

Association for Written Language and Literacy
Ассоциация письменного языка и письменности
Ενωση για τη γραπτη γλωσσα και τη βασικη εκπαιδευση
书面语言和识字协会
Association for Written Language and Literacy

AWLL Newsletter: Number 3: 25 September 2016

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On distribution of third AWLL newsletter [Terry Joyce (newsletter editor)]

Launched in November 2014, the main motivation behind the periodic distribution of AWLL newsletters is to facilitate the sharing of information and research discussions between the regular AWLL workshops (and, thus, the aspirations remain strong that they can steadily appear even more frequently in the future). And, it is now a little over one year since the distribution of the second newsletter that was mainly devoted to the first call for papers for the 10th AWLL workshop that successfully took place in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, in May 2016.

Accordingly, the first important item of this newsletter is a brief report about AWLL10 prepared by the local organizers, Merijn Beekma, Anneke Neijt, and Mijntje Peters. Moreover, the workshops section of AWLL website’s (<http://faculty.tama.ac.jp/joyce/awll/workshops.html>) has also been updated with links to the AWLL10 programme and presentation abstracts, to the minutes of AWLL business meeting conducted during the workshop, and to a selection of photographs kindly shared by some participants (with particular thanks to Hisashi Masuda for taking many of them).

As the workshop report mentions, although AWLL10 represented a special landmark in the series of AWLL international workshop in being the 10th workshop gathering, it was also a rather poignant occasion when Anneke Neijt, the founding AWLL president, announced at the AWLL

business meeting that she had decided to step down as president as she retired from her faculty position at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands in June 2016. As a token of our appreciation for all of Anneke's contributions, AWLL10 ended with a brief tribute presentation, but the second important item of this newsletter wishes to reiterate those sentiments and record them here in a more permanent form.

Marking her retirement from Radboud University, Anneke delivered her valedictory lecture on the June 3, 2016, which was recorded for posterity. In addition to providing URLs for both a video recording and the lecture text (for the benefits of anyone who understands Dutch), Anneke has also kindly prepared a summary of the lecture to share in this newsletter.

Naturally, Anneke's decision to step down from being the AWLL president necessitated some reorganizations of the AWLL board, as announced at the business meeting during AWLL10, and so the next item of this newsletter is to further relay those announcements and to encourage anyone who might be interested to consult the minutes of the 2016 business meeting for supplementary outlines of the fuller discussions that occurred concerning AWLL's future.

Following on from those few items primarily addressing AWLL matters, happily, this newsletter also has a couple of other information items, which are good examples of the broader information dissemination that I hope the AWLL newsletters can contribute to. One item is information about the recently published *The Routledge handbook of the English writing system*, co-edited by Vivian Cook and Des Ryan. Vivian Cook was one of the invited speakers at the AWLL07 workshop held in Paris in 2010 and Des Ryan, a regular participant at recent AWLL workshops, has kindly prepared the outline below. The other item is a brief report of the recent "Idea of Writing 2016" (IoW) workshop, that has been prepared by Keisuke Honda who, in addition to being a regular participant of AWLL workshops, has also been a participant of some recent IoW workshops. As its theme of "Writing as a system: Emergence, variation, performance" indicates, IoW and AWLL clearly share common interests in writing systems and so it is particularly edifying to learn more about related research projects. This newsletter also includes a short notice about a recent update of the ongoing Online Research Bibliography of Written Language and Literacy (ORBWLL) project available at the AWLL website.

In addition to continuing two features—*Thought-provoking quotations and observations* and *Miscellaneous matters*—from previous newsletters, this third newsletter also launches a new feature of *Introducing writing systems*. While the series launching in this newsletter will be on examples from the Japanese writing system, I hope that it might be sufficiently interesting and suitable for a serialized newsletter feature, and that it will also inspire others to provide regular, bite-sized (i.e., about half-page or so) introductions to other writing systems (in the sense of a particular script being used for a particular language) as fleeting, yet insightful, glimpses into how writing systems actually function.

