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The Indexical Dimension of Scientific Graphic Design

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International Conference

Knowledge Design. Graphic Design in Science Communication

Tübingen, 7/4/2016

Dimensions of Scientific Graphic Design

The Informative Dimension

“Graphic design is a form of visual communication: Layout, colors, typography, and visualizations **accelerate communication and facilitate the flow of information.**

Graphic design thus aims at enabling the addressee to build up new structures of knowledge. From a rhetorical perspective, the central question here is **how information can become comprehensible by design** (perspicuitas) and **how immediate insight and understanding can be achieved** (evidentia): How can graphic design render scientific findings **comprehensible and clear**? Which devices or techniques of graphic communication are persuasive? And in what ways can graphic design become susceptible for manipulation or misinformation?”

Kramer, Olaf/Susanka, Thomas (2015). KNOWLEDGE DESIGN. Graphic Design in Science Communication [Call for Papers].
http://s585328421.online.de/knowledgedesign/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/KnowledgeDesign_cfp_engl.pdf

Dimensions of Scientific Graphic Design

The Epistemological Dimension

“Graphic design, however, is not only a method of rendering communication more efficient. At the same time, designing information and knowledge also bears an epistemological dimension, as **the graphic form crucially determines how we think about concepts and theories** (e. g. of different atom models, the wave-particle duality or the configuration of space through cartographic representations). Since knowledge only exists within the confinements of its semiotic representation, **graphic design creates meaning just as much as it communicates meaning**. This brings up the more fundamental question in how far the visual turn has not only changed knowledge communication but also knowledge itself.”

Kramer, Olaf/Susanka, Thomas (2015). KNOWLEDGE DESIGN. Graphic Design in Science Communication [Call for Papers].
http://s585328421.online.de/knowledgedesign/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/KnowledgeDesign_cfp_engl.pdf

"Something spoken about"

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"Long traditional in our culture is the threefold division between **speaker, hearer, and something spoken about**. It has been elaborated in information theory, linguistics, semiotics, literary criticism, and sociology in various ways."

Hymes, Dell (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics. An Ethnographic Approach*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 53–54.

- ➡ Informative dimension: how can we **medially represent the 'something'** (most 'effectively')?
- ➡ Epistemological dimension: how is **the 'something' itself medially constructed** (and thus dependent of the representation)?
 - ➡ 'something spoken about': objects and state of affairs (*Gegenstände und Sachverhalte*) sensu Bühler (1934) (2011, p. 35)

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Thesis

The **indexical dimension** is a third dimension next to the informative and the epistemological dimension (and others) that needs to be taken into account when scientific graphic design is investigated.

Outline

1. Core concepts (*Indexicality, Enregisterment, Indexical Orders, Ideologies of Communication*)
2. Exemplification (Enregisterment and indexicality of academic typography)

Thesis

The **indexical dimension** is a third dimension next to the informative and the epistemological dimension (and others) that needs to be taken into account when scientific graphic design is investigated.

Outline

1. **Core concepts** (*Indexicality, Enregisterment, Indexical Orders, Ideologies of Communication*)
2. **Exemplification** (Enregisterment and indexicality of academic typography)

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"Psychologically, the action of indices depends upon **association by contiguity**, and not upon association by resemblance or upon intellectual operations."

Peirce, Charles S. (1932). *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. 8 vols. Vol. 2. *Elements of Logic*. Ed. by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, p. 172 [= CP 2.306].

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[...] referential or denotational, 'pure' meaning is only one part of the effects of language use. Apart from referential meaning, acts of communication produce *indexical* meaning: social meaning, **interpretive leads between what is said and the social occasion in which it is being produced.**"

Blommaert, Jan (2005). *Discourse. A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics), p. 11.

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"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,

Indexicality (cont.)

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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, Jan (2005). *Discourse. A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics), pp. 11–12.

Indexical Presupposition and Entailment

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"Now in relation to micro-social context in the most general sense, any such socially conventional indexical (Legi)sign [=type] is **dialectically balanced between indexical presupposition and indexical entailment**. That is, its indexical meaning is composed of two aspects. One is its indexical 'appropriateness-to' at-that-point autonomously known or constituted contextual parameters: what is already established between interacting sign-users, at least implicitly, as 'context' to which the propriety of their usage at t_o appeals. The other is its indexical 'effectiveness-in' context: how contextual parameters seem to be brought into being—i. e., causally and hence existentially entailed—by the fact of usage of the indexical (Sin)sign [=token] itself."

