Conceptual Foundations of Language Science

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Description
This peer-reviewed open-access series publishes short and accessible books that explore well-defined topics in the conceptual foundations of language science. Topics may concern any conceptual issue of relevance to language science, from sound to syntax to semantics, and from evolution to acquisition to processing. Each book will be concise (length around 30,000-40,000 words, c. 90 pages) and will be written in clear, accessible prose, to maximize its appeal across the language sciences.

Motivation
No scientific work proceeds without conceptual foundations. In language science, our concepts about language underlie our thinking and organize our work. They determine our assumptions, direct our attention, and guide our hypotheses and our reasoning. So, it is crucial that we give them our close attention, independent from the methods that we happen to be applying in empirical work and analysis. In the context of rapid change and adoption of new methods in science today, there is an especially strong need for state-of-the-art, accessible work on the conceptual foundations of research on language. For only with clarity about conceptual foundations can we pose coherent research questions, design critical experiments, and collect crucial data.
What kind of books will be published in this series?

Traditional publishers tend not to publish very short books. The reasons are economic. But with open-access, the problem does not arise. One benefit of the short format is that the book is accessible and quickly readable. Another is that authors will find writing such a book attractive because it is manageable, given the usual time constraints, especially for more senior authors.

To picture the sort of book we want for this series, think of a longish journal article in which a clear theoretical point is expounded in a sustained way, based on good examples and arguments, with significance for how linguists think and work. Then imagine that the author could flesh out and expand the argument, at a length that a journal would seldom allow, yet keeping within a well-restricted page range (less than 100 pages). Here are a few examples of articles that approximate the kinds of conceptual explorations we have in mind for this series:

- Malinowski, 1923, “The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages”
- Sapir, 1944, “Grading, a Study in Semantics”
- Jakobson, 1965, “Quest for the Essence of Language”
- Chomsky, 1970, “Remarks on Nominalization”
- Hale, 1975, “Gaps in Grammar and Culture”
- Silverstein, 1976, “Hierarchy of Features and Ergativity”
- Levinson, 1988, “Putting Linguistics on a Proper Footing”
- Wilkins, 1996, "Natural Tendencies of Semantic Change"
- Kockelman, 2005, “The Semiotic Stance”
- Hanks, 2005, “Explorations in the Deictic Field”
- Christiansen and Chater, 2008, “Language as Shaped by the Brain”
- Ladd, 2011, “Phonetics in Phonology”

Where applicable, we would encourage authors to use this series as an opportunity to expand on an idea that has been put forward in a shorter published article; or to bring together pieces of a larger argument that may have previously appeared in different venues (though of course with significant update and revision, as appropriate).

Submissions welcome

We welcome submissions and pre-submission inquiries. Contact the editors by email or look up more information on the series website, conceptualfoundations.org.

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