



Showing it all on the Page through Graphology

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Just as phonology is encoding meaning in sound, graphology is encoding meaning in visual symbols:

A hypothetical science of graphology would describe the organization of space into usable tokens. These tokens would include writing symbols such as the alphabet and the number system, punctuation, and designs. (Cummings and Simmons 74)

This is concerned with the way a text is laid on paper. Normally, poetry is written in lines and prose in paragraphs, but there are writers and poets who use both to create literary wonders. To create interest it is vital to catch the reader's eye first. The first attraction is through the eye:

Besides, it also provides additional dimensions to the meaning conveyed by words and sentences.

The typographic design is used:

...when an author wishes to make a particular pOINt.
(Crystal 271)

When language is perceived in a written medium the thing that is most perceived is shape and color. This is obvious to us by looking at language. In literary language it often happens written medium possesses features that are part of the literary meaning. Just as Alliteration and Onomatopoeia and some other phonological features contribute to the effect of the text, the written medium can convey similar effect based upon the design in the visual field. This is not done by designing the letters but in the layout of the text, manipulation of sense lines, or even clustering of alphabet symbols into non-verbal patterns. The graphology is there to take the reader into the writer's mind, the individual experience of being human.

For this trip into the writer's mind, the writer places certain signposts to guide the reader. These indicators are not the usual ones as seen on roads etc, though the message might be the same, instead they are unusual. That which will strike the reader is the first such signal followed by subsequent signals leading a reader in the direction desired by

the writer.

But design taken beyond the basics of writing and punctuation can leap directly into a relationship with situational meaning, without referring to the aspect of form.

An example is the arrow on a one-way street.
(Cummings and Simmons 78)

These signposts can be phonological, lexical, syntactical or even purely graphological. This is the beauty of graphology that it includes all the other linguistic levels in it, as any thing unusual first strikes the eye, so deviation at any linguistic level will first catch the eye. Of course for the semantic angle, one has to then apply the mind. But when the mind sees a link between the unusualness and the meaning, there is appreciation. Of course there might be more than one link, but to discover a connection gives a sense of joy and achievement. It is like solving a puzzle and scoring points. So graphology is also a tactic to involve the reader in the text. Two American poets William Carlos Williams and E.E. Cummings discard the capital letters and punctuation where conventionally they are required. Cummings is famous for this type of orthographic/graphological deviation:

Seeker of truth

follow no path
all paths lead where

Truth is here (Leech 48)

The development of Imagism seems to be the part of this attempt to refer directly to the experience without the interference of the formal aspect. It is analogous to the contemporary attempts to paint “light” rather than “theme.”
(Cummings and Simmons 79)

Graphology, broadly speaking, is the shift from outer to the inner, from the abstract public structures of the world to the particulars of individual perception. And there are writers whose graphological wizardry goes beyond the regulatory convention of prose – the standard alphabet, the standard system of punctuation, standard spellings. In their work even the alphabet, at times goes beyond the conventions.

Not only do they italicize, but do so in a special way. But the moot question is how does a writer indulge in the graphological effects when there is only limited scope? What are those tools by which a writer creates visual effects? The following are the major points that a writer uses to visualize his/her text.

The first among the visual tools comes the spelling; in this a writer can create effects by going for the alternative spellings, misspellings from the point of view of Standard English rules. Variations can be “dialectal, stylistic or free”. Writers do this frequently by switching between American and British English. They have shown pronunciations in print by misspellings, which falls under the category of stylistic variation. Free variation is seen where a writer has a choice between the two accepted norms of the two

Standard Varieties of English (AmE and BrE). A writer may opt from color/colour, program/programme, and -ise/-ize etc. But mainly there are misspellings that are used for two purposes: First, they show the pronunciation in print. Second they have a semantic angle; the misspellings are not without any purpose.

One of the main features of graphology is to show the state of the mind, instead of just telling:

... Joyce's visual puns, Virginia Woolf's use of brackets, the development of an "interior monologue" meant to be heard in the head. Similarly graphological effects have been used as the ideal tool to take a reader inward to the real situation ... the individual experience of being human.

(Cummings and Simmons 70)

Many of the non-native writers have used graphology to show pronunciation in print:

...spelling represents pronunciation, any strangeness of pronunciation will be reflected by strangeness of written form.

