УДК 811.161.2'373.47'367.628-116:82-84'01/'04

# GRAPHIC LINGUISTICS: DELINEATING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WRITING SYSTEMS IN THE EUROPEAN LINGUOCULTURES

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This article highlights the general reception of the evolution of writing. The development of writing as a system of signs is under consideration. It is ascertained that writing is a basic concept of graphical linguistics as its separate branch, and graphics is an underlying principle of each ethnos linguoculture, which is fixed in the process of language formation. It is accepted that writing is a crucial invention of mankind since it stimulated the further development and transmission of information. The initial form of writing was launched by the ancient Sumerians and Egyptians. The stages of writing development from pictographic to letter-sound are specified. In spite of regarding the emergence of new types of writing as a process of human evolution, such a form of writing as pictography - an extra-lingual sign system - remains relevant today, and it is used to transmit information intended for various ethnic groups. The development of letter-sound writing is traced, as well as its shift from the consonantal-sound type to the vocalized-sound writing, the emergence of the first alphabet (Phoenician) with consonants only. The paper then discusses the transition of the Phoenician alphabet to the Greek writing, which was supplemented with new graphemes to represent vowels, making it a vocalized-sound writing system. The article then goes on to characterize the different types of writing systems according to the form, size, and style of their letters. Moreover, the borrowing of individual letters from the Greek alphabet for the development of writing in the European linguocultures is also mentioned. The chain-like development of the Greek alphabet is observed, which led to the rise of the Latin alphabet. The article concludes by finding that the majority of European languages have a Latin-graphic background, simultaneously, the alphabet has become a prominent feature of each language, reflecting the history of the linguoculture of a particular nation.

Key words: writing, writing system, pictography, letter-sound writing, Greek alphabet.

#### DOI:

**Problem Statement.** Writing is a crucial component of the linguoculture of every nation that emerges, it is formed and develops as a result of societal progress. This concept belongs to the basic concepts of linguografica and becomes the foundation of the linguoculture of each ethnos. The term *linguoculture* (Latin *lingua* – language, and *cultura* – education, development) is a concept that denotes "the manifestation, reflection, and fixation of culture in language and discourse" [5:156]. It goes without saying, linguoculture consistently reflects the traditions of a particular linguistic environment. As Tetiana Kosmeda claims, "linguoculture is a phenomenon that presents an array of information somehow connected to language, to each of its units" [8:4]. The history of a nation is always reflected in the mother tongue, including "through every word, even by means of letters and sounds, it confirms the "essence", "depth of history", "magnificence", "mind", "morality", "spirit" and "soul" of its speakers" (translated by E. P.) [32:34]. Graphics is also one of the main concepts of linguografics. It is *graphics* that is regarded as a socio-ideological factor influencing speakers, since letters are "signs of the corresponding linguoculture, expressing the "spirit" of each specific language, because "form" is, [...], an oppositional correlate to "content"" [8:80].

The use of a specific graphic system is undoubtedly based on tradition, since "the prevailing (typical) graphic form of written signs of a certain civilization is certainly conventional, and it is recognized by the nation as a result of long tradition" [8:24].

The research objective is to provide the fragmented demonstration of the stages of writing formation, to scrutinize the historiography of the issue through the description and generalization of the development trends of writing and its types. The formulated aim involves solving the following tasks: (a) to highlight the writing relevance for humanity, outlining the development of writing as a system of signs, and (b) to determine the features of the writing development for the linguocultures of Europe. The object of the study implies the types of writing, and the subject of the research stands for graphic signs. Methods. The descriptive method is actualized to inventory the systems and means of writing throughout its history of formation. The method of induction is employed to draw conclusions based on the processed material. The methods of analysis and synthesis are used for theoretical generalizations and systematization of the material.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. The issues of the origin and development of writing has been under consideration by many scholars, although scientific studies on the specifics of writing and the corresponding written forms gained popularity only in the middle of the 20th century. This is mostly manifested in the fundamental works of the British linguist David Diringer [28] the Austrian philologist Ernst Doblhofer [29], the American linguist Ignace Jay Gelb [30], and some other scientists, whose works reveal details of the main stages of writing development. One of the first fundamental works on writing is the monograph "The Alphabet. An Account of the Origin and Development of Letters" [33] by Isaac Taylor, where the researcher divided writing into three systems: (1) pictographic, (2) syllabic, and (3) alphabetic [see: 33].

