

Association for Written Language and Literacy
Ассоциация письменного языка и письменности
Ενωση για τη γραπτή γλώσσα και τη βασική εκπαίδευση
书面语言和识字协会
Association for Written Language and Literacy

AWLL Newsletter: Number 9: 15 November 2020

[Click on topic to navigate to relevant section; click on text of any section banner to return to content listing]

- On distribution of ninth AWLL newsletter [Terry Joyce (newsletter editor)]
- Conference report: *Grapholinguistics in the 21st century* (G21C) [Yannis Haralambous]
- Updated version of ORBWLL available [Terry Joyce]
- Introducing writing systems: Japanese [7] [Terry Joyce & Keisuke Honda]
- Thought-provoking quotations and observations [9]
- Miscellaneous matters

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

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to exact a heavy toll around the world, I sincerely hope that everyone is safe and finding succor in your families, work and research.

As announced at the end of June, after careful consideration and discussion about the pandemic at the time, the AWLL13 organizers felt that the only viable option was to postpone the workshop (from last month). Moreover, having recently consulted again about the current situation, although things have not changed sufficiently yet to move forward in terms of rescheduling AWLL13, the organizers continue to hope that circumstances will improve during 2021. Accordingly, in view of the continuing uncertainties, the organizers will consult once more in early 2021 to reassess the situation at that time.

While painfully aware that these newsletters are a very poor substitute for the precious connections that the AWLL workshops afford, still, I hope that this ninth newsletter (NL9) can help a little in terms of remaining in contact during these difficult times. NL9's main feature is a report of the *Grapholinguistics in the 21st century* conference, which convened online in June, by Yannis Haralambous, its organizer (and AWLL community member). NL9 also includes the seventh part of the *Introducing writing systems: Japanese* series, a couple of extracts under *Thought-provoking quotations and observations* and, under *Miscellaneous matters*, a list of recent publications by AWLL community members, including some 'mini-flyers' for book publications.

As always, I very much hope that AWLL NL9 might be of interest to you. Any comments, ideas, or items for future newsletters are always most welcome; just email them to terry@tama.ac.jp.

Past newsletters are available at <http://faculty-sgs.tama.ac.jp/terry/awll/newsletters.html>

Conference report: *Grapholinguistics in the 21st century* (G21C) [Yannis Haralambous]

Although the conference, endorsed by the Association for Computational Linguistics and ATyPI, was initially planned to take place in Paris, due to the pandemic, it was conducted online over the three days of 17-19 June 2020. There were 140 registered participants from 37 countries, spanning almost every time zone from the US west coast, across Europe to Japan. The program included two keynote talks—by Martin Neef, AWLL founding member and former secretary, and by Jessica Coon, linguistic consultant for Denis Villeneuve’s movie *Arrival*—and 38 half-hour talks as well as two one-hour poster sessions with 12 presentations in total. The participants were linguists, computer scientists, historians, typographers, designers, paleographers, psychologists and artists.

This conference series (from 2018 in Brest) seeks to be multi-disciplinary in nature, as a forum for various scientific, scholarly and artistic disciplines. Consistently, G21C encompassed various perspectives, including:

- Theoretical talks (e.g., Is the syllable the most salient unit of writing?; A modular theoretic approach to the Japanese Writing System; and Vowel writing and the role of grammar in writing system evolution);
- Human-science talks (e.g., Sociocultural motivation for spelling variation in modern Hebrew; The native script effect; and The sociolinguistics of punctuation);
- Historically-motivated talks (e.g., Scripts in contact: The transmission of the first alphabets; Sacred amulet from Easter Island – 1885/6; and Romanian writing during the 19th century);
- Ethnological and intercultural talks (e.g., The Otomaung Alphabet of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea; Digitizing Dongba pictographs; Digitising Swahili in Arabic script);
- Typography-related talks (e.g., The missing scripts; Typographetics of urban spaces; Graphemic and graphetic methods in speculative fiction);
- Computer science talks (e.g., Between characters and glyphs; Implementing the advanced composition engine of Arabic);
- As well as extremely touching and heart-warming artistic performances (e.g., Christine Kettaneh’s Mute melodies)

