



## Programme

<b>Friday, December 5</b>	<b>Room 8B.3.52</b>
9.30-10.00	Arrival, coffee/tea
10.00-10.15	Introduction to the symposium
10.15-10.30	Adrian Pablé The IAISLC and some conceptual remarks
10.30-11.00	Chris Hutton Graphology and the History of Semiology
11.00-11.30	Nigel Love How do texts (mis)communicate?
11.30-12.00	David Karlander Language Making, Artefact Making
12.00-13.30	Lunch  (Meeting of the Exec. Comm. of the IAISLC)

- 13.30-14.00 Johan Siebers  
Bodies Writing
- 14.00-14.30 Feifei Zhou  
Semiological and social dynamics in collective writing: A case study of bullet comments
- 14.30-15.00 Arendse Lund  
In the Margins of Manuscripts
- 15.00-15.30 Break
- 15.30-16.00 Katarzyna Kapitan  
Reading from the artefact: Perspectives on ATR for medieval Norse manuscripts
- 16.00-16.30 Sinead Kwok  
From utilitarian literacy to full literacy: Textualizing with AI
- 16.30-17.00 Charlotte Conrad  
The responsibility of the comprehender

**Saturday, December 6 Room 8B.3.52**

- 10.15-10.30 Summary of the previous day
- 10.30-11.00 Sally Pryor  
Excerpts from 'Postcards from Writing': soundbites with Harris on key concepts
- 11.00-11.30 Anne Mette Hansen & Dorthe Duncker  
Remarks framing the roundtable discussions (with examples from a 16<sup>th</sup> century composite manuscript)
- 11.30-12.30 Roundtable discussion
- 12.30-12.45 Concluding remarks
- 12.45- Lunch

## **Abstracts**

(by last name)

### **Charlotte Conrad**

*Independent scholar, Dubai*

#### **The responsibility of the comprehender**

In modern linguistics comprehension is understood as a skill and knowledge-based procedure which ideally does not involve individual creativity. As long as you can correctly apply the presupposed skills and knowledge involved in decoding a text (procedure), you as a comprehender have no personal responsibility for the character of the message received (product). *In that sense, the act of comprehension does not engage personal responsibility.*

*Integrational linguistics radically challenges this assumption by understanding each act of sign-making involved in comprehension as essentially creative.*

In the interest of establishing an empirical investigation of the complexity of sign-making involved in comprehension, I am currently working to sketch a model of the kinds of sign-making that the comprehender is culturally expected to perform during comprehension. At this point the analysis is hypothetical and theoretical - set up by referring to examples of failed comprehension.

I invite you to join me in reflecting on the cultural expectations on comprehension as a way of understanding an integrationist model of sign-making from the inside out.

### **Christopher Hutton**

*University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

#### **Graphology and the History of Semiology**

Two important semiological phenomena have been neglected in the history of linguistics: the individuality of human voice and speaking style, and the uniqueness of handwriting. Traditional linguistic narratives tend to suggest that voices speaking the same language are indistinguishable or that variations are primarily linked to broad social categories such as gender, ethnicity, or class. Yet the uniqueness of the individual voice is central to communicational practice. Similarly, while handwriting functions as a personal marker—most notably through signatures used to

authenticate documents and establish legal agreements—its significance remains underrepresented in mainstream linguistics. Nonetheless, handwriting has relevance in fields such as linguistic landscape studies and forensic linguistics. Calligraphy is the sacred or artistic practice that foregrounds the relations between text, the calligrapher or scribe, tradition, script, style, writing implement, ink, and material surface. Modern printing by contrast foregrounds content over form, as seen in the ascendancy of fonts such as Times New Roman.

Against this background, the presentation traces the historical development of graphology—the study of handwriting as a window into individual personality—highlighting key figures including Jean-Hippolyte Michon, Jules Crépieux-Jamin, and Robert Saudek (1880–1935). Special attention is given to Ludwig Klages (1872–1956), a philosopher and prominent figure in characterology (*Charakterkunde*) and *Lebensphilosophie*. Although lesser-known in the Anglophone world today, Klages' influence was widespread in the Weimar Republic, and his term *Logozentrismus* reappeared in the writings of Jacques Derrida. Klages' major works, *Die Probleme der Graphologie* (1910) and *Handschrift und Character* (1917), exemplify the intersection of material, technological, socio-cultural, and semiological factors.

