

A Global Language for Graphology: Broken



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The word '**broken**' describes handwriting specifically but also implies a judgement. It implies that in some way the individual is damaged or broken. This article describes the reasoning for the choice of different language equivalents for that concept in the 4th edition of the Multi-Lingual Dictionary (Bradley 2001). The main drive for the dictionary is to identify words that have been used, then to propose that they are used more. Therefore people who are confronted with terms used in different languages (for example at conferences or in reading) can turn to the book and understand the meaning. The article pays particular attention to the German words used. In any attempt to promote a standard vocabulary for graphology, it is useful to evaluate how handwriting features can be classified. I suggest this classification for terms that describe handwriting either in a quantitative or qualitative way:

1. Describe the handwriting **specifically** e.g. round, small
2. Describe the handwriting with a **metaphor** e.g. Fox tail, shark tooth, thready
3. Describe the handwriting **specifically** but also imply a **judgement** about the writer e.g. slow, graceful, gross, upright
4. Describe the handwriting with a **metaphor** but also imply a **judgement** about the writer. e.g. childish, infantile, sober
5. **Arbitrary** descriptors - Do not describe the handwriting e.g. Moretti's Intozzata type I and type II. The numerous IGAS stroke names.

Broken

The term 'broken' is defined in the 'key words' section of the Multi-Lingual Dictionary as "strokes have gaps". This may be a rather brief and concise explanation but it is to the point.

The feature can be traced back to the work of Crépieux-Jamin - it appears in ABC de la Graphologie (pp.161-165) as l'écriture brisée, in the category called Continuity. Crépieux-Jamin gives the antonym "liée" and as a synonym he provides "rompue". Whilst the multi-lingual dictionary deliberately avoids any inclusion of interpretation of terms in a graphological sense, it may be of interest to know that Crépieux-Jamin associated this sign 'brisée' with breathing or circulation problems.

Ania Teillard wrote her book L'Âme et L'Écriture in French and it was published in 1948. Two years later she wrote a foreword to the same book, this time in German. Her German version includes a "graphological dictionary" which usefully gives French terms next to the German equivalents. Teillard

says "I have held as closely as possible to the definitions of Crépieux-Jamin and his school." It is therefore no surprise to find *brisée* defined as "Pathological condition (respiratory and cardiac). Impeded activity. Broken lower extensions in female writings: sometimes appear after operations" (Teillard 1993: 233). Her German term for *écriture brisée* is given as "Gebrochene Schriftzüge" (Teillard 1952: 290).

More recently, Crépieux-Jamin's ABC has appeared in Italian (2001). Here *brisée* is given as "spezzata." In a message to me on the subject, the Italian graphologist Cristofanelli said that "frammentata" could also be an apt term.

De Bose (1984) in the French Graphology Society journal proposed the German word "zerstückelt" for *brisée* in the Society's series of articles that take a great stride towards the standardisation of Jaminien vocabulary worldwide.

Annie Pesnel, in her French translation of Augusto Vel's Dictionary (1993:79) also used the term *Brisée*, and if we follow it to the original Spanish Dictionary (1983:73) we see the Spanish term to be 'brisada'. The term seems to have found consistent use in Spanish; writing in Argentina, Pedro Foglia (1996:109-112) dedicates a section of his book on signs of illness in handwriting to 'Brisados'.

English equivalents of the term 'brisée' generally limit themselves to the word 'broken'. So for example Renna Nezos (1986:148-9) uses the words 'Broken Writing' and, in line with Crépieux-Jamin, places it into the continuity category and provides the antonym of 'connected' and two synonyms: 'ruptured' and 'interrupted'. The translator of Teillard's book in English (1993) uses the word Broken, defined as "frequent breaks in the stroke". Similarly an American, Rose Toomey in her book on identifying the state of health in handwriting, refers to the feature as 'breaks in strokes' (1981:10,43).

Klara Roman in her Encyclopedia of the Written Word (1968:155) uses the term 'Fragmentation' which she defines as "the breaking up of graphic units (words, letters, strokes) inappropriately into incomplete parts, making for gaps, cracks, and splits in the texture of the writing." Roman's term goes further than 'Brisée' since it extends beyond breaks in the stroke and appears to go towards the sign disconnected. However, the term "fragmented" is a useful one, and it also appears in a South American book in Portuguese by Paulo Sergio de Camargo (1997:140). Here he describes "Escrita fragmentada" in the same way Crépieux-Jamin described *Ecriture brisée* many years before, as a sign of continuity (continuidade). Here Paulo's explanation is that "the letters are formed by two or more separate strokes or are broken (quebrados)".