Silverstein, Michael (2003). Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life. In: *Language & Communication* 23/3–4, pp. 193–229, quot.: p. 195.

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"In general [...] the social effects mediated by speech are highly context-bound or **indexical** in character: they are evaluated in relation to the context or situation at hand, including those aspects of the situation created by what has already been said or done. Either an utterance is felt to be appropriate to the situation as already understood, or it alters the context in some recognizable way, transforming it into a situation of an entirely different kind."

Agha, Asif (2007). *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language 24), p. 14; orig. emph.

Indexing Past Practices

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“jeder sprachliche Ausdruck in unserer Sprachbiographie [ist] durch den Kontext indiziert [...], in dem wir ihn kennengelernt haben – jenseits seiner in Wörterbüchern explizierten Bedeutung bedeutet/bezeichnet jeder Ausdruck eben immer auch reflexiv die Situation, deren Artikulation er ermöglicht (hat).”

[Maas, Utz \(1989\).](#) Sprache im Nationalsozialismus. Analyse einer Rede eines Studentenfunktionärs. In: Konrad Ehlich (ed.): *Sprache im Faschismus*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 162–197, quot.: p. 168.

“die soziale Praxis, und damit eben auch jede Sprachpraxis, [ist] reflexiv [...]: die Form jeder Praxis, also die Form, in der die jeweilige Praxis artikuliert worden ist, kann selbst zum Zeichen für diese Praxis werden.”

[Maas, Utz \(1985\).](#) Konnotation. In: Franz Januschek (ed.): *Politische Sprachwissenschaft. Zur Analyse von Sprache als kultureller Praxis*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, pp. 71–95, quot.: p. 73.

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Social Emblems

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"What is the rubric called 'identity' a name for? What are the things it names? It is a way of talking about the emblematic functions of signs in behavior. An *emblem* is a thing to which a social persona is attached. It involves three elements; (1) a perceivable thing, or diacritic; (2) a social persona; (3) someone for whom it is an emblem (i. e., someone who can read that persona from that thing). When a thing/diacritic is widely recognized as an emblem – when many people view it as marking the same social persona – I will say that it is enregistered as an emblem, or is an *enregistered emblem*. 'Enregistered' just means 'widely recognized,' and there are degrees of it."

Agha, Asif (2007). *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language 24), p. 235.

Register and Enregisterment

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"registers [are] culture-internal models of personhood linked to speech forms"

Agha, Asif (2007). *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language 24), p. 135.

"*Enregisterment*: processes and practices whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped) as belonging to distinct, differentially valorized semiotic registers by a population."

Agha, Asif (2007). *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language 24), p. 81.

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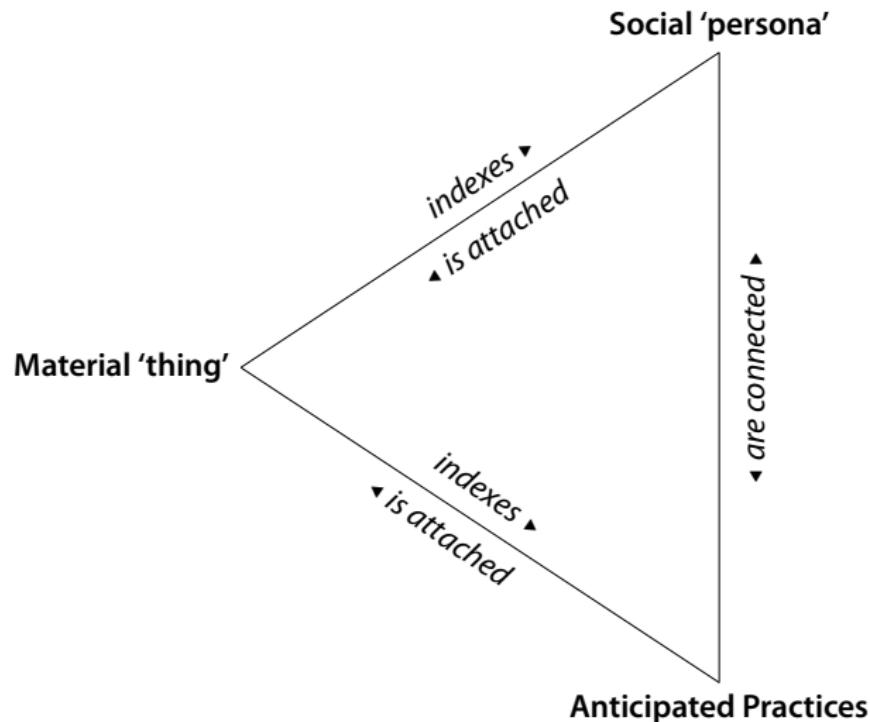
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Cf. Spitzmüller, Jürgen (2015). Graphic Variation and Graphic Ideologies: A Metapragmatic Approach. In: *Social Semiotics* 25/2, pp. 126–141.