While acknowledging that the conference’s virtual nature was a source of frustration for many, on a brighter side, it also afforded new forms of interaction. Zoom’s chat function provided the usually-silent audience with a means of simultaneously engaging with the talks, in providing comments and/or documentation and fostering fruitful discussions, sometimes even involving the presenters themselves. Thanks to such interactions, to the diverse conference program, and, significantly, to the cathartic experience of connecting amidst the pandemic, many participants experienced the conference as a three-day *oasis of knowledge and emotions*. Alas, however, the conference was not untouched by the pandemic, as Dominique Boutet, scheduled to present with his team about a system for transcribing sign languages, passed away due to COVID just a few weeks before the conference; the second day was dedicated to his memory.

All the talks have been recorded and can be viewed on Youtube via links that are available at

the conference Web site: <https://grafematik2020.sciencesconf.org/>

The *Proceedings* will be published by Fluxus Editions in early 2021 as an OpenEdition (i.e., a PDF file will be freely distributed, with printed copies on a print-on-demand basis from Amazon at a moderate price).

The next *Grapholinguistics in the 21st Century* conference is scheduled for June 2022, which, depending on the prevailing situation, will be conducted in either physical or virtual modes.

Updated version of ORBWLL available [Terry Joyce]

A recently updated PDF version of the Online Research Bibliography of Written Language & Literacy (ORBWLL; available at <http://faculty-sgs.tama.ac.jp/terry/awll/orbwill/index.html>), now includes 7,065 references based on 2,750 source bibliographies. A supplementary PDF lists the 104 most-frequently cited references (in descending order from 205 to 39 citations). Regrettably, however, it is not been possible at this time to update the online access, so the website interface continues to only provide access to an earlier version (full online access will be made available as soon as possible).

As always, feedback concerning any inaccuracies discovered is always most welcome, as are recommendations for source bibliographies to include.

Introducing writing systems: Japanese [7] [Terry Joyce & Keisuke Honda]

The previous installment of this feature marked the start of a mini-series addressing some phonological aspects of kanji. Consistently, the previous part sought to elaborate a little more on the basic distinction between the 音 /ON/ Sino-Japanese (SJ) and 訓 /KUN/ native-Japanese (NJ) readings, which are both associated with kanji. More specifically, in addition to noting that, in reflecting different historical and geographical origins, there are three main categories of SJ readings,¹ the previous piece also acknowledged that many kanji are associated with both SJ and NJ readings, with some being associated with multiple readings. In seeking to elucidate the phonological aspects of kanji still further, this installment emphasizes a key point made at the very start of this feature (see newsletter 3); namely, the importance of the immediate context for interpreting kanji usage.

It is now expedient to state the general propensities concerning the distributions of SJ and NJ readings, even though exceptions abound (a truism that particularly resonates with the complexity of the Japanese writing system). Broadly, SJ morphemes (readings) are predominately the bound components of compound words, whereas NJ morphemes (readings) tend to be either simple words or the stems of verbs and adjectives, which can also participate in word-formation processes. Thus, in a fundamental sense, the notion of context begins at the lexical level of specific words. Continuing to illustrate with 行 ‘go; perform; line’, as a kanji associated with multiple SJ and multiple NJ readings, its phonological value within the following lexical examples is wholly dependent on the morpheme’s contribution to the entire word.

修行	/SHU-GYŌ/ ² [GO-ON /GYŌ/] ‘training’
孝行	/KŌ-KŌ/ [KAN-ON /KŌ/] ‘filial piety’
行灯	/AN-DON/ [TŌ-ON /AN/] ‘fixed paper-enclosed lantern’
行く	/i.ku/; /yu.ku/ [KUN /i/ or /yu/] ‘to go; proceed’
行う	/okona.u/ [KUN /okona/] ‘to perform; do; conduct’

Although this feature will look more closely at the fascinating domain of word-formation processes in later installments, relevant to the present focus on phonological aspects, it is also interesting to note the existence of 混種語 /KON-SHU-GO/ ‘hybrid words’. Also referred to as 混成語 /KON-SEI-GO/, hybrid words are combinations of SJ and NJ morphemes that are pronounced according to their respective readings. One example of a SJ morpheme combined with a NJ morpheme is 書棚 /SHO-dana/ ‘bookshelf’. Such hybrid words are known as 重箱読み /JŪ-bako yo.mi/, after the exemplar of 重箱 /JŪ-bako/ ‘nested boxes’. One example of the reversed ordering with a NJ morpheme followed by a SJ morpheme is 手製 /te-SEI/ ‘handmade’. Those hybrid words are known as 湯桶読み /yu-TŌ yo.mi/, after the exemplar of 湯桶 /yu-TŌ/ ‘pail-like container for holding and serving hot liquids’.

