

THE EVOLUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WRITING IN THE DIGITAL ERA: ROLE AND NECESSITY OF WRITTEN EXPRESSION

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ABSTRACT

Writing has played a crucial role in human evolution, making the preservation of knowledge and the development of civilizations from the earliest ancient societies possible. With the rise of digital technology, critical questions arise: Should traditional writing be considered less important due to the technological revolution? How does digital technology affect the value of traditional writing? Does traditional writing remain crucial for the development of critical thinking, linguistic skills, and emotional expression? How can education effectively combine new digital skills with traditional writing to better prepare students for the challenges of the modern world? Through an extensive literature review of relevant theories and studies, critical theoretical analysis, and sociological exploration of the impacts of digital technology, this paper aims to examine these questions and propose that, despite technological advancements, integrating digital skills with traditional forms of writing is essential for a comprehensive educational approach.

Keywords: Historical Development of Writing, Educational History, Development of Language Skills, Technological Revolution in Education, Evolution of Educational Methods

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most fundamental milestones in human civilization, shaping the trajectory of societies and our understanding of knowledge. From the earliest cuneiform tablets of the Sumerians to the writings of the Egyptians and ancient Greeks, writing has served not merely as a means of communication but as a tool for preserving cultural codes, religious beliefs, and historical events. It is intertwined with human existence, representing one of the earliest expressions of our civilization and documenting our thoughts and aspirations. Writing acts as a mirror reflecting our intellectual development and worldview, shaping our collective identity. Through it, human thoughts and actions are preserved over time, contributing to our collective memory and cultural identity.

Writing imparts meaning to our existence, allowing us to understand our place in the world and our interactions with others. The journey of human existence culminates in today's world, where technology dominates every human action, presenting new challenges and opportunities for writing. Traditional forms of writing adapt to the needs of the modern era, creating new environments for expression and interaction that facilitate immediate communication and rapid information dissemination.

Nevertheless, the value of traditional writing remains unchanged. The ability to write, read, and analyse texts is crucial for developing critical thinking skills, linguistic abilities, and emotional expression. In an age of information overload, traditional writing continues to serve as a tool for self-awareness and deeper understanding, allowing individuals to reflect on their thoughts and feelings.

The development of the alphabet and the spread of writing have been pivotal points in human history, enabling people to record and transmit knowledge across generations. They have enhanced social organization and self-awareness, as individuals gained the capacity to reflect on their position in the world and communicate more effectively with one another. Thus, writing has evolved into a tool that mirrors societal needs, facilitating communication and interaction. Despite advancements in the digital age, it continues to connect the past with the present, preserving the essence of human experience and thought.

2.0 THE EVOLUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Writing is one of the most significant milestones in human civilization, as it enabled the recording of thought, the preservation of knowledge, and the development of cultures. From the emergence of the earliest ancient civilizations, writing evolved into more than just a simple communication tool. As a medium that reshaped human experience, writing enhanced the development of knowledge, social organization, and self-awareness. Through it, ancient civilizations managed to ensure the immortality of their ideas and to lay the foundation of modern culture.

Moreover, the development of the alphabet and the spread of the written language led humanity into a new era of thought, where knowledge could be preserved and transmitted in ways previously impossible. In ancient Greece, writing brought about changes in human perception, society, and culture. Focusing on these changes highlights the importance of writing as a tool that allowed the expansion of human consciousness, the preservation and evolution of knowledge, and the formation of social and political structures. Writing was crucial for the development of philosophy and science, enabling the systematic analysis and recording of ideas that shaped what we now call Western civilization.

The development of the alphabet in ancient Greece and the subsequent spread of the written language were pivotal for shaping political and cultural structures. Writing allowed for the recording of laws, philosophical texts, and historical events, creating a foundation for the formation of city-states and democracy (Havelock, 1982). Already Herodotus and Thucydides used writing to record and analyze historical events, while Aristotle systematized knowledge in various scientific fields, such as logic, physics, ethics, political philosophy and metaphysics, utilizing writing as means of organizing his thought and teaching (Aristotle, 1985).

Writing in ancient Greece enabled philosophers to develop complex abstract concepts and create philosophical works that continue to be studied and commented upon by modern generations. It also allowed for the emergence of a dialogue that could preserve and transmit thoughts beyond the limits of human perception and life span, reinforcing the idea of the immortality of thought. Through recording, philosophical inquiries and discussions are not confined to the present but extend into the future, creating a timeless challenge for new generations. Ideas become a legacy passed down from generation to generation, laying the

groundwork for continuous reflection and exploration, as each era approaches and reexamines the ideas of the past differently. For instance, Plato and Aristotle systematically recorded their philosophical thoughts, laying the foundations for the development and formation of Western philosophy (Havelock, 1963).

