

THE TOTAL GRAPHOLINGUISTIC FACT

Brief overview of past and present research

THE NATURE OF WRITING: A THEORY OF GRAPHOLINGUISTICS

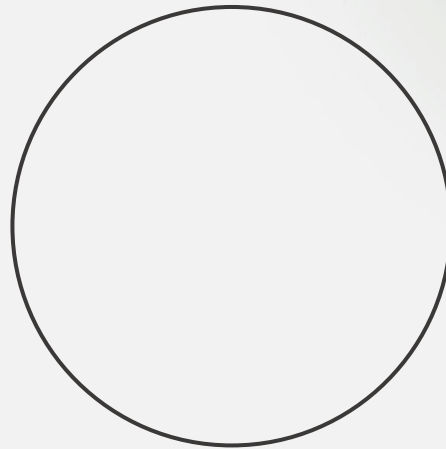
* goal: carving out a **comparative** and
interdisciplinary study of writing

THE NATURE OF WRITING: A THEORY OF GRAPHOLINGUISTICS

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Germanist
structuralist
Schriftlinguistik

focused on synchronic and
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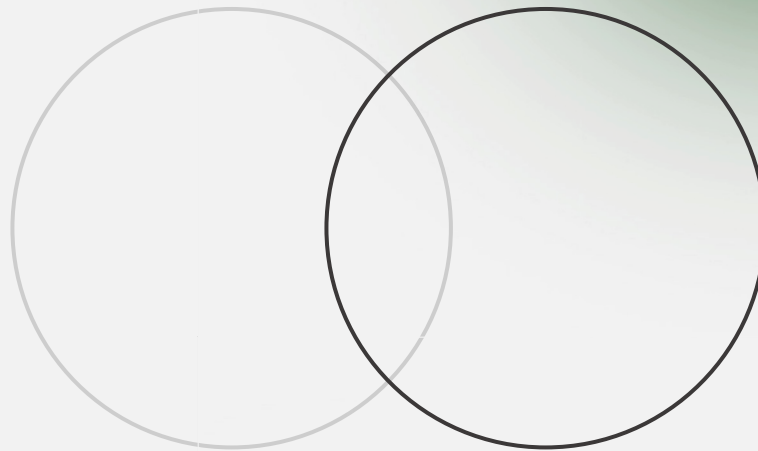


THE NATURE OF WRITING: A THEORY OF GRAPHOLINGUISTICS

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Anglo-American
linguistic research on
writing

focused on typology and
diachrony, [roughly] categorizing
and juxtaposing systems but not
comparing them in a fine-
grained manner

THE NATURE OF WRITING: A THEORY OF GRAPHOLINGUISTICS

DESCRIPTION

- * proposing a unified descriptive framework for all (kinds of) writing systems
- * accounts for basic comparative concepts such as *grapheme*, *allography*, and *graphotactics*

” Some writing systems are better than others.^[1]

” Every language gets the writing system it deserves.^[2]

[1] Rogers, Henry. 1995. Optimal Orthographies. In Insup Taylor & David R. Olson (eds.): *Scripts and Literacy: Reading and Learning to Read Alphabets, Syllabaries and Characters*, 31–43. Dordrecht u. a.: Kluwer Academic Publishers. [from page 31]