I sincerely hope that you will find this third AWLL newsletter of interest, and I would be delighted to hear from anyone, at any time, with comments, ideas, and items for future AWLL newsletters (just drop me an email; terry@tama.ac.jp).

Brief report about AWLL10 [Merijn Beekma, Anneke Neijt, & Mijntje Peters]



The tenth international Workshop on Writing Systems and Literacy, with the theme of *Understanding writing systems: From core issues to implications for written language acquisition*, was held in Nijmegen, 12-13 May, 2016. Including invited talks from Anna Bosman (Radboud University), Geoffrey Sampson (University of South Africa) and Ineke van de Craats (Radboud University), there were 18 oral presentations, 14 poster presentations and the total number of participants was 46. The workshop was a lively meeting that brought together researchers from all over the world.

Like the previous workshop, at the University of Sussex in Brighton (UK), the programme concluded with a forum discussion. Facilitated by opening remarks from a panel of Geoffrey Sampson, Constanze Weth and David Olson, the discussion addressed the issue of evolution for writing systems, which, understandably, evoked somewhat diverse reactions and comments. Some interpretations focused on the 'survival of the fittest' aspect of evolution, arguing that elements of a writing system survive because they fulfill some function. However, other interpretations rather emphasized a notion of system optimization, claiming that, as function alone is insufficient, elements survive when they facilitate systems in optimizing for multiple constraints, including inherent restrictions, such as economy, generality and communicative value, and external ones, such as political and social context, which also mediate the impacts of inherent constraints. Within alphabetic writing systems, phonemes and graphemes appear to have evolved as two sides of the same coin. In essence, they are identical, notwithstanding the fact that the relation between the visual and auditory signal may be capricious, as illustrated by famous examples, such as *Though the tough cough and hiccough plough me through; O'er life's dark lough my course I still pursue*.

The workshop was WLL's tenth anniversary, and it seems that many more AWLL workshops will be held in the future, as they fill an important gap. There are no conferences that are

similarly dedicated to the exchange of knowledge about writing systems as their central goal. That became clear in 1995, when German and Dutch spelling reforms were implemented in complete isolation, without the linguists involved being informed about their respective proposals, even though German and Dutch are languages of adjacent regions. That remarkable lack of communication led to the first workshop on writing systems.

For Anneke Neijt, the chair of the association from its start and one of the local organizers of AWLL10, 2016 is the year of her retirement. Accordingly, she took this moment to hand over the chair to Terry Joyce (Japan) at the business meeting. At the end of the workshop, there was a small surprise party, where Anneke was honoured with an overview presentation of her work and presented with gifts of flowers, a pen and pencil set and a pair of Japanese calligraphy brushes.

We were pleased to see that many participants enjoyed the location, the weather and the food, and we are looking forward to meeting again at the next workshop!

Tribute to Anneke Neijt [Terry Joyce, Mijntje Peters, Lynne Cahill & Martin Neef]

Professor Anneke Neijt was the AWLL president since its founding in 2003 until the AWLL10 workshop in May 2016, when she stepped down from the role just prior to her retirement from Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands in June 2016.



The AWLL10 workshop ended by briefly acknowledging and thanking Anneke for her constant contributions to AWLL as the central driving force behind our series of international workshops over their substantial history, but it is also highly appropriate to again express our sincere gratitude within this AWLL newsletter, as the first since the AWLL10 workshop, in a more permanent format that will hopefully reach an extended community of researchers beyond those attending the workshop.

Prepared by the incoming AWLL board with considerable input from Mijntje Peters, the AWLL10 workshop tribute to Anneke shared a presentation that attempted to briefly trace the history of AWLL and mention all the related workshops, with particular emphasis on Anneke's continual involvement in all, as either the local organizer of many as well as consistent member of their program committees. The presentation also attempted to provide an overview of Anneke's considerable research achievements, which summarized her numerous publications and presentations, as well as noting her supervision of former PhD students. This newsletter piece seeks to summarize that presentation content.

Although the AWLL was established in 2003, the complete series of AWLL-related workshops unquestionably predates that time, and its workshop tradition can clearly be traced back to important precursor workshops from 1997. Accordingly, all related workshops are included in the listing below, where Anneke's continual involvement is highlighted.

