

## RESEARCH OUTPUTS / RÉSULTATS DE RECHERCHE

### Language contact research and HSK45.2

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# 1. Language contact research and HSK 45.2

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## 1. Introduction

When helping shape the field of contact linguistics with the first incarnation of this handbook (Goebel et al. 1996, 1997), none of the editors could have imagined how productive work on this topic would become some thirty years on. Language contact research remains a booming field, indeed. Over the past five years, no less than 6 edited volumes on language contact were published. In 2019, volume 1 of HSK 45 appeared (Darquennes, Salmons, and Vandebussche 2019b). In February 2020, *The Oxford Handbook of Language Contact* (Grant 2020) was published, followed by Wiley's second edition of *The Handbook of Language Contact* (Hickey 2020), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Contact* (Adamou and Matras 2021), and the two volumes of *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Contact* (Mufwene and Escobar 2022). Now that volume 2 of HSK 45 has also been released, one cannot but conclude that, combined, all those edited volumes provide a diverse and ultimately fine-grained picture of the state of affairs in language contact research in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That picture can and should be completed with an inventory of the many monographs that have appeared in all corners of the world as well as contributions in specialized journals such as *The Journal of Language Contact* (De Gruyter Brill) and regular contributions in most general linguistics journals. Engaging in such an exercise here would, however, go far beyond the scope of this introduction. Given the constraints of time and space, we limit ourselves to presenting the structure of the handbook and sharing some general observations gathered during its preparation.

## 2. Structure and scope of HSK 45.2

A close look at the layout of similar (recently) published work is often instructive and inspiring when contemplating and defining the structure of an edited volume. Before we started our own work on volume 2 of *Language Contact: An International Handbook*, we took the time to consult Grant (2020), Hickey (2020) and Adamou and Matras (2021). We were also keen to discover the structure of the two volumes edited by Mufwene and Escobar (2022).

Notwithstanding obvious overlaps in the coverage of certain aspects and phenomena of language contact (some volumes inevitably also rely on the expertise of the same authors), Tab. 1.1 shows that the way in which the theoretical chapters in Grant (2020), Hickey (2020), Adamou and Matras (2021), and Mufwene and Escobar (2022) are structured differs from the way volume 1 of our handbook (which is an almost entirely theoretical volume consisting of 63 thematic chapters) was given shape (see Tab. 1.2). As

Tab. 1.1: General structure of recent edited volumes on language contact

<p><b>Grant (2020)</b>  I. Language contact and linguistic theory  <i>12 chapters</i>  II. Language contact in several languages  <i>20 chapters</i></p>	<p><b>Hickey (2020)</b>  Part I: Contact, contact studies, and linguistics  <i>14 chapters</i>  Part II: Case studies of contact  <i>23 chapters</i></p>
<p><b>Adamou and Matras (2021)</b>  Part 1. Methods and theoretical approaches  <i>6 chapters</i>  Part 2. Processes and dimensions  <i>6 chapters</i>  Part 3. Outcomes  <i>7 chapters</i>  Part 4. Linguistic areas  <i>7 chapters</i></p>	<p><b>Mufwene and Escobar (2022)</b>  Volume I: Population movement and language change  Part I. Multilingualism  <i>8 chapters</i>  Part II. Contact, emergence, and language classification  <i>5 chapters</i>  Part III. Lingua francas  <i>2 chapters</i>  Part IV. Language vitality  <i>5 chapters</i>  Part V. Contact and language structures  <i>3 chapters</i>    Volume II: Multilingualism in population structure  Part I. Language contact and genetic linguistics  <i>5 chapters</i>  Part II. Linguistic areas  <i>4 chapters</i>  Part III. Language spread  <i>3 chapters</i>  Part IV. Emergence and spread of some European languages  <i>5 chapters</i>  Part V. Language diasporas  <i>5 chapters</i></p>

Tab. 1.2: General structure of Volumes 1 and 2 of *Language Contact: An International Handbook* (HSK 45)