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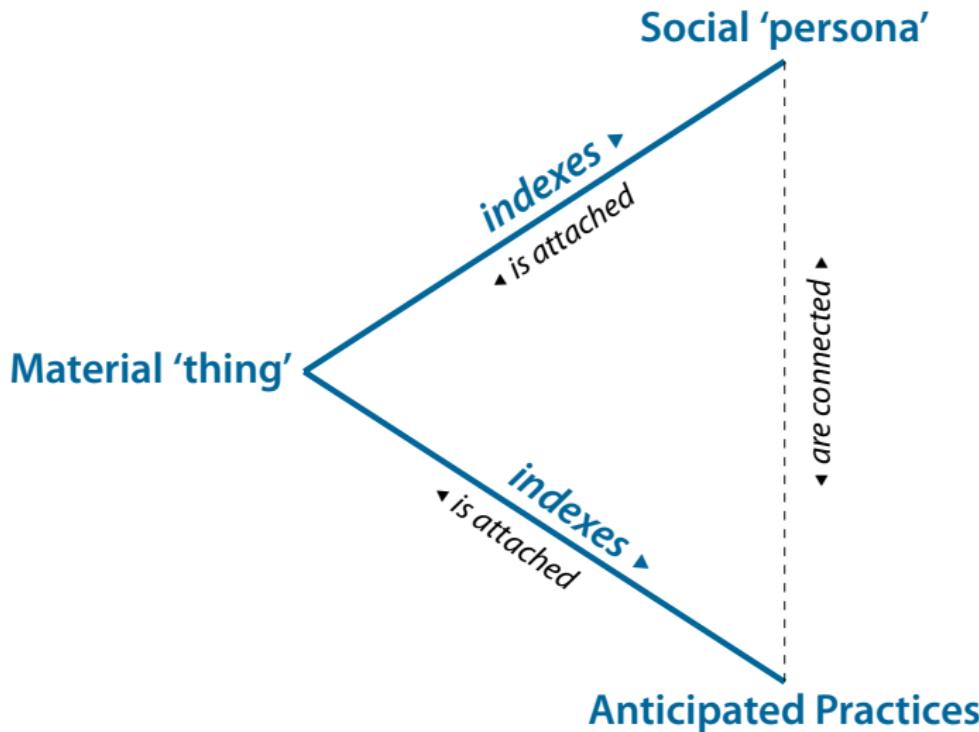
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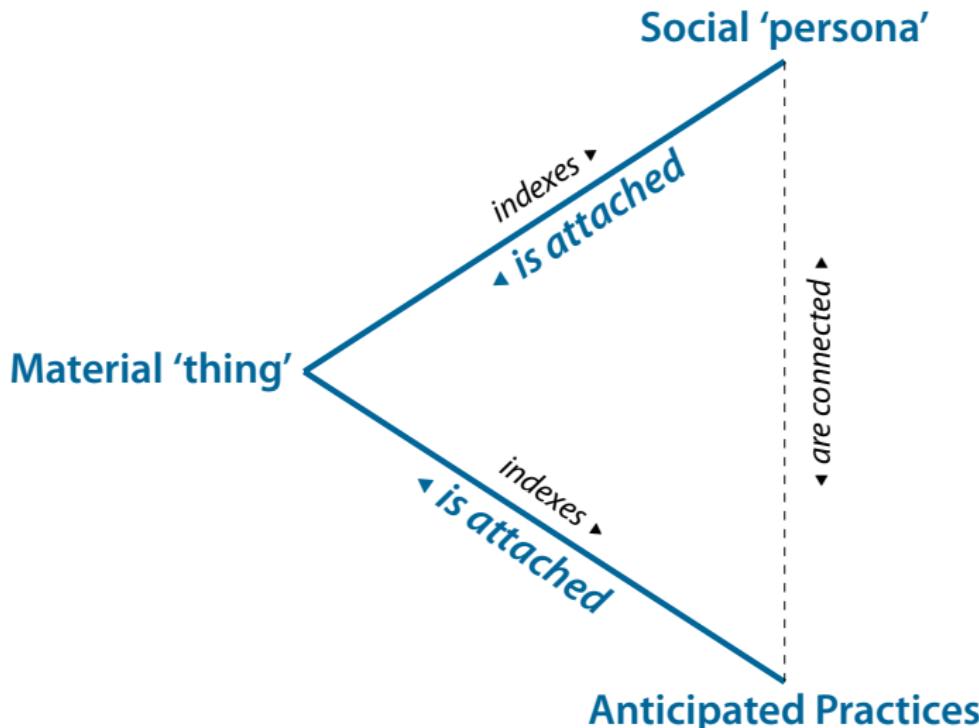
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