

Experteninterview 2:

Interview with the second chosen expert

Befragte/Interviewee: Valerie Sutton

Interviewer und Transkription: Susanne Trumpold

Zeitpunkt des Interviews: Datum/Date: 15.08.2013
Zeit/ Time: 17:55 – 19:24 Uhr

Thema/ Subject: die Verbreitung der Gebärdenschrift von Valerie Sutton und dem Center for Sutton Movement Writing (mit Fokus auf Entwicklungen in den USA)
the dissemination of SignWriting by Valerie Sutton and the Center for Sutton Movement Writing (with focus on developments in the United States)

Transkription:

BEGINN DES INTERVIEWS

1 V. SUTTON: I have read your e-mail again and I understand your question
2 about **how come SignWriting hasn't spread further – faster. How**
3 **come more and more people aren't using it – right now?? (laughing)**
4 **What's wrong with us?**

5 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that's it! That is what I am wondering about! Like
6 Lucinda Batch (now Lucinda O'Grady Farnady), I read, for her it has
7 been like that. She thought: "Now, I have a writing system to write my
8 sign language!" That is at least what I read, and I am wondering about
9 why don't more deaf people see it like that.

10 (Auslassung (=omission) 20 s)

11 V.SUTTON: ... You and I, **we know our own native language** and we also
12 possibly know each other's languages and we know them because they
13 are **established languages** that ... first of all you and I grew up with
14 them, right? I grew up with English, you grew up with German, I
15 assume, and perhaps you grew up with other languages, too, but the
16 point is, whatever language you grew up with that is your native
17 language and then reading and writing it, well, for you and me, we
18 both had **writing systems that have been established for hundreds**
19 **and hundreds of years.** I mean, English was written back in the thirteen
20 hundreds in England, right?

Codierung: (Codes):

Content of the
interview

Advantage
while growing
up with a
native
language with
an established
writing
system

<p>21 (Unterbrechung durch Verbindungsunterbrechung)</p> <p>22 (interruption because connection was broken)</p> <p>23 V.SUTTON: Listen, I do get tired, I do have some health issues. So, a two</p> <p>24 hour conversation like you mentioned in your first e-mail is a little long</p> <p>25 for me, I find conversations exhausting, I love them, I talk too much</p> <p>26 (laughing) and that's my own fault (laughing), but it takes energy to</p> <p>27 talk, did you know that? ...</p> <p>28 INTERVIEWER: Actually, I prepared something to tell you before we gonna</p> <p>29 start, but I don't want you to tire, so ...</p> <p>30 V.SUTTON: No no no no, you go ahead, I am listening.</p> <p>31 INTERVIEWER: hm, okay. Please just tell me, when you would like to stop!?</p> <p>32 V.SUTTON: I will, around ten o'clock, in other words in another hour or so I</p> <p>33 might find myself tired. You mentioned two hours, that is all, I thought</p> <p>34 maybe we can cut it up into two different one hour skype</p> <p>35 conversations.</p> <p>36 INTERVIEWER: Oh cool, that would be fine. Okay, ... (Auslassung: 30 s)...</p> <p>37 V.SUTTON: ... I am very open and believe in freedom, believe me, I do, I am</p> <p>38 much more open than most people are. I just let my invention out,</p> <p>39 that's how Stefan (Stefan Wöhrmann) found out about it. ...</p> <p>40 (Auslassung 20 s) ...</p> <p>41 INTERVIEWER: Okay, I prepared a guided interview, but I would like to see</p> <p>42 this preparation as an orientation, so when we find some topics which</p> <p>43 are really interesting, and I think there are many, I would like us to go</p> <p>44 further and later we go back, to the questions I prepared, okay?</p> <p>45 V.SUTTON: Okay.</p> <p>46 INTERVIEWER: With regard to content, I would like to know as good as</p> <p>47 possible in the short time, how the dissemination of SignWriting in the</p> <p>48 United States is, so I am gonna ask some questions to find out, how</p> <p>49 many people are involved in the dissemination and how many use it as</p> <p>50 far as you know – privately, in schools, in sign language courses for</p> <p>51 hearing people and so on.</p> <p>52 V.SUTTON: Are you gonna stop there or do we have to go on? In other</p> <p>53 words, it would be simpler, if you had simple questions ...</p> <p>54 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay, so I cut the introduction. ... could you introduce</p> <p>55 yourself just short please?</p> <p>56 V.SUTTON: Okay, my name is Valerie Sutton and I am the inventor of Sutton</p> <p>57 Movement Writing. Sutton Movement Writing is a way to read and</p> <p>58 write any body movement and I invented it in the United States</p> <p>59 because I just happened to be an American. I was in California when I</p> <p>60 was fifteen and I was in professional ballet training, because I wanted</p> <p>61 to be a professional ballet dancer and I invented a way to read and</p> <p>62 write ballet movement, dance movement. Later at age 21 it became</p> <p>63 Sutton DanceWriting and in 1974 I started my own non-profit-</p> <p>64 organization here in Southern California and I have started, of course,</p> <p>65 with DanceWriting because I knew nothing else. And we contacted the</p> <p>66 Royal Danish Ballet, I moved to Denmark when I was nineteen, I trained</p>	<hr style="border: 2px solid black; width: 100%; margin-bottom: 10px;"/> <p>Personal attitude (base of dissemi- nation)</p> <p>Interviewer introduction</p> <p>Interviewer introduction content (better: to ask how the organized part of dissemination is organized)</p> <p>The invention of Sutton Movement Writing (3parts):</p>
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67 with the Royal Danish Ballet, teachers of the Royal Danish Ballet, I
68 should say, outside of the company, but they were training me and I
69 became an expert in a particular kind of dance called Bournonville and
70 I started writing it down with my invention. I went back home in the
71 United States in 1972 and wrote my first book on Sutton
72 DanceWriting. Well, you may not know all this, but I am just gonna try
73 to finish the story really fast. SignWriting didn't start until 1974 in
74 Denmark, I was invited back to Denmark to teach the Royal Danish
75 Ballet how to read and write dance, it was the only thing I did, it was
76 Sutton DanceWriting at that time in 1974 and there were some
77 newspaper articles in the newspapers in Denmark about this
78 American girl who came to write DanceWriting ... (Auslassung 15 s)...
79 and somebody at the University of Copenhagen, Professor **Lars van**
80 **der Lieth**, read this article and he was a **researcher at the University**
81 **of Copenhagen on sign language** and he called me and asked me to
82 come and work with them at the University to write down a video
83 tape of Danish Sign Language. That is how SignWriting began. And I
84 sat in front of a video tape of Danish Sign Language and applied my
85 DanceWriting system to write all body movement and to write sign
86 language. SignWriting did not develop in the United States. I want you
87 to first understand that. I had no more influence on the United States
88 than do any other country. In fact **SignWriting is used more in other**
89 **countries than it is in the United States**. I am an international person,
90 I don't see myself as one country and I definitely did not start
91 SignWriting in the United States. **I had to come back to the United**
92 **States and I hired deaf people here to even get them to even look at**
93 **it** and that was really good. We did a great project, but I am just trying
94 to explain that I began in Denmark ... Now, I talk way to much, I am
95 sorry! What was your original question? ... To introduce myself, oh, no
96 (laughing both sides)

