

Graphic Variation and Graphic Ideologies

A Sociolinguistic Approach

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Graphic Variation and Graphic Ideologies

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Introduction

Things, people,
sense

(Graphic) variation
and knowledge

Metapragmatic
approaches

(Short) Conclusions

Scriptal variation: “a neglected area within sociolinguistics”

.....

Unseth, Peter (2005). Sociolinguistic parallels between choosing scripts and languages. In: *Written Language & Literacy* 8/1, pp. 19–42, quot.: p. 19.

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1. Introduction
2. Things, people, sense: On the communicative relevance of 'materiality'
3. (Graphic) variation and knowledge
4. Metapragmatic approaches
5. (Very short) conclusions

- **Perceptibility:** The material appearance of things makes things perceivable.
- **Interpretability:** only perceivable things are interpretable.
- *Perceptibility* and *interpretability* are basic preconditions for **semiosis** ('things' become *signs*)

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Cf. Keller, Rudi (1998). *A Theory of Linguistic Signs*. Oxford:
Oxford University Press.

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- Language/communication makes individuals **perceivable**
- Due to the (concrete way of) communication, communicating individuals can be **interpreted** as social actors
- Material things create **social landscapes**, which symbolize social orders

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Language and Social Relations

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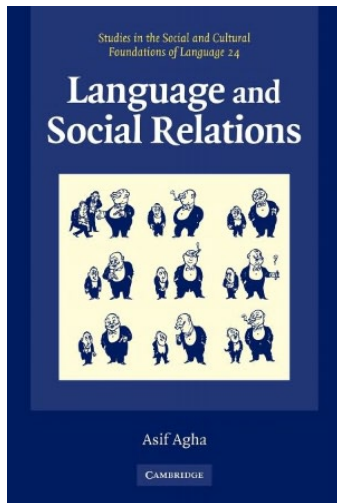
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Agha, Asif (2007). *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language 24).

"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.

'Enregistered' emblems

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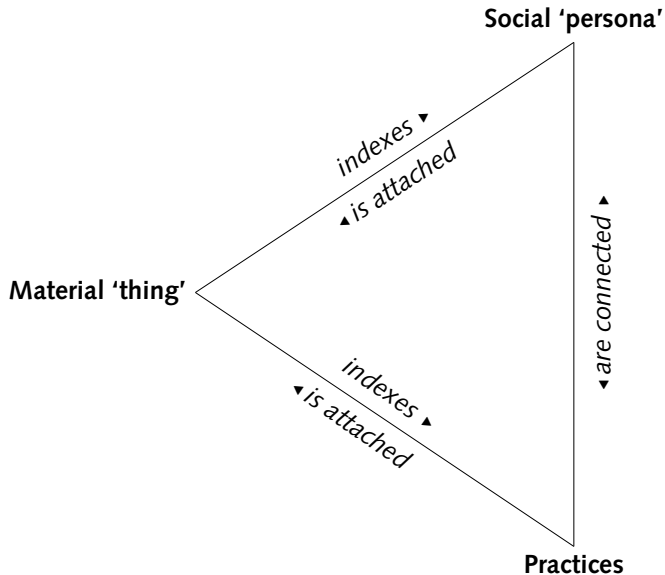
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'Enregistered' emblems

