Writing: System, Use, Ideology · Description

WORKSHOP AT THE **46TH AUSTRIAN LINGUISTICS CONFERENCE**

ORGANIZED BY
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Writing is an utterly multifaceted subject. This is echoed by the interdisciplinarity of grapholinguistics, a young field of study invested in all questions pertaining to writing. As one of the modalities of language, writing is undeniably a linguistic subject. However, the most dominant paradigms of linguistics initially neglected questions of writing; thus, the systematic study of those questions had a delayed start and is, to this day, not as well-established as other linguistic subfields. Against this background, it is astonishing how fine-grained grapholinguistic, and especially graphematic, research has become. It must be noted, however, that this research is influenced largely by structuralism and thus focuses on the (static) description of writing as a system, neglecting questions of its use in the process.

By contrast, use comes to the forefront in psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic approaches to writing. Phenomena studied by psycholinguistics include processes of reading and writing, literacy acquisition, and disorders of reading and written expression, while the sociolinguistic study of writing has focused, among other things, on the social functions of writing (and its various registers), practices of literacy, and, crucially, ideologies associated with writing.

In practice, systematic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic aspects interact and together shape both how writing is structured and how it is used (and how these two factors, in turn, affect each other). To reflect reality in grapholinguistic theory, the systematic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic perspectives should converge. Notably, exchange between these perspectives and the scholars who adopt them has been scarce. Arguably, for the sake of writing as a subject, such exchange is necessary and will likely uncover many (new) questions that have yet to be negotiated. This workshop seeks to make this exchange possible.

In featuring talks from international experts covering all three mentioned perspectives, a full(er) picture of the study of writing is expected to emerge. Scholars are invited to present their research in their field of expertise, focusing also on what it can contribute to an overall theory of writing and indicating possible important interfaces with the other perspectives. This will hopefully generate stimulating discussion(s) about the current state and, most importantly, the future of grapholinguistics and a theory of writing.

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Writing: System, Use, Ideology · Program

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9 (ALL TIMES ARE IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME)

14:25 − 14:30	**OPENING WORDS**
14:30 − 15:00	**Zohar Eviatar** (University of Haifa)
	Writing as a manifestation of inner speech: Hands and Psyche
15:00 − 15:30	**Florian Coulmas** (Universität Duisburg-Essen)
	Writing, Religion, and Identity
	BREAK
16:00 − 17:00	**Rebecca Treiman** (Washington University in St. Louis)
	Learning and use of writing systems
17:00 − 17:30	**Hye K. Pae** (University of Cincinnati)
	"We Are What We Read": The Effects of Script Specificity on Thinking and Learning
	SHORT BREAK
17:45 − 18:15	**Peter T. Daniels** (Independent Scholar)
	What are we talking about?
18:15 − 18:45	**Amalia E. Gnanadesikan** (University of Maryland)
	Sign Affixation in Aksharas and Glyph Blocks: Morphological Correlates in Writing Systems

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10 (ALL TIMES ARE IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME)

9:00 − 9:30	**Stefan Hartmann** (Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf)
	Univerbation and categorial fuzziness: What spelling variants of preposition-noun combinations reveal about linguistic categorization
9:30 − 10:00	**Heather Winskel** (Southern Cross University)
	Mirror invariance: Reading with and without mirror letters
10:00 − 10:30	**Jürgen Spitzmüller** (Universität Wien)
	From 'Semiotic Resource' to 'Social Practice': The Indexical Dynamics of Typography
	BREAK
11:00 − 12:00	**PLENARY TALK OF THE AUSTRIAN LINGUISTICS CONFERENCE** (please change meeting): **Artemis Alexiadou** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin) Multiple exponence: sometimes two is better than one
	BREAK
14:00 − 14:30	**Nadja Kerschhofer-Puhalo** (Universität Wien)
	Hand-writing − rise or fall?: Practices, discourses, and ideologies on writing by hand
14:30 − 15:00	**Florian Busch** (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg)
	Styling Spelling: Social Indexicalities in Digital Written Interaction
15:00 − 15:30	**Dimitrios Meletis** (Universität Zürich)
	Structural, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic typologies of writing
15:30 − 15:35	**CLOSING WORDS**

Writing: System, Use, Ideology · Abstracts

Styling Spelling: Social indexicalities in digital written interaction

Florian Busch (Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg)

