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Approaching typographic variation

This article introduces a linguistic approach to typography which is based on (interactional) sociolinguistic and metapragmatic theories of communicative variation that is located in the rather new sociolinguistic strand called the sociolinguistics of writing. Within the framework clarified here, typography, and graphic design in general, is understood as a variable perceptible resource which provides, by means of its reference-indeterminate variability, options for the ascription and interactive contextual construal of social (or indexical) meaning. As will be elaborated upon, the approach draws on the assumption that such social meaning is not inherent to communicative forms, but the result of discursively shared (enregistered) and thus unevenly distributed and hence contextually differing expectations, beliefs and assumptions (graphic ideologies). The work introduces a range of basic notions that are needed for the linguistic investigation in typography (typography, typographic scales, text design, multimodality), sketches the scope of linguistic investigations into typographic design on the background of different functions of typographic variation, locates the sociolinguistic approach vis-a-vis other linguistic approaches to typography, introduces the basic notions on which a sociolinguistics of typography is built (graphic variation, graphic knowledge, enregisterment, and graphic ideologies) and finally exemplifies the approach by means of examples from German-speaking discourse.

Keywords: typography, sociolinguistics, multimodality, metapragmatics, typographic variation.

Introduction

In this article, I am going to deal with a particular mode of written communication that has gained the systematic attention of social semiotics and sociolinguistics over the course of the last 15 years, typography. The work draws on the sociosemiotic supposition that typography is a central dimension (or mode) of text design that serves different communicative functions (cf. [Stöckl 2005; van Leeuwen 2005; van Leeuwen 2006]).

One aspect of typography will be highlighted here in particular: the social functions and uptake of typography, or, for that matter, the attitudes and values that are attributed to specific forms (variants) of typography and frame the interpretation of texts. The article focuses primarily on the indexical functions of typography, and hence proposes a sociolinguistic and metapragmatic approach to graphic design (as elaborated upon in more detail by [Spitzmüller 2013]).

The outline of the article is as follows: I will begin by introducing and defining some basic concepts, in particular typography, design, and multimodality. Then, I will sketch some linguistically important functions of text design. The last part focuses on social functions. I will deal mainly with examples from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, my main area of research. Consequently, I will discuss primarily exemplary selected cases in Latin alphabet script, although some examples with Cyrillic-Latin variation are included as well[1].

Core Concepts & Terms

In this section, some basic concepts and terms that are relevant to the case in question will be introduced. I will begin with an outline of what we actually understand by typography. Typography is a term present in everyday language. However, as will be elaborated on, we need to have a more fine-grained notion of what we actually talk about when we investigate a matter linguistically. Thus, some terminological differentiation, which is informed by graphic design theory, will be added. In a similar vein, but much more briefly, the term *design* will be discussed. Finally, I will elaborate on the term which is at the center of the current special issue and thus positions this work in the context of the issue, viz. *multimodality*.

Typography

The word *typography* stems from Greek τύπος ('letter, sign') and γράφειν ('to scratch, to write'). Originally, it denoted a specific printing technique, namely the so-called *letterpress printing* with re-usable, movable metal letters that was (re-)invented in Europe in the 15th century (for details cf. [Finkelstein, McCleery 2005; Robertson 2013]). These letters were made of lead alloyed with some other metals (such as tin and antimony). The typical printing procedure was the following. Printing plates, which had been composed by hand with movable letters in a mirror-inverted manner (like stamps), would be pressed from above on a sheet of paper. Letters could be used for single letters (such as Latin <s>), for ligatures, i.e., letters consisting of two or more letters merged together (such as <fi> or <ffl>), for whole lines of print (as in the *Linotype* technique that was introduced in the 19th century) or in form of *clichés* or *stereotypes*, i. e., stamps which produce complex fixed text parts consisting of symbols, ornaments and small texts (typically used for logos).

In technical terminology, the "typographic technique" was thus differentiated from other printing procedures such as printing with wood plates (xylography) or printing with stone plates (lithography). The main difference is that in both cases, complete plates had to be cut or sketched, whereas typography is an atomistic composition technique. One important economic difference that follows from this is that typographic material could be re-arranged and re-used for different prints, while xylography and lithography could only be used for the specific print they had been designed for. A formal difference is that each letter looks different in xylography and lithography (as in handwriting, i. e., chirography), while typographic letters are (more or less) identical tokens of the same type (that

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[1] For an in-depth sociolinguistic exploration of Cyrillic alphabet script and Cyrillic-Latin variation, please see [Bunčić 2016; Kempgen, Springfield Tomelleri 2019].

is represented by the metal *punch* and *matrix* from which the letters are produced) (on the formal differences and their medial consequences, see [Neef 2011]).