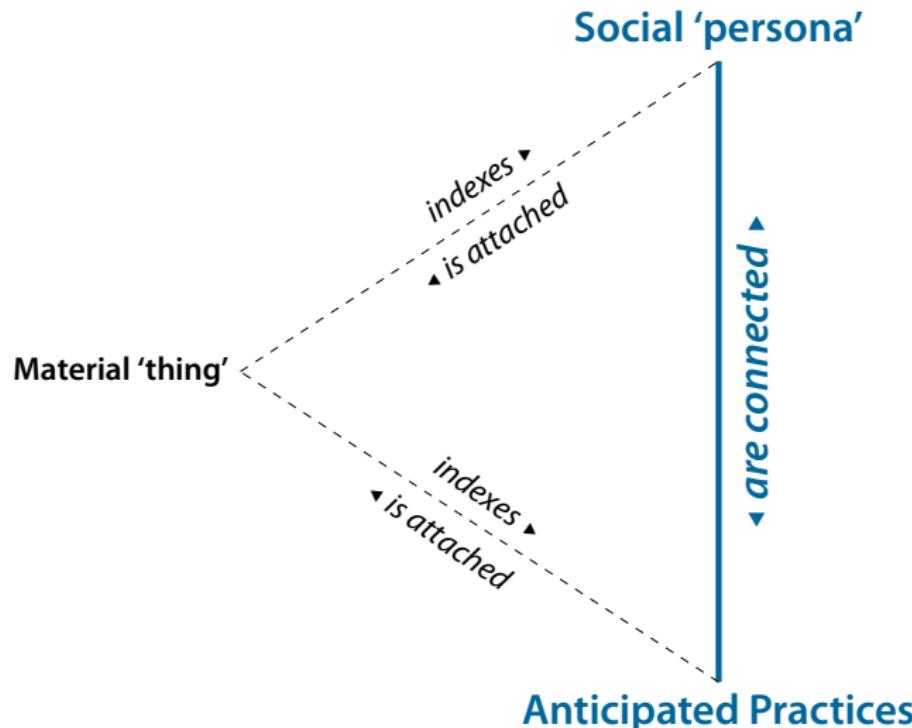
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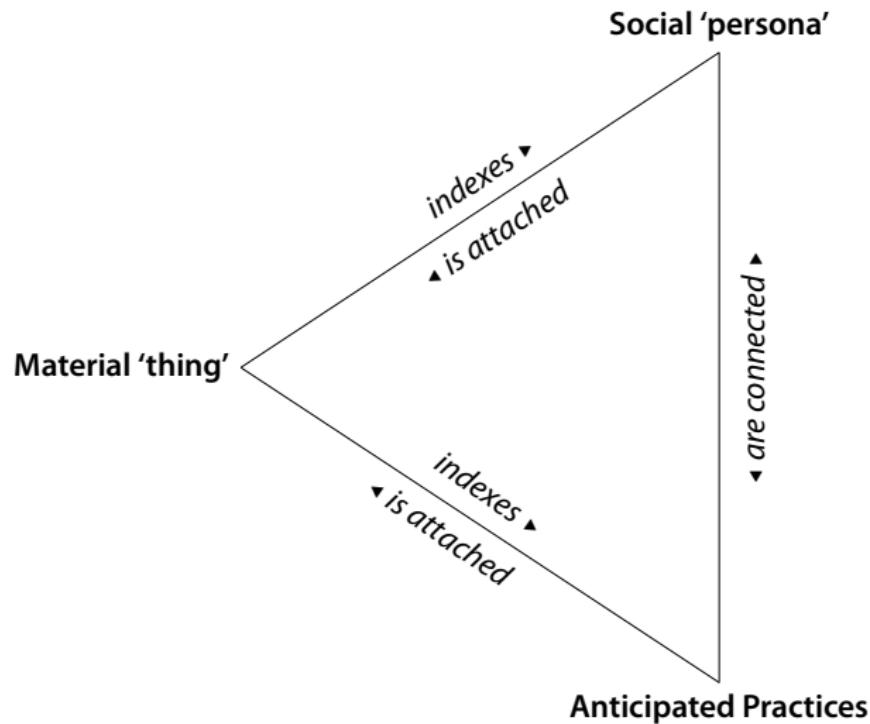
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Scientific Graphic Design as a Social Index