Larisa Sydelnykova [16] made a significant contribution to the study of the phenomenon of writing among the contemporaty linguists. She highlighted the major ways of the formation and development of writing as a sign system from the standpoint of the achivements of latter research in historical, philosophical, and linguistic scientific paradigms. Simultaneously, Olga Stanislav [24] carried out a comprehensive description of non-letter signs of the French written language, taking into account their graphic representation, history of origin, evolution, and functional load. Liliya Sobol [22] emphasized the question of the origin of the Ukrainian writing system, in particular, Glagolitic and Cyrillic. Lev Pyrogov [13] focused on the relationship between writing and thinking based on an analysis of the discrepancies between hieroglyphic and letter-phonetic forms of writing. Furthermore, the textbook by Mikhail Riznyk highlights the basic concepts of writing by aspects: (1) the general principles of the development of writing are shown, mainly from the original pictographic forms to the modern alphabetical ones; (2) the work briefly characterizes the systems of (a) non-alphabetic and (b) alphabetic forms of writing: it is about those that stem from the ancient Greek writing system (Slavic Cyrillic and Latin) [see: 14].

**Presentation of the Main Material.** "The emergence of writing was a natural product of the gradual expansion of the means of communication between people, stipulated by the practical needs of social life. Unlike spoken speech, which was created by people unconsciously, writing is the result of conscious human creativity..." [16:144]. As it is known, writing has a two-sided sign character – an internal form, which is determined by linguistic phenomena, and an external form, which is related to the history of culture.

Naturally, the problems of graphical linguistics are mainly considered through the

definition of the concept of writing, which is interpreted as "a sign system for fixing language on a plane using conventional graphic elements of two dimensions for transmitting information at a distance and fixing it in time" [12:476]. However, we also observe the following definitions of this concept: a graphic system of recording and transmitting information or "a system of graphic signs that is perceived by sight and capable of transmitting speech" [3:944]. Compare: "Writing can be defined as a system of visual symbols, the purpose of which is to transmit the thought of one person or group of people to another" [24:24]. In spite of regarding writing as a means of presenting oral utterances using visual symbols, however, as scientists emphasize, "this is not its main purpose, except cases where the phonetic or phonemic transcription in linguistic work is meant" [23:37].

It is time to single out the main methodological postulates regarding the understanding of the phenomenon of writing: (1) Presentation of actual, predicted, or imagined speech is a special mechanism for transmitting meaning with graphic signals, the convenience of which lies in the small number of necessary signs; (2) The adoption of a certain form of this mechanism, alphabetic writing, in Western Europe led to its perception as usual and natural mechanism, and some of those who discussed the analysis of writing systems were inclined to write as if they were all more or less satisfactory systems of phonemic transcription of utterances; (3) Such an attitude leads to or supports the idea that the study of written documents should always be additional to the study of some spoken idiom, or, as an extreme, to the idea that 'texts' are not 'language'; (4) The fact of the development of writing became the factor that led to the intellectual revolution, since it was this phenomenon that ensured the transmission of information/experience of generations.

Linguists are convinced that the main sources of language research are the first examples of writing, since "even in the mother tongue, writing acts as a mediator at every moment. When it comes to a language that is distant from us in space, the need for written evidence increases even more, especially for dead languages" [23:37]. Ferdinand de Saussure asserted that "language and writing are two different systems of signs; the only purpose of the second is to represent the first. The object of linguistics is not the combination of the written word with the spoken word, but exclusively the latter. However, the written word is so closely intertwined with the spoken word, which it represents, that it eventually takes on the main role" [23:37]. At the same time, the scholar acknowledged that "under certain conditions, writing can slow down changes in the language, and vice versa, the absence of writing does not do any harm to its preservation" [23:38].

Ivan Franko also considered the problems of the formation of the Ukrainian writing. He emphasized that "only the great invention of writing breaks the age of long-lasting darkness and starts a real history, [...] gives people the opportunity to pass on their thoughts to descendants, to share with contemporaries, who are hundreds of miles away" [26: 26–27]. Side by side, "the innovation of writing becomes the ground and the main condition for the development of exact sciences, allowing different people to accumulate scientific materials and giving the opportunity to start from the point where the predecessors ceased" [26: 28]. The researcher notes that "no invention has had such a long-term and powerful influence on humanity as the invention of printing. The small movable type, first cut from beech wood (beech stick, Buchstabe), and later cast of soft metal, became a giant engine of progress! Why? Because the achievements of thought, hitherto hidden with great effort in only a few places, were made what they were in essence – the common eternal good of all mankind; the letter opened the gates for everyone to acquire knowledge

of the truth, since it carried the same beneficent light to both, the magnificent palaces and the thatched roof. That happened due to the tiny movable letter!" [26:29].