In the wake of technical development (and the decline of letter press printing particularly with the advent of digital typesetting at of the second half of the 20th century; cf. [Kinross 2004]), the traditional notion of typography was more and more superseded by a broader concept that no longer refers to a specific technique alone, but includes all techniques to produce printed (and on-screen projected) texts, notwithstanding the technical details (cf. [Wehde 2000: 3–5; Walker 2001: 2]). Moreover, typography nowadays usually denotes not only the production, but also the appearance of such texts. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, defines typography as "the style and appearance of printed matter" [Stevenson, Waite 2011: 1561]. In a linguistic book on the matter, Walker quite similarly notes that ""Typography"… is concerned with how letterforms are used: with how they are organised visually regardless of how the letters are produced" [Walker 2001: 2].

For the purpose of sociolinguistic research (which is also Walker's focus), such a wide and usage-oriented notion is certainly more suitable than a production-oriented notion, as we are not (mainly) interested in how printed texts are technically set up, but how they are *taken* up in interaction. In this context, it is also helpful to keep in mind the etymology of the term that has been sketched above, as it highlights two (three, as we will see later on) important (and intertwined) aspects of what we are concerned with: recurrent *types* or *forms* (τύποι) on the one hand, but also with concrete *material practices* (γράφειν) within which these types are enacted and made *perceptible*, on the other.

Typographic Scales

An obvious drawback of the wide notion, however, is that it covers too many different phenomena to be described accurately enough. To account for this, different layers or scales of typography are often differentiated. In design theory and the print profession, the most common differentiation distinguishes *macrotypography* and *microtypography* (e. g., [Hochuli 1987; Squire et al. 2006]). The former covers the overall design of a printed matter and the composition of letters on the three-dimensional area of the page (selection of the printing material and of typefaces, visual composition/layout of the page, setting of type sizes and distances, setting of page breaks, as well as the visual layout of the document as a whole), the latter covers the composition and design of script in the two-dimensional area of a line (composition of letters to words, distance of letters, text emphases, distance between words, hyphenation of words at line ends, alignment and line distance, sometimes also the design of typefaces).

This binary distinction primarily follows practical purposes (it basically mirrors the work share in the traditional printing business). For linguistic analysis of typography, classifications that attempt to differentiate (ascendant) textual layers of design — in analogy to the linguistic layers we are used to (from phoneme/grapheme over morpheme, lexeme, syntax to text and beyond; cf. [Spitzmüller, Warnke 2011]) — appear to be more useful. One such classification that modifies the classic one has been proposed by Stöckl [Stöckl 2005: 210]. He distinguishes four typographic scales:

1. *Microtypography*: "the design of fonts and individual graphic signs" (type face, type size, type style, color of type).

2. *Mesotypography*: "the configuration of graphic signs in lines and text blocks" (letter fit, word spacing, line spacing, amount of print on page, alignment of type, position/direction of lines, mixing of typefaces).

3. *Macrotypography*: "the graphic structure of the overall document" (indentations and paragraphing, caps and initials, typographic emphasis, ornamentation devices, assembling text and graphics).

4. *Paratypography*: "materials, instruments and techniques of graphic sign-making" (material quality of medium, material production specifics).

Scal distinctions such as Stöckl's are useful particularly for precise, multi-layered analyses of graphic design, since all four scales are potentially important for, and interact within, the semiotic complex that constitutes the multimodal text.

Terminological differentiation is also often necessary when we deal with specific typological features of text design. On the microtypographic scale, type face is arguably most often subject to terminological muddle. At the very least, it is important to differentiate between categorial levels such as:

- *script systems* (alphabetic script, logographic script, syllabographic script, …);
- *script system varieties* (Latin alphabet, Cyrillic alphabet, Hebrew alphabet, …);
- *type genres* (e. g., within the Latin alphabet script, black letter and Roman);
- *type styles* (e. g., *Textura*, *Rotunda*, *Schwabacher, Fraktur* within black letter, *Humanist*, *Modern Serif*, *Sans Serif*, and *Slab Serif* within Roman);
- *type families* (such as *Times New Roman*, *Garamond*, *Helvetica* etc., sometimes inadequately called *fonts*[2]);
- and *type shapes* (light, medium, bold, italic, small caps, etc.).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, these levels can be mapped onto different forms of graphic variation (e.g., inter-script variation, intra-script variation, type genre variation, style variation, family variation, and shape variation; see Fig. 1; for the concept of "graphic variation", see below).

(Text) Design

Design is an even more hybrid term than typography. In everyday speech it denotes the form and aesthetics of artifacts (such as cars, computers, household appliances), while design theory relates it to the art and craft of purpose- or function-related forming of such artifacts (cf. [Redström 2017]). *Graphic design*, consequently, usually denotes the (purpose-oriented) graphic layout of texts (cf. [Eskilson 2007]).