HSK 45.1	HSK 45.2
<p>I. Linguistic aspects of language contact  II. Language contact and the individual  III. Societal aspects of language contact  IV. Methodological issues  V. Interactions with neighboring disciplines</p>	<p>I. The linguistic dynamics of language contact  II. The dynamics of (inter)individual and societal language contact  II.1. The dynamics of bi/multilingual encounters  II.2. The dynamics of language shift, maintenance, and revitalization  II.3. The dynamics of language policy and planning at the state level  III. The dynamics of multidisciplinary language contact studies</p>

far as the geographical coverage of language contact settings is concerned, however, the other editors clearly made the choice to cast the net rather wide, something that we also agreed on doing already when we signed the contract for our two volumes in 2015. Grant's (2020) volume contains chapters on e.g. Ossetic, Korean, Berber, Khmer, Warlpiri, and Paraguayan Guaraní. Part II of Hickey's (2020) handbook includes case studies on Sino-Russian language contact as well as Mayan languages, Finno-Ugric languages, Celtic languages, and Caribbean creoles. Part IV of Adamou and Matras (2021) covers the Balkans, Anatolia, Asia, Eastern Polynesia, Melanesia, North America, and West Africa. The chapters in Mufwene and Escobar (2022) tackle language contact in India, China, and Korea as well as in North and South American and other settings. We do not know if our colleagues had a 'geographical breakdown' in mind when preparing their volumes or if the geographical coverage mostly depended on the availability of expertise in their professional networks. With respect to the structure of Volume 2 of the present handbook (a volume that, with the exception of Section III, consists almost entirely of case studies), we first developed a grid that allowed us to reflect the structure of Volume 1 in Volume 2, to include case studies from different corners of the world, to balance those case studies so as to avoid too much attention to one part of the world compared to another, and to providing room for certain topics that we were not able to cover in Volume 1.

Section I of HSK 45.2 is closely tied to Sections I and partly also II of HSK 45.1: it covers 15 chapters in which (a selection of) linguistic aspects of language contact are discussed, albeit this time not from particular predetermined theoretical points of view but with respect to their occurrence in specific language contact settings. Section II of HSK 45.2 is subdivided into three sections. The 10 case studies in Section II.1 echo (a selection of) theoretical topics primarily discussed in Section II of HSK 45.1. Sections II.2 (10 chapters) and II.3 (9 chapters) dovetail with (a selection of) topics mainly discussed in Section III of HSK 45.1. We deliberately chose to include chapters that concentrate on aspects of language shift, maintenance, and revitalization (Section II.2) and language policy and planning at the state level (Section II.3) for two reasons. First, this allows our readers to compare different geographical settings. Second, we wanted to include chapters that clearly demonstrate the social relevance of our trade in a timeframe burdened with ecolinguistic challenges. The 5 chapters in Section III of HSK 45.2 can be read as complements to Section V of HSK 45.1, and readers will notice that the majority of the chapters included in HSK 45.2 also allow for connections with Section IV (Methodological issues) of HSK 45.1. The great majority of the contributors to HSK 45.2 answered our call to include cross-references to HSK 45.1 in their chapters, but it is clear that many more cross-references can be made. Readers who would like to engage in such an endeavor are invited to use the fine-grained indexes included in both volumes as guideposts.

As announced in the introduction to Volume 1 (see Darquennes, Salmons, and Vandebussche 2019a: 4–5), we have tried to weave some of the topics missing in Volume 1 into the second volume of our handbook. It proved difficult to close all the gaps, but Volume 2 indeed includes a chapter on language conflict, a chapter in which the historical dimensions of language contact research are at center stage as well as 3 chapters on sign languages. No matter how well planned in advance, we were no exception to the unavoidable editor's experience of 'losing' a number of chapters along the way – even such chapters for which we had sought and found a replacement. While the unavoidable academic and nonacademic 'facts of life' sometimes eclipsed writing opportunities, this volume obviously also carries some of the Covid pandemic's impact across its para-

Tab 1.3: The deep structure of HSK 45.2

Introduction		✓			
	Section I	Section II.1	Section II.2	Section II.3	
Africa	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Africa	✓	✓	✓	✗	
Africa	✓				
Americas	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Americas	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Americas	✓				
Asia	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Asia	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Asia	✓				
Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Europe	✓				
Pacific	✗	✓	✓	✗	
Pacific	✓	✗	✓	✓	
Pacific	✓				
Sign language	✓	✓	✗	✓	
		Section III			
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

✓ = chapter covered

✗ = chapter planned but not covered

graphs and pages. In the end, however, we do believe that the composition of the handbook presents an original reflection of the thematic and geographical richness of current language contact research.