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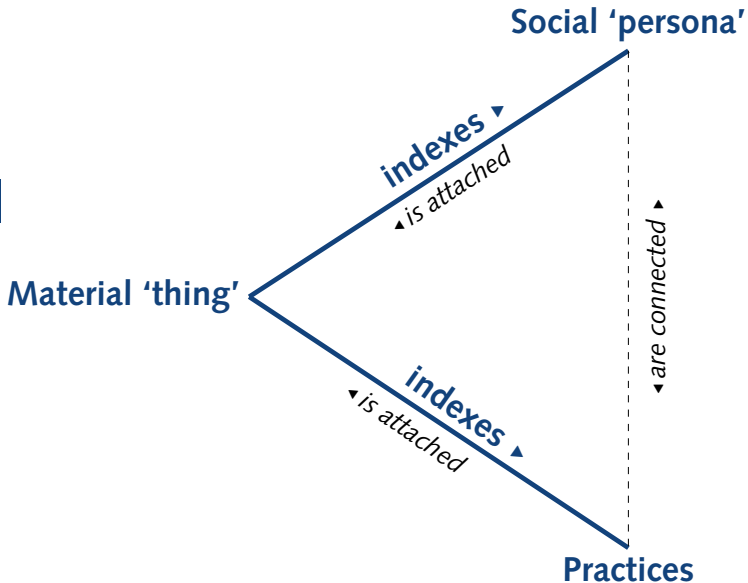
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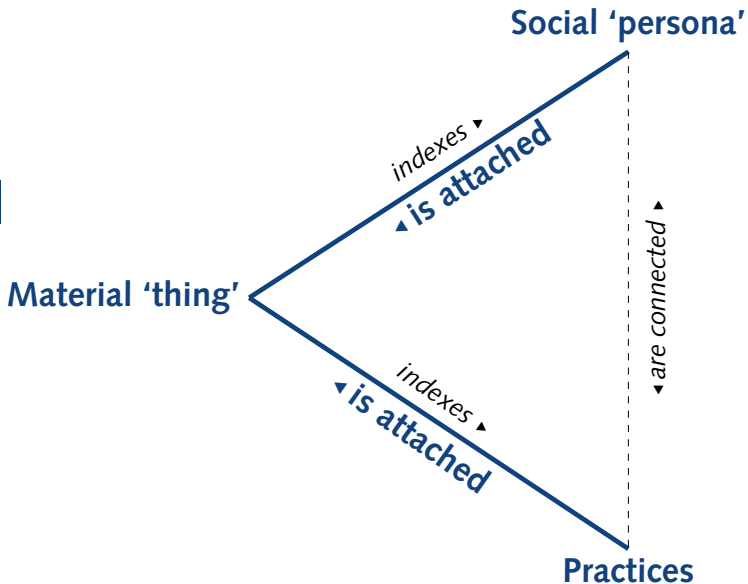
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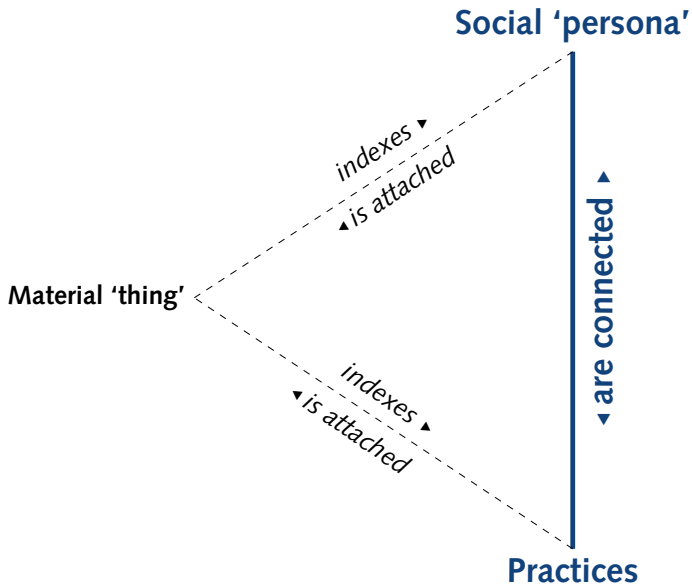
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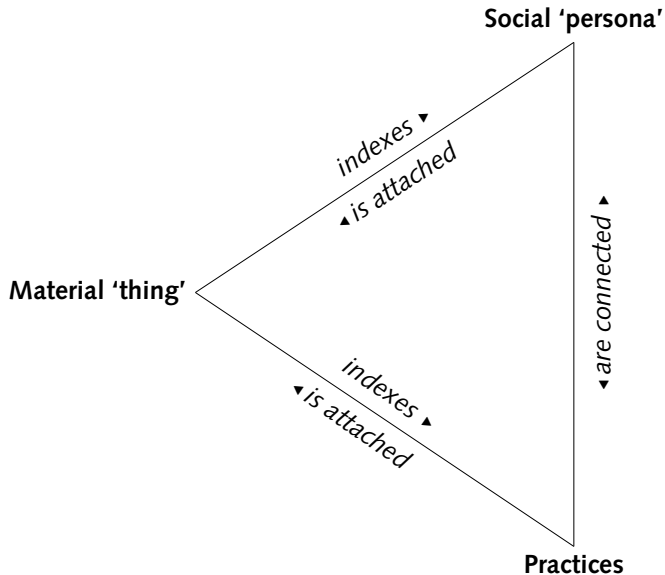
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“Things convey identities through acts in which they are emblematic for those connected to each other through those acts. A necktie is a thing. A car. A hat. A sideways glance. An accent. A sob. All things. All perceivable. Too many things. But [...] let us note that things by themselves are not to the point. It's the emblematic functions they have through acts that connect people; that's the point. Although emblems are embodied in diacritics, a single diacritic can yield different emblematic readings under different conditions [...]. Our focus therefore needs to be not on things alone or personae alone but on acts of performance and construal through which the two are linked, and the conditions under which these links become determinate for actors.”