Media linguistics has adopted this purpose- or function-oriented design concept already in the early days of multimodal research. Inspired by information design studies (such as [Waller 1987; Schriver 1997]), the term *text design* has been proposed (initially by [Bucher 1996]) to cover the strategic composition of texts for specific purposes (cf. [Antos 2001; Roth, Spitzmüller 2007; Ehrenheim 2011]). It thereby stresses the interplay

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[2] In the technical sense, *font* (or *found*) rather denotes a commodity: a material package with which type faces are sold and shipped by the producer, the *type foundry*, e. g., a digital file or a package with letters.

Graphic variation

- Pictural variation
  - […]
- Schematic variation
  - […]
- Scriptographic variation
  - Intra-scriptal variation
    - Writing-technological variation
      (e. g., handwriting vs. typing)
      - Scriptural-verbal variation
        - Graphematic variation
          - […]
        - Spelling variation
          - […]
        - […]
      - Scriptural-paraverbal (parascriptural) variation
        - **Typographic variation**
          - Paratypographic variation
            - […]
          - Macrotypographic variation
            - […]
          - Mesotypographic variation
            - […]
          - Microtypographic variation
            - Type genre variation
              - Type family variation
                - Type style variation
                  - Type shape variation
                  - […]
                - […]
              - […]
            - […]
        - […]
      - Scriptural-nonverbal variation
        - Ideographic variation
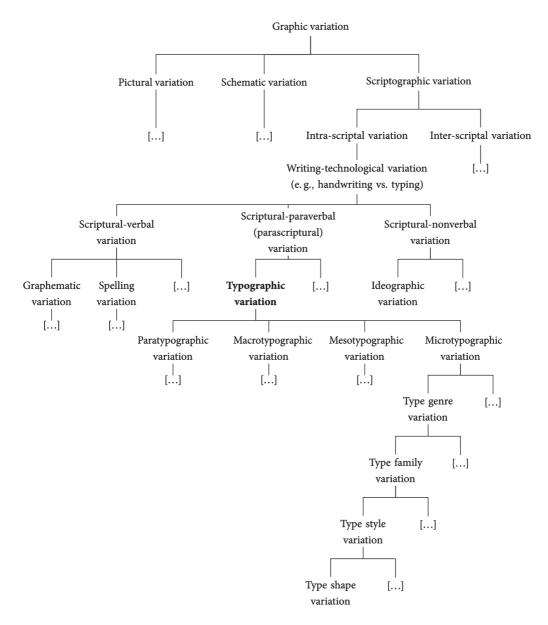   - […]
  - Inter-scriptal variation
    - […]

Fig. 1. Scales of graphic variation (adapted and extended from [Spitzmüller 2013: 215])

of material (multimodal) and referential (verbal) planning. As the information designer Karen Schriver stated, "Document design is the act of bringing together prose, graphics, illustration, photography and typography for purposes of instruction, information, or persuasion" [Schriver 1997: 10].

In a similar vein, design has been adopted by social semiotics, although the focus has been shifted here to the use (selection and composition) of semiotic resources for meaning making. Kress and van Leeuwen note that "Designs are (uses of) semiotic resources, in all semiotic modes and combinations of semiotic modes" [Kress, van Leeuwen 2001: 5].

They go on to elaborate how "Design stands midway between content and expression. It is the conceptual side of expression, and the expression side of conception. <…> Designs are means to realise discourses in the context of a given communication situation. But designs also add something new: they realise the communication situation which changes socially constructed knowledge into social (inter-)action" [Kress, van Leeuwen 2001: 5].

As we have seen, *design* has a strategy- and production-oriented meaning. It thus shifts the focus, as social semiotics generally tends to do, towards text producers, their aims, capacities and semiotic resources. We will see later that a sociolinguistic approach to typography, as proposed here, complements this with a more recipient- and interaction-oriented perspective.

Multimodality

The basic idea of *multimodality* is that texts do not only draw on one, but on multiple semiotic modes (such as verbal language, images, typography), and it is the combination of these modes which makes up the meaning of a text. The two arguably most seminal scholars in the field, Kress and van Leeuwen, define *multimodality* as the "use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined…" [Kress, van Leeuwen 2001: 20]. *Modes*, in turn, are defined as "semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realisation of discourses and types of (inter)action" [Kress, van Leeuwen 2001: 21]. The question what exactly counts as a mode and how modes can be sharply separated is not undisputed. For instance, it is argued whether typography is a mode of its own or whether script is a mode, and typography only a *sub-mode* (e. g., see [Lim 2004; Stöckl 2005; van Leeuwen 2006]).