As Tab. 1.3 reveals, we designed Sections I and II of HSK 45.2 in such a way that they were meant to include 3 (Section I) or 2 (Sections II.1, II.2 and II.3) chapters on Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Pacific. We realize that the grid presented in Tab. 1.3 can be criticized from many angles if only because it is as artificial as any other grid that one might come up with. We nevertheless used it as a basis to recruit contributors because it forced us out of our geographical and scholarly comfort zones. It further served as a touchstone for producing a volume that respects and reflects the linguistic diversity at the heart of language contact research; in retrospect, this diversity is now much better represented than we had imagined at the outset when we engaged as editors some ten years ago, thanks to the generosity and enthusiasm of our contributing authors. While it remains true that the Pacific region is less densely covered in HSK 45.2, we hope that the quality of the contributions can compensate for this quantitative desideratum.

As was the case for HSK 45.1, we will refrain from summarizing individual chapters included in the present volume and instead only present a number of trends that we observed while preparing the volume.

### 3. General observations

Much current scholarship on language contact appears to be governed by the triangulation between a focus on language structure and change, a sincere drive of sociopolitical and academic agency, and the confrontation with an everyday reality that can be unkind to (and ignorant of) those two factors.

Work on contact-induced change as well as the retention or reintroduction of features is gaining traction; new case studies from Africa, Southern America or the Arabic-speaking world ensure that this happens from a wider variety of perspectives than used to be the case in earlier, Western-based work. The proliferation of data from previously overlooked, ignored or invisibilized contact situations is fundamentally changing our perception and understanding of contact issues. In many instances, this research is (at least) partially grounded in attempts at reconstructing the history of Indigenous languages in postcolonial settings. Scholars overarchingly point out that this widening perspective is not only changing our perception of the large continuum of contact-induced linguistic features, but also of the complex relationship between the systemic properties of languages and the indexicality of contact features at large. Studies of very recent and emerging short-term contact situations in ‘new’ (i.e. formerly understudied) settings also challenge our received understanding of the structural, social, and cognitive properties involved.

In our introduction to Volume 1 we pointed to the increasing hybridization of speech communities, and the accompanying concern for the cultivation and preservation of a diverse language ecology worldwide. Many contributions in Volume 2 testify to the challenges posed by complex language ecologies, and foremost where methodology and overall rationale are concerned. Discarding the traditional categorization of language contact case studies under a number of geographical clusters, researchers from distinct corners of the world independently plead for multilayered approaches to contact situations. They thus echo Haugen’s work on language ecology, where he observed that “the steamroller approach to small languages has much in common with the superhighway that flattens and destroys our landscape” (Haugen 1986: 96). This ‘multilayered’ focus applies to both synchronic and diachronic research, i.e. taking in the many language-internal and language-external factors in any given contact situation at a specific moment, but also acknowledging the combined outcome of subsequent (and potentially different) contact situations in a given variety/location over time. The intergenerational focus that comes with this multilayered approach highlights the importance of subsequent language acquisition processes by different cohorts of speakers for the understanding of evolving language complexity. The case studies in this volume convincingly illustrate that this approach challenges received opinions on the processes underlying language contact phenomena, but also that the theoretical shifts engendered therewith are actually supported by an increasing body of new data from complex contact situations. It is also noteworthy that studies of small-scale language contact play a key role in this transformation. Building on our traditional understanding of contact between larger speech communities in well-researched settings, the contexts of small-scale multilingualism show structural outcomes of language contact that are motivated by different aspirations for ‘identity creation’ than usually found in the classic case studies in the field. In foregrounding the personal and intimately psychological rather than (only) the larger social forces of status and upward social mobility, these situations move beyond the ‘one

language – one community’ metric, advocating a more fine-grained understanding of the importance of personal relationships in processes of contact and change (as opposed to ‘categorical identities’).

