

AN INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHOLOGY: DEFINITION, THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

EVA GÓMEZ-JIMÉNEZ

Universidad de Granada

emgomez@ugr.es

71

1. Introduction

Graphology is a linguistic level of analysis that comprises the study of graphic aspects of language¹. This term was first brought into use in linguistic studies in the sixties by McIntosh (1961), who considered it an analogous mode to that of phonology. In his paper “Graphology and Meaning”, he declared he had used graphology “in a sense which is intended to answer, in the realm of written language, to that of ‘phonology’ in the realm of spoken language” (1961: 107). A few years later, Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964: 50) broadened this concept when they connected it to spelling, punctuation and any other matter related to graphic resources in language. Other linguists such as Vachek (1973), Sampson (1985), Coulmas (1991, 1999) and Harris (1995) have also worked on graphology, paying close attention to the properties of alphabets and their evolution throughout history.

The importance and status of graphology as a linguistic level of analysis is particularly prominent in stylistics and multimodality. Within stylistics, some scholars have studied how graphological deviation may affect meaning and produce aesthetic effects. Van Peer (1993), for instance, considered typographic foregrounding and its evolution as a poetic device, while Nänny (2001) checked the iconic properties of verses according to their length. Within multimodality,

and because of the recent relevance of images in communication, there is an attempt, currently, to integrate some graphological elements into the study of modes of communication. In line with this view, great effort has been made by Van Leeuwen, who has published several works either in isolation (2005, 2006) or in conjunction with other scholars (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996; Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001) so as to highlight the semiotic potential of typeface. Similarly, Nørgaard (2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c) has delved into the creation of meaning through certain graphological elements such as typography, layout and colour.

Despite all these studies, literature in this field has not yet outlined the parameters of graphology. Together with this difficulty, there is also a general consensus that graphology is neither relevant nor interesting in itself and, to some extent, some people still misunderstand the real meaning of this word. In view of all these problems, the main objective of this paper is to elucidate the linguistic aspects of graphology, and thereby clarify its meaning. In addition, an inclusive summary of what has already been reported on the topic will be provided and, subsequently, it is my intention to determine which areas should be given priority within this general level of analysis.

72 As a starting point, a definition of graphology is provided in section 2, in which the controversy around this term is explained with specific focus on its linguistic nature. Following this comes a brief explanation of how the notion has evolved from once being simply analogous to phonology, to later becoming a complete, independent system comprising many different elements. Section 3 includes a description of the theoretical background relevant to this level of linguistic analysis, ensuring that both comprehensive and concrete theoretical studies are covered. In section 4 the approaches of Levenston (1992) and Lennard (2005) are detailed, offering alternative views as they do on how graphological elements may be categorized for their analysis. Finally, the paper concludes with the main findings from this study followed by possible lines of research questions to be followed up for the future.

2. Definition

Unlike other linguistic terms such as *morphology*, *syntax* or *phonetics*, *graphology* is a controversial word whose meaning tends to be blurred. This confusion has come about on account of two factors: the non-linguistic meanings attached to this concept and the varied treatment the word has received from dictionaries, manuals and works of reference in general. The definition recently offered by Wales (2001) seems to be the clearest and the most complete one so far, since it clarifies its meaning and includes many other features beyond the letters of the alphabet, for example punctuation marks and spacing.

The very first problem when dealing with graphology is its unclear meaning. This confusion may well be due to its double filiation: though it concerns the study of writing systems, it also concerns character analysis based on handwriting. On most occasions, it is this non-linguistic use of the term that most commonly comes to mind when using the word *graphology*, as the definition given in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2011) demonstrates:

- Inference of character from a person's handwriting. The theory underlying graphology is that handwriting is an expression of personality; hence, a systematic analysis of the way words and letters are formed can reveal traits of personality. Graphologists note such elements as the size of individual letters and the degree and regularity of slanting, ornamentation, angularity, and curvature. Other basic considerations are the general appearance and impression of the writing, the pressure of upward and downward strokes, and the smoothness of the writing. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2011)