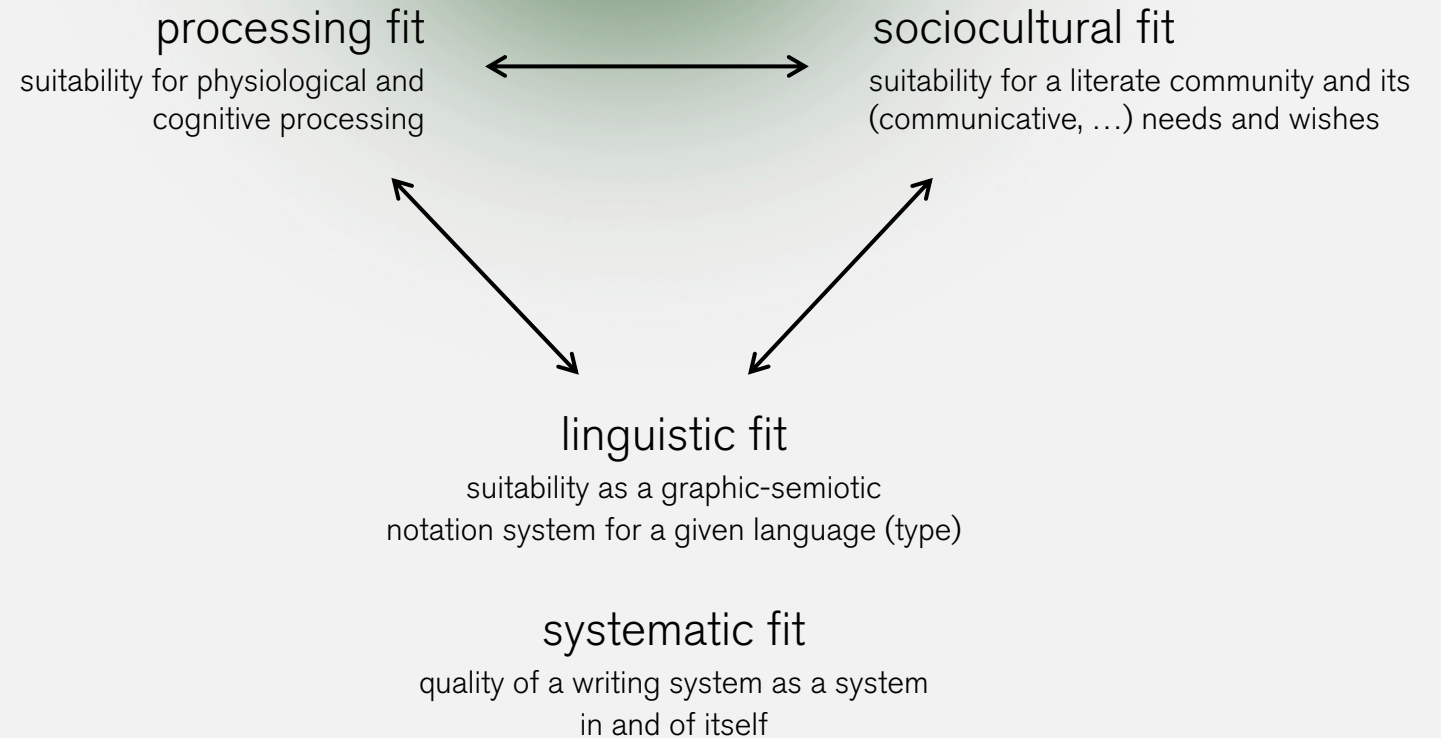
[2] Frost, Ram. 2012. Towards a Universal Model of Reading. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 35. 263–329. [from page 266]

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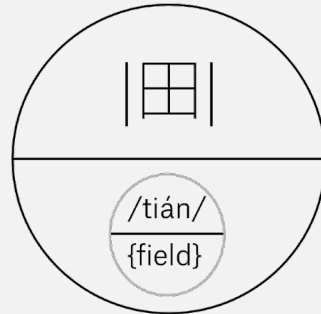
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EXPLANATION



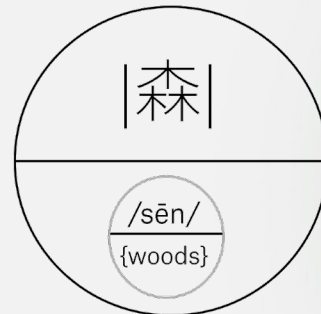
iconicity

pictography



signans visually resembles meaning of the signatum (not the signatum itself, which is a morpheme)

