

Writing

System
Use
Ideology

Workshop at the 46th Austrian Linguistics Conference
University of Vienna, December 9th, 2021

Organizer:

Dimitrios Meletis
University of Zurich
dimitrios.meletis@uzh.ch

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.