2/3 Lars van
der Lieth
asked me to
write down a
video tape on
Danish sign
language

Dissemination
of SignWriting

3/3 hiring of
deaf people in
the US to look
at writing
system

97 INTERVIEWER: No worries, that's fine, you answered some questions I
98 would have asked anyway, so no worries! ... So, you have been in
99 Denmark with Lars van der Lieth, ... Stefan Wöhrmann told me
100 yesterday that after you had the DanceWriting and Lars van der Lieth
101 asked you to transcribe the movements, that actually it had to do with
102 the gestures of hearing people, that it had nothing to do with sign
103 language?

104 V.SUTTON: Well, both, yes and no, but he is right. The original project with
105 Lars van der Lieth was actually by another gentleman, I have to find
106 his name ...(Valerie was referring to Dr. Jan Enggaard.) He (Jan
107 Enggaard) was doing his dissertation under Lars van der Lieth, and the
108 name of the dissertation (note: the real name of the dissertation was:
109 "Hørende Danskeres Gestus-Repertoire (Hearing Danes' Gesture-
110 Repertoire). It was a comparison of, the question was in Danish, but
111 **the comparison of hearing persons' gestures with sign language**
112 **gestures, so it was hearing persons versus deaf persons, what were**
113 **the gestures like and how were they different, that was the actual**
114 **project, but for me to be able to analyze that I had to look at a video**
115 **tape of hearing people sitting on a couch talking to each other in**
116 **spoken Danish and I had to write the movements they were doing**
117 **on the couch, you know, just by talking, like you and me right now,**
118 **and then I had a look at some real Danish Sign Language and**

Addition to
2/3: topic of
the original
project

Addition to
2/3 Inspira-
tion for the
invention

119 compared it. Mainly that project stimulated me to realize that the
120 deaf people have real language. It was obvious it was a real language,
121 so that was where I got inspired. ... (Auslassung 30 s) And I actually had
122 to go to the group of hearing researchers that were run by Lars van
123 der Lieth and say: "You know, you guys have really inspired me, I am
124 grateful that you showed me these video tapes, and I am grateful to
125 work here and I think that this writing could turn into a way to really
126 read and write sign language, that might be valuable for those who
127 use the sign language as their daily language. I think we could really
128 get a written form for sign language from this" and Lars van der Lieth
129 said: "I really don't believe, Valerie, anybody would want to write sign
130 language." He said: "I can't even imagine why deaf people would do it,
131 they don't need a written form and they already could possibly read
132 and write Danish if they have the education and so, why would they
133 need that?" Now, I want you to know that Lars and I have talked about
134 this history many times. I said: "Look, Lars, I understand, but I believe
135 that there could be a written form here and I am gonna try." And he
136 said: "Well, good luck!" So, I went back to the United States after the
137 project was over, so the project was successful, I mean ... (Auslassung
138 20 s) ... so I had the idea to write sign language on a daily basis, I even
139 showed on my own, personally, to **go to a club of deaf people there,**
140 **and tried to show them SignWriting,** that I have done already at the
141 University on this project and it wasn't called SignWriting yet, believe
142 me, and they were interested. They had a lot of fun with it, oh, we had
143 a lot of fun and I ended up getting to know a lot of deaf people and I
144 really enjoyed it. One of the things you should know, is that Lars
145 changed his mind later. This was just simply the initial contact because I
146 came back many years later and I came back several times and I lived in
147 Denmark and I was married to a Dane. So, to make a long story short,
148 Lars was skeptical in the beginning, but in **1975 I contacted deaf**
149 **people in my local area in the United States in California,** found out
150 that there are all kinds of politics, it was so complicated. All kinds of
151 sign languages and theories on teaching deaf people and angry deaf
152 people at the hearing world ... it went on and on ... but finally in 1981
153 (Nancy Romero, at that time Nancy Ellen Woo, became the Founding
154 Editor of the SignWriter Newspaper, and she wrote the first SignWriter
155 Newspaper Edition in 1981. It was beautiful, all written by hand!). **Then**
156 **later, in 1982, we hired a team of Deaf native signers in the United**
157 **States and Denmark through the Center for Sutton Movement**
158 **Writing and ...**

