Variability of Languages in Time and Space

Lecture:

8-1 Writing Systems

Created by:

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Outline

• What is writing, When did writing develop
• Speech vs. Writing
Writing Systems

• What is writing?
• When did writing develop?
• What types of writing systems are there?
Writing

• **Keep in mind**: Writing is not a purer form of language than speech!
• Writing is a system of recording language by means of visible / tactile marks
• Writing is NOT object of linguistics

speech – written text
music – written notes
Words spoken are symbols of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are symbols of words spoken. (Aristotle: *Peri Hermeneias*)

Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first. The linguistic object is not both the written and the spoken forms of words; the spoken form alone constitutes the object. (F. de Saussure: *Course in General Linguistics*)
Speech vs. Writing

- continuous
- bound to utterance time
- contextual
- temporal
- audible
- produced by voice

- discrete
- timeless
- autonomous
- permanent
- visible
- produced by hand
Variability of Languages in Time and Space

Lecture:
8-2 Writing Systems
Created by:
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Outline

• Pictography
• Ideography
• Morphography (logography)
Classification of writing systems

- **semiography** (meaning-based writing)
- **phonography** (sound-based writing)
- **pictography**
Classification of writing systems

- **semiography** (meaning-based writing)
- **phonography** (sound-based writing)

- **pictography**

- Example of a simple mathematical calculation:
  
  \[
  \begin{array}{c}
  389 \\
  - 54 \\
  \hline
  335 \\
  \end{array}
  \]

  \[
  \begin{array}{c}
  1345 \\
  - 706 \\
  \hline
  639 \\
  \end{array}
  \]

  \[
  14 + 9 = 23
  \]
Classification of writing systems

- Pictography
- Ideography

Luwian
• Relationship between the symbol and its referent is mostly arbitrary
• A graphic unit corresponds to a meaningful and grammatically autonomous unit (a word or a morpheme)
• Each morpheme gets its own symbol, thousands of symbols needed
• There are two major logographic writing systems: Sumerian (Cuneiform) and Chinese
• Further in the writing of Japanese, less frequently in Korean, formerly in Vietnamese
Variability of Languages in Time and Space

Lecture:
8-3 Writing Systems
Created by:
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Outline
• Syllabic systems
• Alphabetic systems
Classification of writing systems

- **Language independent**
  - pictography
  - ideography

- **Language dependent**
  - morphography
  - syllabic systems
The basic graphic units are interpreted as speech syllables

- a syllable is a unit of speech that can be articulated in isolation and bear a single degree of stress (English) or a single tone (Chinese)
- typically, a sound of a consonant followed by a vowel (CV)
- different languages allow for different syllables

EN: strength
No writing system could map speech syllables to graphic signs in the ratio 1:1.

Languages combine different strategies developed for syllabic writing to decrease the number of signs in comparison to the number of speech syllables:

- combining simple syllables, disregarding minor distinctions such as aspiration of final consonants
- combining syllables with logograms

One of the most well-known examples of syllabic systems is the Katakana writing system in Japanese.
Classification of writing systems

Language independent
- Ideography
- Pictography

Language dependent
- Morphography
- Syllabic systems
- Alphabetic system
Alphabetic Writing System

• Alphabetic letters encode phonemic segments
• Less than 50 symbols is needed to make this system work
• Languages: English, German, Greek, Czech, …