As also introduced in this feature’s founding piece, some compound words also have multiple pronunciations associated with them. In such cases, the task of determining the appropriate pronunciation can often be more difficult, depending on the extent of contextual clues such as the overall level of formality. Although cited previously, the following examples bear repeated mention, as they are probably the most frequently encountered examples. The NJ readings are examples of 熟字訓 /JUKU-JI-KUN/ ‘monomorphemic NJ words represented by multiple kanji’, which will be discussed further in the next installment together with 当て字 /a.te.ji/ ‘phonological transcriptions with kanji’.

昨日	/SAKU-JITSU/ [SJ reading]; /kinō/ [NJ reading] ‘yesterday’
今日	/KON-NICHI/ [SJ reading]; /kyō/ [NJ reading] ‘today’
明日	/MYŌ-NICHI/ [SJ reading]; /ashita/, /asu/ [NJ reading] ‘tomorrow’

¹In further explanation concerning the co-existence of multiple kinds of SJ readings, it is also worth noting that the different readings were associated with different spheres of learning, such as GO-ON with some traditional schools of Buddhism, KAN-ON with Confucianism, some progressive Buddhist sects, and secular learning, and TŌ-ON with Zen Buddhists, Chinese classicists and commerce interpreters. That also, in part, accounts for their distributions; although only a few kanji have TŌ-ON readings, most have GO-ON, retained due to their associations with Buddhist terms, and KAN-ON readings, as subsequent supplements (Shibatani, 1990).

²Within phonological glosses, word boundaries are indicated by spaces, kanji-kanji boundaries by hyphens, and other script boundaries by periods, with macrons, such as ō, indicating long vowels.

Thought-provoking quotations and observations [9]

Clearly, some observations reverberate across time, even if we are not always fully aware of the extent to which subsequent instantiations are essentially echoing earlier ones. For example, in a chapter on orthography, Read (1983: 158) succinctly highlights the problem of regularity.

Most basically, there is the problem of what regularity means. If it means representing only one kind of linguistic unit in a one-to-one mapping, then few writing systems approach regularity, and many major ones are wildly and inexplicably irregular. If we allow for representations at more than one level, then regularity becomes a complex notion indeed. Even given a working notion of regularity in this sense, there is the problem of what kinds of regularity facilitate reading and writing, bearing in mind that what is regular for the reader may be irregular for the writer. For example, English /n/ has two main spellings, *n* and *ng*, as in *sink* and *sing*. If these spellings represented no other phonemes, then the many-one mapping of spellings to sounds would be regular (in the sense of unique without reference to context) for the reader and not for the writer. Conversely for one-many mappings of spellings to sounds, such as *x* in English, which may represent /ks/ or /gz/ (as in *extend* and *exhaust*), the actual situation is far more complex than these examples suggest because *n* can represent other phonemes and /ks/ can be spelled in other ways. That is, there is really a many-many relationship, but the possibility of asymmetry remains.

Those of us concerned with writing must face the likelihood that regularity in writing systems, whatever forms it takes, may tend to favor the reader over the writer; these are, after all, primarily *reading* systems.