159 INTERVIEWER: The Deaf Action Committee(DAC)?

160 V.SUTTON: That's true. **The DAC started 1988.** This was the beginning of it,
161 but it was in **1981 (the SignWriter Newspaper),** in other words a lot
162 earlier, it was our first real hiring of deaf people. And the very first deaf
163 person that our organization hired was Lucinda O'Grady Batch (now
164 Lucinda O'Grady Farnady), the lady that you mentioned ... (Auslassung
165 20 s) ... **We hired 10 Deaf native signers** and I was so naive, I have had
166 no, you know, I don't sign well myself or at least I didn't at the time, I
167 just thought I could give them the Writing System and say **"Here, write**
168 **your language!"** it wasn't anything like that. If you and I were given the
169 alphabet and we never read or wrote English or German ever in our
170 lives and we are adults and somebody comes along and says: "Here is

Addition to 3/3
or 2/3 (in
Denmark as
well or in the
US?

Addition to 3/3
contact to deaf
people

Addition 3/3
hiring of deaf
people in 1981

Finally turned
into the DAC in
1988

1981: hiring of
10 deaf native
signers

Personal
attitude: way of
showing deaf
people the
writing system
(also line 38)

awareness of
deaf
background

171 A,B,C,D,E,F,G .., well just spell, just start writing, you think we would
172 be able to do it? Of course not! We would struggle and we wouldn't
173 know what sounds to write and what sounds not to write, we
174 wouldn't have any standards, we have no schools, we have nobody to
175 teach us, we would be completely clueless and on top of that I found
176 out that Deaf people have been taught that their sign language was
177 "not good enough", they were told in school that ASL or any sign
178 language was not a good language and that they had to learn how to
179 speak and do oral and lipread and that hearing people wouldn't
180 accept them if they did their language. (Auslassung 20 s) ... **We are an**
181 **international group** and Stefan (Stefan Wöhrmann) is just one of
182 many countries, but he is the first in Germany to take it on and I have
183 a really close relationship with people in the internet and really you
184 should become a part of that, if you really want to learn about
185 SignWriting and the history, you need to join the **SignWriting List**, it is
186 an e-mail-list ...(Auslassung 20 s) ... because that is where people learn
187 about all this and we have thousands of messages and every single
188 day I am talking about the history of SignWriting and reaching out to
189 all kinds of people, just yesterday we had messages from 5 countries
190 and I am answering everyone of them and there is an anthropologist
191 right now her name is Erika Hoffmann-Dilloway and she is a professor
192 of anthropology at Oberlin College (Oberlin, Ohio, USA) and she is
193 writing a book about SignWriting all based on the SignWriting List
194 because the SignWriting List is almost like a phenomena, I have
195 started it, I am free and open, I invite everybody freely, I give
196 everybody documents completely free and my time is theirs, I give my
197 time and I have done this now **since 1996** and **the reason that**
198 **SignWriting is spreading is because of that** and that is because the
199 internet changed my life. I was very ill and had trouble traveling after
200 1990, I used to travel the world, but I couldn't anymore, and
201 SignWriting did already start being used, I mean **we were in the**
202 **school system for a decade in Denmark**. You know, I came back and it
203 really spread. The point that nothing got truly spread until the
204 internet because using the SignWriting List like the e-mail List is so
205 valuable for people and now of course we have Facebook and other
206 things, but it's not nearly as deep, you know the social media is very
207 superficial and of course we have web pages and all that but it's not
208 the same as **SignWriting List where we can have deep conversations**.
209 SignWriting spread in Germany because of Stefan Wöhrmann
210 (Auslassung 30 s) ... and I have said: "Stefan it is okay, you know, we
211 write a little differently here in the US, but that doesn't matter, they
212 write differently over in Nicaragua, too, so who cares, I mean Life is
213 Life and Writing systems are different in every country to a certain
214 degree so don't worry about the fact that the American Deaf aren't
215 doing the same as the German Deaf, What matters is that we
216 document it. " **So, I have dedicated my life to free and open**
217 **documentation so you have no problems with getting all of this**
218 **information this is all there** and we have **archives** after archives after
219 archives of all the messages of the SignWriting List and that is what
220 **Erika Hoffmann** is basing her book on SignWriting on. She **is writing**
221 **one article after the other about the SignWriting List as a**
222 **phenomena of teaching of Writing system all over the world.**

International
groupe

SignWriting
List = e-mail-
list

Spreading
with the
SignWriting
List and the
Internet in
general

Global
differences in
Writing

Free and open
document-
tation

Hint for fur-
ther informa-
tion: archives

Announce-
ment of future
publication

223 ... (Auslassung 2 min: help to sign in) ...