Against the backdrop of the societal differentiation of literacy, the paper investigates spelling variation in digital written communication beyond the binary paradigm of standard and non-standard. To this end, the paper proposes a formal classification of digital spelling variants and then focuses on the socio-communicative functions of these variants in use. Theoretically grounded in the notions of *social indexicality*, the paper discusses how spelling variants are metapragmatically ordered by social actors and deployed in text-messaging interactions to indicate interpretive context. To investigate these phenomena, the paper is empirically grounded in a tripartite research framework that addresses digital writing regarding its I) structural variants, II) communicative practice, and III) underlying language ideologies. The approach is illustrated by case studies based on a data set of informal WhatsApp texting by 23 German adolescents. The exemplary analyses focus on phonostylistic spellings (e.g. elisions such as <ich hab> instead of <ich habe>) and graphostylistic spellings (e.g. graphemic substitutions such as <daß> instead of <dass>) in these German WhatsApp interactions, reconstructing the metapragmatic status of standard orthography in digital writing. By combining structure-oriented, interactional, and ethnographic perspectives, the paper seeks a disciplinary dialogue by relating concepts of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology to grapholinguistics.

Writing as a manifestation of inner speech: Hands and Psyche

Zohar Eviatar (University of Haifa)

I will examine the process of writing as a manifestation of inner speech. Inner speech is fundamental to human mental life – much of our inner experiences include linguistic representations, either as inner dialogues, monologues, remembered conversations, interpretations of perception, and more. Writing has been defined as the visual translation of spoken language. However, when adults write, they usually do not speak out loud – linguistic planning during writing is mostly done via inner speech, unlike children at the beginning stages of learning to write who speak out loud what they intend to write. I will talk about the relationship between writing and inner speech at two levels of inquiry. Focusing on the motor aspects of writing, I report an experiment that shows the relationship between the acoustic characteristics of a heard sentence (prosody), and temporal measures of typing the sentence after repeating it silently. The results reveal that linguistic aspects of speech can affect the peripheral motor system which subserves writing (the hands). Focusing on the content of written texts, I will present findings from a study examining the effects of expressive writing on the experience of surviving psychological trauma (the psyche). We replicated the positive effects of expressive writing on general measures of well-being, and then analyzed the resulting texts from both a psychological and a linguistic perspective. We found that improvement in well-being occurred when emotional and cognitive processes resulted in integrative meaning-making (for example, phrases indicating insight and emotional movement vs. phrases indicating rumination and thought loops) that was reflected in the structure of the narrative. The results from both levels of inquiry will be discussed in the context of the Embodiment Model of language representation, which posits that that neuro-cognitive representations, are a sensory-motor simulation of experience. I will propose that inner speech

is an embodied linguistic representation involved in mental processes from sensory-motor planning and regulating to meaning making and self-narratives, and that writing is our window to these phenomena.

Writing, Religion, and Identity

Florian Coulmas (IN-EAST, Duisburg-Essen University)

Slightly more than a century ago, on the eve of the Great War, Ludwig Zamenhof pointed out that two things divided humanity, language and religion. To the extent that this statement is true it entails the opposite, too. For division means the formation of smaller units: If it isn't Muslims, it is Shiites and Sunnis; and if it isn't Dehlvi, it is Urdu and Hindi. Because of this divisive and unifying potential of language and religion, both play a major role in identity discourses. As such they are the subject matter of social analysis, the Sociology of Language in particular. At the interface of both, writing plays a major role as an agent of dispersal, spread and proselytism.

While Sociolinguistics is focussed, by and large, on speech, the Sociology of Language cannot ignore writing, for language as an instrument of law, religion, instruction, and diplomacy is primarily written language. This paper reviews the significance of writing for the Sociology of Language, paying special attention to religious and other identities.

Learning and use of writing systems

Rebecca Treiman (Washington University in St. Louis)

This talk looks at writing from a psycholinguistic perspective, focusing on how people use their writing system to read and write words. I take a developmental perspective, reviewing studies of populations ranging from preschool children to adults. The focus is on English, but studies of other languages are considered as well.

"We Are What We Read": The Effects of Script Specificity on Thinking and Learning

Hye K. Pae (University of Cincinnati)

The invention of written signs dramatically changed the trajectory of civilization as well as how we think and learn. This talk begins with the linguistic relativity hypothesis (i.e., the language we speak affects the way we think) and extends it to script relativity (the script in which we read influences our thought). It also discusses what it means to be a literate in relation to "we are what we read." Language serves as the medium of conceptual thinking and reasoning. The script we read in goes above and beyond the effects of spoken language on cognition, because reading is a neurobiologically demanding endeavor and needs to be effortfully learned, as opposed to spoken language that comes naturally. The effects of script-specific characteristics on how individuals process visual stimuli at hand have been manifested in a multitude of studies of cross-scriptal differences and second language

learning. To capture these linguistic and scriptal dimensions, the main themes discussed in this talk are as follows: the operating principle of script, grain size, script shape, text direction, the effects of reading, and the presence or absence of inter-word spacing. The talk ends with a discussion of a broader impact of script relativity, including the micro- and macro-influences of script and advances in the science of reading.