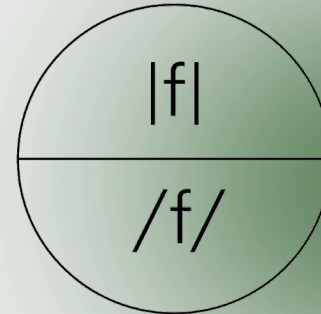
diagrammaticity



a visual change in the signans structurally reflects a change in the signatum (e.g., plurality)

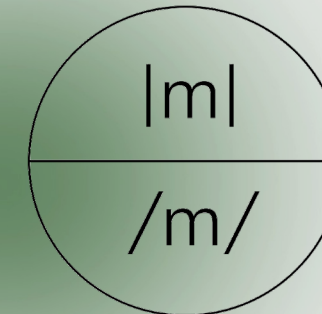
biuniqueness

transparency



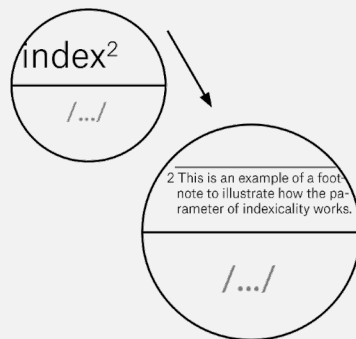
a signans is in a graphematic relation with only one signatum

uniformity



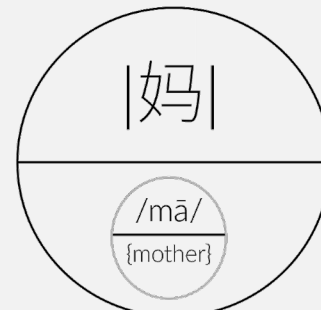
a signatum is in a graphematic relation only with one signans

indexicality



an indexing signans is in spatial contiguity with an indexed signatum

compositional transparency



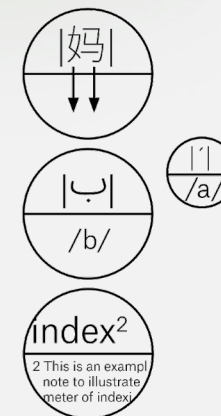
the sum of the graphematic value of the grapheme equals the graphematic value of the whole grapheme

positional transparency



the order of the basic shapes in the signans of a graphematic string corresponds with the order of corresponding linguistic units in the signatum