224 INTERVIEWER: I would like to collect all people who work for the dissemination
225 of SignWriting ... (Auslassung 30 s)

226 V.SUTTON: The Deaf Action Committee continues right now. **I must have**
227 **worked with at least 25 deaf people over time** and right now we have 3
228 active Deaf Action Committee members.

229 INTERVIEWER: Oh, it went on after 1998?

230 V.SUTTON: Oh yes, oh yes, Adam Frost is our Deaf Action Committee leader
231 right now.

232 INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see, there is a big problem cause I just read in the internet
233 what I could find, maybe I collected some wrong information.

234 V.SUTTON: No problem. Well, I agree, that our websites are certainly out of
235 date, you know **there are 3000 pages**, too. These questions should be
236 asked on the SignWriting List, honey, because I would give you messages
237 you wouldn't believe, I would give you such details, but **I do put my time**
238 **specifically to the SignWriting List because that is where we have over**
239 **200 members from over 18 countries**. If you want to know about who is
240 disseminating SignWriting, it is all those people on the SignWriting List and
241 there are hundreds of them, I don't know all of them and there are
242 thousands of people who use SignWriting, I mean new people every day,
243 you should see Brazil, it is just exploding and I don't know any of those
244 people. ... (Auslassung 40 s) ... **It is ongoing, it is spreading like crazy and**
245 **it is all through the internet and Facebook and the SignWriting List, it is**
246 **an active group**. Regarding whom I hire, that is another story, see in other
247 words, the **DAC were people that our non-profit-organization could**
248 **afford to pay, a small amount of money, they were all working fulltime**
249 **elsewhere**. But, nonetheless they were people I worked with personally
250 on a specific project and those projects had **funding from different non-**
251 **profit-organizations. So, the DAC is one of the many groups that is**
252 **spreading SignWriting, but it is only one and my little organization**
253 **actually is almost irrelevant at this point because there are so many**
254 **other groups spreading SignWriting**. ... (Auslassung 30 s) ... So much is
255 happening, there is no way that any one human being could keep up with
256 this. ... (Auslassung 40 s) ... As far as the Deaf Action Committee is right
257 now, Adam Frost is our leader, he is born Deaf, a native signer and he is in
258 his thirties. ... (Auslassung 20 s) ... We don't have anybody fulltime. Guess
259 what, Adam is working as a fulltime professor teaching ASL now at
260 University California San Diego (UCSD) and San Diego Mesa Community
261 College, so it was actually good for us because now they are using
262 SignWriting in his classes.

263 INTERVIEWER: Oh, that is cool!

264 V.SUTTON: So, what is the DAC? They are a bunch of wonderful **Deaf people**
265 **who love SignWriting, they are here, I pay them a little bit and they do a**
266 **project with me**. And yes at the moment we have Stuart Thiessen,
267 Philippe Gallant, Adam Frost, Danny Voreck and occasionally Lucinda
268 O'Grady (Farnady), so there are **five** right now.

269 ... (Auslassung 3 min) ...

270 V.SUTTON: They (the SignWriting List) are Software developers, who are

Better : asking
for "organized
dissemination
" or "dissemi-
nation espe-
cially influen-
ced by whom
?" or asking
for projects ...

DAC
continues!!!
now Adam
Frost is the
leader

Hint for
further
contact

International
dissemination

Active groupe

DAC payment

Don't want to
conclude
outgoing of
the DAC about
general
dissemination

Class using
SignWriting
under Adam
Frost

DAC right now

271 developing software for SignWriting on the SignWriting List, we have
272 people, who are Deaf who are asking questions about how to learn
273 SignWriting, there are teachers who want to know how to teach a certain
274 method right now, then there are people who are just brand new adults
275 to SignWriting and they want to learn how they can use the Software
276 called SignPuddle Online or, of course Delegs in Germany, and how to use
277 it, and all of those people are using SignWriting and asking questions for
278 different reasons. And there are researchers like yourself or Erika-
279 Hoffmann Dilloway who just wrote a question: "Can the SignWriting users
280 please tell me do you use receptive or expressive writing and can you tell
281 me why ?" I don't know if you know these issues, honey, we started up
282 receptive and now we are expressive and bla bla bla

283 INTERVIEWER: Yes, I know.

284 V.SUTTON: ... (Auslassung 2 min) ...

285 INTERVIEWER: So, it is better for you when I ask questions on the SignWriting
286 List because you answer it one time and everybody can see it so you don't
287 need to answer everything for each person.

