

TYPETALK: Handwriting Fonts With Something To Say  
MFA Thesis Abstract  
www.typetalkfonts.com  
© 2005 Amy Papaekias

Language is constantly evolving and shifting, according to the needs of a society or culture. Variations in dialect, pronunciation, vocabulary and tone of voice affect how we express and experience our individual realities.

*It's not just what you say, it's how you say it.*

Written language, far from being subordinate to verbal language, shapes the way we understand ourselves and others, and has the capacity to simultaneously validate and oppress cultural and social identities.

*Typography is visual pronunciation.*

When the boundaries between typography and speech are blurred, there exists an opportunity to fully explore intersections between visual and verbal language. This research has resulted in the development of typeface variations reflecting the complexity of the cultural, social and personal politics of language.

*TYPETALK: Handwriting Fonts with Something to Say*, combines type design and sociolinguistic theory to visually represent speech patterns based on the social and cultural environments surrounding an individual. Each handwriting font utilizes OpenType technology to replace different word combinations, grammatical elements, and vocabulary variations. Based on these variations, the fonts take on their own personalities and behaviors, creating a relationship between the formal elements of handwriting and the contextual variants of language. This project explores type as a site for the visualization of language within a social and cultural context and challenges our current expectations for the limitations and possibilities of type.

The project addresses the following questions:

*How does a typeface with speech behaviors affect the triadic relationship between the author-text-viewer?*

*How does handwriting lose and gain authenticity through its mechanical reproduction as a handwriting font?*

*How do visual forms of languages establish or oppress national, social or cultural identities?*

*How much behavioral modification can a typeface withstand and still maintain its aesthetic and formal qualities as a typeface?*

This paper elaborates on four interrelated areas of research. *Type, Expressiveness and Authorship* explores ways in which typography and type design affects the triadic relationship between the author, the reader, and the text. *The Authenticity of Handwriting* investigates the cultural, historical and contemporary manifestations of handwriting and handwriting fonts. *Type, Orthography and Language Politics* demonstrates the capacity of written language to express national and cultural identity. *A Semiotic Shift* suggests future interactive implications of behavioral fonts.