Scholars of the present period have ascertained that "the development of writing begins with the culture of the ancient Sumerians and Egyptians (3000 BC). The writing systems of Mesopotamia, Egypt, India and China originated from pictograms" [31:213]. It is essential to point out that writing was objective at first, i.e. for the realization / process of communication people referred to objects with a specific meaning, and the system of signs was a universal way of storing and transmitting information.

Andrii Biletskyi offers the following definition of the term writing in the linguistic interpretation: it is "a system of conditional linear (graphic) signs, used to convey individual components of the language. W. [writing – E. P.] is secondary to oral language, on the basis of which it arose as a means of its fixation" [25:316]. At the same time, the schlor indicated the beginning of the period of "documentary history of mankind, because it became possible not only to transmit linguistic information over a distance, but also to fix it in time" [25:316]. The most ancient type of writing with a functional load is recorded as "messages or tombstones incriptions" [6:49]. As stated by A. Biletskyi, alphabetic writing completed the "graphic revolution in the history of mankind" [1:54]. Undoubtedly, the relevance of writing is demonstrated with the fact that it has become a mega-important achievement of human history, the crucial means of linguoculture and culture in general. This significance is invaluable, because it expands the functions of language both in space and time. Writing is evolving, but its forms, such as (1) pictographic, (2) ideographic, and (3) *object* writing, remain relevant, as each of these types of writing has certain advantages and capable of serving the corresponding areas of human activity today. The pictographic writing (from Latin pictus – written with paints, drawn, and Greek, γράφω – write) is "the oldest form of writing, representing portrayal of actions, events, objects, etc. with conventional drawings" [19:534], and "with the help of drawings (pictograms, that is, images of objects, actions and events on stone, wood, clay) the gen. [general – E. P.] meaning of the utterance was schematically conveyed without displaying the linguistic features of the text (sounds, words, their sequence and grammatical forms)" [12:476], since "it is not related to a specific language and can be decoded ("read") by a carrier of any linguistic culture" [16: 146]. *Ideographic* is a better developed type of writing, in which "concepts are embodied in the semantics of the word with the help of an established set of images or graphic symbols" [12:476]: "The word is represented by one sign, unrelated to sounds which it contains. This sign as a whole corresponds to the word and thereby, indirectly, to the idea it expresses" [23:40]. Although "writing is based on ideographic signs fixed for a word (logograms), separate signs are added to them that direct either the pronunciation or the grammatical features of the designated concepts, or class signs (determinatives). The only writing system of such a type that has survived today is Chinese" [15:103], and "the oldest ideograms were ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform" [15 : 462]. The modern linguistics provides a synonymous term for the above – logographic writing, where the Greek-derived component logo- means "word", as you know. Hieroglyphic writing is primarily ancient Egyptian or Chinese writing; (2) phonography – writing that transmits sounds, i.e. the expression plan of linguistic signs. In the subsequent discussion, we will explore the writing dynamics observed:

(a) *Syllabic writing* is a type "where graphic signs are associated with phonemes and combinations of phonemes that can form syllables" [20: 278], "each graphic sign

corresponds to the syllable of the word" [12:477]. This technique of writing is simplier to handle and is more practical, as it reflects the features of each language in which it is used. Examples of syllabic writing systems include Brahmi, Cretan-Minoan, Assyro-Babylonian, Hittite, modern Japanese writing [see:12:477];

(b) Alphabetic writing: in this type of writing letters are used to denote a phoneme, which is easy to reproduce. This type of writing has the following varieties: (b1) Consonant-sound (syllabic) writing where only consonant sounds are denoted by signs. Vowel sounds do not have separate letters, and when reading them, they had to be guessed, which made it difficult to understand the written text. Examples of consonant-sound writing systems include the Indian Devanagari script, Arabic, and Ethiopian. (b2) Vocalized-sound writing was developed by the Greeks. Its letters transmit not only consonants, but also vowels. Therefore, it is from the Greek alphabet that practically all the vocalized alphabets of the world originate, including Ukrainian, German, and English.

With regard to the above mentioned, the author of the paper considers essential to admit that "the system of writing 'one symbol – one word' gradually transformed into the system 'one symbol – one syllable'" [16:147]. *The letter-sound writing* is convenient, because letters are used to designate a phoneme that is easy to reproduce. This type of writing has the following varieties: (a) *consonant-sound (syllabic)*, "where only consonant sounds (consonants) were marked with signs, [...] [but – E. P.] vowel sounds did not have sep. [separate – E. P.] letters, while reading them, one had to guess, which made it difficult to understand what was written" [12:477], for example: "Indian W. [writing – E. P.], Devanagari, Arabic, Ethiopian" [see: 6:49]; (b) *vocalized-sound writing* (lat. *vōcālis* means 'vocal'), developed by the Greeks: its letters were reproduced, of course, not only by consonants, but also by vowels, therefore, *it is from the Greek alphabet that almost all the world's vocalized alphabets come from, including Ukrainian, German and English.* 

