

Preface

We encounter language and communication daily in a multitude of forms. Our everyday understanding of language and communication has divided this complex variety of forms into the strict dichotomy of “written” and “spoken” text. The terms “text” and “conversation”, which express this dichotomy, indicate not only the medial mode of realisation of the communication, but also a categorial division with its attendant scientific and methodological implications.

Whilst in its early stages text linguistics subsumed written text and forms of oral communication under the general term “text” in order to take account of the fundamental similarities between the two, the differences between “text” and “conversation” have latterly been accorded increasing prominence.

Thus since the beginning of the 80s a relatively independent discipline has developed – conversation linguistics – which is concerned with research into spoken, interactive-cooperatively realised communication. Conversation is, in this understanding of the word, the overall situational communication process, in which a multitude of verbal and non-verbal acts are realised by the co-present participants to the interaction.

Text linguistics, which arose a decade earlier from criticism of an exclusively sentence-level oriented linguistics, may in contrast be delimited in terms of the following form of linguistic communication: it is constituted by a particular instance (individual, group, institution, etc.) in written form; production and reception are not interactively-simultaneous, but are rather temporally and spatially removed.

The handbook follows this theoretical and methodological division of the subjects of linguistic theories of communication and distinguishes, therefore, a “text linguistics” from a “conversation linguistics”, but fundamental common features will nevertheless be taken into account.

In contrast to “*Textlinguistik*” (text linguistics), the term “*Gesprächslinguistik*” (conversation linguistics) is, in German, not unproblematic. Alongside the term “*Gespräch*” (conversation), terms such as “*Dialog*” (dialogue), “*Diskurs*” (discourse), or “*Konversation*” (again, conversation) are used. We speak in this handbook of “*Gesprächslinguistik*”/“conversation linguistics” because we are of the opinion that it is thereby possible to return to a far more neutral and general examination of the phenomenon in question, namely interactive communication. The other terms, in contrast, have already been introduced in the framework of particular analytical concepts for oral communication such as “*Dialoggrammatik*” (Dialogue Grammar), or “*Diskursanalyse*” (Discourse Analysis), or “*Konversationsanalyse*” (Conversation Analysis) and are therefore always associated in their use with specific theoretical and methodological implications.

Both the complexity and the scientific significance of the subjects have given rise to a multitude of analytical methods, issues, epistemological objectives, and methodological reflections. The breadth of international research therefore renders a presentation of this area in two separate volumes reasonable. Hence volume 1 is devoted to text linguistics; volume 2 to conversation linguistics.

In detail, the principal tasks of the handbook are:

- to represent developments in research and the current state of research in text linguistics and in conversation linguistics at an international level;
- to elucidate the fundamental text-relevant and conversation-relevant methods and to subject them to a critical examination;
- to present systematically and to exemplify essential aspects of the constitution and the typology of text and of conversation;
- to show text linguistics and conversation linguistics in relation to other disciplines which concern themselves in some form with text and with conversation, with the aim of encouraging the interdisciplinary exchange of information between “text-sciences”;
- to document and to evaluate the application of research in text linguistics and in conversation linguistics to date in particular fields of practice, and to investigate further areas of application.

In view of the mass of extant and incipient text linguistics and conversation linguistics programmes and projects, the aim of a handbook such as this to provide an exhaustive study is a desirable but, in the final analysis, an unattainable ideal. The handbook, however, does not only concern itself with those areas which the editors consider to be the most important in text linguistics and conversation linguistics but also aspires, in its structure, to being systematically comprehensive.

The handbook is intended not only for linguists but also for all others who are concerned in their daily scientific or practical work with the issues of the constitution of text and of conversation – such as literature specialists, philosophers, theologians, historians, psychologists, sociologists, educationalists, editors, and translators, etc.

In view of the international orientation of the handbook in terms of its subject and of its contributors and readers, the languages of publication are German and English.

The two volumes of the handbook are arranged in a way that they correspond to each other in their overall composition. The intention thereby is to give prominence to the connections between written-monologic and spoken-dialogic communication – despite all dissimilarities between the two – and to facilitate the orientation of the handbook user. The overlaps in the treatment of some themes which arise from such a concept have to some extent been retained, since they too serve to show the connections between the two volumes of the handbook.

The basic division of contents chosen for the two volumes aims to register systematically the central aspects of both disciplines as they are currently expressed in international discussion.