In antiquity, writing was the medium for capturing and preserving human thought, recording philosophical ideas, laws, and historical events that shaped the first great civilizations. During the Middle Ages, writing continued to play a vital role, mainly through the transcription and preservation of religious texts and classical works, as well as through the creation of new manuscripts within ecclesiastical and monastic traditions. However, during this period, writing became closely associated with religious authority and spiritual life, with monks in scriptoria preserving and copying valuable texts, keeping Europe's cultural heritage alive. This transition prepared the ground for the resurgence of knowledge that followed with the discovery of printing and the dissemination of written texts to wider social strata (Havelock, 1986).

Handwriting remained, for a long time, connected to the sacred and the divine. In ancient and medieval thought, writing was considered a way to record and preserve divine wisdom. The Ten Commandments, for example, are believed to have been given by God to Moses, indicating the divine origin of scripture. This perception of writing as a divine act shaped humanity's relationship with knowledge and wisdom, while simultaneously limiting the dissemination of knowledge to specific social circles (Pelikan, 1971).

The notion of writing as a divine gift is reflected in the importance attributed to religious texts during the Middle Ages. Handwritten Gospels, liturgical books, and works of the Church Fathers were considered the primary sources of knowledge and wisdom guiding the lives of the faithful (Pelikan, 1971). The sanctity of writing reinforced the need for accurate copying and preservation of these texts by monks in monasteries, creating a continuous line of transmission of religious and philosophical thought.

Writing, beyond its spiritual value, which during the Middle Ages was considered a divine privilege, evolved into a foundation for Europe's spiritual, social, and cultural renaissance. Although it maintained its "holiness", it gradually transformed from a privilege of the few into a force that changed the perception of knowledge, authority, and humanity.

During the Renaissance, writing took on a new dimension with the re-evaluation and revival of classical ancient texts. This period was characterized by the increasing printing of books, thanks to Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 15th century (Febvre & Martin, 1976). The introduction of printing had a significant impact on handwritten traditions, as mass production and distribution of books made printed texts more accessible and widespread. Despite the spiritual and artistic significance of handwritten documents, printing changed the way knowledge was disseminated. This resulted in manuscripts, though not disappearing, being restricted to more specialized or historical uses, while printing emerged as the dominant method for disseminating knowledge. This shift did not diminish the importance of manuscripts but highlighted the evolutionary path of communication and the dissemination of ideas, expanding access to knowledge beyond the narrow confines of monasteries and universities (Pettegree, 2010).

The prevalence of printed writing during the Renaissance and the centuries that followed was not just a technological advance, but a profound cultural and social change. The new ideas of the era, developed through printed texts, contributed to reshaping social and political structures. The Renaissance brought humanistic thought to the forefront, encouraging the discovery of human nature and the world through science and philosophy. Printed writing became the medium through which ideas of freedom, individuality, and autonomy were disseminated and became the core of later Enlightenment movements (Burckhardt, 1990).

With printing, writing was removed from its exclusively divine connection and gradually became a tool that could be used by everyone. The revolution it brought about in access to knowledge and social structure was fundamental. The mass production of books led to a democratization of information, opening the world of knowledge and data that was previously the privilege of the few to the general public. The widespread dissemination of this information led to wider questioning of traditional authorities, including divine knowledge. This question was particularly expressed during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment when philosophers and scientists began to examine and critique traditional doctrines based on logic and empirical observation (Grafton, 2007).

The transition from handwriting to printing is one of the most significant events in the history of human civilization and thought. We must not overlook that this change brought about radical transformations not only in the dissemination of knowledge but also in the structure of society and in the very conception of knowledge and authority. While printing allowed for the mass dissemination of knowledge and the emergence of science, literature, and critical thinking, handwriting should not be considered an impediment. On the contrary, it was the primary means of preserving knowledge for centuries, allowing for the accumulation of human wisdom and the recording of important cultural and religious texts, the foundation upon which the subsequent evolution of human knowledge was based.

