

TYOLOGY OF ARTICULATORY POSTURES AND TRANS-FORMS IN SIGNED LANGUAGES

Robert E. JOHNSON

(Gallaudet University/National Museum of Ethnology)

Signs are composed of alternating sequences of articulatory postural gestures and trans-forms between the gestures. Both postures and trans-forms have contrastive functions. There are various distinctive types of postural gestures and trans-forms differentiated by patterns of duration and velocity. Among the postural gestures, there is a critical distinction between those postural states that have no linguistically salient duration and those characterized by various distinctive degrees of duration. Similarly, among trans-forms there is a distinction between changes accomplished by different types of muscular effort, resulting in distinctive velocities.