What are we talking about?

Peter T. Daniels (Independent Scholar)

Scholars have not always agreed on what *writing* is. At the beginning of the scientific study of writing, in the 1880s, the subject matter might have seemed self-evident and definitions were inchoate. When the major reference works began to appear, after the Second World War, authors began to fill the gap, and their definitions stressed the preservation of communication *across space and time*. The modern period of writing systems research, which happened to set in just after the death of I. J. Gelb, saw a global change to stressing the recording of *language*. Can this change be accounted for? Discussion will be invited!

Sign Affixation in Aksharas and Glyph Blocks: Morphological Correlates in Writing Systems

Amalia E. Gnanadesikan (University of Maryland)

The connection between phonology and writing systems is strong, with all fully developed writing systems making at least some reference to phonology (DeFrancis 1989). As a natural consequence, the tools of phonological analysis have been much used in grapholinguistics, for example in the typology of writing systems and in the identification of entities such as graphemes and graphematic syllables. However, as Meletis (2020: 202) points out, graphemes differ in kind from phonemes (or syllables) in that the former are signs (which stand for something) and the latter are not (being inherently meaningless). Thus graphemes share an important trait with *morphemes* that they do not share with any phonological unit. In applying the tools and categories of morphological analysis to writing systems, we can analyze the dependent vowels of the akshara-based writing systems as systems of affixation. A second type of sign affixation come from the Maya hieroglyphic writing system. Finding morphological processes in the structure of writing systems strengthens the claim that writing systems are grammatical systems in their own right, operating at least partly independently of the grammatical systems of the language for which they are used.

Univerbation and categorial fuzziness: What spelling variants of preposition-noun combinations reveal about linguistic categorization

Stefan Hartmann (Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf)

Spelling variants of German preposition-noun combinations like *infrage/in Frage* 'in question', *infolge/in Folge* 'due to' (lit. 'in consequence'), *aufgrund/auf Grund* 'because of' (lit. 'on ground/cause'), or *zuhause/zu Hause* 'at home' are prototypical examples of doubtful cases in the sense of Klein (2003, 2018, see also Schmitt et al. 2019), as writers are often unsure what the "correct" variant is in standard orthography. The case of *zu Hause/zuhause/Zuhause* exemplified in (1)–(3) is particularly interesting as it is also used in the nominalized form *Zuhause* 'home', which can be found in adjectival uses even in newspaper and magazine texts as well, as example (2) shows.

(1) Ich werde bis Ende nächster Woche **zuhause** unter Quarantäne stehen. 'I will bequarantined **at home** until the end of next week.' (Handelsblatt, 02.12.2020, DWDS)
(2) Die Menschen sollten soweit möglich **Zuhause** bleiben. 'The people should stay **athome** as far as possible.' (Deutsche Welle, 15.06.2020, DWDS)
(3) Also muss ich auch zwei Wochen **zu Hause** bleiben. 'So I have stay **at home** for twoweeks as well.' (taz, 18.11.2020, DWDS)

This variation is closely connected to multiple aspects that are not only relevant from a graphemic (or orthographic, see Jacobs 2005) point of view but lie at the heart of linguistic theory: Firstly, the varying use of open vs. solid spelling indicates that the preposition phrase is perceived as a coherent unit to different degrees by different language users. Secondly, the variation between lowercase and uppercase spelling indicates varying degrees of "nouniness" (Ross1973, Sasse 2001, Hartmann 2018). As such, these instances of spelling variation can potentially shed light on key aspects of linguistic categorization (Taylor 2003). To explore this variation and its explanatory potential in more detail, this paper presents a multifactorial analysis of spelling variation in the case of *zu Hause/zuhause/Zuhause* on the basis of Barbaresi's (2021) "Corona-Korpus", focusing specifically on the adjectival uses of the variants. In particular, the goal of this paper is to assess to what extent this variation is random (which would indicate that there is a certain degree of "contamination" between the three variants in the sense that they are used interchangeably), and to what extent distributional factors – which in turn can be connected to varying degrees of similarity to prototypical nouns and adjectives – can account for the choice between the three variants.