This non-linguistic meaning is further complicated by the uneven treatment that graphology has received from previous researchers. While some research has directly ignored its linguistic meaning and just concentrated on its psychological aspects, other studies have reflected its linguistic nature, though this has been forced into the background. In this sense, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2013) defines the linguistic side of *graphology* as “the study of written and printed symbols and of writing systems”, though this definition appears in fourth position. There is a third possibility when defining graphology that consists of giving prominence to its linguistic value, which is not very frequent in works of reference to date. McIntosh (1961: 107) was the first scholar to use the term *graphology* in this sense, giving it its full linguistic value: “I have used the word ‘graphology’ in a sense which is intended to answer, in the realm of written language, to that of ‘phonology’ in the realm of spoken language”. McIntosh’s definition caught on and developed in the sixties and served in its attempt to integrate more levels than the traditional ones when analysing written texts. It was mainly developed in UK stylistics, and generally applied to the description and study of poetry and literary texts, although this was not always the case (Crystal and Davy 1969). Going a step further, Halliday et al. (1964) proposed three years later a more complete definition that signalled the connection of graphology to other elements such as spelling, punctuation and any other notion connected to the use of graphic resources in a language:

Graphology, however, is an essential part of the description of any written language. The use of the word may be unfamiliar. It has been chosen to parallel ‘phonology’, and the term includes orthography, punctuation, and anything else that is concerned with showing how a language uses its graphic resources to carry its grammatical and lexical patterns. (Halliday et al. 1964: 50).

Whilst the proposals by McIntosh (1961) and Halliday et al. (1964) were crucial for the expansion of the concept in linguistics and stylistics, they still failed to clarify the elements to be analysed within this category. For this reason, the definition chosen for this paper is that given by Wales (2001: 182-183) in *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. For her, *graphology* or *graphemics*² is the study of graphemes and any other element related to the written medium, and of the linguistic system that is manifested through these:

The study of such units [graphemes] in a language is called graphemics, or graphology. [...] Graphemics also embraces other features associated with the written or graphic medium: punctuation; paragraphing; spacing, etc. Different registers make particular use of such graphological features as: size of print and capitalization in newspaper and advertising lay-outs; different typefaces and sizes in dictionaries such as this one; special lines in poetry, etc. [...] Graphology can also refer to the writing system of a language, as manifested in handwriting and typography; and to the other related features [...] e.g. capitalization and punctuation. (Wales 2001: 182-183).

The novelty of the definition offered by Wales (2001) lies in the fact that it broadens the spectrum of elements to be analysed within the category of *graphology* beyond the letters of the alphabet, which is something that has not been considered until very recently. She also gives equal importance to the writing system itself and to the discipline that focuses on its analysis, since these are the key aspects that define the concept of *graphology*. In short, Wales (2001) aims to go beyond the traditional perspective in the treatment of *graphology*.

74

3. Theoretical Background

As stated in the introduction, the lack of a theoretical apparatus is one of the main problems for the study of graphology. While there is only a small amount of research in which the majority of graphological elements have been treated comprehensively, most of the rest tends to deal with this matter from a very specific standpoint. The drawback lies in the fact that the first type of research tends to be long on the practical side and short on the theory while the second type fails by concentrating only on the alphabets, taking no account of other elements like punctuation, spelling or capitalization. Despite these limitations, the following contributions must be considered as the compulsory starting point for any discussion regarding graphology.

Most of the comprehensive approaches are to be found in *Physical Aspects of Texts and their Relation to Literary Meaning* by Levenston (1992) and in the chapter “Punctuation” in Lennard’s (2005) *The Poetry Handbook*. Generally speaking,

these enumerate the different elements involved in this type of analysis, explain their functions and give many examples, all of which come from literary texts. Despite their practical usefulness, it is important to recognize a few limitations in these two pieces of research. Firstly, neither constitutes a theoretical approach to graphology. Secondly, neither uses the term *graphology* to refer to their object of study, though this is clearly what they are dealing with in their work: whereas Levenston talks about *physical aspects* of texts (1992: 1), *graphic form* (1992: 1) and *graphicolgy* (1992: 155), Lennard (2005) uses the hyponymic term *punctuation* to label his subject matter. Finally, the schemes offered by them are completely different in nature, both showing analytical categories that have very little in common. As the categorization of graphological elements (together with the definition of graphology and its theoretical framework) is an important point of controversy, the relevant contributions by Levenston (1992) and Lennard (2005) will be discussed further (see section 4).