Read, Charles. (1983). Orthography. In Margaret Martlew (Ed.), *The psychology of written language: Developmental and educational perspectives* (pp. 143–162). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

~~~~~

Writing is nested in a whole range of daily activities, across diverse domains – work, home, school, political activity, personal interests. Exactly what writing people do, why and how, has been explored in relation to individuals and communities across many diverse geographical, cultural and linguistic contexts. As activities, resources and social relations around activities change so too do the nature and purposes of writing and there is a need continually to explore all dimensions. (p. 97)

In addition to illustrating how “writing is an everyday social practice” (p. 172), Lillis (2013) outlines a number of analytical tools and approaches to describing and analysing writing from a sociolinguistic perspective.

Lillis, Theresa. (2013). *The sociolinguistics of writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

## Miscellaneous matters

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

*14th Annual Conference on Asian Studies (ACAS2020): Voiced and voiceless in Asia*

Olomouc, Czech Republic; 20-21 November 2020

Contact person: Halina Zawiszová

<http://www.acas.upol.cz>

*Chinese languages: history, typology and contact* [Lecture series]

Zoom meetings: 20 November 2020; 4 December 2020; 11 December 2020

Organizers: Bianca Basciano, Anna Morbiato, Giorgio Francesco Arcodia

For information contact: [giorgio.arcodia@unive.it](mailto:giorgio.arcodia@unive.it); [anna.morbiato@unive.it](mailto:anna.morbiato@unive.it)

*Invention of writing Invention of Writing: Production of Images and Language Notation* [INSCRIBE 1]

Zoom webinar platform; 12-15 January 2021

<https://site.unibo.it/inscribe/en/events/conference-the-invention-of-writing-image-production-and-linguistic-notation>

*Morphology in production and perception: Phonetics, phonology and spelling of complex words* [MPP2021]

Düsseldorf, Germany; 08-10 February 2021

Contact person: Ingo Plag

<https://mpp2021.phil.hhu.de/>

~~~~~

Recent publications by AWLL community members

The *Miscellaneous matters* section concludes with a list of recent publications (i.e., since the last newsletter) by AWLL community members, which is followed by ‘mini-flyers’ for three books.

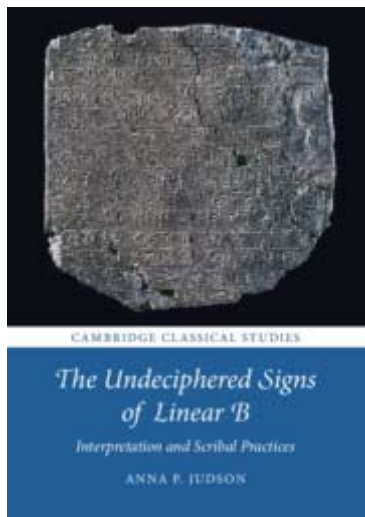
AWLL mailing list is open to anyone interested in receiving occasional information emails, but the core community is based primarily on participation at AWLL workshops. All who participated at the three most recent workshops (AWLL10 in 2016, AWLL11 in 2017 and AWLL12 in 2019) are eligible to have a brief member profile at the community page and to include recent publications under this section of future newsletters (for further information, go to <http://faculty-sgs.tama.ac.jp/terry/awll/community.html>).

Ahlberg, Aija Katriina. (2020). *How abugida readers learn alphabetic literacy skills: The role of phonological awareness in the transfer process in the Konso language, Southwest Ethiopia*. PhD Dissertation. University of Jyväskylä. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-8188-4>

Crellin, Robert S. D., & Tamponi, Lucia. (2020). Vowel quantity and quality in Neo-Punic and Latin inscriptions from Africa and Sardinia. In Aaron Hornkohl & Geoffrey Khan (Eds.), *Studies in Semitic vocalization and reading traditions* (Cambridge Semitic Languages and Cultures) (pp. 1–53). Cambridge: University of Cambridge & Open Book. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0207>.

Judson, Anna P. (2020). *The undeciphered signs of Linear B: Interpretation and scribal practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108859745>

- Karan, Elke, & Roberts, David. (2020). Orthography standardization. In Rainer Vossen & Gerrit J. Dimmendaal (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of African languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meletis, Dimitrios. (2020). Types of allography. *Open Linguistics*, 6, 249–266.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2020-0006>
- Ravid, Dorit, Keuleers, Emmanuel, & Dressler, Wolfgang U. (2020). Emergence and early development of lexicon and morphology. In Vito Pirrelli, Ingo Plag, & Wolfgang U. Dressler (Eds.), *Word knowledge and word usage: A cross-disciplinary guide to the mental lexicon* (Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs 337) (pp. 593–633). Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110440577-015>
- Sampson, Geoffrey. (2020). *Voices from early China: The odes demystified*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Verheijen, Lieke, Spooren, Wilbert, & van Kemenade, Ans. (2020). Relationships between Dutch youths' social media use and school writing. *Computers & Composition*, 56: 102574.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2020.102574>