- AWLL01 What spelling changes** 6-7 Nov 1997; Nijmegen, The Netherlands
Local organizer: [Anneke Neijt](#)
Program committee: [Anneke Neijt](#), Peter Eisenberg, Rob Schreuder
- AWLL02 Writing language** 29-30 Aug 2000; Nijmegen, The Netherlands
Invited speaker: Richard Sproat
Local organizer: [Anneke Neijt](#)
Program committee: [Anneke Neijt](#), Harald Baayen, Rob Schreuder, Martin Neef
- AWLL03 From letter to sound** 23-24 Sep 2002; Cologne, Germany
Invited speakers: Charles Perfetti, Richard Venezky
Local organizers: Beatrice Primus, Martin Neef
Program committee: Martin Neef, [Anneke Neijt](#), Beatrice Primus, Dominiek Sandra
*** Interim WS where plans for AWLL began** 25 Sep 2003; Max Planck, Nijmegen
Crossing borders: Writing and reading in Flanders, Germany and The Netherlands
Local organizer: [Anneke Neijt](#)
- AWLL04 Mapping graphemes onto phonemes** 30 Sep-1 Oct 2004; Antwerp, Belgium
*** AWLL formally founded on the evening of the first day**
Invited speakers: Margaret Snowling, Peter Daniels
Program committee: Martin Neef, [Anneke Neijt](#), Beatrice Primus, Dominiek Sandra
- AWLL05 Constraints on spelling changes** 5-6 Oct 2006; Nijmegen, The Netherlands
Invited speaker: Sieb Nooteboom;
Local organizers: Stefan Meeuws, [Anneke Neijt](#), Rob Schreuder, Eliane Segers, Ludo Verhoeven
Program committee: Martin Neef, Beatrice Primus, Dominiek Sandra, Rob Schreuder, Ludo Verhoeven
- AWLL06 Typology of writing systems** 18-19 Sep 2008; Braunschweig, Germany
Invited speakers: Rebecca Treiman
Local organizers: Susanne Borgwaldt, Torsten Fiebig, Iris Forster, Tobias Heinz, Martin Neef
Program committee: Susanne Borgwaldt, Martin Neef, [Anneke Neijt](#), Beatrice Primus, Dominiek Sandra
- AWLL07 Units of language – units of writing** 30 Sep-1 Oct 2010; Paris, France
Invited speakers: David Olson, Michel Fayol, Vivian Cook
Local organizer: Amandine Bergère
Program committee: Amandine Bergère, Terry Joyce, [Anneke Neijt](#), Beatrice Primus
- AWLL08 The architecture of writing systems** 4-5 Oct 2012; Oldenburg, Germany
Invited speakers: Jonathan Grainger, Peter Eisenberg
Local organizers: Nanna Fuhrhop, Kristian Berg, Franziska Buchmann
Program committee: Nanna Fuhrhop, Terry Joyce, [Anneke Neijt](#), Beatrice Primus
- AWLL09 Orthographic databases and lexicons** 4-5 Sep 2014; Brighton, UK
Invited speaker: Viorica Marian
Local organizer: Lynne Cahill

Program committee: Lynne Cahill, Terry Joyce, [Anneke Neijt](#), Beatrice Primus

AWLL10 Understanding writing systems 12-13 May 2016; Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Subtitle: From core issues to implications for written language acquisition

Invited speakers: Anna M. T. Bosman, Geoffrey Sampson, Ineke van de Craats

Local organizers: [Anneke Neijt](#), Mijntje Peters, Merijn Beeksma

Program committee: Lynne Cahill, Terry Joyce, Martin Neef, [Anneke Neijt](#), Mijntje Peters

And, turning to Anneke's research achievements, while it is not possible to cite every publication and presentation, because there are so many, after first noting the breadth of Anneke's research interests, and presenting some summary counts, we provide citations for 11 of Anneke's authored, co-authored or co-edited book publications and journal special issues.