figure-ground

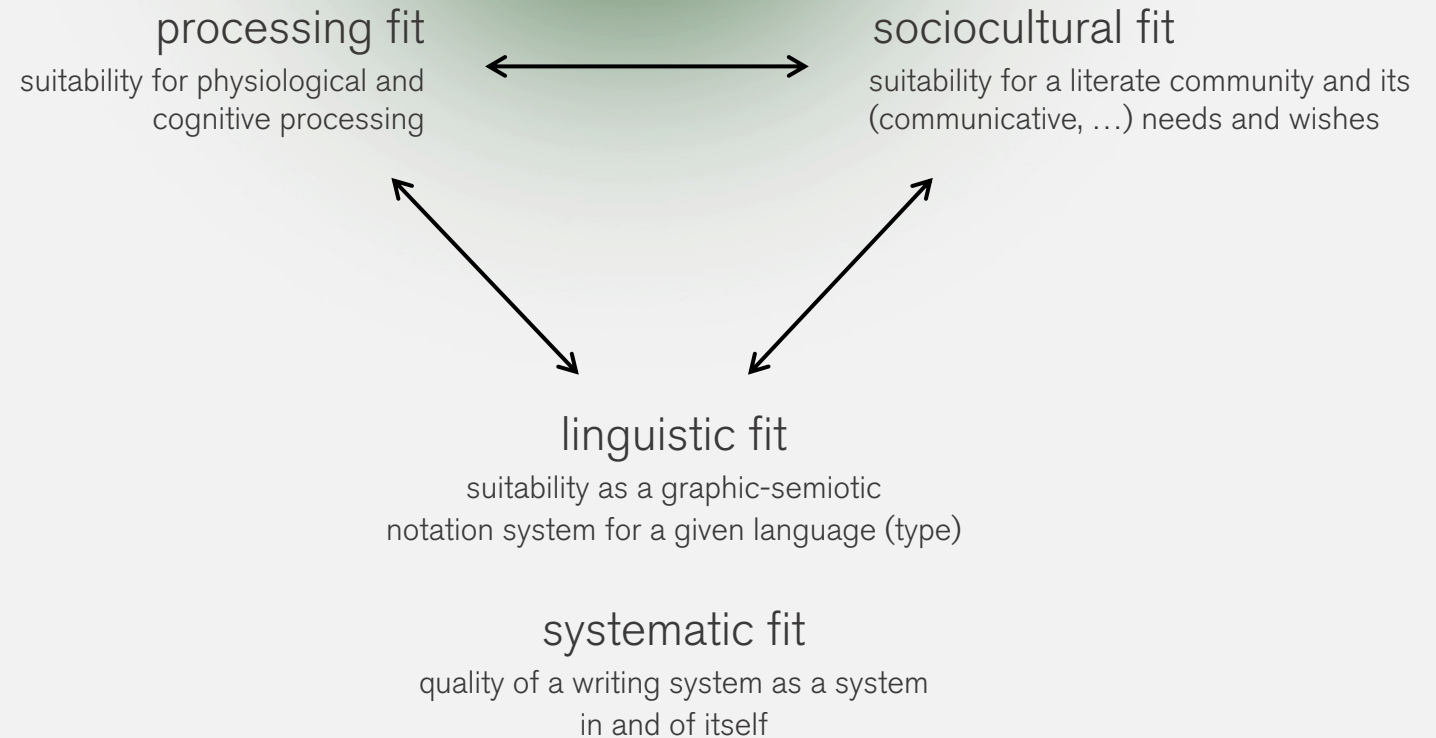


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EXPLANATION



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pictography

- * iconic semiotic relation between visual basic shape (signans) and meaning of the represented morpheme (signatum), no such relation possible for abstract concepts → **linguistic fit**
- * facilitates perception and memory (cognition) but hinders production (physiology), leading to a decrease of pictography → **processing fit**
- * this decrease is made possible through the pragmatic negotiation of conventions → **sociocultural fit**

EXPLANATION

practice

practice/ideology

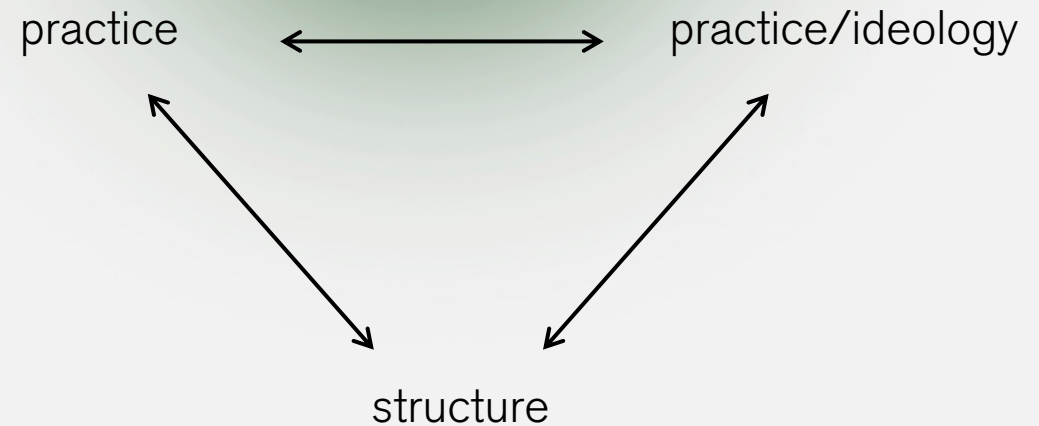
structure

THE NATURE OF WRITING: A THEORY OF GRAPHOLINGUISTICS

DESCRIPTION

- * proposing a unified descriptive framework for all (kinds of) writing systems
- * comparative, functionalist, usage-based approach that integrates elements from several linguistic and semiotic theories or metatheories
- * accounts for basic comparative concepts such as *grapheme*, *allography*, and *graphotactics*

