

**WRITING AT THE PRAGUE LINGUISTIC CIRCLE**

Call for contributions

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To mark the centenary of the founding of the Prague Linguistic Circle, the journal [\*Linguistique de l'écrit\*](#) wishes to devote its 2026 special issue to this research group's contribution to linguistic approaches to writing.

The theme of writing is not spontaneously associated with the activities of the Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC). It even contradicts the image usually associated with the Circle, which remains attached to the invention of phonology – its "battle cry" according to its president, Vilém Mathesius (1966 [1936]: 144). However, the Circle's work goes beyond the description and theorisation of phonological systems. The main syntheses devoted to the PLC (Fontaine 1974, Viel 1984, Raynaud 1990, Mahmoudian & Sériot 1994, Toman 1995, Procházka, Malá & Šaldová 2010, etc.) have highlighted the diversity of the fields explored by the Prague scholars: morphophonology, syntax, lexicon, grammatical, poetic and semiotic studies, etc. Few mention writing among the Circle's important themes. Yet two of its participants and major figures in passing on the Circle's legacy – Josef Vachek and Roman Jakobson – emphasised the importance of this issue. Vachek (1966: 101-103) lists "Problems of written language and orthography" among the major areas of focus of the CLP, and Jakobson draws the attention of the editors of the issue of the journal *Change* devoted to the Circle (1969) to the place occupied by writing. Based on Jakobson's testimony, Jean-Pierre Faye writes that "the question of writing was frequently raised and discussed in the Prague Circle" (Faye & Robel 1969: 85). This assertion is confirmed by all the sources and documents available today. It can be seen, for example, in the programmes of the Circle's meetings, where the theme of writing recurs very often (Čermák, Poeta & Čermák 2012). It is addressed in papers by Troubetzkoy<sup>1</sup>, Karcevski<sup>2</sup>, Artymovych<sup>3</sup>, Novák<sup>4</sup>, Trnka<sup>5</sup>, etc. Issues related to the reform of Czech spelling, its written language and its standardisation are an important, albeit little-known, part of the Circle's activities (Sinzelle Poňavičová 2022). These issues are addressed in the 1929 *Theses*, which also discuss the duality of the "oral manifestation" and "written manifestation" of language, as well as the "strong influence on spoken literary language" exerted by written language. Although these issues are not treated in a unified manner within the functional approach developed in Prague, they are at the heart of several texts – e.g. Havránek (1937) – many of which share the hope for a future "science" or "theory of writing" (Troubetzkoy 1969 [1935], Vachek 1945). They also gave rise to major works, in particular by Vladimir Buben, *Influence*

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<sup>1</sup> "Alphabet and Phonetic System" (6 February 1928), "On the Relationship between the Glagolitic Alphabet and the Greek Alphabet" (6 October 1934).

<sup>2</sup> "On the Reform of Russian Spelling" (6 October 1934).

<sup>3</sup> "Written Language" (24 February 1932), "Phonology and Writing" (18 December 1933).

<sup>4</sup> "History of the Slovak written language from a phonological point of view and the question of the reform of Czechoslovak spelling" (23 March 1931).

<sup>5</sup> "Stenography and phonology" (16 March 1936).

*de l'orthographe sur la prononciation du français moderne* (1935), and Joseph Vachek: "On the problem of written language" (1989 [1939]), "Written language and printed language" (1948). Long after the dissolution of the Circle in 1952, Vachek continued his reflection on the status of written language (Vachek 1973, 1989). His work, along with Mukařovský's remarks on "graphic processes" (1969 [1931]) and Artymovyč's autonomist positions (1932a, 1932c), attest to the fact that the CLP's treatment of writing cannot be reduced to the phonocentrism generally attributed to the Prague school (cf. Jakobson 1976: 77-78). This diversity must also be viewed in the light of the approaches to writing developed in other schools – Geneva, Copenhagen, American school – as illustrated by the dialogue between the texts of Uldall (1944), Vachek (1945) and Pulgram (1951). In this respect, the place of writing in the development of Prague phonology deserves to be questioned. This is also true of the comparisons with writing systems that run through Troubetzkoy's phonological writings (1936: 8, 11, 1949 [1939]: 70). They echo the analyses of Albano Leoni (2014), which highlight the prevalence of the alphabetical model at work in structural phonology.

The issue of writing was of concern to the members of the Prague Linguistic Circle because it involves the various dimensions of language – functional, social, semiotic – that they sought to understand. Writing was difficult to ignore for a school that strove to combine language theory and literary theory. The diversity of questions that these subjects have raised or are capable of raising today will be the focus of the next issue of *Linguistique de l'écrit*. This issue follows on from the seminal contributions of Hall (1960), Arrivé (1983), Chiss & Puech (1983), and Anis (1984, 1988) on the emergence of structural approaches to writing. Its ambition is to shed light, in the light of recent research, on this little-known aspect of the ideas and work carried out within the Prague Linguistic Circle, as well as their productivity a century after its foundation. It also aims to broaden the analysis to include how the CLP's proposals were articulated or confronted with other intellectual and artistic traditions. The Czech and Russian avant-gardes, in particular, worked extensively on graphic materiality and scriptural experimentation, providing fertile ground for dialogue with the Prague school's reflections. Similarly, subsequent debates on phonocentrism – whether informed by Derrida's philosophical approaches or by the perspectives of the linguistics of enunciation developed by Bakhtin/Vološinov and Benveniste – constitute a space where the Circle's legacy has been revisited, discussed and even contested. This openness will make it possible to situate the CLP's contribution within a broader history of theories of writing and its role in language.

Broadly speaking, issues relating to writing can be addressed either in the works of the Prague Circle or on the basis of those works. For example, contributions may focus on:

- The role of writing in Prague theory (phonology, poetics, aesthetics, etc.)
- The definitions, status and uses of concepts: writing, script, written language, literary language, linguistic culture, etc.
- Problems of spelling, the relationship between oral and written language, phonemes and graphemes;
- Issues of norms, linguistic standardisation, literary language, linguistic culture;
- The place of writing in society, literature and education;
- Analysis of the work of CLP members (Artymovyč, Buben, Havránek, Vachek, etc.) and their legacy;

- The sources of the CLP's ideas on writing and writing systems, their reception and transmission;
- Comparison with approaches to writing developed in other centres (e.g. the Copenhagen School);
- The CLP's contributions to the linguistics of writing;
- The links and dialogues between the Circle and the Czech and Russian avant-gardes, which accorded an essential place to graphic experimentation and scriptural practices;
- The subsequent reception of the Prague theses on writing in theoretical debates on phonocentrism, whether philosophical (Derrida) or derived from the linguistics of enunciation (Bachtin, Benveniste).

### Submission and evaluation procedures

Article proposals and all contributions should be sent to: [redaction@linguistique-ecrit.org](mailto:redaction@linguistique-ecrit.org)

Article proposals (one page) will be evaluated by the issue coordinators, and articles will then undergo double peer review in accordance with the journal's editorial policy as indicated on its website (<https://linguistique-ecrit.org/pub-188266>, Instructions / Submit an article tab). Articles may be written in English or French.

### Schedule

Receipt of draft submissions (one page + bibliography): 1 December 2025

Notification of acceptance: 15 December 2025

Receipt of articles: 31 March 2026

Return of evaluations: 31 May 2026

Receipt of articles after rewriting: 31 August 2026

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