

Writing unfolds on a spatially bounded surface. This spatial constraint directly influences the production of written words. When writers arrive at the end of a line, they have two basic options: either the next word is shifted to the following line, or it is divided—marked by a hyphen. In both cases, spatial factors take precedence over linguistic ones initially (with list formatting as a notable exception, cf. Reißig 2015). While these processes are handled automatically in digital word processing software, handwriting remains a domain in which they must be negotiated manually. This is the starting point of the present study.

Particular attention is given to the hyphen—a punctuation mark that *divides* written words. Previous research has focused primarily on the system governing its placement (cf. Geilfuß-Wolfgang 2007; Fuhrhop & Schmidt 2014). In contrast, this study adopts a usage-based perspective: drawing on a corpus of over 1,000 handwritten German school-exams from the last 100 years, the actual hyphenation practices of writers is investigated.

The analysis reveals clear preferences in hyphen placement, which reflect the complex interplay between syllable boundaries and morpheme boundaries in written language. These patterns not only shed light on graphematic structure but also offer insights into the underlying writing processes in which they emerge. In this sense, hyphenated written words become loci of the interaction between morphology and graphematics.

Fuhrhop, Nanna & Schmidt, Karsten (2014): Die zunehmende Profilierung der Schreibsilbe in der Geschichte des Deutschen. In: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 136 (4), 538–568.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/bgsl-2014-0047>

Geilfuß-Wolfgang, Jochen (2007): *Worttrennung am Zeilenende. Über die deutschen Worttrennungsregeln, ihr Erlernen in der Grundschule und das Lesen getrennter Wörter*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110969351>

Reißig, Tilo (2015): *Typographie und Grammatik. Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Syntax und Raum*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.