Anneke's wide research interests include gapping, automatic translation, Dutch spelling, plural and linking morphemes and their orthographic representation, metric phonology, Dutch verb spelling, rhythm and meter, stress, spelling acquisition, compounds, morphological variation, education of Dutch. While we would again apologize if we have missed any research achievements, but, over Anneke's career, we have been able to identify, 1 dissertation (which was subsequently published as book), 10 books (including 4 co-authored, 5 co-edited and 1 co-edited special issue), 3 co-authored external research reports, 35 chapters (of which 21 were sole-authored and 14 co-authored), 58 articles (of which 14 were sole-authored, 39 co-authored and 5 were published online), 24 presentations (of which 12 were sole presentations and 12 were joint-presentations), as well as 16 others forms (including 9 book reviews, 4 newspaper articles, 1 university magazine article, 1 inaugural address and 1 farewell presentation).

Neijt, A., & Bakker, D. (Eds.). (1990). *Computerlinguïstiek, een overzicht in artikelen*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

Neijt, A. (1991). *Universele fonologie, Een inleiding in de klankleer*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

Bennis, H, Neijt, A., & van Santen, A. (1991). *De groene spelling*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.

Zuidema, J. J., Weber, J., Nunn, A. M., Neijt, A. H. & van Heuven, V. J. (1994). *Groen zonder bladeren, specificaties voor een elektronische versie van de nieuwe Woordenlijst, in opdracht van de Nederlandse Taalunie*. Utrecht.

Fromkin, V., Rodman. R., & Neijt, A. (1996). *Universele taalkunde, een inleiding in de Algemene taalwetenschap* (Sixth edition). Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

Neijt, A. H., Roggema, I., & Zuidema, J. J. (Eds.). (1994). *De Spellingcommissie aan het woord*. Den Haag: SDU.

Neijt, A. H. & Zuidema, J. J. (Eds.). (1994). *Het Spellingdossier, Deel 1, Spellingrapport*. Den Haag: SDU.

Neijt, A. H. & Reinsma, R. (Eds.). (1996). *De nieuwe spellinggids van de Nederlandse taal*. Utrecht: Wolters', Van Dale & Prisma Woordenboeken.

De Schryver, J., & Neijt, A. H. (2002). *Handboek spelling*. Mechelen: Wolters Plantyn.

Neef, M., Neijt, A., & Sproat, R. (Eds.). (2002). *The relation of writing to spoken language* (Linguistische Arbeiten 460). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Sandra, D. & Neijt, A. (Eds.). (2005). Processing in reading and spelling words [Special issue].

Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 18(3).

Over her career, Anneke has supervised at least three PhD students, Dr. Anneke Nunn, Dr. Esther Hanssen and Dr. Arina Banga, and co-hosted with Anna Bosman and Johan Zuidema, Mijntje Peters' postdoctoral research, as well as serving as an external examiner for doctoral students on numerous occasions. Anneke has also taught as invited professor at a number of other universities, such as the University of Duisburg in Germany, which is yet another indication of her scholarship and her important contributions in bringing together linguists from Germany and the Netherlands. Moreover, Anneke has also served, from 2008-2014, as a test jury member on *Het Groot Dictee der Nederlandse Taal* [The Great Dutch Spelling Test], which is a televised competition.

While reluctantly respecting Anneke's decision to step down from serving as AWLL president on the occasion of her retirement, in both acknowledgement of her founding role for AWLL and in the sincere hopes that she will continue to be involved with AWLL in the future too, the new incoming AWLL board decided to make Anneke its first honorary lifetime member.

Valedictory speech – Zelf taalkundige worden (“being a linguist yourself”)

[Anneke Neijt]

Three weeks after WLL10, I delivered my farewell lecture. For anyone who understands Dutch, both a video recording (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8Mqqi2ZXjg>) and the text with details of issues proposed (<http://repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/158947>) are available. In my view, knowledge of language is so important that everyone should receive linguistic training to become, to a certain degree, a linguist themselves. Learning to read and learning to write are both part and parcel of such training.