(Leech 47)

They do not hesitate to go further to show the other features as well. English not being the first language of Indians and used only occasionally, both the children' and adults' English can be foregrounded against the background of Standard English. This factor can be noticed only by someone who has a first-hand knowledge of the Standard English, having had some exposure to that kind of atmosphere. It is precisely because of this that non-native users of English who have lived or studied in the zones where English is the mother tongue are able to detect such errors.

One such difference between the Indian and the British, non-native and native environment, is the use of the swear word 'Damn' which is so commonly used in India, just like Hello, Hi and Bye. But a native user, especially a child, hesitates to use this word. For instance, in *The God of Small Things*, the British child, Sophie Mol does not even utter the word; she uses letters for it and asks the Indian children whether they were allowed to use the word:

... Dee Ay Em En... (182)

Then misspellings are there to indicate strong emotions, both positive and negative, about something.

So there is the special spelling:

'Myoozick' instead of the normal 'music'. (Roy 95) Though the pronunciation is the same.

Then in another example, the lady who tries to coax, the little boy, Estha, into having a sweet, transfers the deliciousness of the delicacy onto the words when shesays:

... Verrrry sweet. (Roy 323)

Such misspellings and coming together of words, apart from showing pronunciation, also suggest a speed-up in the delivery of speech, which in itself may be due to various reasons:

- 1.time is running out.
- 2.they are excited or enthusiastic about their subject. 3.they fear someone will interrupt or disagree with them 4.they want to get an unpleasant item over with quickly. 5.they realize they have made a gaffe or a mistake or have expressed themselves confusingly and hurry on to a new topic in the hope that their listener(s) will either fail to notice or simply forget.
6. they think of another more interesting topic and get rid of the old one as quickly as possible.
- 7.they realize they have been droning on at a boring rate and overcompensate by then going too fast. (Russell 127)

Special symbols are used frequently which are signs that carry out the functions of the words, phrases or clauses. They convey the same message as the words do.

Common examples are a plus sign in red (+) for medical purpose, a cross in red (X) for danger and most of the signs indicating traffic rules. Asterisks are used to show omitted letters especially in taboo words.

In the novel, *The God of Small Things*, the number of a pink receipt is presented as -

Receipt No. "Q498673." (163)

Perhaps the unusual style for numbers is there to support the previous statement: The whole of her crammed into a little clay pot. (163)

The receipt and the numbers took the shape of the *crammed whole* of the remains.

Abbreviations or shortened forms of words are a major feature of the written language. These may or may not be known to the readers, but have the same effect of attracting attention. Today, writers use a number of these abbreviations in their work instead of their fuller counterparts. A reader is drawn towards them for two reasons: First, because of a change from the normal words to something different. Second is the familiarity with the abbreviated stuff.

Some of such common Indian abbreviations which are quite familiar to people are: *PWD*, *CPI (M)*, *DDA*, *BABA*, *BA*, *WWF*, *FPO*, the American *NBA*, the British *BBC* and *CCP*, *VVP*, *VIPs*, a *UN* job, and the commonest of all the *FIR*.

Contrasts are presented effectively by means of graphology by making use of Italics, Capitalization, Boldface, Colour etc. However, in the case of certain writers, this could be one entirely different branch parallel to the whole of graphology because there are different variations in italics. Then there are italics numbered with letters (a) etc. and italics numbered with numbers (1) etc. All convey different graphological effects;

various categories are shown in this manner; it shows something that is outstanding, which will have the focus naturally. One cannot avoid noticing such things. In the following example the term Advance used on the left is “reinforcing”, while the same term used on the right is “contradicting”.

ADV^ANCE ADV_ANCE (Crystal 268)

There are a few lines from Alfred Beston’s science fiction story showing the use of spatial organization/typography to represent the disturbance in the mind of the protagonist:

Foyer
 Bedroom
 Bath T
 Bath e
 Living Room r
 Kitchen r
 Dressing Room a
 Bedroom c T e
 r r a c e
 (Crystal 271)

Spatial organizations can be seen on the page, which are used to express various concepts like slogans, songs, couplets, recitations, or even shapes and figures. They could be silently thought or verbally expressed.