EXPLANATION



THE NATURE OF WRITING: A THEORY OF GRAPHOLINGUISTICS

metalevel:

DESCRIPTION

EXPLANATION

- * sociological aspects of working in this 'field'^[1]

- * historiographic reconstructions of trends and strands in 'grapholinguistics'^[2]

- * accounts for basic comparative

[1] Meletis, Dimitrios. 2021. On being a grapholinguist. In Yannis Haralambous (ed.), *Grapholinguistics in the 21st Century 2020. Proceedings, Part I* (= *Grapholinguistics and Its Applications*; 4), 125–141. Brest: Fluxus Editions. DOI: 10.36824/2020-graf-mele.

[2] Meletis, Dimitrios. In print. What's in a name? Trends and challenges in naming the study of writing. In Yannis Haralambous (ed.), *Grapholinguistics in the 21st Century 2022. Proceedings* (= *Grapholinguistics and Its Applications*; 9), 399–442. Brest: Fluxus Editions. DOI: 10.36824/2022-graf-mele

practice/ideology

structure

ORTHOGRAPHIC RELATIVITY

Comparing the relation between literacy
and linguistic normativity across
writing systems and literate cultures

Funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences (APART-GSK) from 09/2023–08/2027

ORTHOGRAPHIC RELATIVITY

Comparing the relation between literacy and linguistic normativity across writing systems and literate cultures

Literacy

- * shapes our perception and processing of language – including spoken language
- * makes possible forms of metalinguistic awareness
↗ prerequisite of the normative evaluation of language

„ Weil jedes Mal, wenn ich wo schreibe, schreibe ich, und deshalb muss es auch korrekt sein, weil sonst kann ich's gleich lassen.

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Core questions

1. How do different literacies shape normativity?
2. How does this normativity in turn influence communication and views of language?
↗ **“Speak in full sentences!”**

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Specific research questions

- * **Structural:** How does the structure of writing systems produce variation that is orthographically regulated?
- * **Sociolinguistic:** How are orthographic norms negotiated and prescribed?
- * **Pragmatic:** How does normativity shape literacy practices?
- * **Metapragmatic:** How does normativity shape attitudes towards literacy practices?

ORTHOGRAPHIC RELATIVITY

Comparing the relation between literacy and linguistic normativity across writing systems and literate cultures

e.g., Frick, Karina & Dimitrios Meletis. Submitted. People incorrectly correcting other people: The pragmatics of (re-)corrections and their negotiation in a Facebook group. *Discourse, Context & Media*.

Comparison

- * **Structural:** Description in one uniform framework
- * **Sociolinguistic:** Sociocultural and sociopolitical embedding in linguistic communities
- * **Metapragmatic:** In total 45 sociolinguistic, language-biographical interviews about ideologies of normativity and/in writing
- * **Pragmatic:** Exemplary online discourse analyses focusing on normative and prescriptive actions

THEORETICAL

EMPIRICAL

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German-, Norwegian-, and Japanese-language communities

- * status of literacy; exercise of diverse literacy practices; attitudes
- * sociolinguistic and sociocultural conditions, e.g., diglossia, contact between literacies
- * authorities of linguistic policy that regulate literacy and language in general
- * deconstruction of Eurocentrism and alphabetocentrism

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Different literacies shape
linguistic norms and views on
language in **different** ways.

The project is a broad first step in the
investigation of orthographic
relativity from multiple perspectives.