These terminological quarrels do not need to concern us here. What is important in the context of this work is the general assumption of multimodal theory where texts are more than a string of letters, but a complex semiotic (multidimensional) composition. For analyzing texts, it therefore does not suffice to concentrate on the verbal part alone. In Kress' and van Leeuwen's words:

> All texts are multimodal. Language always has to be realized through, and comes in the company of, other semiotic modes. When we speak, we articulate our message not just with words, but through a complex interplay of speech-sound, of rhythm, of intonation; accompanied by facial expression, gesture and posture. When we write, our message is expressed not only linguistically, but also through a visual arrangement of marks on a page. Any form of text analysis which ignores this will not be able to account for all the meanings expressed in texts [Kress, van Leeuwen 1998: 186].

If we follow this, the need to include typography, and graphic design in general, in the linguistic analysis of texts becomes apparent.

Functions of Text Design

But what exactly does typography add to the meaning of texts? What are its functions? Over the last 15 years, several linguists have raised these questions, and they also provided a range of answers to them (e. g., [Crystal 1998; Stöckl 2005; van Leeuwen 2005;

In Liebe geboren.
In Liebe gelebt.
In Geld gestorben.

Fußball

* 24. Oktober 1857
† 26. Februar 2016

Deine Kraft brachte uns Reichtum.
Wir verkauften dich.
Dich tragen wir zu Grabe.

Salman bin Ibrahim Al Chalifa
+ Gianni Infantino
Jack Warner und Sepp Blatter
mit Jeffrey Webb, José Maria
Marin und allen Angehörigen,
Freunden und Gönnern

8044 Zürich, FIFA-Strasse 20

Unser besonderer Dank gilt allen Bankangestellten der Cayman
Islands, Adidas, Coca-Cola und den Fernsehanstalten weltweit.

Die Beisetzung findet im Zimmer des Hinterzimmers statt.
Von Verträgen bitten wir Abstand zu nehmen.

Fig. 2. A mock obituary (mourning the "killing" of football by the FIFA).
Source: https://schottischefurcheblog.wordpress.com/2016/04/06/r-i-p-fussball/
(accessed: 29.03.2021)

van Leeuwen 2006; Spitzmüller 2006; Spitzmüller 2013]). Basically, when linguists analyze typography, they are interested in one of the following two things: *text organization* or *style*. In the first case, their questions circulate around how texts are structured and readers are guided by means of graphic design. In the second case, their questions are more concerned with how graphic design influences the interpretation of texts.

With regard to text organization, it has been investigated if and to what degree the microtypographic design of texts (for instance, emphasis or selection of typefaces) as well as meso- and macrotypographic design (page layout, combination of text and image, the usage of footnotes, headings, paragraph alignment) determines the organization of text and influences readability (for a survey, see [Spitzmüller 2017]).

When stylistic functions are at the center of linguistic research, on the other hand, it is investigated how typographic elements are part of contextualization processes, i.e., how they frame and influence the interpretation of texts. Research has indicated that such framing might happen on all typographic scales. An important question in this context is, for instance, whether the (micro-, meso-, macro- and paratypographic) design of texts evokes expectations in regard to the genre of a text (so-called *typographic dispositives* [Wehde 2000: 119–133], or *genre cues*; [Spitzmüller 2013: 237–280]), as can be seen, for instance, in mock genres such as mock obituaries (Fig. 2) or mock (academic) papers (cf. [Spitzmüller

forthc. b]), in which different (verbally and graphically indicated) genres are strategically mapped onto each other in a sort of graphic "double-voicing" ([Bakhtin 1981]).

Another question that is addressed by the stylistic strand is how graphical elements signal group membership (social identity), or how design elements are used to express emotions (see [Schopp 2002; Androutsopoulos 2004; Meier-Schuegraf 2005; Spitzmüller 2012; Spitzmüller 2015]).

In the remainder of this work, I will specifically focus on these latter stylistic functions of typography. However, I will approach them not from sociosemiotics, but from a sociolinguistic point of view.

(Typo)graphic Variation as Social Practice

At the center of the sociolinguistic view on typography is its social meaning. The sociolinguistics of typography, therefore, is interested in how people socially position themselves (how they make themselves "socially visible" [Assmann 1986: 127]), as well as how they are positioned (are being made "socially visible" in reception), by means of graphic design. Sociolinguistics provides a couple of concepts which are helpful to understand how typography works, namely *(sociolinguistic) variation, indexicality*, *enregisterment, communicative knowledge*, and *ideologies of communication*. I will discuss and connect them with typography in turn.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, graphic design is a form of communicative variation. In comparison with *(socio)linguistic variation*, the sociolinguistic core topic (cf. [Tagliamonte 2006]), we can refer to our subfield of communicative variation as *graphic variation* (with potential sub-differentiation as presented in Fig. 1). Sociolinguistics has always stressed that linguistic variation generally has the potential to be socially distinctive (e.g., see [Chambers 2003]). With only some (although prominent) exceptions (such as [Bright 1996; Coulmas 2002; Unseth 2005; Cook-Gumperz, Gumperz 2012]), however, the discipline has for a long time limited itself to spoken language as allegedly the most "authentic" and "variable" form of communication (for a critique of this construal, see [Bucholtz 2003]).