Unfortunately, the official description of Dutch orthography does not help learners of Dutch. The relation between orthography, on the one hand, and the structural aspects of the language, on the other—as expressed by the phonological and morphological principles, that hold for Dutch as much as for all alphabetic writing systems—is clumsily described. Notable exceptions are left unmentioned, and notable generalisations are missed, leading to an explanation where a straightforward example of morphological consistency is referred to as an exception. Moreover, although the notion *samenkoppeling* ‘coupling’ is introduced, the descriptions and examples that seek to illustrate the difference between coupling, compounds and word groups are confusing. Incomplete and uninformative lists of exceptions are presented.

There has been much ado about the spelling reforms implemented in 1995 and 2005. Dissatisfaction over spelling arose, I think, because of counterintuitive descriptions of how to write linking elements in compounds. Here, Chomsky's list of demands for language descriptions is relevant; his requirements for observational, descriptive and explanatory adequacy. The official description of Dutch orthography does not even reach the level of observational adequacy—the most modest type of adequacy—requiring that a description adequately covers the data. The official description also lacks descriptive adequacy, in that it

conflicts with one's linguistic instincts. Such uninformative descriptions foster the idea that spelling is a gambling game. The number of illiterates in The Netherlands is high, and demands in term of spelling proficiency at the end of primary school are low. The governmental institution responsible for Dutch orthography, the Nederlandse Taalunie, should cooperate more with researchers at universities, while universities in The Netherlands and Flanders should establish a chair in orthography.

Announcements concerning the AWLL board [Terry Joyce (AWLL president)]

At the 2016 AWLL business meeting, it was also announced that, sadly, Beatrice Primus (former AWLL vice-president), who was unable to attend the workshop in person, had also decided to withdraw from the AWLL board in order to focus on her busy role as the general editor of the related Written Language and Literacy journal. As the business meeting minutes record, deep gratitude was expressed for Beatrice's long years of service on the AWLL board.

Naturally, both Anneke's and Beatrice's decision precipitated significant reorganizations of the AWLL board. As first proposed in advance by Anneke and confirmed by both the outgoing and incoming boards, Terry Joyce accepted the invitation to become the new AWLL president, Lynne Cahill accepted the invitation to become the new AWLL vice-president, and Martin Neef also accepted Terry and Lynne's invitation to rejoin the board as AWLL secretary. As the business meeting minutes also outline, the new AWLL board is still engaging in (slow but surely ongoing) discussions about how to further improve AWLL operations, and we very much remain open to hearing from anyone with comments or constructive suggestions on any matters (please email to terry@tama.ac.jp).

Cook, Vivian & Ryan, Des (Eds) (2016) *The Routledge handbook of the English writing system* [Des Ryan]

The growth in the research on writing systems is, perhaps, the result of two things more than anything else. One is that ever-changing technologies have given people a chance to express themselves in print and, as a result, fragments of creativity have been sprinkled into inert writing systems such as English (at least in certain domains of writing). Secondly, writing systems research has begun to emerge from the shadow of linguistics, a discipline which has concentrated on speech for a whole century. Accordingly, there remains a large amount of research yet to be done. Hence, it has proved to be a good time to publish one of the first large-scale surveys of work already conducted on English spelling, and I have been invited to present an outline of that book here.

The opening parts of the book are theoretical and historical, respectively; Part three deals with literacy and education, Part four presents a kaleidoscopic portrayal of how the EWS is actually employed in various social contexts, including some regional variants, while Part five examines the visual nature of writing and the role that modern technologies are beginning to play in its development (or perhaps lack thereof). The book opens with a very short introduction and a

background chapter by **Vivian Cook** (Ch. 2), which aims to bring the reader up to speed with ideas that may be assumed by other contributors.

Part 1. *Theory and the EWS*

Richard Sproat (Ch. 3) locates the EWS among the writing systems of the world and my own chapter (Ch. 4, **Des Ryan**) looks at what information tends to be included in English spelling, before looking at some possible future directions of research. By contrast, **Iggy Roca** (Ch. 5) explores the phonological knowledge necessary to bridge the gap between spelling and speech. **Frank Kirchhoff** and **Beatrice Primus** (Ch. 6) present a new perspective on English punctuation.