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

"Style is a means to enhance social visibility."
("Stil ist ein Mittel zur Steigerung sozialer Sichtbarkeit.")

.....

Assmann, Aleida (1986). 'Opting in' und 'opting out'.
Konformität und Individualität in den poetologischen Debatten
der englischen Aufklärung. In: Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (ed.): *Stil.
Geschichten und Funktionen eines kulturwissenschaftlichen
Diskurselements*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp (stw 633),
pp. 127–143, quot.: p. 127.

“le moyen de production du signe est totalement indifférent, car il n'intéresse pas le système [. . .]. Que j'écrive les lettres en blanc ou en noir, en creux ou en relief, avec une plume ou un ciseau, cela est sans importance pour leur signification.”

“The means by which the sign is produced is completely unimportant, for it does not affect the system [. . .]. Whether I make the letters in white or black, raised or engraved, with pen or chisel — all this is of no importance with respect to their signification.”

.....
de Saussure, Ferdinand (1959). *Course in General Linguistics*.
Transl. by Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library [fr. orig.:
Cours de linguistique générale. Lausanne/Paris: Payot 1916],
120 [fr.: 165–166].

"Type well used is invisible as type, just as the perfect talking voice is the unnoticed vehicle for the transmission of words, ideas. [. . .]

The book typographer has the job of erecting a window between the reader inside the room and that landscape which is the author's words."

.....
Warde, Beatrice (1991). Printing should be invisible. In: Paul A. Bennett (ed.): *Books and printing. A treasury for typophiles*. Savannah, Georgia: Frederic C. Beil, pp. 109–114 [orig.: New York: Marchbanks Press 1932], quot.: pp. 111/113.

'Sociolinguistics of scriptality'

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- **Sebba, Mark (2009).** Sociolinguistic approaches to writing systems research. In: *Writing Systems Research* 1/1, pp. 35–49.
- **Androutsopoulos, Jannis (2007).** Neue Medien – neue Schriftlichkeit? In: *Mitteilungen des deutschen Germanistenverbandes* 54/1, pp. 72–97.
- **Unseth, Peter (ed.) (2008):** *The sociolinguistics of script choice (= International Journal of the Sociology of Language 192).*
- **Jaffe, Alexandra/Androutsopoulos, Jannis/Sebba, Mark/Johnson, Sally (eds.) (2012).** *Orthography as Social Action: Scripts, Spelling, Identity and Power.* Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton (Language and Social Processes 3).

“In general, we can say that every difference in language can be turned into difference in social value – difference and inequality are two sides of a coin, a point often overlooked or minimised in analysis.”

.....
[Blommaert, Jan \(2005\)](#). *Discourse. A critical introduction*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Key topics in
sociolinguistics), pp. 68–69.

“[. . .] 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, Mark \(2009\)](#). Sociolinguistic approaches to writing
systems research. In: *Writing Systems Research* 1/1, pp. 35–49,
quot.: p. 39.

Example: pop-cultural scene communication

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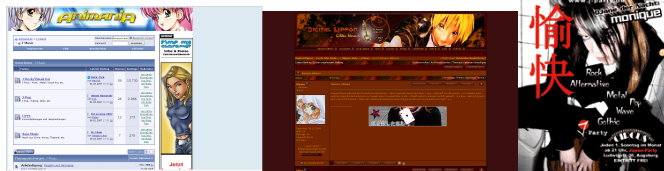
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“There’s more to life than *Times New Roman*.”

.....

Danet, Brenda (2001). *Cyberpl@y: Communicating Online*.
Oxford: Berg (New technologies/new cultures series),
pp. 306–311.

"I received a letter from a responsible of the [German] designer association inviting me to join a committee.