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Mirror invariance: Reading with and without mirror letters

Heather Winskel (Southern Cross University)

From an evolutionary perspective, the visual system is programmed to recognise predators or objects regardless of their orientation. This is referred to as mirror invariance or generalisation. As reading is a relatively recent cultural invention, it does not have particular cortical networks associated with that function. Instead, it has been found to recycle pre-existing regions of the visual cortex that are typically used for recognising objects and faces (e.g., Dehaene, 2005). When learning to read Roman script with its mirror letters, children need to fine-tune skills so that they can readily discriminate between mirror letter pairs and words containing those letters (e.g., bad vs. dad). Thus, the general mirror recognition ability must be inhibited or suppressed to some extent when learning to read scripts with mirror letters (e.g., Dehaene et al., 2005, 2010). Importantly, prior research on readers of scripts without mirror letters (Tamil: Pederson, 2003; Thai: Winskel & Perea, 2018) suggests they are more susceptible to mirror generalisation effects in comparison to readers of scripts that do have mirror letters (i.e., Roman script). Some recent research on this topic will be reviewed.

From 'Semiotic Resource' to 'Social Practice': The Indexical Dynamics of Typography

Jürgen Spitzmüller (Universität Wien)

In linguistics, typography has often been described as a 'semiotic resource' of its own kind which offers specific meaning potentials to readers. This talk introduces a different perspective which is informed by interactional sociolinguistics and metapragmatics. Like other modes of communication, typography is thereby conceived of as a socially enregistered form (materialization) that is discursively associated with context expectations, experiences, values and beliefs ('graphic ideologies') and thus indexically shapes ('contextualizes') interpretive processes. I will argue that typography needs to be analyzed in the context of socially institutionalized enactments ('communicative social practices') and framing metapragmatic discourse rather than on the basis of mere product analyses (of multimodal texts), which do not sufficiently grasp the dynamics and indexicality of typography.

Hand-writing – rise or fall?: Practices, discourses, and ideologies on writing by hand

Nadja Kerschhofer-Puhalo (Universität Wien)

Writing systems and the systemic character of writing are typical objects of linguistics. More recently, other aspects of writing have attracted the research interests of many linguists and writing in its many aspects has gradually moved from the periphery towards the center of linguistic interest. This seems to reflect a general societal trend towards a *focus on form* (rather than *function*) due to which the visual, the multimodal, or the aesthetic often seems to receive more attention than contents.

This presentation will discuss aspects of the usage of hand-writing as embedded in discourses. The value of writing by hand and its positive impact on motoric and cognitive skills is highlighted in discourses favoring the continuous teaching and practising of hand-writing in educational contexts; the negative effects of writing on screens and keyboards in the age of digital communication are frequently deplored in discourses on literacy and education. However, as will be postulated here, the social status of hand-writing is changing, but it is not "getting lost" or "dying out" – as many worries and complaints in public media would suggest – but is rather undergoing a process of continuous discursive negotiation and diversification.

Literacy practices involving hand-writing and ideologies around such practices of writing by hand will be illustrated by materials collected in two research projects on the acquisition and use of literacy skills in educational and everyday contexts: My Literacies and Views in*2 Literacies. They will be complemented by social media contributions to exemplify processes of negotiation and diversification of the social status of hand-writing. Literacy practices – a central concept in both projects – are practices of reading and writing in daily life and form a crucial part of our communicative repertoire. They are embedded in everyday contexts and influenced by socio-cultural, individual and institutional factors. Having a central role in our daily lives, they are socially constructed and formed by discourses.

Traditional forms of calligraphy find their echo in more recent practices of lettering and aesthetic writing that are enacted and shared in social media (see also online communities such as *Studygram, Studytube oder Studyblr* to name just a few). They show highly formalized, aesthetized, and also ritualized practices of writing by hand where aspects of materiality and mediality are strongly associated with affordances of the communication channel, commercial aspects, but also socio-cultural contexts and the status, intentions and communicative aims of the users. These lend themselves to an analysis of meta-pragmatic and ideological aspects associated with (hand-)writing and literacies at large. This presentation will focus on different aspects of literacy practices and writing by hand: the individual, the spontaneous, the ritual, the performative, the social, the commercial, the aesthetic, and even the subversive character of writing by hand.

As the research program of the Literacies and Multilingualism research group is an ongoing and continuously developing project, our aim here will be to offer insights into our research material and to formulate open questions for further research that may contribute to an overall theory of writing and literacy.

Foundations of usage-based graphemics

Ulrike Sayatz (Freie Universität Berlin), **Roland Schäfer** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Usage-based Grammar (UG) is based on two core anti-chomskyan assumptions: (i) grammar is acquired using only general cognitive devices, (ii) only the input and general cognitive constraints determine the grammar. Since the input is always rife with variation and often non-discrete, a third assumption is crucial to some researchers: (iii) grammars are learned as probability distributions over possible forms, meanings, and form-meaning pairs. We embrace all three assumptions and apply them to graphemics in Usage-based Graphemics (UGx, Schäfer & Sayatz 2016 and references therein). In this talk, we summarise the core theoretical assumptions of UGx and show examples from published and unpublished research on German.