The German philosopher Walter Benjamin, in his work "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1968), analyzes the concept of the "aura" that surrounds works of art and written texts in the pre-printing era. Referring to the "aura", he points out the uniqueness and sanctity that characterized manuscripts, which were often associated with religious or political authority. Before the invention of printing, manuscript texts were unique and could not be mass-produced, which gave them a special sense of sanctity and importance. This notion of "aura", apart from works of art, extends to manuscript writing in general, which was considered extremely unique and connected to the divine due to the impossibility of mass reproduction and the value attributed to it. His inquiry concludes that writing and the imprinting of thought on material media create new forms of authority and social organization. With the invention of writing, knowledge becomes an object that can be controlled, categorized, and disseminated in ways that were impossible with oral tradition, deeply affecting the creation and preservation of civilizations.

Marshall McLuhan, in his work "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man" (1964), refers to printing as a technology that radically altered the perception and organization of society. According to McLuhan, printing allowed the dissemination of ideas on a mass scale and the establishment of linear thinking and individual identity. The evolution of printing led to

significant changes in the structure of authority and humanity's relationship with knowledge, as it made systematic recording and dissemination of information possible.

In his work "The Order of Things" (1966), Michel Foucault analyzes the change in the structures of knowledge and authority from the 16th century onward. According to Foucault, printing and the scientific revolution led to a restructuring of knowledge, where logic and science began to replace divine authority. This shift marked the beginning of a new era in which knowledge was no longer absolutely connected to the divine but was subject to questioning and critical thinking. Writing and recording knowledge, Foucault concludes, creates structures through which people perceive and understand the world and themselves. Writing is not only a tool for recording reality but also for creating it. Through writing, ancient civilizations managed to shape identities and define otherness, reinforcing the sense of "us" and "other".

The philosophical perspective of Walter Ong in "Orality and Literacy" (1982) reminds us that handwriting and oral tradition shaped the way people perceived and recorded their world. Although printing brought about a revolution in the dissemination of knowledge, handwriting played a key role in preserving cultural heritage and shaping human thought before the invention of the printing press.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida, in his work "De la Grammatologie" (1990), argues that writing is not merely a communication tool but a fundamental extension of memory and consciousness. Writing allows the storage of information outside human memory, creating an "external memory" that enables the disconnection of thought from the immediate and the present. This fact allows people to think and operate in new dimensions, to develop abstract ideas, to record and process information beyond the limits of oral tradition.

The philosophical analyses of thinkers like Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, and Michel Foucault reveal the profound impact of printing on the dissemination of knowledge and the restructuring of authority. Printing not only challenged divine knowledge but also allowed for the development of a new era of human creativity and critical thinking. Writing in general, and particularly handwriting, was not limited to the transmission of knowledge but played a significant role in the deeper processing of thoughts, feelings, and experiences, as well as in the development of personal thought. This process, also known as introspection, refers to the individual's engagement with their ideas, processing and formulating them on a more substantive level (Wikipedia, 2024).

The act of handwriting often favored this internal process, as it provided time and space for self-expression and critical thinking, without the immediacy and automation that might accompany digital writing. Derrida, with his theory of "difference", defined the function of humans in understanding the relationship between older and newer forms of writing. As he argued, handwriting, with its uniqueness, offered a more direct and personal way of expression, which remains significant even today (Derrida, 2003).

The advancement of writing, from handwriting to printing and digital technologies, constitutes a dialectical process. Each new medium brought changes to human thought while simultaneously preserving the fundamental structures of the previous ones. Writing remained a living tool that connects knowledge with authority, while also providing the possibility of critique and questioning. In this context, handwriting remained an important factor in shaping

human cognition and culture, providing the foundations upon which humanity's progress was built.

3.0 WRITING IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND THE NECESSITY OF LEARNING NEW SKILLS

Plato was among the first thinkers to express concerns about the impact of writing on memory. In his dialogues, such as "Phaedrus" and "The Republic", he examines the relationship between writing and oral tradition. In "Phaedrus", he presents a myth where the god Thoth offers writing as a gift to King Thamus. However, the king rejects the gift, arguing that writing will weaken memory and lead to superficial understanding of things (Plato, 1997). Plato's concern about the impact of writing reveals a deep thought about how the means of recording and disseminating knowledge can affect understanding, learning, and the intellectual process. Writing, although offering innumerable advantages, might change the quality of knowledge and learning in ways that Plato considered significant and worrisome.