288 V.SUTTON: Exactly! Of course that means that you have a public life. I am
289 answering you publicly and everything you answer back to the list will be
290 public and you should know that it is being recorded in an archive and the
291 nice thing about that thing is that you can go back to the archive, we have
292 a special page where you can access the archives and we have archives
293 which go all the way back to 1996. So, we have archives all those years of
294 messages ongoing long detailed, fascinating messages from people who
295 started using SignWriting like you.

296 INTERVIEWER: After I signed in the SignWriting List I can see these archives?

297 V.SUTTON: Yes, you can see them without as well, one of them, the one of the
298 most active is logged because they expect you to be a member that is not
299 my choice, that is the college that donates this service to us. And by the
300 way, the nice thing about the SignWriting List is that it is also connected
301 to other e-mail-lists that might be of interest to you. One of them is called
302 the "Sign Language Linguist List".

303 **Signwriting.org**, I started that one in **1996**. I have 9 websites, but this is
304 the one I keep building, I keep adding to it rather than throwing it out
305 (laughing). That is why there are over 3000 pages now, it is overwhelming.
306 And 1997 we started archiving. Archive 3 and Archive 4 are the ones that
307 are up to date.

308 ... (Auslassung 5 min: how to Sign In)

309 INTERVIEWER: So, I see, there are now so many people using SignWriting and
310 working with SignWriting for the dissemination so you can't collect them.
311 That is actually a really good ... ähm, sign (laughing). It is like that? I mean,
312 in the United States, you know, I don't want to talk about international
313 developments. I want to mention it in my examination, but I need to see
314 some smaller things I can work with, so when I want to see everything I
315 can't write 30-40 pages (laughing V.SUTTON.) So, I have said I want to see
316 the United States and Germany. So, in the United States how many
317 people you can tell who work for the dissemination? The DAC we had, the
318 Center for Sutton Movement Writing (the DAC is a part of it, the deaf
319 branch); ...?

Background:
changing from
receptive to
expressive
caused of deaf
wishes

SignWriting
List = public
within e-mail
list and shown
in archive

SignWriting
List is connec-
ted to other e-
mail-list like
the sign lang-
uage Linguist
List

Homepage

The internet
disseminates
SignWriting

320 V.SUTTON: The reason why I can't answer this is that I don't know myself. I am
321 not asking the US to use it, I just put it out on the internet. ... (Auslassung
322 20 s) ... The internet has changed things, **it just disseminated it all by**
323 **itself**, I mean I could pass away and my websites would stay up because
324 we are setting it up that way and **they can download every single**
325 **document that I have and people use it all the time.**

326 INTERVIEWER: Do you know how many people click on your homepage daily? I
327 read something about 10.000 to 20.000 clicks?

328 V.SUTTON: I don't know, I haven't even looked at that. See, I don't know how
329 many use it. I am guessing tens of thousands, but I don't know, but that is
330 all over the world, that is not the US, actually the US is very behind.
331 (Auslassung 30 s) ... I know that there is a **high school in Arizona that uses**
332 **SignWriting as a part of their ASL classes. And that is a nice school and it**
333 **is going for 10 years, the classes are taught by Natasha Escalada-**
334 **Westland** and she is a brilliant teacher and it is continuing and I am gonna
335 be posting on the SignWriting List and on the web about her documents.
336 So, that is an American Project. **Our non-profit organization is a very small**
337 **group (Centre for Sutton Movement Writing), we are only 4 paid people**
338 **and not even fulltime. Anybody and everybody else is donating their**
339 **time, so, believe it or not, this is being done on a shoestring and it is**
340 **being done through the internet and our office is the internet. Everybody**
341 **did it out of their house, there is no office. Now, we did have projects**
342 **from 1999 to 2005 or so...There was a project in the Albuquerque Public**
343 **Schools in New Mexico that used SignWriting.**

344 INTERVIEWER: Oh yes, there have been even more schools who use it, I saw?

345 V.SUTTON: Yeah, there is a school in Georgia, the Georgia School for the Deaf,
346 that has one teacher that uses it (Cherie Wren). It is used a lot in French
347 Canada, but you want to stick to the US. In the US it is much more
348 personal. Adam teaches SignWriting within his classes in ASL, but it isn't
349 that he is doing it officially, he just does it because he loves it and because
350 the students benefit from it. So, it is just sort of used, individuals contact
351 me all the time and tell me they have been using it for five years and I
352 have never met them in my life, they are just individual students. So I
353 don't have anything to tell you, I'm so sorry.

354 INTERVIEWER: Oh, I like to go on with this, there is a SignWriting literature
355 project, where schools can apply or where teachers can apply for ...?

