

Writing conventions and pragmatic perspectives
Workshop of the Indogermanische Gesellschaft
Brussels, 13th and 14th September 2018

Writing systems are graphic devices to note the phonetic and phonological features of the corresponding languages. They provide a stable form of permanent access to semantic contents. However, written texts should not only be analysed as transcriptions of strings of sounds or phonemes. To the contrary, written sources of all kind also share specific pragmatic features which require a study of their own.

The graphic layout of a text, e.g. abbreviations, indentations, paragraphs, interpuncts between syllables, words, or sentences, the use of signs of different size, alternation between several writing systems for the same language, and the sinistroverse, dextroverse, or boustrophedonic direction of writing may all be considered the elements of a semiotic paradigm characteristic of written communication. They can be analysed independently from the writing system itself (conceived of as a code noting phonemes), because they provide the reader with autonomous indications on the pragmatic scope of the text. Even the decision to resort to a definite material as the support of the text (metal, ceramic, stone, papyrus, parchment, paper) can sometimes be regarded as a pertinent semiotic feature referring to the pragmatic scope of the text itself. Beyond their own phonetic or phonological function, the combinations of written signs such as ligatures and digraphs, or the use of specific forms for the various signs, are also salient from a pragmatic perspective, in so far as their presence can be characteristic of precise textual genres or types of texts.

Furthermore, written communication, contrary to oral communication, simultaneously gives the reader access to a plurality of utterances. It is not bound by the linearity of language. The possibility of writing two different types of texts on the same material support, each one being characterised by a different pragmatic scope, for instance a title or colophon and the corresponding text, should also be considered a pragmatic specificity of written communication. The difference in the scope of both types of texts can be highlighted e.g. by the use of different graphic markers.

These semiotic and pragmatic features of written communication will be the topic of the workshop *Writing conventions and pragmatic perspectives*. Papers on all ancient Indo-European languages will be welcome, since this problem can be approached from a variety of angles,

using both epigraphic and manuscript sources. Contacts between different societies and writing systems also suggest interesting problems.

The topic does not only concern Indo-European languages. Every type of written communication presupposes the use of graphic markers highlighting the scope of the text. Therefore, the workshop is conceived as an occasion for putting Indo-European studies and neighbour disciplines in contact. Mediterranean and Near East areas in particular developed multiple writing traditions in antiquity, among Indo-European or non-Indo-European speaking societies which could be in tight relationships with each other. The workshop may therefore be of interest either to epigraphists and historians or to linguists specialists of Indo-European or other branches.

The workshop will take place on the 13th and 14th September 2018 at the *Université libre de Bruxelles* (Belgium). Interested colleagues should submit an abstract (up to 300 words) before the 15th December 2017 to Valentina Belfiore (belfiorev@yahoo.de), Emmanuel Dupraz (Emmanuel.Dupraz@ulb.ac.be) or Theresa Roth (rotht@staff.uni-marburg.de). The programme of the workshop will be published online in February 2018. Working languages are English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

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