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## Introduction

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Readers of this 5<sup>th</sup> volume of the Handbook will discover it represents a multi-level undertaking. While the ambitious comparison of five languages in the first four volumes of the *Online Handbook of Language Criticism – A European Perspective* (HESO) series had already presented us a challenge, with this newest volume on *Language Ideologies and Language Criticism*, we have taken on yet another challenge: the framing and harmonisation of phenomena that are difficult to define. This includes the consideration of ideologies as they relate to languages: language viewed as the interplay of language systems, language use, attitudes toward language and concepts of language.

The term *ideology* is used differently in everyday language and linguistic terminology (for a more precise differentiation, refer to the article published by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/bpb*) and the following excerpt):

The term “ideology” is particularly scintillating and interesting because it is directly linked to questions of objectivity and truth. Not only in everyday language, but also at times in academic or political contexts, the allegation that a person represents an ideology is done with the intent of denigrating that person’s point of view or even the individual him- or herself. In using this term, e.g. by implying a dogmatic, totalitarian claim to power or an intolerant attitude, the person’s viewpoint is intended to be disparaged. (Translation by C. D.)<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Felder, Ekkehard (2010): Ideologie und Sprache. In: Online dossier “Sprache und Politik”, published by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/bpb*). <https://www.bpb.de/themen/parteien/sprache-und-politik/42737/einstieg/> (last accessed on 30/05/2025).  
“Der Begriff ‚Ideologie‘ ist ein besonders schillernder und interessanter Begriff, weil mit ihm die Frage nach Objektivität und Wahrheit unmittelbar verbunden ist. Nicht nur in der Alltagssprache, mitunter auch in wissenschaftlichem und politischem Kontext ist mit der Behauptung, eine Person vertrete eine

On this basis, two concepts can be identified for the term *ideology* – on the one hand, a descriptively neutral concept of ideology as a collection of ideas and perspectives that reflect a particular social standpoint, and on the other hand, a derogatory concept connotating one-sided adherence to a particular mindset. In this Handbook, we define ideology as an analytical category. We use it descriptively, in that we focus on a range of language-related ideologies from the past and present in relation not only to our own language, but to foreign languages as well. In doing so, we are fully aware that the academic approach is also subject to perspectivisation and is, therefore, also ideological. We have therefore adopted the sociological concept of ideology.

If we attempt to apply the dichotomy of these two concepts (i.e. descriptively neutral and thus also categorisation on the one hand and subjectively negative on the other) to the compound term *language ideology*, it is also possible to identify two concepts for *language ideology*: Firstly, in the sense of 'language is immanent in ideology' and secondly, in the sense of 'language radiates ideology'. Against this backdrop, we first define language ideology in general terms as an *emic* concept individuals, groups and entire language communities have of their own language and other languages, as well as of their own utterances and those of others. In this context, language ideologies are meronyms of ideologies.

Without getting ahead of ourselves with regard to the differentiated explanations laid out in the foundational article in this volume, we will briefly outline here the significance of language ideologies as socially formed perceptions of languages, language use, language systems and the manner in which people speak in specific situations (see also Flubacher 2020).<sup>2</sup> Language ideologies "are firmly embedded in socio-cultural factors and are definitively related to language itself and its function in constructing

Ideologie, eine Abwertung des jeweiligen Standpunktes oder sogar der jeweiligen Person beabsichtigt. Die so bezeichnete Einstellung soll herabgesetzt werden, indem ihr zum Beispiel ein dogmatisch-totalitärer Herrschaftsanspruch oder eine intolerante Gesinnung unterstellt wird."