356 V.SUTTON: Yes, there is a SignWriting Literacy Project. But that was more, yes
357 they can apply any time and I donate materials, but the majority were
358 from, almost every one of them were in another country. The only one
359 that was really big time (in the US) was in Albuquerque Public Schools in
360 New Mexico. Since then we haven't had any Sign Writing Literacy Projects
361 in the United States. See, this a shock to you I'm sure because you thought
362 of me as an American who started it up in my country, but I didn't. I'm a
363 person who started an invention that has nothing to do with any country.
364 It writes **human body movement** and I see myself as an international
365 person not as an American versus something else. And I started the writing
366 system in Denmark which really made everybody happy in Europe because
367 then they can say "SignWriting is a European system" because they didn't
368 want to say it was an American system. I told them that was fine with me.
369 The point is that I have individual Deaf people who might work with me in

Highschool in
Arizona using
SW for 10
years (1)

CFSMW 4
paid people

Internet
=office

Albuquerque
Public School
(2)

Georgia
school for the
Deaf (3)

Probably
more un-
official using
like in class of
Adam Frost
(4+?)

Origin:
Human body
movement
(= inter-
national)

The DAC
prepares
gives free
material to
the world

370 the DAC still to this day. And we are preparing **materials that we than give**
371 **free away to the world, but other than that I do not start any projects,**
372 **specific to any one place. And it is all up to everybody else (to choose)**
373 **what they want to do with it. I have to leave it to the world.**

Attitude: leave
the invention
to the world

374 INTERVIEWER: Because that it how dissemination works.

375 V.SUTTON: That's right. And I have no control over it.

376 INTERVIEWER: I know and I really don't want you to control it. I want to collect
377 information.

378 V.SUTTON: Right and that's the one thing I am pretty good at, because what
379 the SignWriting List..... and the websites where everybody can download ...
380 an example of ... there are two young people right here in my local area
381 (Jake Chasan and Elena Eroshkina) who are age 16 (and 17), who decided
382 to develop a SignWriting app. I'm sure you saw it on the front page of my
383 SignWriting.org website. Now, they were in the boy scouts and girl scouts,
384 you know, where they, maybe you have like explorers kids who do
385 project's together. Anyway, as a part of their project they decided to
386 develop a **SignWriting App**. So they arrive in my home and say "look what
387 we have now", I didn't start that. I am thrilled. I put it up on my website.
388 I'm delighted, but I didn't do that. I didn't stimulate them.

SignWriting
App for Apple
(my hint: also
exists for
android:
SkySigns =
English - ASL
dictionary)

389 ... (Auslassung 40 s) ...

390 INTERVIEWER: ... Moreover I want to know about publications for example. I
391 saw a lot of publications, but (...). Ok what I did or how it developed my
392 situation. I didn't know something about SignWriting at all. Maybe 4
393 month ago or maybe 5, doesn't matter. But I am studying Sign language
394 since 2008 and I never heard about it and it is a really good University and
395 we have a lot of

396 V.SUTTON: Oh, that is not the University's fault's. It's the same in the United
397 States.

398 INTERVIEWER: I didn't want to say it is somebody's fault, I just wondered about
399 the situation. I had some Writing systems as well and I thought about to
400 publish it. But at first I had a look in the world wide web to other scripts
401 and I found your system and the one of Stefan Wöhrmann the
402 "Gebärdenschrift" and I saw there is a system and why don't we have
403 courses about this in University or why didn't deaf friends or teachers tell
404 something about it, as well I never saw somebody using it. And the
405 university would probably say something like "it is not so far disseminated
406 that we teach it, so that you, as teachers, can teach it in the schools. So, I
407 thought about ... maybe there is no lack for deaf people. There are movies
408 to record and a lot of people just use that, all these ...

Why
establishing
SingWriting in
the school
system takes
time ...

409 V.SUTTON: OK first of all. There is definitely a lack in the deaf community, but
410 they have not been informed, ok? So they don't know about SignWriting.
411 That does not mean that I haven't spent 40 years trying to inform them, I
412 have. That's my life's work. And it doesn't mean that Stefan Wöhrmann
413 hasn't been trying to inform everybody, but there is a whole system of
414 teaching that would have to change. ... (Auslassung 30 s ... Short: **There are**
415 **a lot of teachers who even need to learn sign language** for example
416 Stefan is in a school that is basically oral.) ... And we expect sign language
417 teachers to change all their curriculum because there is now a way to write
418 it and they have never learned how to write it before. Means that all the

Hint: the way
of establishing
it in schools

419 curriculum has to be redeveloped with somebody like yourself who would
420 have the passion as a young person to figure out how we are teaching sign
421 language right now in the schools in Germany and then **create the written**
422 **material that would be supported in SignWriting and obviously**
423 **coordinate with the Deaf Community and make sure they are happy with**
424 **the way you wrote it because writing their language is different than**
425 **writing spoken German.** So as a hearing person doing this work you are
426 gonna have to bridge the gap between the cultures and they are gonna be
427 skeptical of you because you are a hearing person and are you trying to
428 destroy their language because most deaf people had that experience or
429 they have been told their language is no good and then they are scared to
430 write it for fear they are going to be looked down at by the hearing world.
431 So you have a cultural problem between groups and the school system and
432 all of this comes together and makes the barrier very high for the people
433 who want very much to put writing into the language of teaching. So, all of
434 this is important. None of these are real barriers, it will all change, but
435 there have been centuries of deaf people wanting to write their language,
436 every deaf person I meet has developed their own writing system for
437 themselves cause they are so desperate. ... (Auslassung 4 min) ...