Issues of language management agency and sociocultural/economic/political developments combine with the aforementioned structural refocus in an ever more complex ‘total language contact fact’ (see Silverstein [1985] on the ‘total linguistic fact’). The collected scholarship in both handbook volumes bears witness to an ideological turn that percolates into the dominant academic discourse on language contact proper. Contact between speakers, speech communities and linguistic varieties is frequently sublimated to (and recontextualized as) a conflict between language ideologies and all the identity issues these entail. The increased sense of belonging that springs from this framing chimes in with the now-common link between ‘identity creation’ and structural changes mentioned above. It also seems to open a broad pathway for the interdisciplinary study of the way in which local understandings of language and its meanings are being reshaped.

However, as many contributors cannot help but highlight, the ideals of ecolinguistic harmony and cultural valorization are all too frequently at odds with the bitter and harsh socio-economic reality of many endangered language communities worldwide. The primary need to secure a community’s social and economic well-being tends to outbalance the necessary investments for the preservation of threatened language varieties, for fully understandable and honorable reasons. As ever, moving from language contact research to true language revitalization requires language management that preserves cultural capital while simultaneously transforming it into economic and political capital as well.

#### 4. Outlook

On a personal note, we are happy to add that the interest in revitalization and documentation also echoes with the young generations of students in our language contact curricula; we hope that this handbook may help and inspire them to pursue research on languages worldwide that are at risk of vanishing, to prevent that we lose “forever our chance to fully investigate the limits and possibilities of human language systems and the windows they open up into the human mind” (Trudgill 2023: 306).

While it is common knowledge and practice that claims of language ownership and diverging views on language preservation may divide the linguistic community under scrutiny (and actually hamper its defence), the numerically small (sometimes very small) group of language specialists studying these varieties appear not to be alien to these traits, either. We gleaned an (often unarticulated) dividing line between the native speakers/language users studying and documenting their own community languages (partially driven by considerations of identity and belonging) and scholars ‘from the outside’ who are often driven by a shared concern for language preservation and an intrinsic interest in the language itself as well as linguistic diversity generally.

As a result, discussions of ‘ownership’ of endangered languages have sometimes complicated the role of non-community members, often academics, in supporting language preservation or revitalization. Communities often lack resources of various kinds, and today, increasing numbers of productive collaborations are emerging as scholars work directly to support renormalization, documentation, educational and other efforts.

In the microcosm of these professional specialties, reviewers tread carefully and are highly sensitive to the deeply rooted identity concerns that underly much of the scholarly output on the topic – more often than not stressing the need for more linguistic person-power in times of sometimes challenging student recruitment in the humanities. We trust that both community members and those working with them on language issues will find ways to navigate these dynamics, responding to globalizing and localizing (or ‘globalizing’, Roudometof 2016) tendencies, and continuing to fuel the flood of progress in the science and scholarship advancing our understanding of language contact.

Scholarly criticism has rightfully toned down the manic sociolinguistic embrace of claims on the exceptional ‘superdiversity’ and unparalleled migration dynamics of the present age, putting language contact challenges in a broader historical perspective (Pavlenko 2019, 2023). Yet, all indicators point towards the ongoing importance and presence of migration – and, accordingly, towards perennial contact and possible conflict. Nelde’s Law – “there is no contact without conflict”, as also quoted in the introduction to Volume 1 – will continue to apply for some time to come, and we are eager to learn how it will be integrated in the ongoing development of contact linguistics as the 21<sup>st</sup> century moves forward.

One thing seems certain: if progress continues at the pace it has since the first edition of this handbook, a third edition would contain important issues that are not or are only barely visible today.

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