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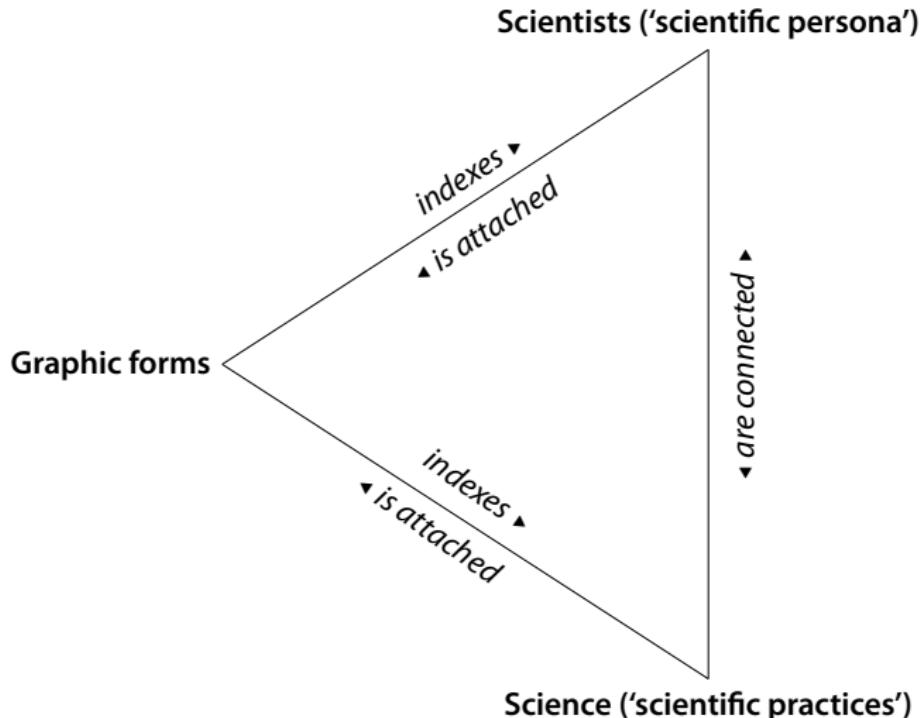
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- **1st-order indexicality:** Linguistic forms that are linked to a specific sociodemographic context only from the outside (e. g., by linguistic observation)
- **2nd-order indexicality:** Linguistic forms that are linked to a specific sociodemographic context from the inside (i. e., by group members) and hence can be used as contextualization cues
- **3rd-order indexicality:** Linguistic forms that are widely perceived as being 'emblematic' for a given sociodemographic context and that are thus often used in stylization [*connotation sensu Hjelmslev* ([1943] 1969, pp. 114–125)]