The letter has been set in 10 point Avant Garde, justified, very long lines, huge white space between words, no leading. I rejected immediately."

"Ich erhielt einen Brief von einem Verantwortlichen des Designer-Verbandes mit der Aufforderung zur Mitarbeit in einem Ausschuß.

Der Brief war in der 10 Punkt Avant Garde gesetzt, Blocksatz, sehr lange Zeilen, sehr große Löcher zwischen den Wörtern, ohne Durchschuß. Da habe ich lieber gleich abgesagt."

.....
Willberg, Hans Peter/Forssman, Friedrich (2001). *Erste Hilfe in Typographie. Ratgeber für Gestaltung mit Schrift*. 3rd ed. Mainz: Hermann Schmidt Verlag [orig.: Mainz: Hermann Schmidt Verlag 1999], 78; my translation.

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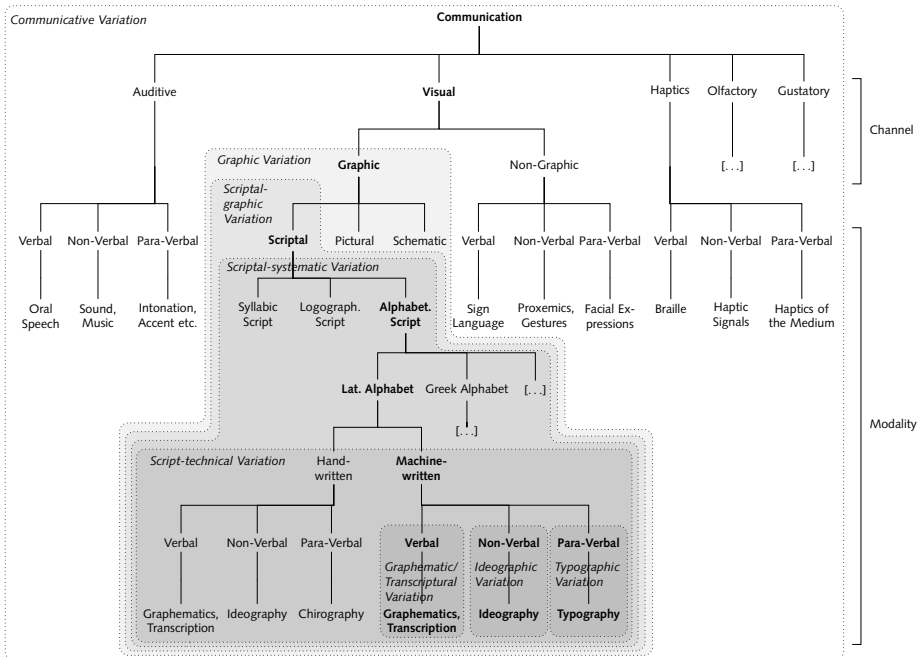
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"[...] the use of the word knowledge (*savoir*) [...] refers to all procedures and all effects of knowledge [or *recognition*; J. S.] (*connaissance*) that are **acceptable** at a given point in time and in a specific domain."

.....
Foucault, Michel (1997). What is Critique? In: Michel Foucault: *The Politics of Truth*. Ed. by Sylvère Lotringer. Transl. by Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter. With an intro. by John Rajchmann. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), pp. 41–82 [fr. orig.: Qu'est-ce que la critique? (Critique et *Aufklärung*) in: *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie* 84/2 (1990), p. 35–63], quot.: p. 60.



Definition

Graphic ideologies, or **ideologies of graphics**, are 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.

Cf. [Spitzmüller, Jürgen \(2012\)](#). Floating Ideologies: Metamorphoses of Graphic "Germanness". In: Alexandra Jaffe/Jannis Androutsopoulos/Mark Sebba/Sally Johnson (eds.): *Orthography as Social Action: Scripts, Spelling, Identity and Power*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton (Language and Social Processes 3), pp. 255–288, quot.: p. 257. – drawing on [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.

“The ‘Air Snack’ sign is set in Gothic type. Nevertheless, there are no Nazis in sight.”

“Das Schild ‘Air Snack’ ist in Fraktur geschrieben. Trotzdem sind keine Nazis zu sehen.” (*Berliner Zeitung*, 4.05.2004)



Snack bar, Berlin
Tempelhof Airport

(Image source: <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/flughafen-tempelhof-snack-und-weg/1193646.html> <11.06.2013>)

“The ‘Air Snack’ sign is set in Gothic type. Nevertheless, there are no Nazis in sight.”