2 Flubacher, Mi-Cha (2020): Language Ideology. In: Schierholz, Stefan J. (Ed.): Wörterbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft (WSK) Online. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter. [https://www.degruyter.com/database/WSK/entry/wsk\\_id0998eae3-5307-43e3-9c9f-914d070e82b7/html](https://www.degruyter.com/database/WSK/entry/wsk_id0998eae3-5307-43e3-9c9f-914d070e82b7/html) (last accessed on 30/05/2025).

group identity. Therefore, not every form of ideology that may be encoded in or through language will be addressed in this Handbook, but only those ideologies related to language" (quoted from the foundational article in this volume). By employing this relatively broad concept of (language) ideology, we are in line with the fairly standardised concept of ideology used in international research discourse (based primarily on Irvine 1989<sup>3</sup> and Silverstein 1979<sup>4</sup>). However, we augment and refine the concept of language ideology by including an aspect that is decisive for this Handbook: the *emic* perspective. From this perspective, language ideologies represent social indexicality: they refer to socio-culturally and discursively relevant language-reflective or language-critical individuals and collectives, while at the same time serving as action-guiding templates for attempts and procedures to achieve language standardisation. In this fifth volume, we elucidate the interrelationship between language ideologies and language criticism, i.e. concrete forms of (assessing) evaluative language reflection, and their intellectually and socially effective concepts.

This Handbook, as with the previous volumes, is structured on the basis of three categories: the heuristic distinction between the micro, meso and macro levels. Although the classification of individual examples into these categories is not unequivocal or unambiguous, they nonetheless help to provide insight and orientation. The delimitation of the comparative article in this volume is therefore described below:

Language ideologies are formed at the macro, meso and micro levels of a language community. The macro-level involves the (generally implicitly or explicitly standardised) language of a socio-political or cultural region or, in the modern era, a state. The meso-level refers to the language or habitual language use of a socio-cultural group, on the basis of either geography (e.g. a city) or social ideology (e.g. left-wing). The micro-level refers to individual speakers

- 3 Irvine, Judith T. (1989): When Talk Isn't Cheap. *Language and Political Economy*. In: *American Ethnologist* 16/2, pp. 248–267.
- 4 Silverstein Michael (1979): Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology. In: Clyne, Paul R./Hanks, William F./Hofbauer, Carol L. (Eds.): *The Elements. A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels. Including Papers from the Conference on Non-Slavic Languages of the USSR*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, pp. 193–247.

with their linguistically identifying markers and regional or stylistic deixis of the first order as well as their options for language choice. (Quoted from the comparative article in this volume)

As illustrative examples of these levels, the macro-level refers to discourses on standardisation and national language that are explicitly or implicitly present in the texts on codification. As an illustration of the meso-level, we observe attribution practices and negotiation processes in various language cultures, some of which are (linguistically) ideological. One example of this is when the official standard language differs from the local dialect or when a standard or its components are subject to a change in ideological valuation. The micro level can particularly be seen in all those who in everyday life interact within multilingual contexts and speak multiple languages – and who therefore must constantly decide which language to speak (and which not). These examples and more are discussed in detail in the comparative article in this volume.

There is a connection between the focus of this fifth volume, *Language Ideologies and Language Criticism*, and those of the first four volumes of the Handbook series. Within a comparison of language cultures, it raises the question of how the much-discussed and discursively established concepts of language standardisation and the standardisation of a national language along with its variants have progressed and how they are currently transforming. These aspects are strongly connected to the first Handbook volume, *Critique of Language Norms*, as well as to the second, entitled *Standardisation and Language Criticism*, third, *Linguistic Purism and Language Criticism* and fourth Handbook volume, *Language Institutions and Language Criticism*.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the reviewers from German, English, Romance and Slavic Studies for their suggestions and comments. It is thanks to their expertise that it has been possible to publish this fifth volume of the Handbook in this form. We would also like to thank our translators, Cynthia Dyre, Ronja Grebe, Iva Petrak, Ilaria Sacconi and Paul Chibret, for their precise and expert collaboration. And finally, we would like to thank our editors, Vanessa Münch and Lara Trefzer, for their exceptional work on this volume.

*Heidelberg, Mannheim, Cologne, and Mainz, May 2025*