Langscape: Documentation applications of a language mapping tool and resource

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Langscape is a language mapping tool and resource containing information on over 7,000 languages. Information ranges from detailed maps indicating the extent of where a majority of speakers in a region are native speakers of that language; areas of lingua franca usage; sound files for languages; word lists for languages; language identification tool; and a range of functions assisting in language and linguistic pedagogy.

Langscape was originally developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Language and subsequently taken over by the Language Science Center, both at the University of Maryland. It is a free, on-line resource that is available to the public. Some functionality is based on proprietary information or systems, and these are not made available in the public release. As Ethnologue has recently instituted a paywall, resources like Langscape that can be used and accessed by researchers anywhere, are increasingly more important and rare.

Langscape solicits input from both professional and amateur linguists to help expand and refine coverage of language map areas. This is done by 'crowd-sourcing' input and having that curated or vetted by experts. The underlying mapping technology is based on ArcGIS.

This talk will present Langscape, and explore many aspects of its different functionalities and content. Aspects of the system that are not part of the public release will be covered (in the hopes of engendering potential collaboration). Finally, we will explore how Langscape, or similar such mapping tools can be used to help aid language documentation. Whereas researchers in the past marked lines on maps with pencils to represent isoglosses and bundles, modern mapping tools with multiple overlays allow for much more precise and revealing representations of language boundaries.

Please note that this talk will not cover technical details of the ArcGIS technology beyond a very simple introduction.

https://langscape.umd.edu

https://www.ethnologue.com/

https://www.arcgis.com/