Chapters I and II and chapters XII and XIII are devoted to the history of research and to the current state of research. In order to maintain as comprehensive a picture as possible in the midst of this great variety of schools, trends, and approaches – particularly in the case of text linguistics – important phases in the research will be dealt with in longer overview articles and, in addition to this, approaches which have proved to be particularly productive when viewed from the perspective of the history of research will be dealt with in their own (short) articles.

Chapter III and chapters XIV to XVI contain a presentation of the methods of analysis which are constitutive for each discipline, and do so from a strictly scientific-systematic perspective – this is in contrast to the orientation towards the history of research adopted in chapters I and II and in chapters XII and XIII.

The focus of the handbook is formed on one hand by chapters IV to VII and by chapters XVII to XX, which concern themselves with various aspects of the constitution of text and the constitution of conversation respectively, and on the other hand by chapters VIII and IX and by chapters XXI to XXIII, which have as their subject the typology of text and the typology of conversation respectively.

Chapters X and XI and chapters XXIV and XXV round off the two volumes of the handbook by going beyond the purview of the disciplines in their strict sense. In chapter X and in chapter XXIV, text linguistics and conversation linguistics respectively are presented in the interdisciplinary framework of important disciplines which deal with text: the focus here is not only on a general recording of text-related and of conversation-related activities, but also on the issue of if, and if so, in how far, text linguistics and conversation linguistics can be of use to other disciplines which concern themselves with text and with conversation.

The final chapter of each volume (chapters XI and XXV respectively) is concerned with the aspect of applied text linguistics and of applied conversation linguistics, that is, these two final chapters are on the application of the research results of both disciplines in particular areas of practice.

In detail, the individual chapters serve the following purposes:

Chapter I is devoted to the history of text linguistics.

Chapter II gives a short overview of the development and the current state of text linguistics in particular geographical regions. The selection restricts itself to language areas (in the broadest sense) which have distinctive text linguistic research trends. A comprehensive study is not the objective here.

Chapter III concerns itself with important text analysis methods which either have been developed within the bounds of text linguistics or have been developed within other disciplines and are of particular relevance for text linguistics. The articles here are conceived systematically rather than historically (in contrast to the articles in chapter I).

Chapter IV offers, in the form of comprehensive articles, a systematic presentation of the essential prerequisites for the constitution of texts.

Chapters V and VI, which cover the grammatical, topical, and pragmatic conditions for the constitution of texts, define the core of the issue of text constitution.

Chapter VII then deals with the constitution of written texts under the aspects of "text production", "text structuring" and "text reception".

The issue of text typology is to be seen as a further central aspect of text linguistics.

Chapter VIII takes as its theme "criteria" in order to examine the fundamental principles of the typology of texts.

Chapter IX deals with the issue of text typology from another perspective, namely that of text-type *description* (in contrast to the *delimitation* of text types in chapter VIII). Since it would go far beyond the scope of this handbook to deal with all socially relevant text types in the form of individual articles, this work concentrates on the presentation of central fields of communication and on their constitutive text types. This procedure takes into account the basis of the text types in superordinate interactional contexts and an isolated examination of one text type is thus avoided. The term

“field of communication” is related to particular social areas for which the specific action and evaluative norms are constitutive. Fields of communication can thus be described as situatively and socially defined “ensembles” of text types. Since an adequate typology of fields of communication has not yet been provided by research the delimitation and listing of these fields is still rather provisorial and unsystematic. The editors are, however, of the opinion that for written communication the principal fields of communication have been recorded.

Chapter X sets text linguistics in relation to other disciplines for which work with or on texts is in some way fundamental. The list is not exhaustive yet comprises, in the opinion of the editors, the most important text-related disciplines. The focus in these articles is on the explanation of the respective underlying text concepts as well as on specific theoretical and methodological principles in dealing with texts. The relation to text linguistics is, as far as possible, established.

Finally, chapter XI is directed towards the central areas of application of text linguistics.

In the treatment of *conversation linguistics in volume 2* the basic procedure will be – as mentioned above – the same as that adopted for “text linguistics” in the first volume.

