

# Writing Systems

## Notes for Lecture 1 — Introduction

- I. STRUCTURE OF COURSE
  - A. Details in the Course Timetable
  - B. Textbook: *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach*. Henry Rogers. Oxford: Blackwell. 2005.
  - C. Lectures
  - D. Notes: on-line  
[www.chass.utoronto.ca/~rogers/courses/JAL328.html](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~rogers/courses/JAL328.html)
  - E. Two quizzes
    1. Quiz 1: up to that point
    2. Quiz 2: from mid-term test up to that point
  - F. Mid-term test: from beginning of course up to that point
  - G. Final exam: entire course, emphasising the material since the mid-term test
  - H. Knowledge of certain symbols in various writing systems will be required for quizzes, mid-term test, and final exam. These will be clearly specified in advance.
  - I. Quizzes, mid-term, and final will generally be a mixture of objective (multiple choice, true-false, matching, etc.) and short answer (definition, fill in the blank, short discussion, short essay).
  - J. Questions for Quizzes, Mid-Term, and Final Exam drawn from
    1. Book
    2. Notes
    3. Lectures
  - K. Prerequisite for this course is LIN 100 or ANT 100 or the equivalent. If you feel weak in linguistics, go through Appendix A in the back of the book. You might also look at the sections on phonology and morphology in any introductory textbook.
  - L. For next week, get textbook and read Chapters 1–3; download notes; notice signs on shops, etc.

## II. CHAPTER ONE — INTRODUCTION

## A. Importance of writing

## B. Definition

1. Writing is the use of graphic marks to represent specific linguistic utterances.

## C. Writing and language

1. Not the same thing
2. Language
3. Writing
4. Warning: one of the most serious mistakes in this course, and one of the easiest to make, is to fail to distinguish writing and language.
  - a) *Polish is a very phonetic language.*
  - b) *A Chinese character is a word.*
  - c) *English has lots of silent e's.*

## D. Scope of the course

## E. Aspects of writing

1. History of writing
  - a) Dates
    - (1) OLD (BC, BCE)
    - (2) NEW (AD, CE)
    - (3) time o
  - b) Invention of writing
    - (1) Mesopotamia
    - (2) China
    - (3) Mesoamerica
  - c) Borrowing of writing systems— very common
    - (1) Semitic → Greek → Slavic  
Cyrillic → Russian → Mongolian
  - d) Creation of new script
    - (1) Cree → Inuktitut
  - e) Gradual change
    - (1) India: Brahmi (Sanskrit) gradually changes into the many scripts used today in India: Devanagari (Hindi, Marathi, Nepali), Bengali, Gujarati, Gurmukhi (Punjabi), Oriya, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Sinhalese



### 3. **Allograph** — variant of grapheme



## B. Arrangement

### 1. linear arrangement

- a) direction within line/column:
  - (1) left-to-right: Roman
  - (2) right-to-left: Arabic
  - (3) top-to-bottom: (older) Chinese, Mongolian
- b) flow of lines/columns:
  - (1) lines: top-to-bottom: Roman, Arabic
  - (2) columns: right-to-left: (older) Chinese  
left-to-right: Mongolian
- c) paging: which way do pages turn; front of book

### 2. diacritic

- a) free grapheme: occurs in a variety of contexts
- b) bound grapheme: (**diacritic**)

### 3. complex symbol: free grapheme + bound grapheme

- a) violate linear arrangement: < à ç >
- b) follow linear arrangement: < t<sup>h</sup>a >

### 4. ligatures: two graphemes joined and written as one unit: æ œ

- a) non-structural:  
English <æ> < **fi** (**fi**) **fl** (**fl**) >
- b) structural: Danish <æ>
- c) quasi-ligatures: Spanish <ll>
  - (1) <lla> alphabetised as though it were a separate letter;  
i.e., after <lya> and before <ma>

## C. Relation to language

### 1. discrepancies

- a) unit discrepancies
  - (1) digraph: two symbols – one linguistic unit
    - (a) <ng> /ŋ/
  - (2) diphone: one symbol — two linguistic units
    - (a) Greek <ψ> = /ps/, could be written as <πσ>, but isn't.

- b) contrastive discrepancies
- (1) homography: different linguistic units written same way
- (a) heterophonic:  
*does* '3 sg pres of *do*' /dʌz/  
 'female deer (pl)' /dowz/
- (b) homophonic:  
*mould* '(hollow) form'  
 'fungus'
- (2) heterography: different linguistic units written differently
- (a) homophonic:  
*road, rode, rowed* /ɹɔwd/
- (b) heterophonic: (neutral situation)  
*sat, Penelope, harpsichord*

## 2. Level of linguistic unit

- a) <∞> and <∇> are used as arbitrary symbols in the following examples
- b) phonographic
- (1) phonology — phonogram
- (a) phoneme letter alphabet  
 <∞> /p/; <∇> /e/
- (i) Roman, Greek, Cyrillic, Korean Hankul alphabets;  
 (ii) Hebrew, Arabic systems
- (b) mora moraic system  
 (traditionally called syllabary) (typically CV or -C)
- (i) <∞> /pu/; <∇> /ku/  
 (ii) Japanese *kana*; Cree/Inuktitut systems  
 (iii) True syllabic systems are extremely rare.
- (2) morphology — common — morphogram
- (a) <∞> {dog}; <∇> {book}
- (b) \$ @ 5 + ♣
- (c) Chinese characters
- (d) Note that systems where a symbol relates to a *word*, rather than to a *morpheme*, in the language seem not to exist; thus we will not use the term *logographic*!
- (3) syntax — slight relation to punctuation
- (a) ? ! . ,