Only quite recently has the maxim of social relevance of communicative variation been explicitly applied to scriptal variation (see [Sebba 2009; Jaffe et al. 2012; Lillis 2013; Blommaert 2013; Spitzmüller 2013; Androutsopoulos, Busch 2020]). In this context, sociolinguistics scholars have pointed out that graphic communication is (on multiple levels from script over spelling to typography) by no means less variable than oral communication. As Sebba notes, "…there are in fact many points within writing systems where variation can occur, and where there is variation, there is in practice always social meaning" [Sebba 2009: 39].

Social meaning thereby unfolds in what sociolinguistics calls *indexicality* — interpretive inferences drawn by communicative actors from specific communicative variants selected from a range of possible co-referential variants (i.e., variants with the same referential meaning) that point towards, and thereby co-construct, aspects of the context in which these variants are supposed to be interpreted:

> Through indexicality, every utterance tells something about the person who utters it — man, woman, young, old, educated, from a particular region, or belonging to a particular group, etc. — and about the kind of person we encounter — we make character judgements

all the time, and labels such as "arrogant", "serious", "funny", "self-conscious", or "businesslike" are based almost exclusively on how people communicate with us. Every utterance also tells us something about the utterance itself. Is it serious or banter? Is this an anecdote, a joke, an order, a request? Is the speaker sure/sincere/confident of what s/he says? What kind of relationship between the speaker and the hearer is articulated in this utterance — is this a friendly or a hostile utterance? And every utterance tells us something about the social context in which it is being produced: is this a formal or an informal occasion? Are things such as social class, gender, ethnicity, or professional status played out in the utterance? Are social roles reinforced or put up for negotiation? Are social rules being followed or broken? And so on. Indexical meaning is what anchors language usage firmly into social and cultural patterns [Blommaert 2005: 11–12].

With regard to typography, this means that the graphic design of a text is sociolinguistically relevant since the selected graphic means *might* be indexically linked with social values and context expectations. However, the microtypographic emphasis can be noted: other than many semiotic works on graphic design, (interactional) sociolinguistics does not assume that typographic means always "have" a meaning. Rather than this, it is assumed that meaning is ascribed to these means by particular actors in communication. As Gumperz explains:

> What indexes do is act as flags, cues or reminders to listeners to search their memory for possible alternative ways of explaining or framing what they hear or otherwise perceive or recall. That is to say, to arrive at explanations that make coherent sense of what is going on in the situation at hand. There is thus no generally agreed-upon, stable meaning relationship between the indexical sign and any specific explanation. The interpretations are always highly context-specific in that they depend on aspects of the communicative process that resist strict formalization [Gumperz 1992: 113].

In other words, typographic meaning is perceived to be context-dependent and user-dependent. It is not "attached" to a text by its producers and then simply decoded by its recipients. Instead, it is the procedural result of social practice enacted in interaction.

This does not mean, however, that social meaning is built out of the blue through local interaction. Social values are ascribed to linguistic forms discursively and are thus persistent over single interactional events. In sociolinguistic terms: social (or indexical) meaning is discursively *enregistered*, whereby ""[e]nregistered" just means "widely recognized", and there are degrees of it" [Agha 2007: 235]. In local interaction, then, these enregistered indexicals can be taken up and included (or not) into the process of setting up a context for interpretation (cf. [Spitzmüller 2015]).

Whether or not this uptake happens depends on whether interpreters share enregistered ascriptions and whether they construe it to be relevant in the given communicative context. What becomes crucial here is the fourth core concept mentioned above: *communicative knowledge*. Knowledge is thereby perceived as a set of assumptions about reality that actors have and share. According to Foucault, "…*knowledge*… refers to all procedures and all effects of understanding that are acceptable at a given point in time and in a specific domain" [Foucault 1997: 60]. Drawing on this, we can say that the ascription of social meaning to typographic means is part of something we might call *graphic knowledge*, assumptions about graphic means which people of a community (assume to) share. Graphic knowledge is part of a general communicative knowledge, on the basis of which interact-

ants draw inferences about the interpretation of communicative goings-on within the process that is called *contextualization* in interactional sociolinguistics. As Gumperz noted:

> In order to constitute meanings, speakers activate interpretative frames or schemata from their experience and from their grammatical, lexical and pragmatical knowledge. The enacting of these schemata is called *contextualization* [Gumperz in Prevignano, Di Luzio 2003: 4].
>
> I have proposed the notions of contextualization cues and contextualization processes as a way of accounting for the functioning of linguistic signs in these inferential processes. Contextualization cues are a class of what pragmaticians have called "indexical signs", which serve to retrieve the contextual presuppositions conversationalists rely on in making sense of what they see and hear in interactive encounters. They are pure indexicals in that they have no propositional content… Yet they play a major role in transforming what linguists refer to as "discursive structures" into goal-oriented forms of action [Gumperz in Prevignano, Di Luzio 2003: 9].