In *The God of Small Things*, writer Arundhati Roy uses the spatial organization effectively. On page 141, there is a song for a character, Sophie Mol, but which is specially organized and paragraphed as if to show the shape of a tall and thin girl on the page. And the italics-in-the-middle indicating what it is. What strikes is the use of periods are used even after the conjunction ‘and’. One of the uses is that of de-attracting and re-attracting. When Roy wants to distract the readers from other things and focus them only on the character Sophie Mol, she creates a special paragraph:

*There was A
 girl
 Tall and
 Thin and Fair
 Her hair Her
 hair
 Was the delicate colourov Gin-
 nnn-ger (left left, right) There
 was
 A girl (141)*

This paragraph is the girl on paper. The narrator sizes up this girl from top – *Her hair* to bottom – the movement of her legs *left left, right*. From a distance this is the only possible description that one can get. This paragraph has further graphological deviations: the items 'colour of' merge into *colourov*. This could be to show the pronunciation in print or it could be that the voiceless /f/ changes to voiced /v/ owing to influence from the next voiced consonant /g/ in speech. Second, the stutter at the lexical item is the result of indecision between two colours: that of Gin and that of Ginger, and the issue finally settles at ginger, as the walking girl has come closer. So, what appears Gin-like from a distance changes to *Gin-nnn-ger*-like on approaching close. This is evident from the movement *left left, right* – the girl, Sophie Mol, was coming towards the narrator, Rahel. Things that catch the reader's attention are: The special paragraph, the misspellings, the parentheses and repetition. So graphology includes both repeating the same choices and going beyond the set of choices; it covers both schemes and tropes. Both strike the reader. This is what graphology can do; focus the reader to go through layers of meaning:

Equally, the writer may have no subtle or profound semantic intentions at all, but wish to use these features in the hope that the reader will find them appealing – perhaps elegant, intriguing, charming, clever, beautiful. At this point semantic function of the writing system merges with aesthetic, and linguistics gives way to art.

(Crystal 271)

Without a definite purpose, such linguistic experiments are few. A scientist has a definite purpose to experiment round the clock in his laboratory. What phonology does in speech, graphology does in writing. One of the major features of speech/conversation is the shared context where a speaker might just hint at something, which he knows the listener will understand, excluding any third person unfamiliar with the history of the situation.

But how does an author do this in writing? This is done by using graphology, not by literally repeating the thing but merely hinting at it, fully knowing that the readers will understand.

Next in line which can be used for graphological purpose is punctuation.

One significant feature is the use of parenthesis (brackets), without which the chapter on graphology would be incomplete. This feature is used a lot by writers. There are all three kinds: Brackets, Dashes and Commas. And the material packed in each of these might itself need a separate investigation, as writers make use of words, phrases, clauses and sentences in them. And each of these mentioned items could be further distinguished in terms of Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives, Adverbs, Prepositional phrases, participles – both -ing and ed - infinitive phrases or clauses, main and subordinate clauses, and sentences ranging from one-word type to simple/compound/complex etc. This apart, various attitudes are conveyed through such parenthesis. Basically they are used by a writer for one of the following:

Explanation, Comment, Reference, Unimportant after-thought.

(Partridge 64)

For instance, there is an explanation of the the term ‘care’ in parenthesis:

They provided the care (food, clothes, fees) but withdrew the concern. (15)

Brackets are also used to focus on the things separating something from the rest. And also “... brackets are perfect for authorial asides of various kinds ...” (Truss162)

The single dash has been used to “segregate or emphasize, very decisively a final member” (Partridge 71) of a sentence or for presenting an after-thought:

The other Punctuation that is prominent and pervasive is the three dots ... or the “separative dots” as they are called. They are mainly used for expressing hesitation, holding back of words for several reasons, “to trail off in an intriguing manner” including “the power erotic suggestion.” (Truss 166)

There is an example when Sophie Mol explains to Estha and Rahel:

how there was a pretty good chance that they were bastards and what bastard really meant. This had involved, though somewhat inaccurate description of sex. See what they do is ... (135)

About parenthesis one more thing that is established is that there is a degree of obtrusiveness, with brackets coming first, which serve as a real aside for the author. Then come the dashes, and the commas are the least obtrusive.

But many non-native writers take fuller than normal advantage of parenthesis because they are aware of:

... the principle that focus normally comes at the end of a tone unit explains why a parenthesis (which is normally bordered by tone-unit boundaries) can be used rhetorically to throw emphasis on a word immediately preceding it:

And THÌS, in SHÓRT, is why I reFÙSED.
(Quirk and Greenbaum 407)

With this technique writers are able emphasize/highlight a number of items simultaneously. This complex interaction of typeface, type size, letter and line spacing, color, and other such graphological variables combine to produce a sort of texture, the “dominant visual quality of the typeset text”. One such deviation, error in normal circumstances, is not all that striking, but a large number of such ‘errors’ in print will have a massive effect.

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