

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The current volume consists of several contributions that illustrate the stage of the dialectological and linguistic geography research at the moment. Theoretical, methodological and technical aspects regarding the study of language at a dialectological level are presented.

Dialectology and linguistic geography studies register nowadays a special evolution both in Europe and in other continents. In using informatics, we witness today the fourth “generation” of linguistic atlases, with the publication of the “Atlas Linguarum Europae” [ALE], a project that was developed at a continental level, following the publication of other linguistic atlases elaborated at regional or continental levels, or by language families (for example, “Obščeslavjanskij Lingvističeskij Atlas” [OLA] or “Atlas linguistique roman” [AliR]).

The program of dialectology and linguistic geography research made so that language and dialects relationships appear in a new light and acquire a new relevance. At the level of European languages, linguistic comparison emphasizes deep and ancient relations of a cultural, social and religious nature. It is “a common mentality” that sometimes reveals the way in which extralinguistic reality is reflected in different languages or even in language families. Romanists have often revealed the fact that the comparison among Romance languages acquires a new depth if handled at the level of dialects. This is precisely underlined by the “Atlas linguistique roman”.

The current volume also helps stressing the relevance of recent dialectology and linguistic geography research for general linguistics, for the study of the languages that come into contact and for the comparative historical study.

The volume opens with the contribution of Mario Alinei, who was the president of the “European Languages Atlas (ALE)” between 1982 and 1998 and also the editor of the first five volumes of the Atlas (1983-1997). M. Alinei’s article is important both for the synthetic description of the history of the ALE (the first linguistic atlas at a European level) and, especially, from a theoretical point of view. ALE has inaugurated a new type of linguistic maps, previously acknowledged, namely *motivational maps*, by Mario Alinei’s decisive contribution, the one who also drew up “the three-stage theory”, regarding linguistic motivation in the history of European languages and – on this account – the Paleolithic Continuity Theory regarding the origin of the European languages.

An extension – important under a methodological aspect – of linguistic geography to the domain of anthroponomy is given by Wolfgang Viereck's article, *On the historical and geographic diffusion of English family names*. From a historical point of view, as the author shows, "in England the introduction of family names or surnames respectively was due to an enormous cultural change that followed the Norman Conquest in 1066". The geographical spreading of some English family names is illustrated by the author in former works for different historical stages, on 18 maps.

In our article (N. Saramandu and M. Nevaci) we discuss the theoretical and methodological aspects of the elaboration of motivational linguistic maps. Starting from the experience acquired at the level of the "Atlas Linguarum Europae", we briefly outline the "motivations" that account for the names of "leeches" in Romance languages "SANGSUE" (map that will be published in the next volume of the "Atlas linguistique roman"). The main purpose of our contribution was to show that motivational linguistic maps can be drawn not only at a European level or at the level of a family of languages, but also at a national level (map "CRANIU" [SKULL], on the basis of *ALRR. A Synthesis*, I).

Evoking briefly the progress that has been recorded for the last decades in dialectometry (DM) in Europe and the USA, Hans Goebel, one of the promoters of this linguistic discipline, presents some theoretical and practical aspects of DM on the basis of his experience at EDMS (Ecole – DM de Salzburg, Austria). DM is a method of study of the data offered by the linguistic atlases that highlights, on a statistical ground, the resemblance / difference degree among dialectal areas. The author illustrates his method with examples taken from the "Atlas linguistique de la France" (ALF).

The article written by Stelian Dumistrăcel and Doina Hreapcă is a contribution to the electronic drawing of linguistic maps. At the same time, the authors propose an exhaustive capitalization of the linguistic information regarding linguistic variation – including the historical, sociological information and so on – and its representation on stylistic-linguistic maps.

Four articles present the stage of dialectology and linguistic geography research regarding the Portuguese in Brazil (Maria do Socorro Silva de Aragão), Catalan (Joan Veny), Italian (Federica Cugno), Walloon (Esther Baiwir). The volume ends with a study dedicated to the terms used in Irish and Scottish Gaelic for "nothing" and "anything" (Seosamh Watson).

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