The Spanish journal *Gamma* attempted to standardise vocabulary in its edition 22 and here on page 13 is a German proposition for "fragmentada" which is given as "Angestückelt".

Max Pulver used the term "Zerbrechen" (1931:290) in the phrase "Zerbrechen von Buchstaben in zwei oder mehr Züge". The English version of this book provides the word 'Fragmentation' in the equivalent "Fragmentation of letters into two or more parts" (1994:347) in Italian the word becomes "Frammentazione" (Frammentazione delle lettere in due o più tratti) (1983:237). In these pages Pulver has been discussing the issue of insincerity, and is suggesting that "fragmentation" may be indicative (with other signs present).

M N Bunker, who founded the IGAS School in the United States of America, introduced a stroke indication called "Moral decay" which is described as "breaks in the bottom of the circle letters." Interestingly it has also appeared in print by authors other than Bunker, for example Santoy (1991:68) who says that such a writer "lies, steals, cheats, swindles and will yield to any temptation". Bunker later stated "no single stroke could indicate something as major as a poor moral foundation" and IGAS advice in 1991 was to disregard "moral decay - it was a piece of research that did not pan out" (see IGAS 1991).

The interpretations of these signs have been rather extreme, ranging from a physical problem to one of insincerity. Jacqueline Peugeot et al (1997) avoid both such interpretations but do refer to the sign "fragmented letters" with the description "letters are not just separated but divided into fragments". The description goes further and defines "dissociated letters" which are letters made up of two parts when they

could be made with no penlift". They are further described as "dissociations". Incidentally, in the Italian version of this book *brisée* was translated as "spezzettata". (Peugeot et al 1992)

Christiane Bastin and Denise de Castilla both had a long experience as hospital psychologists and were also French-trained graphologists. This put them in a privileged position to build a large collection of handwriting samples from people with many types of mental disturbance. In 1990 they published a book with such samples and descriptions of the various conditions. This book is therefore interesting since it describes, in general terms, the feature of broken writing (1990:21). We find that "*brisée*" is not mentioned; the authors use such terms as "fragments séparés" and "ruptures soudaines". The book provides this clarification that could be the final word on this topic: "writing is not homogeneous when it is in the form of fragments separated by sudden breaks, juxtaposed without any natural transition. These "changes of direction", segments of movement, pressure etc. are often found in children's and adolescents' handwriting. They are also found in some psychopaths' handwriting, that is to say when the personality is uncertain or hesitant about its identity and when it lacks cohesion".

The term "interruption" is also used; it is identified in De Graves' book that describes the German contribution to graphology. Here, in his glossary of graphological terms he sets the French term 'interruption' against the German "Unterbrechung" (1992:354).

De Bose (1984) translated the Ajuriaguerra scale of handwriting characteristics. These are used specifically with the handwriting of children. Here item M25 is related to the concept of broken, the item is "Lignes cassées", which De Bose (1984) gives as "abgebrochene Zeilen". Nezos (1993:90) translates this into English as "Broken Baseline", Boille N (1988) uses the term "Righe spezzate" in Italian and finally Sen (1991) uses "líneas partidas" in Spanish.

Conclusions

It is clear that there are several German terms in use: "zerbrechen" (Pulver 1931), "Gebrochene Schriftzüge" (Teillard 1952) and "Unterbrechung" (De Grave 1992). One of my correspondents, Oda Nowrath (July 2001), proposed "unterbrochen", and an unidentified Spanish source gives *Unterbrechung* for *interrupción*, and another unidentified French source gives "Strichunterbrechungen" for the equivalent of *interruptions du trait*. The Spanish *Gramma* journal gave "Angestückelt" for *fragmentada*. In relation to the Multi-Lingual Dictionary 4th edition, a decision was made to use the German terms: **abgebrochen** (pg 7, 16, 52) and **zerstückelt** (pg 15, 57, 68). Both terms come from De Bose (1984) writing in the French journal.

This short article has explored the concept of 'broken' and has given some indications why the feature, in the author's opinion can be classified as a sign which describes handwriting specifically, but also implies a judgement about the writer. This definition in fact holds true in English, French, Spanish, Italian and German.

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