Concrete approaches have concentrated on very specific elements within the level of graphology. For this reason, the present paper will focus on those works that deal with writing systems, as these are the least specific ones and also the most theoretically oriented. The works of Vachek (1973), Sampson (1985), Coulmas (1991, 1999) and Harris (1995) have proved to be of a similar focus and to provide very complete in-depth studies, explaining the features and evolution of the writing systems in the world. They fail, however, in thinking that a writing system relies solely on the use of the letters of the alphabet, ignoring other important questions such as spacing, punctuation or typographical options.

Vachek's (1973) *Written Language: General Problems and Problems of English*, is one of the first publications to deal with writing systems from a very theoretical viewpoint. This work summarizes the main contributions made by structuralism and functionalism to the study of writing systems and the problems derived from them. Contrasting with the vision of authors such as Saussure, Sapir, Bloomfield and Hockett, who thought writing was just a sort of representation of oral language, scholars like De Courtenay, Bradley or Frinta recognized that writing was an independent system with its own structures (Vachek 1973: 10-13). This statement implied the subsequent recognition that there exist two kinds of norms in most languages, the oral and the written ones (1973: 19-20). Moreover, it was stated that the degree of equivalence between the phonological and the graphological systems in a language can hardly become absolute (1973: 21). Having identified all these features, Vachek (1973: 49-56) set out some of the main characteristics in the written representation of the English language, presenting at the same time some of the problems derived from attempts to change it (1973: 57-58). This work concluded by upholding the verdict that it was

impossible to reform the spelling system of the English language and it recognised that works in this field have demonstrated the functional capacity of language, its stratification and the constant relationship between form and substance. Vacheck (1973: 69-70) considered that identifying the linguistic norms applied to writing and sounds in a language is important, declaring that while oral properties are defined much more concretely, the functions and the features of written aspects of language were still to be developed.

The next stopping off place in this itinerary is one of the greatest contributions to the study of writing systems: Sampson's (1985), *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Introduction*. Here, Sampson (1985: 11) recognized that prior to the Prague Circle and Vachek, nobody had cared about writing systems, and even their premises on this topic were not discussed anywhere outside Europe. Bearing in mind the theoretical gaps in this field, Sampson (1985: 12-45) set out in the first chapter to distinguish between *semasiographic* and *glottographic* systems³: while the former refer to those visual systems in which ideas are shown in a direct way, as with mathematical language and most traffic signals, the latter are those that represent "spoken-language utterances", normally lacking a direct relationship with their referents (1985: 29-31). Within *glottography*, Sampson (1985: 32-33) also distinguished between *logographic* and *phonographic* systems: *logographic* ones directly represent morphemes and/or ideas, whereas *phonographic* ones only stand for sounds and/or phonemes in a language. In order to differentiate between *semasiographic*, *logographic* and *phonographic* systems, Sampson proposed two basic criteria: the degree of motivation "between the graphs of a writing-system and the spoken-language units they represent" (1985: 34-35) and the degree of completeness, that is, how much a writing system is capable of representing all the linguistic units in a concrete language (1985: 35-37). All these ideas constitute the real contribution made by Sampson (1985) to this field, though he also explained the nature and evolution of certain writing systems such as the Graeco-Roman alphabet or the Japanese writing, to cite a few.