Plato's concern remains relevant, especially with the rise of digital technologies and social media. In the 21st century, technological advancement and changes in social and economic structures create new challenges for education, making Plato's philosophical views more relevant than ever. A fundamental question that arises is whether traditional writing should continue to be a central priority in the educational system or whether it should adapt to the directions set by technological advancement and new skills to meet the demands and challenges of a modern civilization. Historically, writing has been considered fundamental for communication and the preservation of knowledge. The traditional way of writing, as a means of recording and communication, plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and personal expression. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the digital age has influenced the significance of writing, prompting a re-examination of its role (Ong, 1982).

A careful analysis of education reveals that writing should not be considered the sole priority but one of many tools important for the development of human capability and expression. In this spirit, intellectual, social, and emotional skills, which allow people to interact, think critically, and adapt to various situations, as well as the ability to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas through speech, writing, or other art forms, acquire equally critical importance. One can easily conclude that writing and new skills should be combined to provide a holistic education that adequately prepares students for the modern world. Writing remains important for communication and the preservation of knowledge, but recognizing the importance of new skills is also critical for their successful adaptation in the digital age, especially in a world transformed by digital technology. Therefore, a balanced approach is required that combines both aspects, equipping them appropriately to succeed and actively contribute to modern culture (Carr, 2011).

Despite technological advancements, learning to write continues to play a significant role in enhancing students' language skills. The process of writing involves the use of grammatical rules, syntactic structures, and vocabulary essential for correct and effective communication. According to the analysis by Graham and Hebert (2018), the ability to write well is closely linked to overall linguistic development and allows students to express their thoughts clearly and accurately.

Moreover, writing also functions as a means for self-expression and emotional development. The process of writing allows students to explore and process their emotions in a structured way. Koster's research (2021) shows that writing can help in emotional expression and the development of emotional intelligence, facilitating self-awareness and personal growth.

It also plays a significant role in preserving and understanding cultural heritage. The ability to correctly record in writing is essential for the preservation and transmission of a culture's knowledge, traditions, and values. Bradshaw (2019) mentions that despite the spread of digital media, writing continues to be critical for preserving history and culture, as it allows for the recording and dissemination of human experience over time.

Writing remains fundamental to education, despite digitization and the prevalence of electronic communication media. While technologies allow new forms of expression, learning to write continues to be of critical importance for students' development. The process of writing helps students develop their language skills, as it requires the formation and organization of their thoughts into a coherent and logical structure when composing a sentence or text. In his research, Graham (2018) points out that writing encourages analytical thinking and creative problem-solving, which is crucial for academic success and personal development. The ability to organize and express complex thoughts through writing enhances deeper understanding of material and promotes critical thinking.

Despite the central importance of writing in the educational process, the need for strong writing skills remains evident even in an era of digitization, where digital technology has changed the way we record and communicate. At the same time, digital technology has undoubtedly transformed the way we communicate, creating new forms of interaction and information dissemination. Can we use the advantages of digital communication to enhance our written expression and adapt to the demands of modern life (Carr, 2011).

In the modern world, new technologies and skills such as digital design, programming, and data analysis have become crucial. Without these skills, successful integration into a digital society and professional success in today's work environment becomes particularly difficult. Sherry Turkle, in her work "Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other" (2011), analyzes how technology affects human interaction and underscores the need for new skills essential for survival and prosperity in the digital age. Moreover, developing skills related to technology can promote creativity and innovation. The ability to understand and use new technologies is important for shaping modern culture and solving complex problems.

New technologies do not simply replace older ones but transform and integrate them. According to this perspective, printing and digital technology have certainly influenced the form and function of writing but have not abolished it. On the contrary, writing continues to remain fundamental, embedded in new forms of communication and creativity, as McLuhan (1964) states. Writing evolves continuously, with technologies such as printing, digital writing, and voice recognition expanding our communication capabilities without eliminating traditional writing. Instead of replacing it, modern forms of writing complement it, offering new ways of accessing, managing, and disseminating knowledge.

Education scholars must examine the significance of writing in relation to new skills. Alain de Botton, in his work "The School of Life: An Emotional Education" (2009), emphasizes the importance of developing a balanced education that combines traditional skills with contemporary needs. According to de Botton, education should not focus exclusively on traditional skills like writing but also on developing skills necessary for success in modern society. The ability to combine traditional knowledge with new skills is critical for personal and professional development.

4.0 CRITICAL VIEW -CONCLUSIONS

Writing has played a key role in human development and the evolution of civilization, starting from the discovery of the first writing systems in ancient cultural societies, through the revolution of printing, to digital skills. The historical trajectory of writing not only demonstrates the changing nature of the tools we use but also its uninterrupted significance as the foundation of human knowledge and communication.