Silverstein, Michael (2003). Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life. In: *Language & Communication* 23/3–4, pp. 193–229.

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"I should clarify that ideologies about language, or linguistic ideologies, are any sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use."

Silverstein, Michael (1979). Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology. In: Paul R. Cline/William Hanks/Carol Hofbauer (eds.): *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, pp. 193–247, quot.: p. 193.

Graphic Ideologies

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[...] interactants not only display values and beliefs towards and by means of languages and varieties, but also towards and by means of the use of graphic elements. Alongside language ideologies, sociolinguistics thus also needs to consider what I shall call **graphic ideologies** here. [...] Drawing on Michael Silverstein's (1979: 193) classic definition, graphic ideologies can provisionally be defined as any **sets of beliefs about graphic communicative means** articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived orders and communicative use of graphic elements. 'Graphic communicative means' thereby subsume all sorts of communicative means that use the visual channel and that are used in texts (this, in turn, excludes nonverbal visual phenomena such as gesture)."

Spitzmüller, Jürgen (2012). Floating Ideologies: Metamorphoses of Graphic "Germanness". In: Alexandra Jaffe et al. (eds.): *Orthography as Social Action: Scripts, Spelling, Identity and Power*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 255–288, quot.: pp. 256–257.

Academic Writing as Social Positioning

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“Die **Alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache** dient den Schreibern einerseits als **zeichenhaftes Werkzeug** zur Realisierung wissenschaftlicher Denk- und Handlungsroutinen und andererseits als **Erkennungszeichen wissenschaftlicher Autorität**. [...]

Als **Gruppensprache** hat die Wissenschaftssprache nicht nur eine Darstellungs-, sondern immer auch eine **Ausdrucks- und Appelfunktion**. Sie ist zum einen ein *Symptom* der ‘Innerlichkeit’ des Schreibers, ist ‘Kundgabe’, weil sie dessen ‘Selbstdarstellung’ dient. Mit ihr weist sich der Schreiber als Wissenschaftler aus. Die Wissenschaftssprache ist zugleich *Signal*, ein Appell an den Leser, dem vermittelt wird, dass der Text einem wissenschaftlichen Kontext zuzurechnen ist.”

Steinhoff, Torsten (2007). *Wissenschaftliche Textkompetenz. Sprachgebrauch und Schreibentwicklung in wissenschaftlichen Texten von Studenten und Experten*. Tübingen: Niemeyer (Reihe Germanistische Linguistik 280), pp. 3, 35–36.

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"Academic writing, like all forms of communication, is an act of identity: it not only conveys disciplinary 'content' but also carries a representation of the writer. [...] In other words, we do not simply report findings or express ideas in some neutral, context-free way, we employ the rhetorical resources accepted for the purpose of sharing meanings in a particular genre and social community."

[Hyland, Ken \(2002\).](#) Authority and Invisibility: Authorial Identity in Academic Writing. In: *Journal of Pragmatics* 34, pp. 1091–1112, quot.: pp. 1092–1093.

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"Academic writing is a major site in which social positionings are constructed. The acquisition of disciplinary knowledge involves an encounter with a new and dominant literacy, even for L1 learners, and although undergraduates are not expected to enter a disciplinary community, they are assessed on their ability to engage in its specialized discourses [...]. Students have to develop the 'peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding and arguing that define the discourse of the community' [...]. They must speak with authority, and to do this they must use another's voice and another's code, weakening their affiliations to their home culture and discourses to adopt the values and language of their disciplinary ones [...]."

Hyland, Ken (2002). Authority and Invisibility: Authorial Identity in Academic Writing. In: *Journal of Pragmatics* 34, pp. 1091–1112, quot.: p. 1094.

Academic Phrasebank

Previewing sections of text

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on X. It begins by ...

This introductory section provides a brief overview of ... It then goes on to ...

This part of the thesis discusses the findings which emerged from the statistical analysis presented in the previous chapter.

This chapter describes and discusses the methods used in this investigation. The first section ...

The second part moves on to describe in greater detail the ...

The final chapter of this dissertation is divided into two parts. The first ...

This chapter is divided into four main sections, each of which presents the results relating to one of the research questions.

The structure and biological functions of Xs will be discussed in the forthcoming sections.

Introducing a new topic or aspect of a topic

Regarding X, ...

As regards X, ...