Part 2. *The history and development of the EWS*

Simon Horobin (Ch. 7) surveys the wide range of inputs into English spelling, while **Merja Stenroos** and **Jeremy Smith** (Ch. 8) present a novel, sociolinguistic approach to English spelling before 1600. This is juxtaposed by **Phil Scholfield's** (Ch. 9) account of the modernization and standardization of English spelling since Shakespeare's time. **Philip Durkin** (Ch. 10) provides an insider's view on how the Oxford English Dictionary sifts through the massive amount of spelling variation it captures, and, finally, **Jesper Kruse** (Ch. 11) highlights how present-day spellings may reflect obsolete pronunciations that only survive in a few, often isolated, accents.

Part 3. *Learning and teaching English*

Education remains fundamental to writing systems, and **Nenagh Kemp** (Ch. 12) examines how children actually acquire a system as complicated as English. **Terezinha Nunes** (Ch. 13) compares the policies behind the teaching of literacy in New Zealand and England, while **Rhona Stainthorp** (Ch. 15) looks at how the EWS may be taught in English primary schools. **Liory Fern-Pollak** and **Jackie Masterson** (Ch. 14) look at dyslexia, in its many forms, asking why it is so prevalent among English speakers, and what can be done to intervene and help dyslexics.

Part 4. *Society and the English writing system in the world*

Florian Coulmas's (Ch. 16) looks at how social conditions affect changes (or not) in the writing system, including the split between British and American spelling, while **D.W. Cummings** (Ch. 17) looks at how that particular split is less stable than it may seem at first. The next four chapters explore other kinds of variation in English spelling: the rich history of Scots spelling (Ch. 18, **Jennifer Bann** and **John Corbett**), the stunted history of Irish English spelling (Ch. 19, **Raymond Hickey**), the representation of the North American dialect (Ch. 20, **Michael D. Picone**) and the emerging Jamaican Creole writing system (Ch. 21, **Mark Sebba**). The remaining three chapters look at the linguistic landscape (Ch. 22, **Jeffrey L. Kallen**), the impact of English on Japanese writing (Ch. 23, **Takeshi Okada**), and the contentious but ever-present issue of spelling reform (Ch. 24, **Valerie Yule** and **Ishi Yasuko**).

Part 5. *Processing the written symbol*

Will Hill (Ch. 25) gives a history of typography in relation to English, up to the modern printed screen. **Melvin J. Yap** and **Susan J. Rickard Liow** (Ch. 26) present research on how readers process written forms. This is followed by two chapters on the research into the role of computer-mediated communication, one with an overview of the literature on the topic (Ch. 27, **Lauren Squires**) and one on the developing 'written system' in use (Ch. 28, **Tim Shortis**). Finally,

Roger Mitton (Ch. 28) gives a history of spellcheckers, a technology that helps to keep stability at the core of the writing system.

The future of writing systems is a vast world that will include a lot more than the standard spellings in current use. This does not mean that existing orthographies will dissolve into a world of anarchic, DIY spellings, as was once feared by many, in light of text messages and the likes; instead, the landscape of spellings will simply be a richer, funnier and potentially more insightful world than what currently exists. Writing may not end up like James Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake*, but traces of this future world are everywhere, from trade names to text messages, hashtags to the high streets. This book does not describe that future so much as try to show that the EWS has been a changeable and adaptable thing, in its past and present guises.

Cook, Vivian, & Ryan, Des (Eds.). (2016). *The Routledge handbook of the English writing system*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Brief report about the 2016 Idea of Writing (IoW) meeting [Keisuke Honda]

The annual workshop of the Idea of Writing (IoW) was held on 22-23 July 2016 at NCCR eikones, University of Basel (Switzerland). Continuing the IoW's tradition of themed workshops, this year's meeting was entitled "Writing as a system: Emergence, variation, performance". The workshop consisted of 17 presentations in total and attracted more than 30 participants. Some of the presenters provided descriptive accounts of individual writing systems, while others discussed more theoretical issues related to the development, dissemination, implementation and education of writing. The presentations also covered a wide range of historical and modern writing systems, including Latin, Runic, Carthaginian, Punic, Berber, Vai, Bamum, Chinese, Dongba, Yi, Korean, Japanese, Mayan, and many others. The participants enjoyed talks in a beautiful Old University building overlooking the Rhine River. The presenters were also invited to dine at Restaurant Kunsthalle after the first day of the workshop.