The Phoenician alphabet, also known as the Proto-Semitic alphabet, is considered to be the first writing system where a letter denotes a sound. This is confirmed by the oldest monuments of the 9th–11th centuries BC. It is noteworthy that the Phoenician writing system, for the first time, had a correspondence between a grapheme and a specific sound. Previously, graphemes corresponded to whole words, as in ideographic writing, or to syllables, as in syllabic writing. The Phoenician alphabet comprehended 22 letters that "denoted [only – E. P.] consonant sounds or semivowels, and they were named after the acrophonic principle" [3]. "The possibility of writing without letters to denote vowels stipulated the nature of Semitic languages, where the semantics of the root is associated with consonants, and vowels express word-formation and grammatical elements of the word" [3]. The statement is axiomatic that the Phoenician alphabet is the basis of all alphabets that are formed on the letter-sound principle.

The Greek alphabet was the first vocalized-sound writing system (this special term is used "due to the Greek origin of the word alphabet" /[17:187]/). This is because "in Gr. [Greek – E. P.], the roots of words and affixes are composed of both consonants and vowels. Vowels played the same role as consonants in distinguishing the semantics of words, and a Gr. [Greek – E. P.] text without vowels was almost incomprehensible" [12:478]. Therefore, after borrowing the Phoen. [Phoenician – E. P.] alphabet, the ancient Gr. [Greeks – E. P.] gradually adapted it to their language from the 8th century BC: they changed some letters of the Phoen. [Phoenician – E. P.] alphabet to denote Gr. [Greek – E. P.] vowels and created new letters  $(\varphi, \chi, \xi, \psi, \omega)$  for consonants that did not exist in

the Phoen. [Phoenician – E. P.] language" [21:478]. *The classical Greek alphabet* appeared in 403 BC, encompassing 24 letters (17 for consonants and 7 for vowels). Unlike the Phoenicians, the Greeks wrote from left to right. "The Greek alphabet gave rise to the Latin alphabet, over 70 alphabets of the world nations were formed from the latter (over 30 European, 20 Asian, and about 20 African)" [2:110]. However, not every nation that needed it [a writing system – E. P.] created a fundamentally new system of signs. Writing systems, alphabetic ones in particular, mostly expanded from one ethnic group to another (tribe, nationality). Only to designate specific sounds were new signs invented" [11:3].

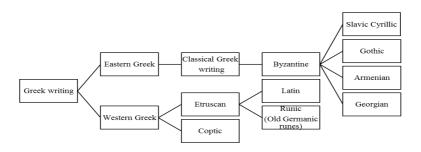
The types of writing include: (1) uncial ("sometimes also called the primitive minuscule" / [7:514] /) - "a type of Latin and Greco-Byzantine writing of the 4th-9th centuries, which is marked by rounded letters that almost do not protrude beyond the lines, the absence of ligatures and word division" [10:515], and the uncial of IV-VI centuries "had a diagonal, approximately 45-degree angle of inclination of the pen and was without serifs, small serifs appeared in the V-VIII centuries" [7:514]; (2) semi-uncial - "in L. [Latin - E. P.] paleography [...] a simplified form of uncial that appeared around the VI century as a symbiosis of uncial and Roman italics. Due to the elements of cursive penetrateing the uncial script, the principle of placing the letters of a line within two lines was violated in the 5th century (this is what united uncial with capital letters), and uncial acquired similarities to line italics" [7:344]; (3) ustav – "one of the types of writing in ancient Greek, Latin and Slavic manuscripts, according to which each letter was written separately, detached from the neighbouring ones, straight and clear" [21:495]; (4) mayuscule – "this type comprises capital letters in the texts of ancient writing. The inscriptions made in M. [mayuskul] fit clearly between two horizontal lines, without going beyond the boundaries of the formed line" [9:158]; (5) minuscule script (minuscula scriptura) – "ancient, as well as medieval L. [Latin – E. P.] and Gr. [Greek – E. P.] (including Byzantine) writing in lowercase letters" [7:325].

Over the centuries, the Latin writing has undergone various stages of its development – from archaic to monumental writing. For example, "The Gothic font is a font that arose on a Latin basis, each sign of G. [Gothic – E. P.] f. [font – E. P.] is characterized by many various strokes [7: 294]. This font, according to the acquired features, received new nominations: varieties of this font are "texture, rotunda [...], Schwabacher, and facet" [7: 294].