Chapters XII and XIII introduce the history and the regional spread of conversation linguistics. They investigate, how conversation linguistics developed from other concepts and from sub-disciplines within linguistics, how it has spread in various geographical regions, and what actual trends have emerged. It is self-evident here that the attempt at a systematisation has as its goal a more or less broad orientation rather than a precise categorisation of contemporary trends in conversation linguistics. Thus the terms which are used in the titles such as “conversation analysis”, “discourse analysis”, and “dialogue grammar” are to be understood rather as a broad approach to a systematisation or as a point of condensation for the various, quite differentiated endeavours towards the analysis of spoken communication.

In chapter XIV the point of view of the articles – following the scientific-historical and the scientific-sociological aspects of the two previous chapters – shifts from the meta-theoretical level to the examination of the subjects themselves. The initial focus is on the scientific documentation of the conversation. The object of the examination here is the particular methodological orientation of conversation linguistics which, apart from a few exceptions such as dialogue grammar, has always been a primarily empirical-inductive discipline. The procedures connected therewith must be discussed in appropriate detail.

Chapter XV concentrates on the second most important issue within an empirically-oriented conversation linguistics: the further processing of technically documented interactions. Conversation linguistics is only possible if the documented material is transcribed in detail and thus translated into a form which fixes its temporal linearity and transitoriness. In the conception and arrangement of such transcriptions a variety of factors plays a role, and it is these factors which are addressed in the individual articles.

Chapter XVI rounds off the methodological discussion. Following the examination of the processes of the documentation and of the transcription of conversation, in this chapter the basic methods of analysis are presented.

Chapters XVII to XX are devoted to the various aspects of the constitution of conversation: prerequisites, structures, procedures and modalities. This issue-complex is – together with the typology of conversation – a central concern of conversation linguistics.

In chapter XVII the various means and conditions for the realisation of conversation, such as the cognitive, social and medial preconditions, are thematised.

Chapter XVIII deals with the structure of conversation on various levels. These levels form hierarchies, on which the analytically differentiated elements are accessible. A conversation linguistics now has the tasks of discovering the various individual elements and structures of the conversation, of naming them, and of systematising and categorizing them. From such a methodological perspective the conversation is not processed successively-analytically but is perceived holistically as a finished and completed product.

Chapter XIX then presents, from a different methodological perspective, the various procedures which participants to an interaction employ in order to allow the conversation to come into being.

In chapter XX the focus is on a further important – and central – issue to which one is led through the particular interactive topic-orientation of special conversation sections: namely, modality. Under this are to be understood the relevant communicative intentional character and effect status of the conversation activities, with which the participants are able to realize various communicative intentions. The style of the conversation, the degree of sincerity and of significance are determined through such modality markings.

Whereas these articles are concerned with the constitution and the internal conditions of conversation, the next large issue-complex deals with conversation as a whole and with the possibilities for its classification.

First, chapter XXI presents the problems of the classification of conversation in general terms.

Chapter XXII essays to give an overview of those conversation types examined in the research – systematically arranged according to various fields of communication.

Chapter XXIII looks at special forms of communication which are difficult to subsume under the classification employed in chapter XXII.

The conclusion of this volume is formed by articles which are devoted to various interdisciplinary problems connected with the analysis of conversation.

In chapter XXIV the concern is in how far the analysis of conversation plays a role in other disciplines, is practised there, and in how far the theoretical-methodological concepts which are applied there might be of interest to conversation linguistics.

Finally, in chapter XXV the questions of in which social fields the findings and results of conversation linguistics can be applied and what practical use they might have there are addressed.

The detailed structure of the chapters can be seen from the table of contents and therefore does not need further explanation at this point.

Responsibility for the correctness and quality of each article rests with the individual contributors. The editors have tried – as far as possible – to achieve a quantitative

balance and formal uniformity among the articles. The only exception, due to the introduction of the German spelling reform during the course of the production of this handbook, is orthography. Here, the authors were free to choose between the old and the new system, and the editors have followed the authors' instructions or indicated intentions. Of course, consistency of spelling in the individual articles is assured.

The editors would like to thank all those who were involved in the making of this handbook, the authors, the editors of the handbook series, and the Walter de Gruyter Publishing House. Our special thanks also go to Dagmar Schacht and Jörg Hagemann (both Hamburg) for their active help in the various editorial stages.

The editors hope that the contributions will stimulate the contemporary discussion in text linguistics and conversation linguistics and that the wide range of information offered in this handbook will be used intensively.

December 1999

Klaus Brinker (Hamburg)
Gerd Antos (Halle)
Wolfgang Heinemann (Leipzig)
Sven F. Sager (Hamburg)