This study argues that understanding this intellectual history provides valuable insights into the relationships between writing, materiality, technology, sociocultural and political context, and semiological theory, including integrationism.

## **Katarzyna Kapitan**

*École nationale des chartes – PSL, France*

### **Reading from the artefact: Perspectives on ATR for medieval Norse manuscripts**

This paper presents initial results from a project aiming to develop the first open-access FAIR ATR model for medieval Old Norse manuscripts. In my talk, I will focus on the challenge posed by the limited availability of training data and introduce a workflow that enables low-cost fine-tuning of existing generic models. This approach produces text predictions that can also support related computational-philological tasks, including scribal-hand identification.

Using only a small number of training pages to fine-tune the CATMuS-medieval model, we achieved clear improvements in both in-domain and out-of-domain accuracy. These results demonstrate that effective models can be created with minimal data and without specialised hardware, as all experiments were carried out on a standard laptop. By analysing the main types of recognition errors—

particularly those involving special characters central to Old Norse palaeography – I will discuss the implications for current transcription practices and the challenge of reconciling differing editorial conventions in the field.

## **David Karlander**

*Uppsala University, Sweden*

### **Language Making, Artefact Making**

The regimentation of language qua object is partly a material process. Practices of linguistic description, standardization, lexicographic compilation and the like do not only produce authoritative metalinguistic accounts of what some language is. They also result in physical artefacts, notably grammar books, dictionaries, and collections of canonical texts. At least in the (modern) Western tradition – as integrational linguists and linguistic anthropologists have noted – an authoritative tome is widely seen as a crucial component in the delineation, fixation and regulation of individuated language. In some cases, the creation of such physical artefacts has even been regarded as a precondition for a full social recognition of single languages and their linguistic borders, most notably in various descriptive and normative paradigms, as well as in the many social settings where these paradigms have been developed and implemented – from field sites and colonies to old metropolises and new states (Harris, 1981; Blommaert, 2008; Silverstein, 2019).

In this talk, I take a closer look at a neglected inflection of this artefactual idea of language. Seeking to deepen our understanding of what it means for a language to be an artefact. I engage with the textual and material practices of creators of constructed languages. From Ludwig Zamenhof's publication of *Esperanto* in the *Unua Libro* (Zamenhof, 1887) to Billy Ray Waldon's typewritten outline of *Poliespo*, a polysynthetic Cherokee–Esperanto hybrid (Walsh, 1988?) and beyond, the existence of a physical language-artefact fills an important function in the making, social recognition, and use of constructed languages, attesting to their reality, durability and relative utility (or futility). Conversely, the absence or complete loss of a material rendition of a constructed language may destabilize the “reality” of the language. These twinned dynamics raise new questions about language making, including: what does it mean for a (constructed) language to exist? What is the relationship between its modes of existence to text and matter? How is this relationship maintained, reworked or dissolved? Why?

## Literature

- Blommaert, J. (2008). Artefactual ideologies and the textual production of African languages. *Language & Communication*, 28(4), 291–307.
- Harris, R. (1981), *The Language Myth*. Duckworth.
- Silverstein, M. 2019. Texts, entextualized and artifactualized: the shapes of discourse. *College English*, 82(1), 55–76.
- Walsh, B. R. 1988(?). *La Fundamento de Poliespo*. Manuscript.
- Zamenhof, L. L. 1887. *Dr Esperanto – Meždunarodnyj jazyk*. Kelter

## Sinead Kwok

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### **From utilitarian literacy to full literacy: Textualizing with AI**

This paper proposes to realise the potential of an integrational semiology of textualization (Harris, 1998a) by applying it to the rapid, global adoption of AI communication, which has engendered a series of new-fashioned acts of textualization. The paper will reformulate and evaluate two main reactions to LLM-powered chatbots as the offshoots of two stages of literacy named by Harris himself (2000, pp.x-xi): *utilitarian literacy* and *full literacy*.