Graphic knowledge thus "consists of sets of beliefs concerning the use and [indexical] "meaning" of graphic elements which are held to be "given" — or are, with Foucault, "acceptable" — by a specific social group (at a specific point in time) under specific communicative conditions" [Spitzmüller 2013: 203] (my translation. — *J. S.*).

The use and interpretation of graphic means are based on such (sets of) beliefs. We might call those, in line with metapragmatic terminology (cf. [Silverstein 1979; Irvine, Gal 2000; Chernyavskaya 2020; Spitzmüller forthc. a]), *graphic ideologies* (cf. [Spitzmüller 2012; Spitzmüller 2015]). Examples of graphic ideologies include ideas on how specific means express specific values, or how they are particularly suitable or typical for a given genre, that is, how they align with contextual expectations. Graphic ideologies, in other words, are assumptions about potential indexical pointers of graphic means towards contextual features (cf. [Irvine, Gal 2000: 37]).

Graphic ideologies are often connected with assumptions of shared (enregistered) graphic knowledge, particularly if the intentional usage of graphic means (to a specific end) is ascribed. Sometimes, however, they might also presuppose lacking knowledge on the interlocutor's part (in the case when graphic usage is construed to be "giving off" information about the interlocutor against their will). The following anecdote by a German typographer, Hans Peter Willberg, is a case in point: "I received a letter from a representative of the [German] designer association inviting me to join a committee. The letter had been set in 10 point Avant Garde, justified, very long lines, huge white space between words, no leading. I rejected immediately" [Willberg, Forssman 2001: 78] (my translation. — *J. S.)*.

Graphic design, by means of the ideologies attached to and enregistered with it, hence frames the interpretation of texts in the sense of what interactional sociolinguistics terms as *contextualization cues* (see the quote of Gumperz above), indexical signs which connect utterances to the context of interaction both retrospectively and progressively (cf. [Silverstein 2016]). Drawing on their graphic knowledge, recipients might thus draw inferences about the genre of the text they are dealing with (*genre cues*), historicity of texts (*cues of historicity*), social background of text authors (*cues to personae*), social practice they are part of (*cues to practice*), etc. Such inferences might lose plausibility as the process of interpretation continues. In this case, recipients might consider revising their assumptions

on the basis of other contextualization cues, such as verbal information or new "incoming" cues. Consequently, the process of contextualization is open-ended and meaning is dynamically and interactively (co-)constructed in this process.

Exemplification

In this section, I will provide some cases that exemplify the theoretical thoughts provided above. I will begin with examples that demonstrate the graduatedness of graphoideological enregisterment processes. Then I will move to the question of how graphic knowledge and graphic ideologies are manifested in metapragmatic discourse.

Variable degrees of enregisterment are quite easy to find with regard to typographic forms. To begin with, within larger cultural contexts, some typographic means seem to have a rather strong and wide-spread social meaning. In German-speaking countries, this is true for black letter types, which appear to be associated by many people and in many contexts, in particular in political contexts, with nationalism or even national socialism (cf. for details [Flood 1996; Bain et al. 1998; Meier-Schuegraf 2005; Spitzmüller 2012]). They are thus often used to contextualize (and either graphically celebrate or stigmatize) right-wing political movements. Figure 3 displays two examples (a banner and a screenshot from a video clip) taken from a campaign against right-wing political movements and racism.

Fig. 3. Recontextualization of graphic shibboleths.
Source: https://www.gesichtzeigen.de/angebote/kampagnen/mein-wahl-kampf-gegen-rechts/
(accessed: 28.03.2021)

The text of the banner translates as 'Say no to racism. No matter in which language'. The text in black letter on the bottom right of both artifacts translates to 'My campaign against right-wing' (whereas *Mein Wahl-Kampf* is a pun in regard to the title of Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*). Next to the script genre variation, the design also adapts and transforms some other graphic means that foster the contextualization, such as the red and white color (cf. [Koop 2008]) and the gaze of the depicted persons (contrasted by the skeptical facial expression of the young man montaged into the video). As for the video, other modes (such as sound, music, intonation, and speech style) add to the picture.