The workshop programme and abstracts of all presentations can be downloaded from the following URLs, respectively:

https://eikones.ch/fileadmin/documents/ext/event/2016/ideas_of_writing/NEU_Karte_Programm_Tagung.pdf

https://eikones.ch/fileadmin/documents/ext/event/2016/ideas_of_writing/Abstract_booklet_IoW_final2_22.06.2016.pdf

New version of ORBWLL available [Terry Joyce]

As part of more general updating of the AWLL website, I am also pleased to report that a new version of the Online Research Bibliography of Written Language & Literacy (ORBWLL) database is now available (<http://faculty.tama.ac.jp/joyce/awll/orbwill/index.html>). With the processing of an additional 250 source bibliographies (now 2,250 in total), the latest version consists of 6,135 references (up from 5,655 of previous version) and 40,358 citations (increased from 35,434).

ORBWLL continues to be available as a downloadable PDF file (now 445 pages) and with online access that supports search capabilities and provides the *Cited by* information.

The next version update will be shared once a total of 2,500 source bibliographies have been processed, but, in the meantime, I continue to welcome both recommendations for source bibliographies to include and feedback on any inaccuracies found so they can be corrected.

Introducing writing systems: Japanese [1] [Terry Joyce & Keisuke Honda]

As the Japanese writing system (JWS) has a reputation among writing system scholars for being the most complex writing system in modern use (Honda 2011; Joyce 2013, 2016), this series will attempt to provide short explanations,* with vocabulary examples, of various aspects of the JWS. [*For brevity, regrettably, some finer details may have to be omitted or postponed to later installments]

The main component script is 漢字 /kanji/ (lit. *Chinese characters*), so our first installment focuses on the most frequently used kanji of 日. One key aspect of kanji is that most are associated with two basic kinds of readings - /on/ Sino-Japanese and /kun/ native-Japanese - but some have multiple readings, as do some compound words. Admittedly, there is a real sense of *jumping in at the deep-end* in taking 日 first, as it has two official *on* and two official *kun* (plus a few unofficial ones of both kinds) and is a component of some basic compound words with multiple readings, but it also nicely illustrates the importance of context for understanding kanji usage generally, and, in turn, how its two main senses both contribute to its very high frequency.

日 *Meaning:* day; sun; Japan; counter for days *On:* nichī, jitsu *Kun:* hi, ka

Alone 日 /hi/ means *day*, which can become /bi/ in some compound words, such as the final element of weekday names, as reflected in the three different readings for the three occurrences within the example sentence of その日は日曜日でした /Sono **hi** wa **nichiyōbi** deshita/ *That day was Sunday*. As noted already, some basic compound words involving 日 have multiple readings, such as the semantically related set of 昨日 *yesterday*, as either /sakujitsu/ or /kinō/, 今日 *today*, as either /konnichi/ or /kyō/, and 明日 *tomorrow*, as either /myōnichi/ or /ashita/ (or /asu/). The second readings are the native-Japanese words that correspond to the compound meanings.

Another major factor for its very high frequency is that 日 is the first component of 日本 /nihon/ (or less commonly now /nippon/) *Japan* (lit. *sun-source* that underlies the *land of the rising sun* expression)—naturally, an extremely common word within this national context. And, it can often function as an abbreviation for Japan within compounds, such as in 日米 /nichibei/ *Japan-US* (where 米 is also a conventional abbreviation). But, sometimes it can be important not to confuse the order of elements, for in contrast to 日本, the reversed order of 本日 /honjitsu/ means *today* (in more formal contexts).

Yes, it is all rather quite complicated! More next time!

