Investigating Historical Language Ideologies in Multilingual Contexts: A Novel Sociohistorical Framework

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Theories of Language Ideology

- **Neutral:** "Shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world" (Rumsey, 1990)
- **Critical:** "Sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein, 1979)

- Following Woolard and Shiefflin (1994), we adopt an overlapping view:
  Shared notions and beliefs, both conscious and unconscious, that shape users' production and perception of language structures
- The emergence of language ideology requires the recognition of difference between varieties
- Language ideologies are the interpersonal social schemas that result in individual language attitudes, the two are not equivalent and should not be conflated (Kircher & Zipp, 2022)

Related Approaches to Historical Contexts

Ecology of Language (Haugen, 1972)
- Provides a schema for identifying important variables of the linguistic context

Language Standardization (Joseph, 1987)
- Provides a specific account of how standard languages emerged in Western and Post-Colonial societies

Language Prestige (Sairio & Palander-Collin, 2012)
- Examines how speakers ranked languages in historical contexts

Multilingualism and Code Switching (Schendl, 2012)
- Examines how speakers selected and switched between varieties in multi-varietal contexts

Language Policy (Wright, 2004)
- Examines how states, rulers, and institutions imposed and guided language use and development

Challenges and Aim

Challenges
- Speakers from cultures which lack a "standard language" do not view themselves as speaking a particular language or necessarily belonging to a linguistic community, which challenges the European model of language description (Milroy, 2012)
- Historical frameworks of investigation must be able to account for the wide cross-contextual diversity of language ideologies which has been described

Aim
- **Synthesize related approaches into a productive framework for working with historical data to identify language ideologies**

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Proposed Framework

A flexible model for interrelating direct textual data with indirect contextual data
- **Recognizes that historical language ideology is not directly accessible to researchers**
- **Proposes three manifestations of language ideology,** categories of textual data that signal the presence of language ideology
- **Proposes three variables mediating language ideology,** categories of contextual variables which produce metalinguistic awareness
- Not exhaustive categories, aim instead to set out a foundation to build on
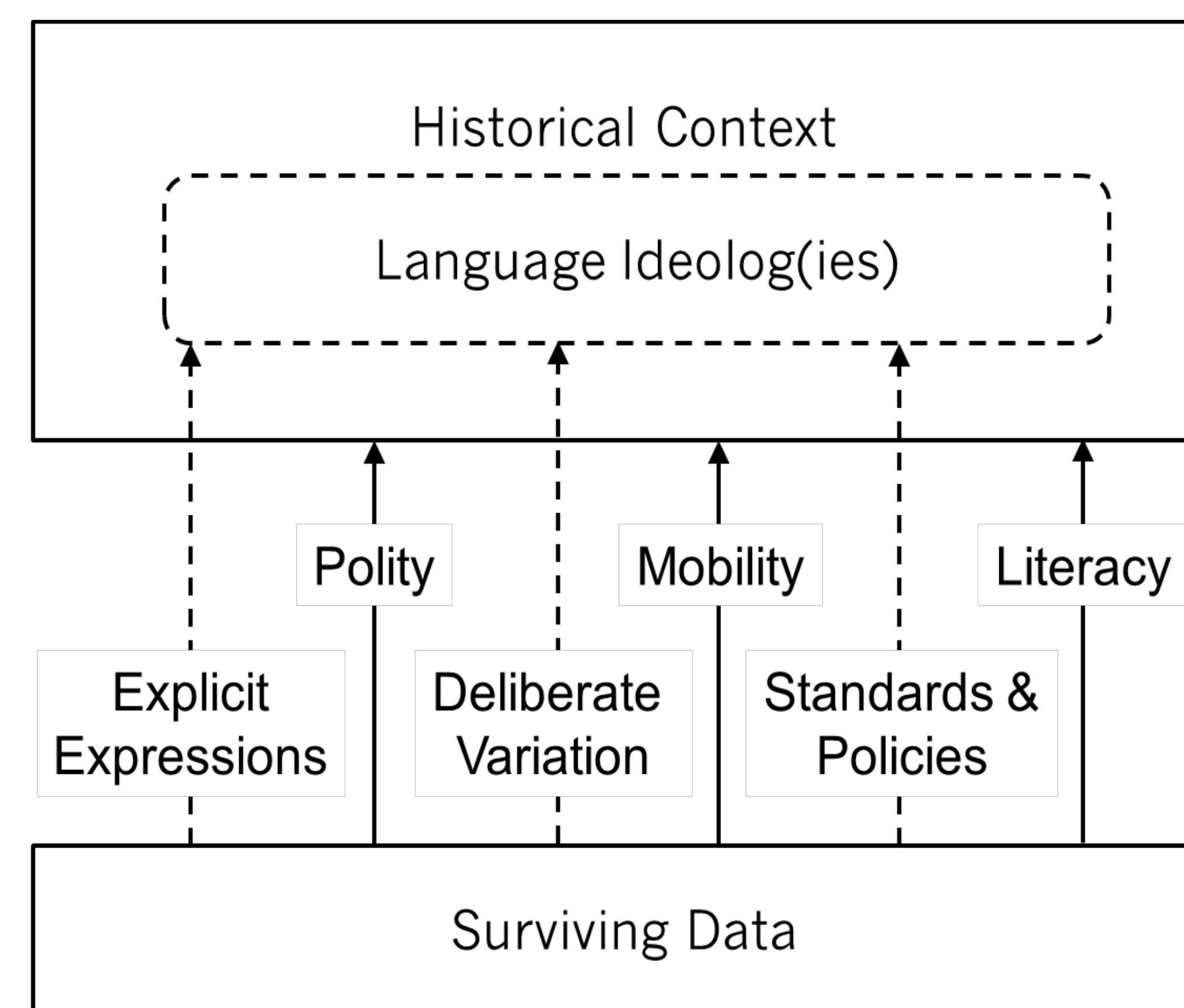

