Moretti for many useful comments.
2. We are grateful to Toon van Hal and Johan van der Auwera for having pointed out the history of the saying to us.
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