In antiquity, writing was the means for recording and transmitting knowledge. Authors like the ancient Greeks and Romans used writing to capture philosophical thoughts, historical events, and cultural traditions. The first writing systems, such as Cuneiform and Hieroglyphics, allowed ancient civilizations to record laws, rituals, and historical events, preserving their knowledge and traditions for future generations. Writing contributed to the development of philosophical, scientific, and literary traditions that shaped Western civilization and laid the foundations for the evolution of human knowledge and communication.

The invention of printing constituted a revolution in the dissemination of knowledge, as it allowed for the mass production and distribution of books, making them accessible to a wider audience and promoting scientific and cultural progress (Eisenstein, 1980). Printing not only improved writing but also enhanced the ability of human thought to evolve through the widespread dissemination of knowledge. Access to written sources expanded significantly, allowing more people to participate in scientific and philosophical discussions, essentially strengthening the dissemination of knowledge and promoting cultural and social progress. With the introduction of new production and dissemination techniques that emerged from the era of inventions and discoveries, printing radically changed the way people understood, recorded, and participated in shaping their culture.

Gilles Deleuze offers a fascinating interpretation of writing, revolutionizing the traditional conception of it as a simple method of communication. He argues that writing is a dynamic creative act that is not limited to communication but shapes and reconstructs reality. He believes that writing is not a linear process but a "rhizome", a network extending in all directions without beginning or end. Instead of merely reproducing reality, writing creates it. It is a political act, as it has the power to challenge existing power structures and create new ones. Through writing, he suggests that we can transcend the limits of identity and explore new possibilities. In other words, writing functions as a process of liberation, allowing us to think critically and imagine a different future (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze, 2004).

In the modern era, the digital revolution has drastically changed the way we record and communicate. Digital writing, through computers, mobile devices, and artificial intelligence, has highlighted new forms of communication and expression. The ability to write in digital

media offers new opportunities for creativity and professional development (Kress, 2003). However, the introduction of these new technologies has also led to new challenges, such as the need to develop new skills and focus on quick and brief forms of communication. It is crucial to enhance students' critical thinking towards texts produced from technological sources, to carefully examine the ethical implications of their use, and to ensure that their integration into the educational process is done with full transparency and respect for the principles of justice and democracy. Despite the prevalence of digital technology, writing remains crucial for the development of critical thinking, language skills, and emotional expression (Graham & Hebert, 2018).

Writing, beyond being a communication tool, is also decisive for cultivating analytical thinking and clarity of expression. The teaching of writing enhances students' ability to think analytically and express their ideas clearly and is closely linked to the development of language ability and emotional intelligence. Humans create art and writing from a position of consciousness and personal experience, where their emotional and sensory experiences uniquely shape authentic works. Their awareness of their existence, self-knowledge, and emotions are integrated into the creative process, leading to works that reflect their personal understanding of the world and the desire for self-realization.

We must not forget that artificial intelligence does not possess consciousness or subjective experience. Its algorithms function by reproducing data and patterns without emotional or personal involvement. Despite its ability to create texts that appear authentic or emotionally charged, it is limited to an indifferent imitation of emotional expression, based on statistical models and data analysis, without ever being able to touch the real emotional involvement that characterizes human creativity.

Education in the 21st century must combine traditional writing with new digital skills. Integrating writing skills with technology will better prepare students for the modern world, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively and actively participate in the knowledge society. The value of writing must be recognized while simultaneously integrating new technologies so that students are prepared for the challenges of the modern era. This combination will promote the development of both traditional and digital skills.

Overall, the historical evolution of writing demonstrates that despite technological advancements, writing remains fundamental to education and the development of the human spirit. From ancient scripts and the revolution of printing to modern digital applications, writing has evolved into a dynamic tool that continues to be essential for human knowledge and communication.

The educational policy of the 21st century must recognize the importance of writing and combine traditional writing with new skills. This will ensure the comprehensive development of students, emphasizing critical thinking, digital skills, and creativity. At the same time, education must promote students' ability to adapt to evolving technologies while cultivating their emotional and social intelligence.

Shaping a modern educational system requires the continuous renewal of teaching methods and the evaluation of the effectiveness of educational practices. In this way, students will be better prepared for the challenges of the future. In this context, teaching traditional writing

remains necessary, as it constitutes a cornerstone for the development of critical thinking and language ability, enhancing the overall education of students.

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