Figure 1: Illustration of the framework

Manifestations of Language Ideology

Explicit Expression
- Having records from individuals detailing their perceptions of language forms provides evidence for their conscious beliefs and attitudes

Deliberate Variation
- Which language an author chooses to use implies linguistic propriety, preference, and power

Standards and Policies
- When authorities issue decrees or create educational materials on varieties of language, this provides evidence for linguistic norms and the authorities attitudes and beliefs

Variables Mediating Language Ideology

Polity
- Differing power relations incentivize different language attitudes among both rulers and subjects

Mobility
- Contact changes both languages and attitudes—cross cultural exchange, both positive and negative

Literacy and Writing
- Writing is necessarily learned with norms, and these norms influence spoken language
- Textual traditions are value-laden and offer targets for production

Application 1: Vaupés Basin (1980–2012)

Deliberate Variation

Men and children speak the dominant language of their village, their patrilect; the wives speak their own patrilect. Couples understand each other's languages but tend to speak in their own language (Epps, 2013).

Mobility

People of the Vaupés basin learn each other's languages to maintain trade and labor exchanges, even if they do not speak them (Epps, 2018). The practice of linguistic exogamy contributes to this, as wives(/mothers) speak a different language than the village.

Application 2: Ottoman Empire (1299–1922)

Explicit Expression

Ottoman poet Nabi (1642–1712) wrote: "In the provinces the ear and the heart long for the sweet elocution of the people of Istanbul... [c]an such heart-warming meanings and fine elegant expressions come into being in the middle of Arabistan?" (Aynur, 2006, p. 487)

Polity

To rule its multicultural population, the Ottoman administration included members of the Empire's many ethnic groups through both forced and voluntary assimilation (Yilmaz, 2009; Peirce, 2010).

Deliberate Variation

A 17th century Ottoman author describes meeting various non-Turkish Ottoman subjects who learned Ottoman Turkish or Persian for official cultural purposes (Kim & Bashkin 2022, p. 130).

Mobility

Interregional trade, dominated by wealthy Muslim merchants, thrived, leading Arabic to become the lingua franca (Kim & Bashkin, 2022; Quataert, 2005).

Standards & Policies

Ottoman Turkish was the language of administration (Saydam, 2007). Palace schools for elite children and devshirme provided instruction in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish (Dolgunsöz, 2014).

Literacy and Writing

Greek, Latin, Armenian, and Hebrew texts circulated extensively throughout the empire between subject populations (Kim & Bashkin, 2022).