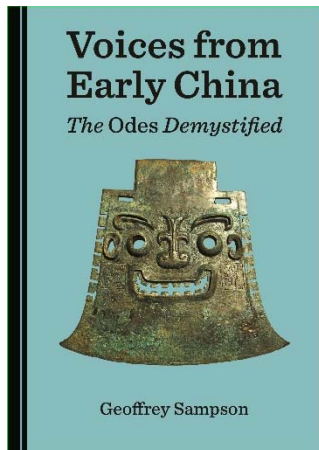


Judson, Anna P. (2020). *The undeciphered signs of Linear B: Interpretation and scribal practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108859745>

Hardback and ebook versions are available to order from www.cambridge.org/9781108494724

AWLL mailing list can get a 20% discount using the code TUSL2020. For those with an institutional subscription to Cambridge Core, the book is also available to download at <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108859745>

Decades after Michael Ventris deciphered Linear B and showed that its language was Greek, nearly one-sixth of its syllabic signs' sound-values are still unknown. This book offers a new approach to establishing these undeciphered signs' possible values. Analysis of Linear B's structure and usage not only establishes these signs' most likely sound-values – providing the best possible basis for future decipherments – but also sheds light on the writing system as a whole. The undeciphered signs are also used to explore the evidence provided by palaeography for the chronology of the Linear B documents and the activities of the Mycenaean scribes. The conclusions presented in this book therefore deepen our understanding not only of the undeciphered signs but also of the Linear B writing system as a whole, the texts it was used to write, and the insight these documents bring us into the world of the Mycenaean palaces.



Sampson, Geoffrey. (2020). *Voices from early China: The Odes demystified*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

For further details, see www.grsampson.net/BVEC.html

Voices from Early China is a translation of the *Book of Odes* (詩經), one of the earliest literary monuments in any living language (comprising poems dating from about 1000 to 600 B.C., several centuries before the Chinese script was standardized).

Alongside renderings of the poems into modern, unstuffy English, the book spells them as they originally sounded, full of rhyming and alliteration that is lost in modern Chinese pronunciation – this is a feature that has only recently become possible, through advances in reconstructing Old Chinese phonology. The poems, many by women, offer vignettes of life in a society emerging from barbarism towards high civilization. The book includes an Introduction setting the poems in their historical and social context and discussing their literary technique, a map, an alphabetized glossary of each word used in the poems, and more.

~~~~~



Meletis, Dimitrios. (2020). *The nature of writing. A theory of grapholinguistics* (Grapholinguistics and Its Applications 3), Brest: Fluxus Editions.

OpenEdition, freely downloadable from:  
<http://www.fluxus-editions.fr/gla3.php>

Writing is an eclectic phenomenon whose many facets are studied by the young interdisciplinary field of grapholinguistics. Linguistically, writing is a system of graphic marks that relate to language. Under the lens of processing, it is a method of producing and perceiving utterances with our hands, eyes, and brains. And from a communication theoretical and sociolinguistic perspective, it is an utterly personal medium that allows users not only to convey messages to others but also to associate themselves with cultures or ideologies. These perspectives must merge to become the foundation of a functional theory of grapholinguistics that aims not only to describe how writing systems are built but to explain *why* they are built that way. Starting with a unified framework that allows the description of all types of writing systems with comparative concepts (such as *grapheme*) and moving towards the incorporation of evidence from disciplines such as psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics to arrive at



explanations, this book establishes the cornerstones of such a functional theory of writing. *The Nature of Writing* is a collection of ideas about writing, a status report about relevant research, a discovery of desiderata, and a new perspective. It is a start, but most importantly, it is an invitation.

---

AWLL board

President: Terry Joyce; vice-presidents: Lynne Cahill & Dorit Ravid

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

On Facebook and Twitter [[@awll](#)]

© 2020