Accordingly, those who remain at the stage of utilitarian literacy are complacent with a concept of writing inspired by “glottic writing” (Harris, 2000, p.viii) – language-based writing specifically designed to integrate writing with speech. Such is a concept of writing as a practical technique or medium serving linguistic functions hitherto (un)fulfilled by speech, a mode which correlates with speech and ultimately represents language itself. This position upholds writing as an autonomous semiological mode to which developed humans are entitled, as linguistic expression *au fond* (‘the written sign *calls forth/is* the linguistic sign’). And with that, the integrative potential of writing has been locked away in a preconceived notion of language, of linguistic understanding and delivery. A subscription to this view therefore constrains the developmental possibilities of AI communication to such inhibiting metalinguistic questions as whether AI is (well on its way to becoming) a writer or author with authorial intentions, an owner of texts, or by extension, a languaging being – thereby projecting a misunderstanding of the relationships between language and writing onto what we can do with LLMs.

To move forward to full literacy is to understand writing as essentially the making of metasigns which serve an integrational function of which glottic writing is only one demonstration. It is to recognise writing as textualization, a process which

“physically integrates word and object” (Harris, 1998a, p.238), or a written sign and the material it spawns in. Textualization as the production of written signs is itself also the production of a textualized artefact, the relationship between text and artefact being one of “*complementary contextualization*” (p.239) – and thus in textualized artefacts the text is never a purely linguistic thing. Rather, full literacy promotes an awareness of “a new concept of language” (Harris, 2000, p.xi) brought about by renewable acts of textualization, in lieu of a fixation with a given account of language and writing. In light of this, the integrationist shall explore the advent of LLM-powered communication in terms of the massive artefactualization of language codes (via continuous programming and datafication of previous textualizations) and its semiological consequences, including the birth of a new conceit of language as creative, manipulative recoding. Integrationist semiology situates all this in the semiological perspectives of the textualizers (more semiologically fundamental than the traditional writers) who partake in unprecedented forms of “synoptic reduction” and “analytic expansion” (Harris, 1998b, p.265) in their creation of newfangled metasigns and “exploit *systematically* the potentialities afforded by the indeterminacy of the linguistic sign and the open-endedness of sign systems” (Harris, 2000, p.240) with the computer as “the most powerful contextualization device ever known” (Harris, 2002/2013, p.49).

### **References:**

- Harris, R. (1998a). The semiology of textualization. In R. Harris & G. Wolf (Eds.), *Integrational Linguistics: A First Reader* (pp.227-240). Oxford: Elsevier Science.
- . (1998b). Writing and proto-writing: from sign to metasign. In R. Harris & G. Wolf (Eds.), *Integrational Linguistics: A First Reader* (pp.261-269). Oxford: Elsevier Science.
- . (2000). *Rethinking Writing*. London & New York: Continuum.
- . (2013). Literacy and the future of writing: an integrational perspective. In J. Brockmeier, M. Wang & D. R. Olson (Eds.), *Literacy, Narrative and Culture* (pp.35-51). London & New York: Routledge. (Original work published 2002)

## **Arendse Lund**

*University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

### **In the Margins of Manuscripts**

Both medieval scribes and readers left insertion marks, manicules, and other explanatory notes in manuscripts, and these marks serve as evidence of their interactions with the text. Through a wide-ranging examination of the legal

manuscripts held by the Arnamagnæan Institute, we can detect patterns of use through the presence of these marginalia and get insight into the medieval manuscript as a living document and the site for on-going communication.