Thought-provoking quotations and observations [3]

Ewan Clayton starts his (2013) book, *The golden thread: The story of writing*, with a rather bold claim; namely,

We are at one of those turning points, for the written word, that come only rarely in human history. We are witnessing the introduction of new writing tools and media. It has only happened twice before as far as the Roman alphabet is concerned – once in a process that was several centuries long when papyrus scrolls gave way to vellum books in late antiquity, and again when Gutenberg invented printing using movable type and change swept over Europe in the course of just one generation, during the late fifteenth century. Changing times now mean that for a brief period many of the conventions that surround the written word appear fluid; we are free to re-imagine the quality of the relationship we will make with writing, and shape new technologies. How will our choices be informed – how much do we know about the medium’s past? What work does writing do for us? What writing tools do we need? Perhaps the first step towards answering these questions is to learn something of how writing got to be the way it is. (Clayton, 2013: 1).

Informed by his perspectives as a calligrapher, a professor of the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media at the University of Sunderland, and past consultant for Xerox PARC, Clayton offers a detailed and interesting account of the Roman alphabet, handwriting, printing and writing, which culminates with a fervent pronouncement about the very nature of writing:

Writing, at its best, can celebrate the whole way we explore the material world and its sensuality to think and communicate; this is what writing does. My belief is that future generations will continue to search for and respond to joy in writing and reading and beauty in written artefacts, and to generously share these experiences. We should expect and demand to be supported – in the digital domain as elsewhere – in pursuing these profoundly human aims. (Clayton, 2013: 356)

Clayton, Ewan. (2013). *The golden thread: The story of writing*. London: Atlantic Books & Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint.

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**script** 1 In the study of writing, the graphic form of a writing system. In non-technical contexts the term is often used interchangeably with ‘writing system’ or ‘alphabet’, from which it should be distinguished, however. A writing system needs a script for its physical representation, but both are conceptually independent of each other. The same writing system may be written in a variety of scripts. For example, the Roman, Cyrillic, Greek, Russian and runic scripts are different graphic instantiations of the same writing system, the alphabet. Similarly, syllabic alphabets of the C plus inherent a type are instantiated by the various Indian scripts. Scripts, in tum, come in different varieties in both handwriting and print, for example the

many typefaces that have evolved for the Roman script. 2 In typography, typefaces designed to imitate the appearance of handwriting. (Coulmas, 1996: 454)

Coulmas, Florian. (1996). *The Blackwell encyclopedia of writing systems*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

## Miscellaneous matters

*Calls for various related conferences, events, special issues*

*Journal for Language Technology and Computational Linguistics (JLCL): Call for papers for special issue on NLP for Perso-Arabic alphabets*

Deadline: 01 December 2016 (for JLCL Volume 32 (2017), Issue 1)

<http://www.jlcl.org/index.php?modus=news>

*IV International Congress of the Caucasiologists*

Tbilisi, Georgia; 01-03 December 2016

<http://caucasiology.tsu.ge/congress/>

*International Conference on Asian Linguistics*

Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam; 15-16 December 2016

<http://ical.amu.edu.pl>

*Metadiscourse Across Genres: Mapping out interactions in spoken and written discourse*

Güzelyurt, Cyprus; 30 Mar – 01 Apr 2017

<http://www.metadiscourseacrossgenres.com/>

*Act of the Scribe: Interfaces between scribal work and language use*

Athens, Finland; 06-08 April 2017

<http://blogs.helsinki.fi/actofscribe/tag/workshop/>

*1st International Conference on Revitalization of Indigenous and Minoritized Languages*

Barcelona, Vic, Spain; 19-21 April 2017

<https://icriml.indiana.edu/about/index.html>

*23rd Himalayan Languages Symposium*

Tezpur University, Assam, India; 05-07 July 2017

<http://www.himalayansymposium.org/>

*Twenty-Fourth Annual Society for the Scientific Study of Reading (SSSR) Meeting*

Halifax, Nova Scotia; 12-15 July, 2017

<https://www.triplesr.org/index.php>

*Visualizing (in) the New Media*

Neuchâtel, Switzerland; 08-10 November 2017

<http://www2.unine.ch/vinm2017>

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### AWLL board

Terry Joyce (president), Lynne Cahill (vice-president), Martin Neef (secretary)

AWLL website: <http://faculty.tama.ac.jp/joyce/awll/index.html>;

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