Application 3: Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)

Standards & Policies

Multiple edicts were issued discouraging use of foreign languages in the court and for official purposes, defacto recognizing Chinese as the official court language (Lotze, 2017).

Literacy and Writing

The Ming dynasty founded a bureau of translation to translate documents for the court, and imperial exam takers could advance on the merit of their translation abilities (Lotze, 2017).
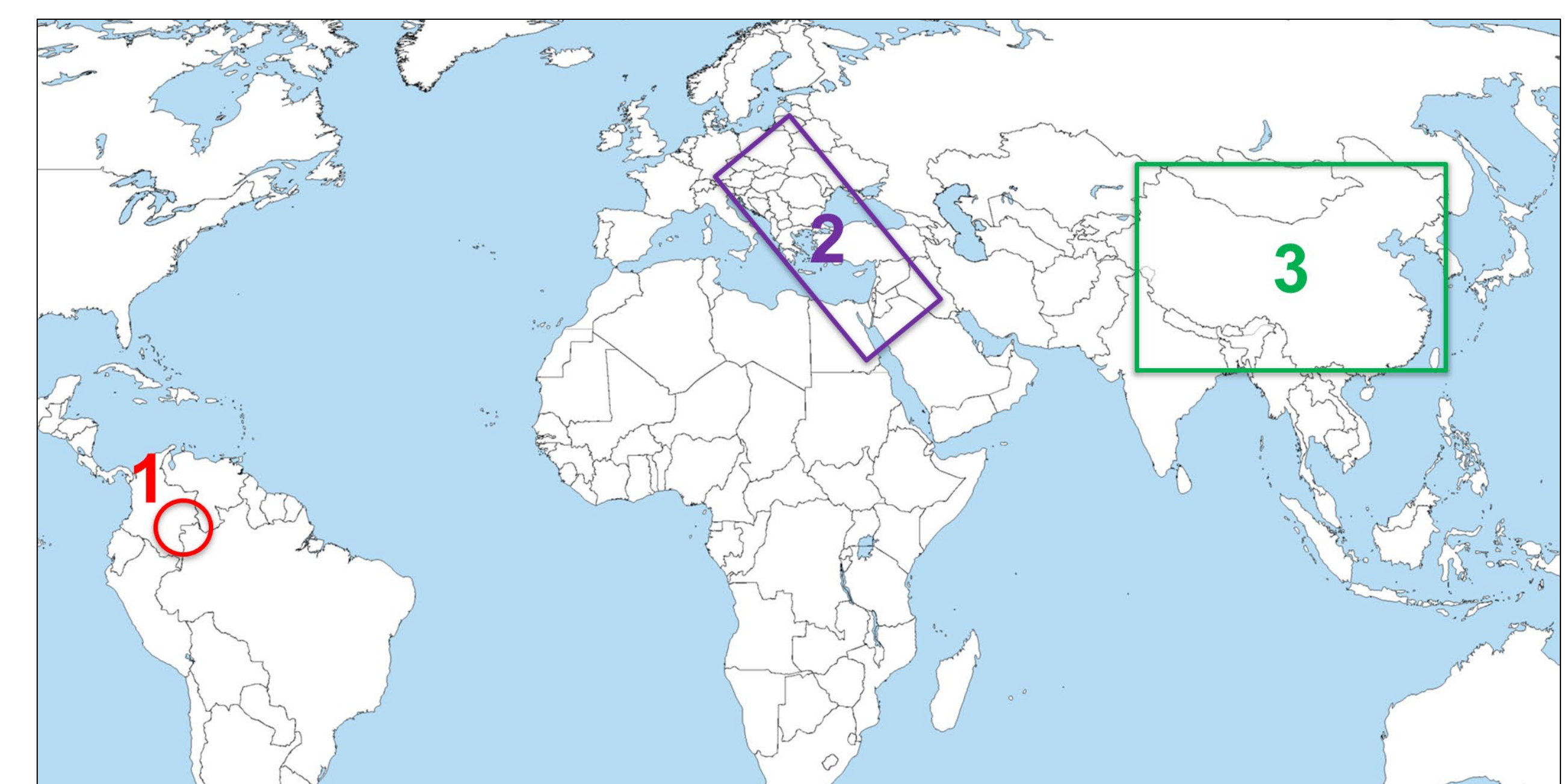

Figure 2: Example application areas