## **Johan Siebers**

*Middlesex University London, UK*

### **Bodies Writing**

It was a staple advice of the ancient rhetoricians, especially of the later Roman era, to point out that writing is the best training of, and preparation for, speaking. At the same time, writing that does not refer to the context of speaking, to a contextual communicative situation, became stale, if not stalled and halted. Thus Quintilian writes: “the ability to write more and write more quickly will come not only from practice, important as this undoubtedly is, but also from method. It will come if, instead of lying back looking at the ceiling, mumbling to ourselves to stimulate thought, and waiting for something to turn up, we approach our writing problem somehow like ordinary human beings, and ask ourselves what the circumstances demand, what is appropriate to the person speaking, the time, and the judge’s attitude. In this way nature herself will prescribe both our beginning and what follows it. Most points, in fact, are certain and, unless we close our eyes to them, come into view on their own” (*Institutio Oratoria* X, 3).

Quintilian evokes the concrete, embodied act of writing and he also emphasises the concrete circumstances that present, naturally as it were, what is to be written, in which order, etc. For the rhetorician, writing is entirely situational. The act of writing he has in mind took place, probably, on a wax tablet, with a stylus, in bed or out of bed. The stylus had a pointed end with which marks could be made in the wax, and a flattened end with which what had been written could be smoothed over and thus deleted. Horace wishes, for a young man with writing ambitions, *saepe stilum vertas*: may you often turn the stylus. May you write, delete, write again.

This kind of writing could still take place horizontally. Maybe not by staring at the ceiling, but the wax tablet and stylus could be used in any bodily position whatsoever. This is not true for the ink pen, because of gravity influencing ink flow, and only with difficulty realisable with a typewriter or computer. The natural descendent of the stylus is, then, the eraser-capped pencil and the paper writing pad. Indeed, Truman Capote, who described himself as a “strictly horizontal author”, always used this type of pencil to write with (as did some other, vertical, authors, such as Nabokov and Steinbeck).

But the pencil is a problematic writing tool. It constantly draws us towards drawing: to see the marks made on the paper as suggestive of visual pattern, line or image that leads us away from the letter on the page as a token of a type in a writing code. Perhaps it does this more so than the ink pen, even though there the pull of the ink marks on the page towards the artefact that is emerging under our hand, rather than the text as a semantic, free-floating entity, is also present. But the ink stains with dye and water, the pencil deposits a layer of graphite on top of the writing surface. We “make” in a more material way with a pencil. At the other end of the spectrum the type-writer (and its heirs, the keyboard and dictation software) disembodies us completely, disconnects us from the pull towards drawing. But we might experience this as a blessing.

It would be misleading to think about the relation between bodily posture, writing tools and the writing process only in terms of media affordances. If, as in the rhetorical tradition since Cicero and Quintilian, we depart from the common trope that writing and speaking have “nothing” to do with each other (as also the Integrationists sometimes propound), while we also resist the metaphysical temptation to see writing as a mere shadow or image of speaking, a much more embodied, “artificial”, variegated and open relationship between orality and literacy comes into view.

## **Feifei Zhou**

*Lingnan University, Hong Kong*

### **Semiological and social dynamics in collective writing: A case study of bullet comments**

Bullet comments (Danmu), which originated on *Bilibili*—a platform that was once a stronghold of youth subcultures and is now a major video-sharing site in China—present a compelling case for rethinking the material and semiological conditions of writing. This writing function allows users to post anonymous comments on videos, which then appear on the screen and become part of the viewing experience for everyone. These comments accumulate and play in sync with the video, creating a unique blend of watching and reading. At times, entire frames are completely covered by bullet comments, enhancing the video’s appeal. Bullet comments rework the orality of the video’s speech, manipulate complex temporal relations, and facilitate collective ‘jamming’ of the audiences’ wordplay. These dynamics provide rich material for exploring the contextual knowledge, adaptive ingenuity, and technological sensitivity users bring to this new form of textualization. Additionally, this function enables viewers to evaluate (and rewrite) other speakers’ accents and

speech styles by exploring the affordances in Chinese writing system, which then further injects creative energy and reinforces the sense of unity in the video-watching community. Drawing on examples from several case studies, I examine the effects of bullet comment users' writing practices and discuss their implications in the context of the rise of underclass content creators and the intensification of China's traffic-driven digital economy.