More recently, the works by Coulmas (1991, 1999) and Harris (1995) have also tackled this subject. In *The Writing Systems of the World*, Coulmas (1991) approached writing systems from a historical perspective, dealing with the cuneiform system, Chinese calligraphy and the Occidental alphabet, among many others. Some years later, Coulmas (1999) compiled all the terms used in this field in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems*. Nonetheless, a theory of writing was still to be developed, as Harris (1995) has recently alleged. Because of the lack of a theoretical framework, Harris (1995) has proposed an integrational approach that relies on four main features: the use of a framework that is not based on the relationship between writing and other linguistic systems, a tabula rasa approach to

what has already been said on this topic, the explanation and development of relationships inside the writing systems and the creation of a coherent and systematic approach. Taking these four suggestions as a starting point, Harris (1995: 5) proposed a theory of writing based on language as a human social activity, and not just as a transmitter of ideas; in this way, communication is subject to biomechanical, macro-social and circumstantial restrictions that determine the characteristic forms of writing. His main contribution to graphology in this regard is the idea that writing is a system by itself, strongly refuting the presupposition that it is a mere representation of oral communication:

From an integrational point of view, the mistake embodied in the traditional Western view of writing is plain: it confuses the function of the written sign with just one of its possible uses. An integrational semiology must show how and why the signs of writing function in a way that is basically different from the signs of speech, even when the purpose of the written text is to record a spoken message. (Harris 1995: 7).

Together with comprehensive and concrete approaches, it is worth mentioning multimodality as a recent theoretical frame that integrates some of the elements to be considered within the spectrum of graphology. Multimodality has contributed to the understanding of graphology in two respects: the identification of writing as a particular mode of communication (hence displaying its own particular features) and the meaning potential of some graphological aspects like layout or font. In relation to the status of writing as a mode of communication, multimodality has claimed that writing has more differences than similarities when compared to speech and that writing is a border category as it displays some spatial aspects (Kress 1996: 56-58). This idea is essential to an understanding of graphology, because it reasserts the visual nature of this level of analysis and its proximity to other visual modes of communication such as images. Furthermore, multimodality tries to provide tools for the analysis of visual aspects in language, which is very helpful when working with graphology. Regarding the meaning potential of visual elements, multimodality deals with some concrete graphological aspects, namely writing systems (Kress 1996: 55-57), layout (Kress 1996: 59), spelling (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996: 18-21, 58), font and colour (Kress 1996: 59; Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001: 167-171). As mentioned above, multimodality is addressing particular issues to improve the understanding of certain graphological aspects.

4. Levels of Analysis within Graphology: Lennard's (2005) and Levenston's (1992) Proposals of Categorization

A few limitations notwithstanding, the works of Levenston (1992) and Lennard (2005) constitute two valuable contributions to the study of graphology. Unlike

other researchers, these two scholars have dealt with one of the most important questions in relation to this level of linguistic analysis: what are the different levels and sub-levels to be included under the term *graphology*. Their proposals imply a great step forward in linguistics and stylistics studies because they organize graphological features in a systematic and structured way.

On the one hand, Levenston (1992) draws up a scheme that distinguishes four different levels within the graphic representation of language: *spelling*, *punctuation*, *typography* and *layout* (see table 1). As a starting point, Levenston (1992: 2) criticises the lack of critical approaches to the study of graphological elements. He believes, basing himself on Firth’s (1957) model of linguistic description, that graphology is as relevant as other levels such as grammar or lexis for the study of literary texts. As a consequence, Levenston (1992) argues that more attention be given to graphological elements, and though his book is not of high theoretical density, it is of great importance since it is the only comprehensive approach to the role of graphology in literature:

“The Stuff of Literature”—I have chosen this catchy but obscure title in desperation; there is no accepted way of referring to the topic. If this were a Ph. D. thesis, there would be no problem; we could put all the relevant information into the subtitle: “The Stuff of Literature: A Study of the Contribution Made to the Meaning and Value of a Work of Literature at the Level of Graphic Form, with particular reference to Spelling, Punctuation, Typography, and Layout”. (Levenston 1992: 1).