In terms of X, ...

In the case of X ...

With regard to X, ...

With respect to X, ...

As far as X is concerned, ...

Reintroducing a topic

As discussed above, ...

As explained earlier, ...

As described on the previous page, ...

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, ...

As explained in the introduction, it is clear that ...

As was pointed out in the introduction to this paper, ...

Returning (briefly) to the (subject/issue) of X, ...

The Enregisterment of Scientific Emblems

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Cf. for instance:

- Raible, Wolfgang (1991). *Die Semiotik der Textgestalt. Erscheinungsformen und Folgen eines kulturellen Evolutionsprozesses*. Heidelberg: Winter (Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse Jg. 1991, Abh. 1).
- Campbell-Kelly, Martin/Croarken, Mary/Flood, Raymond/Robson, Eleanor (eds.) (2003). *The History of Mathematical Tables. From Sumer to Spreadsheets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rosenberg, Daniel/Grafton, Anthony (2012). *Cartographies of Time. A History of the Timeline*. New York/London: Abrams Books.
- Lima, Manuel (2014). *The Book of Trees. Visualizing Branches of Knowledge*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

The Footnote as a Scientific Icon

- “typographische Geste der Wissenschaftlichkeit”
 (“typographic gesture of scientific nature”),
 “das Graphem der Gelehrsamkeit schlechthin”
 (“the ultimate grapheme of scholarship”)
-

[Cahn, Michael \(1997\).](#) Die Rhetorik der Wissenschaft im Medium der Typographie. Zum Beispiel die Fußnote. In: Hans-Jörg Rheinberger/Michael Hagner/Bettina Wahrig-Schmidt (eds.): *Räume des Wissens. Repräsentation, Codierung, Spur.* Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, pp. 91–109, quot.: p. 92.

- “Personalausweis der Gelehrtenrepublik”
 (“identity card of the Republic of Scholars”)
 - [Košenina, Alexander \(2003\).](#) *Der gelehrté Narr. Gelehrtensatire seit der Aufklärung.* Göttingen: Wallstein, p. 267.
 - “Footnotes [...] are intimately bound up with authority”
-

[Nimis, Steve \(1984\).](#) Fussnoten: das Fundament der Wissenschaft. In: *Arethusa* 17/2, pp. 105–134, quot.: p. 106.

The Enregisterment of 'Objectivity'

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"Nineteenth-century scientific prose shows trends that persist from the 18th century and that will continue to persist into the 20th. [...] [Amongst others,] the **movement toward the appearance of objectivity** that stems from the reduction of personal pronouns, evaluative and deviant expressions, and an increase in abstract and impersonal predicate."

Gross, Alan G./Harmon, Joseph E./Reidy, Michael (2002).
Communicating Science: The Scientific Article from the 17th Century to the Present. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, p. 124.

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- Plain style ideal in scientific writing as of the 17th century

Cf. [Nate, Richard \(2001\)](#). "Plain and Vulgarly Express'd": Margaret Cavendish and the Discourse of the New Science. In: *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 19/4, pp. 403–417; [Hüllen, Werner \(1989\)](#). "Their Manner of Discourse". *Nachdenken über Sprache im Umkreis der Royal Society*. Tübingen: Narr.

Plain Style in Science

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“[...] in aufklärerischen Wissenschaftsideologien [...] [wird] eine ‘durchsichtige’ **Wissenschaftssprache** gefordert [...], eine Sprache, die ihre eigene Sprachlichkeit vergessen machen und es ermöglichen soll, auf die ‘nackte Wahrheit der Dinge’ zu blicken (Kretzenbacher 1995: 25). Der **Einfluss dieser Ideologien auf die scientific community ist ungebrochen.**”

Steinhoff, Torsten (2007). *Wissenschaftliche Textkompetenz. Sprachgebrauch und Schreibentwicklung in wissenschaftlichen Texten von Studenten und Experten*. Tübingen: Niemeyer (Reihe Germanistische Linguistik 280), p. 5.

► Language ideology of ‘transparency’

See Kretzenbacher, Heinz L. (1995). Wie durchsichtig ist die Sprache der Wissenschaften? In: Heinz L. Kretzenbacher/Harald Weinrich (eds.): *Linguistik der Wissenschaftssprache*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, pp. 15–39.