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Semantic structure

“General form” of a concessive sentence:

$p' \rightarrow \text{normally} \neg q'$

.....

Cf. König, Ekkehard (1991). Konzessive Konjunktionen. In: Arnim von Stechow/Dieter Wunderlich (eds.): *Semantics. An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter (Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science 6), pp. 631–639, quot.: p. 633.

Gothic type as an 'enregistered' emblem

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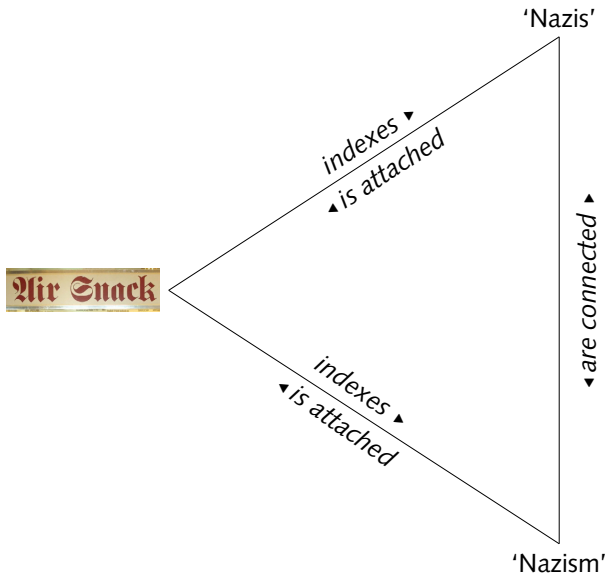
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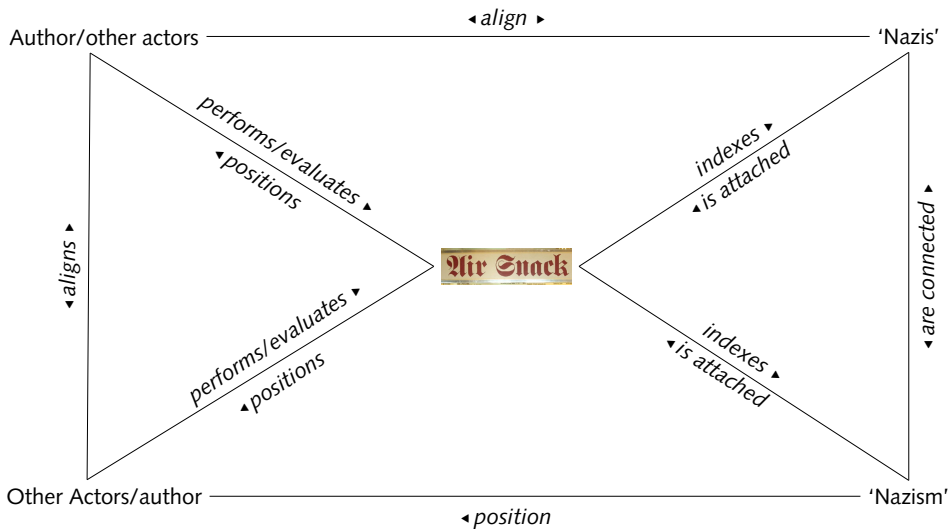
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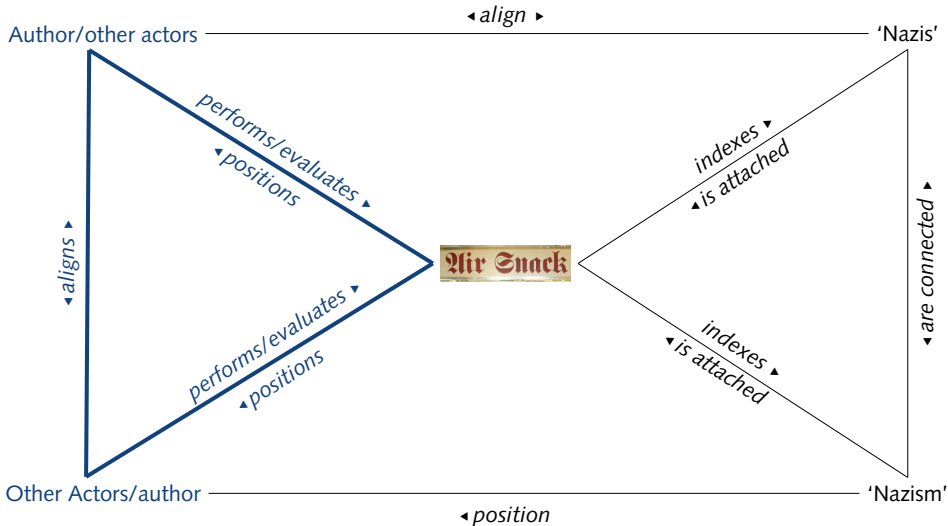
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Metapragmatic stancetaking



