

Writing and Signed Languages

by Joe C. Martin

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Linguistics Program

College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Carolina

2007

ABSTRACT

The idea of a written form for signed languages has been controversial, and this paper presents a series of experiments designed to provide answers. The findings:

- writing a signed language is in fact possible, using SignWriting, but not using another script. (experiments 1 and 2)
-
- a script for signed languages must be arranged in the nonlinear fashion employed by SignWriting and not in the linear manner of scripts for spoken language. (experiment three)
-
- our brains process SignWriting in the same manner they process scripts for spoken language. (experiments 4 and 5)
-

Conclusion: reading and writing is the same for both sign and speech, and SignWriting is just another writing system like any other.