


Movements across conceptual spaces can also activate performativity. The ‘translanguaging’ space presents itself at an English-taught program in Japan when students and faculty constantly traverse across the spatial triad—the mental space where monolingual ideology surveils idiolects, the physical space where personal linguistic repertoires are performed, and the social space where individuals with varying linguistic competence and language politics interact. It is advocated that translanguaging should be elevated to the ideological level to exert influence on languaging in the social space (Ngoc Anh Đô & Gregory S. Poole, chapter 3). Moreover, the researcher’s ideological movements, together with those of participants, sharpen the contour of a ‘safe’ performative linguistic space during return interviews, where reflective thinking about the actual beneficiaries in market-oriented volunteer tourism and questioning of White Saviourist narratives can ‘come out’ (Cori Jakubiak, chapter 6).

Although unmentioned by editors and contributors, it is worth contemplating whether the movement of space itself, be it active or passive, can activate performativity. Is the ‘critical’ space formed because the Japanese street/space, where a black cosplayer stands, has transformed into the TikTok space, where her cosplay post is subtitled with the hashtag ‘kawaii’ (Laura Miller, chapter 7)? By focusing on traces of contrasting language politics, this book challenges ‘named languages’ and subverts linguistic hierarchies. It excels in providing insights on how to expand our attention from language politics to politics of other axes of discrimination, with this ‘performative linguistic space’ tool, to disrupt rigid social categories and promote cross-disciplinary dialogue.

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GUY MERCHANT, *Why writing still matters: Written communication in changing times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. 280. Hb. £80.

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The book takes a ‘sociomaterial approach’, discussing writing in terms of history, technology, and social functions. It presents writing as a mode of communication, focusing on its distinctiveness and the ways in which it combines with other modes. Defining communication as ‘movement of meaningful information’, it describes writing as a ‘visible language’ and outlines major phases of its historical development and the positive and negative aspects of its uses. The book also

challenges ethnocentric assumptions, such as the idea that writing was only invented once, that it makes us more intelligent, or that it is central to civilization. Part 1, 'Impressions', consists of four chapters focusing on pertinent definitions and the delineation of writing as a visible language. Part 2, 'Expressions', consists of five chapters focusing on uses and functions of writing in social settings. The two parts compose the book's overall approach, which distinguishes between the 'technology for writing', tools and instruments used by writers, and 'technology of writing', ways in which we use writing to achieve different purposes.

Part 1 distinguishes writing from speech and other modes, such as images and sounds. It emphasises the visible nature of the written sign and introduces some pertinent terms such as multimodality, writing systems, and machine learning. It considers writing as physical activity, involving hand and eye coordination, and describes the development of artefacts that accompany writing, from clay and stone, to pens and keyboards. These artefacts support the emergence of different functions of writing and its physical appearance, named 'graphic space'. The first four chapters introduce and explain three heuristic concepts for the study of writing: the 'display principle', the way writing is seen, the 'design principle', the possibilities and constraints of the material elements on which writing is seen, and the 'mark-making principle', the use of tools to produce notations.

Part 2 discusses what we do with writing, highlighting reflection, connection, and elucidation. This part elaborates on genres, their social functions and ensuing power relations, represented in such actions as book burning, censorship, and, more recently, the use of hashtags to direct readers to specific information. It overviews narrative and presents writing as the mode that enabled long narratives, such as novels, to develop and promote a 'narrative consciousness'—the representation of the world through narrative. Writing also enabled the development of organizing, labelling, and categorizing through the production of workplace texts. The last two chapters explore the effects of digital technology, which enabled the separation of storage from text and the ability to distribute text to many readers simultaneously. Throughout the book, the author presents both strengths and weaknesses of forms of writing; for example, technology brings in elements of access and availability, which depend on political factors.

The author uses a colloquial style with descriptions of facts and historical events, giving examples from a range of contexts, interspersed with personal vignettes. Despite several generalizations, due to its extensive coverage of topics, the book is a useful introduction to important concepts in the study of writing for an undergraduate and non-specialist audience.

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