438 INTERVIEWER: Yes, he (Stefan Wöhrmann) just said he wishes that in
439 Universities SignWriting will be taught.

440 V.SUTTON: I agree and it should be. And it should be **a part of every sign**
441 **language class, not as a separate subject** but just simply the written form
442 for the language, just like if I wanted to learn French, I would learn to speak
443 it, but I also would have a book written in French. ... So I think it is all good.
444 And I don't think that you should worry about the fact that it hasn't spread
445 faster because **historically this is faster than any other Writing system in**
446 **history as far as I know.** Well because of the internet, I mean, have you
447 ever thought about the history of the German written language? How many
448 centuries old is it?

449 INTERVIEWER: I don't know.

450 V.SUTTON: It probably goes back to the year 1100 maybe, maybe the year 1000.
451 They probably were writing German at that time and ... (Auslassung 30 s
452 short: Great Britain wrote their language around 1300) ...

453 INTERVIEWER: Wow, that is interesting!

454 V.SUTTON: Yeah, I can actually point you to an article that explains that it is
455 amazing and I am sure that is true. (Auslassung 40 s) ... A pastor said:
456 "Valerie, you have to spread this writing system. What is the problem?"
457 And I said: "You know, everybody asked me that but I am trying really hard,
458 what would you suggest? How can you help me?" And he said: "Well, you
459 know, we could start writing the Bible, I think that would spread it, cause I
460 have over a hundred deaf people in my church and they can't read the
461 Bible in English cause their English isn't skilled enough." ... (Auslassung 20 s)
462 ... So we started it (see Nancy Romero's site www.ASLGospel.org) It
463 is called the **ASL Bible Project, see it in SignPuddle Online:**
464 <http://www.signbank.org/signpuddle2.0/index.php?ui=1&sgn=151>. And
465 they have written the entire New Testament. There is a woman named
466 Nancy Romero. She is a hearing woman and she has written a lot of the
467 New Testament. And the point I am getting at is that we now have books
468 that are so big we have written thousands and thousands of pages in

Addition: Why
establishing
SingWriting in
the school
system takes
time ...

Learning Sign
Language with
SignWriting
not as a
separate
subject

Actually it is a
fast spread-
ing: com-
pared to the
writing sys-
tems of spo-
ken languages
(which had no
internet)

Hint to an
article

ASL Bible
Project

469 American Sign Language now, we never had the literature before and I am
470 not saying it should be the Bible only. We have got to get more. So we are
471 starting to write other big things, did you see the **Wikipedia**?

472 INTERVIEWER: Oh yeah, that is cool!

473 V.SUTTON: Oh yeah, that is so cool! That's **gonna turn into a very important**
474 **spreading of the entire writing system** and I believe, honey, if you and
475 others in Germany got involved with that and did one for German Sign
476 Language for Wikipedia, we will help you get it set up. And we are gonna
477 help every country try. The Brasilians want it right now, you know, we are
478 still working on the software to make it better. But the point is once it is
479 really going, imagine all the Wikipedia articles written in German Sign
480 Language that will help so much because what is really needed is reading
481 material. **We don't have a lot of it. One of the reason why SignWriting**
482 **hasn't spread really fast is we had no publications because it was a**
483 **brand new writing system. There were no books to read.**

484 INTERVIEWER Oh yes ...

485 V.SUTTON: ... **So without books to read how can we have anything to teach**
486 **and so really, you can't just do that overnight, books are developed over**
487 **many centuries. You have books to read in German because of centuries**
488 **of writers who have written all kinds of beautiful books and once when**
489 **they want to write the books they have all the tools to do it with, the**
490 **typewriter or computer and all that. We had to develop software** just
491 like the Gutenberg press (laughing). **We had to develop the equipment in**
492 **the computer for SignWriting symbols. Our biggest job from my**
493 **organizations' point of view has been the development of the software.**
494 That is my biggest contribution besides the invention of the actual writing
495 system **and also disseminating it through websites and through the**
496 **SignWriting List.** I am gonna have to stop soon...

497 ... and you have to say that the US is just one of many countries in the
498 same position. We are no different than your country in the sense that we
499 do not have SignWriting in the schools, not like you and I would like, we
500 do not have it taught officially at the University level except for people
501 like Adam Frost who teach it along with their ASL lessons. And we would
502 like that very very very much and **we do have about 25 people who have**
503 **gotten their PHD (dissertation) now because of SignWriting.**

504 INTERVIEWER: Alright, but you really helped me cause these two interviews
505 are just a part of my bachelor thesis. In the first step I exactly did what
506 you mentioned: I had a look in the libraries and in amazon and in the
507 WorldCat-Library Catalog, do you know WorldCat?

508 V.SUTTON: No.

509 INTERVIEWER: It is a catalog where a lot of libraries all over the world are
510 linked to, university libraries, public libraries and even college libraries. So
511 I searched for publications in SignWriting and about SignWriting in the
512 United States and in Germany, I mean in all university libraries where you
513 can get at least a bachelor degree in sign language interpreting or
514 education. And YES, the situation was not so good, but with your two
515 interviews I got a lot information to explain that because I wanted to
516 interview you to get to know why is the situation like that and I already
517 knew that what I did was just a small small small part of the dissemination

ASL-
Wikipedia-
Project

A lack of
reading
material.

