

## **Linguistic images and their potential for language-ideological positioning in a diachronic perspective**

### **Patterns, variations, shifts and changes of level**

Linguistic images are manifestations of language-reflexive interpretive schemes. Analogies between language and a body of water, a plant or a person, a political body, a building, a treasure, a mirror or a mask provide indications as to what people think about the structure and function as well as about the sociocultural and sociopolitical role of language. In the field of German linguistics, linguistic images are a central object of investigation in the history of language awareness and language reflection but also in research into language criticism and language ideology relevant to the present day. This article explores the potential for the language-ideological positioning of linguistic images in a diachronic perspective from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Linguistic images are associated with interpretive schemes that hand down language-related knowledge through time and space but also modify it. Language-ideological positionings are formed – and also transformed – through linguistic images. This article puts forward three propositions. For one thing, a process of de-imaging has been taking place from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, linguistic images are verbalized explicitly in the sources and texts under consideration such that the language-ideological positionings are closely linked with the linguistic image. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries almost the opposite is true: language-ideological positionings (for example, practices of inclusion and exclusion in the discourse on gender-sensitive speech) are addressed explicitly; linguistic images associated with them, by contrast, remain implicit or abstract (an image of language as something that can do harm or an image of language as a medium of exclusion and/or disparagement). Against this backdrop, the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century appear to represent a transitional phase; sometimes explicitly verbalized linguistic images and language-ideological positionings can be identified but sometimes they remain implicit. The period of National Socialism or, most notably, the subsequent process of dealing with the National Socialist past can be categorized as a turning point. For another thing, and this goes hand in hand with the second proposition, traditional linguistic images and their pattern-like interpretive schemes are shifting into lay discourse. The third proposition is also linked to de-imaging: In the period of National Socialism or the subsequent process of dealing with the National Socialist past, an interpretive scheme emerges, namely that of the ideological nature of language. This interpretive scheme is only rarely verbalized in the form of linguistic images; much more frequently we find language-ideological positionings which show that it is no longer just language that is reflected on but that language criticism itself comes under suspicion of ideology. From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the view is becoming established that languages and certain language usages convey ideologies. The change from a metalinguistic discourse that is strongly centred around linguistic images to a meta-metalinguistic discourse in which the power of language as a medium for recognizing and constructing reality is reflected can be described as a change of level.

The basis for our analysis is prefaces and language-reflexive chapters from German-language linguistic writings, (online) dictionaries and grammars that set the tone at the particular moment in time. For those who wrote the dictionaries and grammars as codices, the linguistic images and language-ideological positionings were constitutive in the creation of their work. Our analysis does not claim to be complete, however. The main aim is to highlight traditions and ruptures.

As the concept of ideology is often used in a stigmatizing way in everyday language, this article operates with two ideological concepts. On the one hand, we work with an analytical concept of ideology, which understands every form of knowledge, including knowledge produced by science, as being ideological. Thus we subscribe to an understanding of ideology from the perspective of a sociology of knowledge. We use the concept as an analytic category which is initially not associated with any value judgement but which should show that knowledge is always perspectivized. This broad concept of ideology makes it possible to historicize the boundaries between experts and lay people and also to consider the temporality of knowledge content and the operations behind its production up to the present day. When the concept of ideology is used in the texts under consideration, it usually does not align with the sociological-analytical concept of knowledge. Rather, “ideology” is usually used here with the aim of stigmatizing the ideas referred to. This is then demarcated from the analytic concept of ideology and understood as being emic/discourse-immanent. In this sense, this article can also be understood as being ideological in that it endeavours to contrast linguistic images and their potential for language-ideological positioning over time as descriptively as possible. This broad concept of ideology is then transferred to the concept of language ideology in such a way that the concept of language ideology is a meronym of the concept of ideology: they include language-related knowledge but go beyond purely language-related knowledge in one crucial respect. Language ideologies act as social indices; that is, they point to socioculturally and discursively relevant language-reflexive or language-critical individuals and collectives. At the same time they are guiding processes of standardization and destandardization..