78

1. Spelling	Formal vs. informal language Diacritics Archaisms Dialects Interlanguages Eye dialects Eye rhymes Puns
2. Punctuation	Absence of punctuation Patterned punctuation
3. Typography	Italics Other typefaces
4. Layout	

TABLE 1. The study of graphological elements. Levenston’s (1992) proposal (adapted)

Lennard’s (2005) proposal differs from that of Levenston’s (1992) in its aim and scope. *The Poetry Handbook* (2005) is defined by its author as “[a] book [...] [for] anyone who wants to read poetry with a better understanding of its craft and technique; it is also a textbook and crib for school and undergraduate students

facing exams in practical criticism” (Lennard, 2005: xxi). Due to its introductory nature, Lennard (2005) presents basic issues for the study of poetry such as metrics, poetic form, versification, rhyme or syntax. Chapters three (2005: 33-80) and four (2005: 81-104) are devoted to *composition* and *punctuation*, though both cover what is also understood as *graphology*. The reason for this terminological shift is quite simple: Lennard (2005) labels what I consider to be *graphology* as *punctuation*, by paying attention not just to punctuation marks, but also to spelling, typefaces or spacing, to cite a few elements. Lennard (2005: 109-114) also proposes a scale of eight different descriptive levels that facilitate the analysis of matters affecting *punctuation* [*graphology*] (see table 2). The scale is organized from the more rudimentary elements —the letterforms that punctuate the blank space in a page— to the more complex ones —the creation of a book as a complete unit of punctuation—.

1. LETTER-FORMS PUNCTUATING THE BLANK PAGE
2. INTERWORD SPACES
3. PUNCTUATION MARKS
4. WORDS OR OTHER UNITS DISTINGUISHED BY FONT, FACE, COLOUR, SIGN, OR POSITION
5. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PAGE AND OPENING
6. PAGINATION
7. THE STRUCTURES OF GROUPED PAGES
8. THE MS, TS, CODEX, SCROLL OR LEAF AS A COMPLETE OBJECT PUNCTUATING SPACE OR A CONSTITUENT VOLUME IN A GREATER WHOLE

TABLE 2. The study of graphological elements. Lennard’s (2005: 109-110) proposal (adapted)

The proposal offered by Lennard (2005) has been subsequently recognized by different scholars. Bray, Handley and Henry (2000) have followed this scheme in *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page*. Presented as a practical work, this book collects different essays that focus their attention on the study of concrete elements in specific texts, for example the covers in some publications by George Eliot and G. H. Lewis (Korn, 2000), the footnotes and the typography in *Le Rouge et le Noir* by Stendhal (Scott 2000) or the marginalia in the epilogue in *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* by Alasdair Gray (White 2000). This collection considers, as Lennard (2005) does, that punctuating a text is also part of the creative process, so elements such as footnotes, blank spaces, punctuation or marginalia also contribute to the creation of meaning in a text (Bray et al. 2000: xvii). More importantly, this book opens with an introductory chapter by Lennard in which he repeatedly refers to the lack of theory in relation to this topic, due to the grammatical orientation in linguistic studies and the problems derived from

the definition of the concept itself (Bray et al. 2000: 1-3). His aim is clear: to develop a theory of *punctuation*, hence of *graphology*, to cover the current theoretical gap in this field.

5. Discussion

This paper aims to clarify the understanding of graphology as a linguistic level of analysis. For this reason, the dual nature of graphology has firstly been explained, thereby referring to the study of the writing system and at the same time also to the analysis of a person's character based on his/her handwriting. Subsequently, a revision of several definitions that trace the evolution of the concept *graphology* has been made. Having clarified its meaning, an in-depth account of the relevant theoretical background in this area has been provided, mainly represented in the works of Levenston (1992), Lennard (2005), Vachek (1973), Sampson (1985), Coulmas (1991, 1999) and Harris (1995), as well as other contributions demonstrating the importance of graphology as a medium for creative expression. Brief mention of multimodality has also been included, as this branch of study addresses aspects affecting graphology. Finally, a description of those schemes offered by Levenston (1992) and Lennard (2005), which fill part of the gap around graphology when clarifying its organization into several sub-levels of analysis, has been given.