Thus, it was *the Greek writing* that was called to serve European languages. It was the Greek writing that served as the ground for the development of writing in Europe. The Eastern Greek branch of the classical Greek writing gave rise to the development of such types of writing as **(1)** *the classical Greek writing*, which was also projected onto **(2)** *Byzantine writing*, which formed the background for **(3)** *Slavic Cyrillic, Gothic, Armenian*, and *Georgian writing systems* [see: 12: 478]. As we can observe, there is a chain projection.

The Western Greek branch fostered the formation of (1) Etruscan and (2) Coptic writing, and from Etruscan came (3) Latin, which later spread to almost all linguocultures of Europe, and (4) runic writing [see: 12: 478].

The modern scholars ascertain, that hypotheses about *the Slavic runes* as a kind of *cryptic* or *pagan writing* are not subject to scientific logic, since runic writing, as it is commonly accepted, does not belong to *a unique sacred writing*, but it also derives from *archaic Greek writing* and emerged through the mediation of Latin. The prevalence of primary writing types in European linguocultures is shown on Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Summary scheme of the prevalence of primary types of writing in the linguocultures of Europe.

It stands to reason, "the alphabet of each language forms a graphic system that has its own history, undergoes appropriate changes; it occupies a certain place in the linguoculture of a particular nation" [22:210]; an alphabet is "a set of letters adopted in the writing of a language and arranged in a certain established order" [18:35].

Conclusions. In conclusion, writing is one of the greatest assets of mankind, which has become the main means of recording, enriching and transmitting the experience of generations. New types of writing emerged in the process of human evolution, among them letter-sound became the newest and most common, which underwent formation from consonant-sound to vocal-sound by adding new graphemes to indicate vowels, in particular, Phoenician writing to Greek. Then the Greek alphabet became the foundation for the creation of a number of European alphabets. Over time, the alphabet has become not only a sign of a certain linguoculture: the names of its letters contain new conceptual meanings that emphasize its significance for a particular ethnic group. However, having a letter-based writing, humanity continues to use pictographic, ideographic and object images as an auxiliary means of communication in the Internet and advertising discourse, on road signs, etc.

The perspective of this study implies the necessity to thoroughly characterize knowledge of the alphabets origin, their modification, the mutual influence of the world alphabets, as well as the processes of lexicalization, semantization and acquisition of pragmatic meanings by the letters of the alphabets. This is important for both teaching Ukrainian as a mother tongue and as a foreign language, because during the actualization of the meanings that model the names of the letters, a language game is created, including a graphic one.

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## ГРАФІЧНА ЛІНГВІСТИКА: ОКРЕСЛЕННЯ ПОСТУПУ ПИСЕМНОСТИ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИХ ЛІНГВОКУЛЬТУР

## Єлизавета Пересада

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Стаття присвячена загальній рецепції еволюції письма. Увагу акцентовано на питанні розвитку писемности як системи знаків. Зазначено, що письмо  $\epsilon$  базовим поняттям графічної лінгвістики як

окремого напряму мовознавства, а графіка – основа лінгвокультури кожного етносу, що закріплюється в процесі становлення мови. Доведено, що письмо є надважливим винаходом людства, оскільки це стимулювало подальший розвиток та передачу інформації. Первісна форма письма була започаткована давніми шумерами та єгиптянами. Визначено та фрагментарно окреслено етапи розвитку письма від піктографічного до літерно-звукового. Незважаючи на те, що появу нових типів письма розглядають як процес еволюції людства, нині така форма письма, як піктографія - позамовна знакова система, - залишається актуальною та використовується для передачі інформації, що призначена різним етносам. Простежено процес появи літерно-звукового письма, його перехід від консонантно-звукового до вокалізовано-звукового та виникнення першого алфавіту (фінікійського), що містив лише консонанти, а також його перехід у грецьке письмо, що, поповнившись новими графемами на позначення голосних, перетворилося на вокально-звукове. Схарактеризовано типи письма за формою, розміром і накресленням літер. Окрім того, частково йдеться й про запозичення окремих літер грецького алфавіту для розвитку писемності європейських лінгвокультур. Спостерігається ланцюжкова проєкція розвитку грецького письма, що зумовило, зокрема, й появу та становлення латиниці, а також способи її поширення. З'ясовано, що більшість європейських мов мають латинографічну основу. Водночає алфавіт став характерною ознакою кожної мови, що відображає історію лінгвокультури певного народу.

Ключові слова: письмо, писемність, піктографія, літерно-звукове письмо, грецький алфавіт.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 17.03.2024 доопрацьована 26.03.2024 прийнята до друку 01.04.2024