While the given examples are likely interpreted in a similar way by many recipients, other means are much subtler and group depending. For instance, pop-cultural scenes

typically have specific graphic means which distinguish them from others and contribute to the scene's identity (cf. [Androutsopoulos 2004; Spitzmüller 2013: 360–400]). The knowledge of these means, however, is much less wide-spread than the aforementioned associations of black letter, although some allude to more generally enregistered graphic knowledge which is recontextualized for the purpose of the pop-cultural positioning.

Figure 4 displays some cases in point from what is called "Russian pop" (*Russenpop*) in the German speaking area, a genre that reached popularity by engaging popular Russian emigres.

Fig. 4. Graphically constructed "Russianness". *a.* Album cover *Russkaja: давай* [*dawai*] (2007); *b.* Album cover *Russkaja: Energia!* (2013); *c, d.* Two flyers from the author's collection (both collected in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, April and May 2007).

As can be seen, the examples use graphic variation on all scales to contextualize (what they construe as) "Russianness": red color, iconic symbols (such as the Soviet star and the Matroshkas), Russian Avant Garde and Soviet political propaganda artwork, but specifically also distinctive typography and inter-scriptal variation.

A recurrent means is the use of inverted Latin letters that mimic letters from the Cyrillic alphabet (but graphematically remain within the Latin context), particularly *Я* (used as *R*) and *И* (used as *N*). Sometimes, Latin letters with no such iconic counterpart are reversed for the same contextual effect (e.g., the inverted *K* in the band name, *Russkaja*). It seems that "reverseness" has become iconic to "Russianness" within this context. Furthermore, Cyrillic letters that resemble Latin ones are used (in the example: *ь* as *b*), as well as letters that are indifferent but clearly deviant from the Latin forms (such as the letter representing *G* in *ST. PETERSBURG* in the rightmost flyer, possibly derived from a rotated *Б* or *б*).

In addition to this iconic use, "foreign" script is sometimes also used in more symbolic ways to address a local audience. The title of the album "давай" ('come on!'), released by a primarily Austrian band (with a singer of Russian origin) for the Austrian market, is a case in point. In the context of this particular usage, it is not actually required that recipients be able to read and understand the title. They only need to understand that this is (supposed to be) Russian. Furthermore, the scriptal "foreignness" is a crucial context feature here as it adds to the semiotic construction of "Russianness". For this to work, the

markers of "Russianness" need to be embedded in a "Western" matrix frame (this is also the case in the band's song texts, which are mostly in English with some Russian words or phrases saliently embedded). In regard to cases of similar forms of language blending (see [Rampton 2018]), we have called this form of inter-scriptal blending *graphic crossing*, the juxtaposition or blending of diverse graphic systems or subsystems of which at least one is considered "foreign" (and hence indexes "foreignness") in the current context of utterance (cf. [Spitzmüller 2007]).[3]

The pop-cultural examples discussed here rely on knowledge about cultural frames of reference, but also about genre-specific forms of variation (such as letter reversal). Similar practices can be found in other pop-cultural genres such as Visual Key, where "Japanese-ness" is graphically constructed via inter-script variation to Kanji and Kana script, symbols, colors, etc. (cf. [Spitzmüller 2013: 393–399]), or Heavy Metal, where (a specific kind of) "Germanness" or "Teutonism" is constructed by means of black letter typeface and the so-called "Heavy Metal Umlaut" (cf. [Spitzmüller 2012]). Some forms used (black letter and the script variants) are rather deeply enregistered, others (umlaut for instance) are enregistered on a medium-sized level (it exceeds the scene, but it is still limited to actors who are somewhat familiar with it), yet others require insider knowledge.

Some ascriptions are even shared by rather small groups only. A case in point is the anecdote of Willberg's provided above, which serves as esoteric expert knowledge (i.e., "enacts expertise" [Carr 2010]) about microtypographic details and thereby allows the narrator to position himself as someone "in the know" vis-a-vis a group of actors whom he denies such expertise.

This case is one example of metapragmatic "expertise" discourse that can be found in professional and connoisseur community discourse, for instance in so-called typophile internet fora. A neat example from the early days of the Internet is discussed in Danet [2001: 289–344], a community of practice constituted for the purpose of demonstrating a group member's disfavor and rejection of the *Times New Roman* type family. Times New Roman, according to the group's expressed belief, is a "boring typeface" used by "boring people". Type family variation, hence, becomes socially discriminative, a "sign of difference" [Gal, Irvine 2019]. Note how this is done by indexically linking graphic variants with specific types of users (*social personae*). In the current case, we can specifically observe an ideological process that has been called *iconization* or *rhematization* in language ideology research (cf. once more [Irvine, Gal 2000; Gal, Irvine 2019]): the alignment of communicative characters with a communicators' features ("boring typeface" ↔ "boring people").