Explaining the meaning of graphology is the first step towards acquiring a clearer understanding of this notion as a linguistic level of analysis. Traditionally speaking, the term *graphology* has usually been associated with “the inference of character from a person's handwriting” (EB 2011), while very few people have acknowledged its linguistic nature. This double layer and the irregular treatment so far received from works of reference have led to much controversy surrounding the meaning of this term. The first purely linguistic definitions are ascribable to McIntosh (1961) and Halliday et al. (1964), who connected graphology with phonology (McIntosh, 1961) as well as with the graphic resources of a language (Halliday et al. 1964). The passing of time has narrowed the scope of the term, which has meant that the spectrum of aspects to be included under this label has vastly expanded. Graphology is nowadays defined as the study of graphemes and other features associated with the written medium, such as punctuation, paragraphing or spacing (Wales 2001: 182), but also as “the writing system of a language, as manifested in handwriting and typography” (Wales 2001: 183).

Theoretical publications dealing with language at the level of graphology can be categorized into two main groups: comprehensive and concrete approaches. The former (Levenston 1992, Lennard 2005, Vachek 1973, Sampson 1985, Coulmas

1991, Coulmas 1999, Harris 1995) imply the treatment of graphology from a general and comprehensive perspective. The drawback with these critics is that with the exception of Levenston (1992) and Lennard (2005), they have tended to confuse writing systems with alphabets, and hence omit many other items that should in fact be considered at this level of analysis. The latter includes all the works that have dealt with concrete elements within graphology. In this sense, the reader may find the works on punctuation, typography and layout useful, including such topics as the use of parenthesis as a poetic device (Tartakovski 2009), typographical foregrounding (Van Peer 1993) or modernist verse (Levertov 1979), to cite a few.

Nowadays, multimodality (Kress 1996; Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996) has foregrounded the use of several semiotic modes for communication, hence highlighting visual aspects of language. In this way, this branch of study emphasizes the need to study the meaning potential of some graphological elements. It offers some theoretical background for the analysis of these elements, thus covering some aspects that had mostly been neglected by linguistics. Nonetheless, multimodality does not cover graphology comprehensively. As it is concerned with the interrelation between different modes of communication, writing is only one of these aspects. Though multimodality approaches specific graphological aspects that mean something because of their visual nature, such as layout, colour and letterform, many questions remain unanswered because it has not covered all issues within this level of linguistic analysis, nor has it treated them deeply enough.

Among all of the works revisited, Levenston's (1992) and Lennard's (2005) categorizations may constitute a suitable departure point for the study of graphology and the features impacting on this level. As explained earlier, these two proposals are quite different in nature. On the one hand, Levenston (1992) distinguishes four main groups: *spelling*, *punctuation*, *typography* and *layout* (see table 1), taking plenty of samples from literary texts to back up his claims. On the other hand, Lennard (2005) proposes an eight-level scale: (1) letter-forms, (2) spaces, (3) punctuation marks, (4) font, face, colour, sign or position options affecting words or other units, (5) page organization, (6) pagination, (7) page grouping and (8) volume or any other kind of complete punctuation unit (see table 2). Whereas Levenston (1992) is clearer at setting out the general groups that serve to classify graphological elements, Lennard (2005) offers a more complete and comprehensive theory relating the aspects to be analysed within graphology. Levenston's (1992) taxonomy has two main weaknesses: he does not use a very theoretical approach and what needs to be analysed within these four main categories is not by any means obvious. To put it more clearly, while he makes a comprehensible distinction between spelling, punctuation, typography

and layout, he does not delve further into what one might refer to as the sub-elements that require consideration within each of these categories. Levenston (1992) deals with some concrete elements such as *eye dialects* (spelling) or *italics* (typography), for example, but these alone are not sufficient. Depending on the text and the kind of discourse under examination, it will be therefore necessary to focus on aspects that have not been remarked on previously by Levenston (1992). The alternative put forward by Lennard (2005) is a more theoretically-oriented approach that includes additional references and assists in offering a more thorough review of this topic. However, the limits of some of the categories proposed by this scholar remain unclear, especially those dealing with the organization of the page, and the opening, pagination and structures of grouped pages. It is also remarkable that both proposals focus on literary texts, thereby ignoring other genres of discourse where graphology may well prove to be relevant. In view of the evident gaps in both the aforementioned proposals, an analysis of graphological elements would most definitely be a worthwhile endeavour. Though different in nature, the two approaches discussed can be used to complement one another. Part of their value lies in the fact that they are the first to have dealt with visual aspects of language from a comprehensive perspective, thus allowing for attention to be paid to aesthetic effects.