Metapragmatic stancetaking



Cf. Du Bois, John W. (2007). The stance triangle. In: Robert Englebretson (ed.): *Stancetaking in discourse. Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins (Pragmatics & Beyond, N. S. 164), pp. 139–182.

Further examples

(My translations)

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- “In contrast, the titles of the publisher ‘Internationale Beziehungen’ [‘international relations’] look sensational and cheap. [. . .]. **Both titles are typeset in Fraktur, as if they were thrillers from the Nazi era.**” (Berliner Zeitung, 23.05.2002)
- “The other two newspapers are called ‘Der Insel Bote’ or ‘Der Fahnenträger aus Pommern’, the latter equipped with the subtitle ‘circular letter for national socialists’ and the addition ‘proud, German, and free’. **Typeset in Fraktur, of course.**” (Berliner Zeitung, 16.09.2002)
- “Later, I sometimes observed how the two people entered a black Opel Manta car. On the rear window, ‘Pitbull Germany’ was **written in Fraktur type, which was popular amongst the Nazis. Thus, all prejudices were evoked.** Here is where my understanding ended.” (Die Zeit 28/2000)
- “Hamer’s books: they are full of odd medical theories and anti-Semitism. **Conspicuous: the Fraktur type.**” (Hamburger Morgenpost, 7.02.2006)

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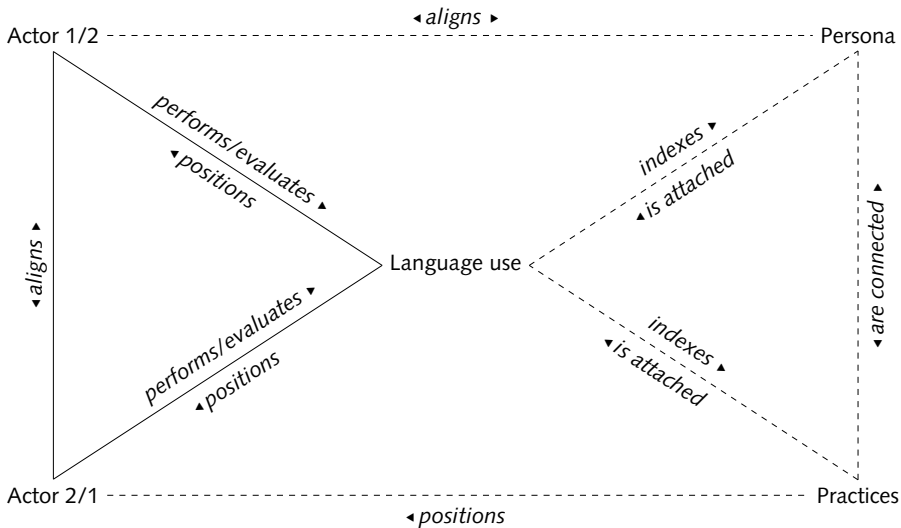
(Short) Conclusions

“Whoever said that with 26 soldiers of lead he could conquer the world was clearly no typographer, for he wildly underestimated the size of the army required.”

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Twyman, Michael (1986). Articulating Graphic Language: A Historical Perspective. In: Merald E. Wrolstad/Dennis F. Fisher (eds.): *Toward a New Understanding of Literacy. Proceedings of the 3rd Conference on Processing of Visible Language held May 31 through June 3, 1982, at Airlie House, Airlie, Virginia*. New York: Praeger (Praeger special studies – Praeger scientific), pp. 188–251, quot.: p. 199.

Metapragmatic Positioning



- [Agha, Asif \(2007\)](#). *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language 24).
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