Reasons:

- New writing
system

- books are
developed
over centuries

-at first there
was a need of
developing
and
disseminating
software to
write
SignWriting

Wishes to
have it more
in schools and
universities

Subject:
search for
publications
in libraries
and amazons

<p>518 in general, but more I can't do in this step. I can't go out and talk to all the 519 deaf people what they think about and how they use it so I thought I 520 gonna do this small piece and talk to you both and I got information to 521 explain why the situation is not just like these numbers show.</p>	<hr style="border: 2px solid black; margin-bottom: 10px;"/> <p>Choice of dissemination in new global way by internet, not libraries</p>
<p>522 V.SUTTON: Yes, exactly in fact, I think what you need to say is that SignWriting 523 and the dissemination of SignWriting is an example of a new 524 globalization of our communication systems. I have chosen not to 525 publish big textbooks that are in universities. That is not what I would 526 even want to do. When we just recently had a course they all downloaded 527 it, the free documents of my websites into their ipads their iphones and 528 well also their computers of course.</p>	<p>Very few books in libraries because we don't print very much</p>
<p>529 INTERVIEWER: Alright, it is really important for me to know that you 530 intentionally did it this way. It is a pity, that I can't count these downloads 531 like publications I did.</p>	<p>Number of deaf people in US not known</p>
<p>532 V.SUTTON: Yes, I have very few books in libraries because we don't print very 533 much, we do print some but maybe there will be more dissemination in 534 time, I did put some of our books on amazon.com but mostly I didn't, so 535 you can't judge it by that either. ... (Auslassung 30 s) ...</p>	<p>.</p>
<p>536 INTERVIEWER: Do you know how many deaf people live in the United States?</p>	<p>.</p>
<p>537 V.SUTTON: Not really, no. In fact the current census, which means that they go 538 around door to door to make statistics every couple of years. The last 539 time they did it, they didn't even ask about deafness.</p>	<p>Calculation of people who benefit from SignWriting out of estimated numbers</p>
<p>540 INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.</p>	<p>.</p>
<p>541 V.SUTTON: (Auslassung 3 min) So, now we are getting down on a quarter of 542 percent of the world population that use sign language on a daily basis 543 as their primary 100 percent language were spoken language is hard for 544 them because it is not a part of their world. Those are the people that 545 Stefan teaches, he is one of the greatest teachers we have ever had, he 546 cares about students like a father over his child, I only wish there are 547 more teachers like him, and most of these deaf people they fall through 548 the cracks of our society, they do need a writing system and they also 549 deserve it and those people who are educated from that group, out of 550 this a quarter percent, we have got, let us take that as a whole, maybe the 551 top 5 % of that percent are the ones who make it the ones who talk to 552 you and me, the ones who work with me like Adam Frost, the ones who 553 sign every day but also know enough English to be able to survive, the 554 ones who make it in our society and who get the PHDs themselves. That is 555 a very small group within that group and those are the educated born 556 deaf people who use sign language who then turn around and 557 communicate with their fellow deaf friends who do not know the 558 spoken language of the country and those are the people we are dealing 559 with. Just think about this small amount of people. And I am honored to 560 work with them.</p>	<p>Educated born deaf people as idols and multipliers</p>
<p>561 INTERVIEWER: Did Gallaudet University search for some contact with you? Or 562 are there some projects or something like that?</p>	<p>Gallaudet University: (Some presentations and individual contact, ...</p>
<p>563 V.SUTTON: Well, I presented SignWriting in 1984 and Adam Frost the deaf 564 man I just mentioned who is my deaf assistant just got his Masters Degree 565 in Linguistics from Gallaudet. He had 2 years there and he presented 566 SignWriting several times to different projects through that. We are very</p>	<hr style="border: 2px solid black; margin-top: 10px;"/>

567 much into the individual contact with people who are open to the idea and
568 who want to do something and so yes, they contacted me, we used to sell
569 some dictionaries there in their bookstore and I had individual deaf people
570 just love it and they are just living it. **So we have individuals at Gallaudet**
571 **but as far as institutional backing no, in fact they don't back any theory,**
572 they have oralists on campus, they have sign language people on campus,
573 they believe in cued speech, they have this and they have that and yeah,
574 there are linguists who use SignWriting and there are also linguists who use
575 other linguistic base notation systems like HamNoSys from Germany.
576 (Auslassung 30 s) ...

577 INTERVIEWER: Are you alright?

578 V.SUTTON: I hope your work will help us get it spread (laughing). Maybe you
579 can help us.

580 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I hope so. Alright, thank you very much for your
581 engagement, your time and your openness and ... yeah, thank you very
582 much.

583 V.SUTTON: It is a pleasure, Susi. (Auslassung 20 s) ... **Writing systems take**
584 **centuries to be established. The fact that we have gotten this far and we**
585 **have people really truly writing it on a daily basis and some people use it**
586 **as their daily communication system is amazing ...**

587

588 ENDE DER TRANSKRIPTION

... Gallaudet
isn't backing
any theory)

Final
conclusion:

No bad
dissemination,
it is great!