UGx views graphemics as a component of the language faculty on a par with phonology and phonetics. While the phono-component comprises regularities of how grammar is encoded in speech sounds, graphemics comprises similar regularities of how grammar is encoded in written symbols. Whether and how strongly the phono-component and the graphemics component are intertwined is determined by the type of script and the specific language, where ideograph-based writing systems like early cuneiform Sumerian (virtually complete separation) and phonographic writing systems like German (substantial overlap) represent extremes on a continuous scale. The probabilistic usage-based nature of the acquisition process should be reflected in the grammars of competent adult speakers/writers and not just in the acquisition process itself. Therefore, UGx is not a theory of processing, and we consequently focus on production data obtained from competent adults. The main task of UGx is to uncover the probabilistic mappings of lexical-grammatical categories to written forms. For writing systems like German this involves the mappings of sounds to letters, parts of speech to spellings, syntactic categories to spaces and punctuation marks, etc. Notice that *probabilistic* does not imply that there are no virtually discrete mappings like the consonantal segment-to-letter mapping in German. While the acquisition of the writing system involves explicit instruction and is partially superimposed by prescriptive norms, we expect writers to learn grammar-graphemics mappings first and foremost from their realisations in the input, especially whenever the norm is unspecific or unclear – a situation which provides ideal test cases for UGx. Variation or alternation in the input shapes the acquired probability distribution, and conditioning factors are acquired to the degree that they can be retrieved from the type and the frequency of the input. We show how the assumptions of UGx can be tested using data from four studies on (i) the graphemic cliticisation of the German indefinite article (*ein > n > nen*) as showing constraints on graphemic words and syllables (Schäfer & Sayatz 2014), (ii) punctuation in non-standard syntax as an indicator of both clausal (in)dependence and the part-of-speech of connectives (Schäfer & Sayatz 2016), (iii) alternations in the univerbation of noun-verb combinations as motivated by their ambiguous morphosyntactic status (Schäfer & Sayatz submitted), (iv) the punctuation marks used in non-integrated prenominal syntax as an indicator of their functional spectrum (Sayatz & Schäfer in prep.). We use production data rather than perception data, both from large corpora (including writing produced under low normative pressure) and production experiments. We finish by discussing how written register is an under-researched determining factor in writers' graphemic choices.

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Structural, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic typologies of writing

Dimitrios Meletis (University of Zurich)

'Writing system typology', thus far, is closely associated with a descriptive classification of writing systems focusing on the linguistic level (phonemic, syllabic, morphemic) that the basic units of writing systems relate to – their main underlying criterion, thus, is 'dominant level of representational mapping' (cf. Joyce/Meletis in press). Such typologies have been used to show how writing systems function at their core as well as to highlight both similarities and differences between them. Arguably, however, due their narrow scope, many potentially relevant features and parallels remain blind spots.

These start already at the structural level, as the restricted focus on the relation between writing and language results in a disregard of systematic structural features that are intrinsic to writing systems, i.e., not determined by their relation to language. These include, for example, allography, i.e., systematic variation of variant units in writing, or graphotactics, the rules of how units of writing may combine to form larger units (such as written words, sentences, etc.). Notably, a restriction to structure dismisses paramount questions concerning the use of writing systems, e.g., how they are processed and used for communication, bringing to the fore psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives. Potential criteria for possible psycholinguistic typologies of writing include, for example, spacing between graphemes or written words, or the visual complexity exhibited by the script used for a writing system. A candidate for a sociolinguistic typology is the degree of normativity and prescriptivism characterizing a literate culture, which is established, among other things, by asking if and how the writing system in question is orthographically regulated and how this affects users' literacy practices and ideologies pertaining to writing.

Since, in a comprehensive and integrated theory of writing, a writing system must always simultaneously be considered as a system with its own idiosyncratic features, a semiotic system relating to a given language, a graphic medium that must be physiologically and cognitively processed, and a communication tool and a cultural technique embedded in a given context and culture, structural, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic perspectives arguably should never be adopted completely divorced from each other (cf. Meletis 2020). This talk aims not only to present different structural and use-based typologies of writing that go beyond those brought forth by 'traditional' writing system typology but also to show how they are connected and interact with each other and, importantly, how this can increase our knowledge of the fundamental nature of writing.

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