

Introduction to the *Language and Space* series

In 1982 and 1983 the renowned HSK series was launched with a two-volume handbook, *Dialektologie: Ein Handbuch zur deutschen und allgemeinen Dialektforschung*. Even though this first handbook played a significant role in the subsequent success of the series and was out of print by the mid 1990s, early plans to publish an updated edition (as was done with other successful titles) were soon shelved. Consensus instead settled around the view that advances in the understanding of the object of dialectological study, along with fast-paced developments in the relevant disciplines and the need to adequately represent the rich findings of this global research effort, made a completely fresh start necessary.

Even though the variability of human language is in essential ways caused and constrained by the dimensions of time and space, and although most people today still speak with some form of distinct regional coloring, dialects isolated from supranational and standard varieties are increasingly becoming marginal phenomena, right across the world. Accordingly, a reorientation of research into language and space has begun – shifting from a discipline focused on the reconstruction of premodern language states (traditional dialectology) to approaches dedicated to a precise analysis of the dynamic processes at work within complex language systems and their explanation in terms of cognitive and interactive-cum-communicative factors.

This shift in emphasis towards embodied and evolving language has led to a blurring of the established boundaries between dialectology, sociolinguistics and language contact studies and to the adoption of impulses from geography, sociology and anthropology as part of a wider reappraisal of the relationship between geographical place and cultural space. Additionally, a way has needed to be found to take account of significant differences in how language is “territorialized”. These range from traditional, sedentary settlement patterns to personally mobile and electronically delocalized postindustrial lifestyles, and from semiliterate, largely oral cultural traditions through, say, the formation and maintenance of immigrant communities and enclaves within multicultural and urbanized landscapes, to the inhabiting of pre-eminently social spaces in the increasingly fragmented and ad hoc milieus of contemporary society.

Against the background of this reorientation, the idea of a subseries within the HSK range entitled *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation* developed out of intensive discussions between representatives from various research fields, the editors and publishers. Inaugurating this subseries are two “foundation” handbooks, canvassing international developments in theory and research methods and, for the first time, interrogating the theoretical and practical foundations of linguistic cartography. These cross-linguistic foundational volumes are to be complemented by a loose sequence of volumes that each analyze the full dimensions of spatial variation within an individual language or language group whilst remaining guided by a uniform structure.

This first introductory volume, *Theories and Methods*, directly addresses both the changes in the object of study (linguistic variation across “space”) and the attempts within the relevant disciplines to adjust to the concomitant reconceptualization of its nature. As intimated by its subtitle, the volume is divided into two halves. The first of these, the theoretical wing, encompasses a transdisciplinary discussion of the notion of

space together with critical evaluations of linguistic approaches to it plus several articles on the structure and dynamics of (and between) language spaces. The second, methodological wing details and showcases traditional and contemporary methods of data collection, analysis and presentation in linguistic geography and language variation studies, with special emphasis on the methodological problems within the individual structural domains (phonology, prosody, morphology, lexis, syntax and discourse) and a series of illustrative and multifaceted case studies.

The second volume, *Language Mapping*, addresses a striking deficit in the field of studies into language and space. To date there has never been a collected consideration of the many issues impinging upon the creation and use of maps in the investigation of language, its distribution and variation. Within various major languages, schools and traditions have emerged within which problems have been addressed and approaches have been refined, but there has been a dearth of exchange between these traditions. Starting from a thoroughgoing consideration of the conceptual, cognitive and cartographic fundamentals of committing languages to maps, the second foundational volume also explores the individual traditions, their origins, peculiarities and strengths, before considering numerous aspects of the revolutionary enabling impact of computing on language mapping and some of the intersections between the cartography of language and other fields of human endeavor. Naturally, given the topic, the volume will be accompanied by an extensive, separately bound collection of maps.

These two foundation stones are to be followed by a series of works that will, while oriented to a uniform structure, thoroughly explore the current state of research into the spatial dimensions of particular languages or language areas. Given linguists' increased awareness of the complexity of the relationship between language and physical space, and of the fiction of a single "authentic" variety per speaker, the volumes are focused on (groups of) languages rather than regions and attempt to chart their internal variational structure and dynamics, their interface with other languages and their distribution across physical, social and cultural space. Each volume will open with a section examining the history of investigation into the language(s) in question, the foci of current research and perceived deficits. Then the genesis of the (areal) linguistic constellations and variety spectra will be treated along with a complete anatomy of the language space. But the bulk of each volume will be devoted to a detailed description of linguistic subregions and domains including, obviously, those which transcend traditional bounded spaces as well as attitudes and social configurations, and to an exploration of aspects specific to the language (group), including its use in a range of locations as a postcolonial or an immigrant language, the roles of various media and the techniques and technology used to present results.

For the noble HSK handbook tradition, *Language and Space* thus represents the revisiting, after more than a quarter of a century, of one of the fundamental dimensions of human language in all its variety and flux. The new series attempts to draw together and take account of the advances in our understanding of this dimension, broaching the boundaries between disciplines, questioning but not abandoning established traditions, drilling down into the concept of space itself, in order to bring to its readers some of the excitement of the scientific hunt for that most immanent quarry – language itself.

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