82

6. Final remarks and further avenues

To sum up, the introductory ideas foregrounded in this paper show that graphology as a level of linguistic analysis remains largely understudied within linguistics and stylistics. There are currently few publications dealing with this topic, and this is in fact a vicious circle: the lack of applied research on graphology is a direct consequence of the absence of theoretical models in this field. Without a solid theoretical model, it is difficult to carry out a stylistic analysis of literary or non-literary discourse; by the same token, if stylistic analyses are lacking for this level of linguistic analysis, it is hard to theorize about graphology. It is important, too, to explain the reasons for this disadvantageous position. On the one hand, the general impression given is that graphology is susceptible to linguistic analysis. Nonetheless, typography, spacing or visual appearance in a text are what first shapes the way we perceive what we are reading. In this sense, although graphology may be considered an easy subject, it is precisely this idea of easiness that has led to an ignorance of its features, as well as its functions. On the other hand, there is concern that an incorrect association has been made between the terms *graphology* and *writing system*, which is also a synonym of *alphabet*, and in the process neglecting several other visual aspects that also pertain to the system. When paying close attention to

the composition of any text, one soon realises that elements such as punctuation marks, blank spaces or capital letters are almost equally important for the understanding of a text as the letters themselves. Together with the reasons already detailed, there is a further drawback concerning the fact that the only information about graphology to date has been produced in a fragmentary way, which has generated great uncertainty in this area. Due to the disadvantageous position in which graphology finds itself in comparison to other linguistic levels of analysis, many questions are raised and will need answering in future research, such as: Which elements should be included within the study of graphology? How do they work? How do they relate to each other? How does the system of graphology work as a whole? To this end, as mentioned above, the categories given by Levenston (1992) and Lennard (2005) are a very valuable point of departure because they charter many of the elements to be considered within graphology. Nonetheless, future empirical research should provide a more systematic scheme that enables identification, classification and the relating of graphological elements in a methodical way and for further diverse purposes. More importantly, these disadvantages also signal the need for a theory of graphology that is yet to be developed, and that constitutes the main problem when dealing with this topic. A theory of graphology cannot deal solely with the elements that form this linguistic level, but must consider their functioning, their premises and so on; it cannot deal just with a concrete element or issue, as is the case with those works that simply check writing systems. The terminological problem should also be addressed in the future, as present research demonstrates there is great controversy about the use of *graphology* and *graphemics* as labels for the study of writing systems. Finally, a graphological theory should be constructed based on research into texts that included samples that were of interest from a visual point of view and lent themselves to a variety of analysis, as would be the case of advertising or journalism, for example.

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Notes

¹ Though the term *graphemics* is also used to refer to this linguistic level of analysis, *graphology* is the preferred term in this paper. There is great controversy as to whether to use one or another, though in practical terms they are synonyms when referring to the study of written aspects of language. From a purely theoretical perspective, it seems that the use of the term *graphemics* has predominated; on the other hand, *graphology* is the preferred term within other fields of study like stylistics. For further information on this issue, see Crystal (2011) and Wales (2011).

² As in the case of Wales (2001), some other scholars have used the term *graphemics* to refer to the study of writing systems. See Stockwell (1952), Hamp (1959), Hall (1960, 1963), Francis (1962), Fisiak (1968), Augst (1986), Daniels (1991) or Coulmas (1999).

³ As stated by Sampson (1985: 29) in his book, both terms are adapted from Haas (1976).

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