Similar discourses are current to date, and as in the *Times New Roman* case they often circle around the fonts that are promoted by popular operating systems and thus widely used. *Arial*, *Calibri* and *ComicSans* are other frequently discussed cases (for the latter case, Meletis [2020] indicates how the iconization "childish typeface" ↔ "childish people" frames the respective graphic ideology).

Examples such as the typophile cases are part of what we call *metagraphic discourse*, metapragmatic discourse that circles around graphic variation (cf. [Spitzmüller 2015]). In a sociolinguistic approach to typography, the analysis of metagraphic discourse becomes a central part of the endeavor, as only there can we understand how graphic knowledge and graphic ideologies become discursively constructed and how they are negotiated (and

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[3] More recently, [Androutsopoulos 2020] proposed the term *trans-scripting* (drawing on the concept of *translanguaging*; cf. [García, Wei 2014]) in regard to similar cases in Greek-Latin inter-scriptal variation.

disputed) by communicative actors. In other words, if we set out to understand the social relevance of typography from a sociolinguistic point of view, it is not sufficient to look at typographic design alone. We must include analyses of how social actors talk about, and thereby evaluate, typographic design. Discourse about typefaces (such as *Times New Roman* or *ComicSans*) are a case in point, but next to this, there is surprisingly much metapragmatic discourse available in books and magazines about typography, in fora, on websites, etc. Sometimes it takes place on the backstage, such as in editorial logs on Wikipedia (for an in-depth analysis of metagraphic discourse about the meaning of black letter type and the umlaut in a Heavy Metal context in Wikipedia editorial comments cf. [Spitzmüller 2012: 274–279]). If we open our eyes, a widely unexplored and highly fascinating land of graphic ideologies and metagraphic practices lead to sociolinguistic inquiry.

Conclusions

In this work, I have introduced and proposed a sociolinguistic approach to typographic variation. I have argued that typography is a potentially meaningful mode of written communication if we account for the fact that typographic meaning is not context-abstract, but the dynamic, context and user dependent result of locally enacted discursively constructed ascriptions that (indexically) link typographic variants (on different scales of typographic design) with assumptions about what is supposed to occur in an interaction if specific typographic constellations are involved.

I have argued that the analysis of typographic variation needs to consider how typography is actually used and discursively construed in interactional performance, since typography is not just a form for written texts, but needs to be understood as intricately embedded in social practices within which such forms are aligned with a range of expectation, evaluations and experiences. Thus, as with other forms of communication, we need to widen our scope from communicative products to processes and all the "meta" that frames and links them.

The late Michael Silverstein reminds us that we need to include structures, practices, and ideologies if we want to get hold of the "total linguistic fact" [Silverstein 1985: 220]. Likewise, we need to look not only at the recurrent *types* or *forms* (τύποι), but also at the concrete *material practices* (γράφειν) within which these forms are used, and not least at the ideologies (δόξα) that make the sensable forms sensible in these practices, if we want to understand the *total* typographic fact.

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К вопросу о типографических вариациях

В статье рассматривается особый способ письменной коммуникации, который привлекает внимание социальной семиотики и социолингвистики на протяжении последних 15–20 лет, а именно типографика. В статье представлен лингвистический подход к изучению типографики, основанный на социолингвистической и метапраграмитической теориях коммуникативной вариативности и относящийся к довольно новому направлению — к так называемой социолингвистике письма. В рамках статьи типографика и графический дизайн в целом понимаются как воспринимаемый ресурс со множеством переменных, который посредством своей изменчивости предоставляет варианты для переписывания и интерактивного конструирования социального (или индексального) значения. Основное внимание уделяется индексальным функциям типографики. Типографика является центральным аспектом (или способом) текстового дизайна, который выполняет различные коммуникативные функции. В частности, выделен один аспект типографики — социальные функции и восприятие типографики, то есть отношения и ценности, которые приписываются конкретным формам (вариантам) типографики и которые определяют интерпретацию текстов. В статье подробно описан данный механизм. Подход автора основан на предположении, что социальное значение не присуще коммуникативным формам изначально, а является результатом дискурсивно разделяемых и, следовательно, неравномерно распределенных и контекстно различающихся ожиданий, убеждений и допущений (графическая идеология). В статье вводится ряд основных понятий, необходимых для лингвистического анализа: типографика, иерархия вариативностей, текстовый дизайн, мультимодальность. Автор дает обзор лингвистических исследований, посвященных типографическому дизайну, в контексте различных функций типографической вариации, что позволяет подчер-

кнуть значимость социолингвистического подхода в сравнении с другими лингвистическими подходами к изучению типографики. В качестве иллюстраций приводятся примеры из современной немецкой, австрийкой и швейцарской прессы.