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- König, Anne Rose (2004). *Lesbarkeit als Leitprinzip der Buchtypographie. Eine historische Untersuchung zum Forschungsstand und zur Entwicklung des Konzeptes 'Lesbarkeit'*. Erlangen: Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (Alles Buch. Studien der Erlanger Buchwissenschaft VII). URL: <http://www.alles-buch.uni-erlangen.de/Koenig.pdf> <03/04/2012>.
- Spitzmüller, Jürgen (2010). Typografische Variation und (Inter-)Medialität. Zur kommunikativen Relevanz skripturaler Sichtbarkeit. In: Arnulf Deppermann/Angelika Linke (eds.): *Sprache intermedial: Stimme und Schrift, Bild und Ton*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter (Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Sprache 2009), pp. 97–126.
- Spitzmüller, Jürgen (2013). *Graphische Variation als soziale Praxis. Eine soziolinguistische Theorie skripturaler 'Sichtbarkeit'*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter (Linguistik – Impulse & Tendenzen 56), pp. 29–58.

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Typographic Prescriptivism in Academic Style Sheets

Corpus: **50 guidelines** for students from **35 different** Swiss and German **universities**

- **33** style sheet limit the selection of possible typefaces
 - **17** require the selection of (a) specific typeface(s):
 - 9 require *Times New Roman*
 - 6 require *Arial* or *Times New Roman*,
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Call for Transparency

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“Der Sinn des Layouts besteht bei wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten darin, ein **möglichst hohes Maß an Leserfreundlichkeit** zu erzielen. Das Layout hat also keinen Selbstzweck, sondern **dient ausschließlich dazu, den zu vermittelnden Inhalt zu transportieren**. Daraus ergibt sich vor allem eine Anforderung an das Layout: Es sollte **so unauffällig wie möglich** sein, damit es **nicht vom Inhalt ablenkt**, sondern im Gegenteil zu ihm hinzuführt. Generell sollte daher mit Textformatierungen sparsam umgegangen werden. Ein **gutes Layout tritt hinter den Inhalten völlig zurück**; je zurückhaltender und schlichter es ist, desto besser.”

Guideline from German Studies Department [Germanic Linguistics, Germany]

Times New Roman as Standard

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“Wenn Sie keine Times-Schrift, wie sie die meisten Textverarbeitungsprogramme als **Standard-Einstellung** haben, verwenden möchten, sollten Sie dennoch eine **möglichst ähnliche Schrift** wählen. Auch hier gilt: **Abweichungen vom Üblichen sind eher von Nachteil als von Vorteil.** [...] Und mit [...] dem optischen Gesamteindruck leidet, auch wenn es ungerecht sein mag, zugleich unweigerlich der **Seriositätseindruck** – ein Aspekt, dessen Bedeutung man nicht unterschätzen sollte.”

Guideline from German Studies Department [Germanic Linguistics, Germany]

“clean, academic and plain layout!”

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“Da Grundkenntnisse in der Verwendung von Textprogrammen selbstverständlich sein sollten, wird erwartet, dass die Arbeit in gut lesbarer Form auf dem Computer eingerichtet wird (**sauberes, akademisches und klares Layout!**)”

Guideline from German Studies Department [Literature Studies, Switzerland]

Authentication as a Social Practice

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"We call attention not to authenticity as an inherent essence, but to **authentication as a social process** played out in discourse."

Bucholtz, Mary/Hall, Kira (2005). Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach. In: *Discourse Studies* 7/4–5, pp. 585–614, quot.: p. 601.

"authenticity is not so much a condition [...]; it is a social meaning."

Coupland, Nikolas (2007). *Style. Language Variation and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Key Topics in Sociolinguistics), p. 26.

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- Scientific graphic design is, as any form of communication, **indexically linked** with specific personae and practices
- It is subject to socially distributed values and beliefs (**communicative ideologies**) that have developed discursively over time
- Hence, scientific graphic communication is **more than a means to convey or constitute scientific knowledge** – it is a **socially meaningful practice** that helps constituting and maintaining science as a field for social actors
- The **indexical dimension of scientific graphic design** therefore should be considered if we want to understand how scientific communication works as a **social practice** and how scientists position themselves as **social actors**

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