Writing describing itself

How the duality of writing as a metalinguistic instrument and research object challenges a *Descriptive Grapholinguistics*

Dimitrios Meletis

University of Zurich

DN29 Visiolinguistics: Panoramas of Languaging and Visuality

The Open University

grapholinguist

Meletis, Dimitrios. 2021. On being a grapholinguist. In Yannis Haralambous (ed.), *Grapholinguistics in the 21st Century 2020*, 47–62. (Grapholinguistics and Its Applications 4). Brest: Fluxus Editions. https://doi.org/10.36824/2020-graf-mele

We invite individual pre-recorded paper contributions that can provide novel insights into understanding visiolinguistics. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

Language and racialisation ▪ Language and gender identities ▪ Gerontolinguistics ▪ Crossing ▪ Multimodality and transmodality ▪ Visual discourse analysis ▪ Visual anthropology ▪ Visual sociology of knowledge ▪ Language and materiality ▪ Visualising languages through national flags ▪ Body language, facial expressions and gestures ▪ Sign language ▪ Captions and text-image interfaces ▪ Written literacy ▪ Graffiti ▪ Calligraphy ▪Linguistic and semiotic landscapes ▪ Geosemiotics ▪ Audiovisual surveillance ▪ Visual narratives ▪ Computer-mediated communication ▪ Visual methods for analysing languaging (e.g. concordance lines, spectrographs, quantitative graphs, diagrams, tables and transcripts) ▪ The language of maps and mapping languages and dialects ▪ Media aesthetics ▪ Translanguaging ▪ Books and print media ▪ Television ▪ Language in art ▪ Logos and symbols ▪ Iconicity ▪ Scripts and writing systems ▪ Statistics, numbers, mathematics and economic figures

https://discourseanalysis.net/en/dn29-visiolinguistics-panoramas-languaging-and-visuality

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We take writing

for granted.
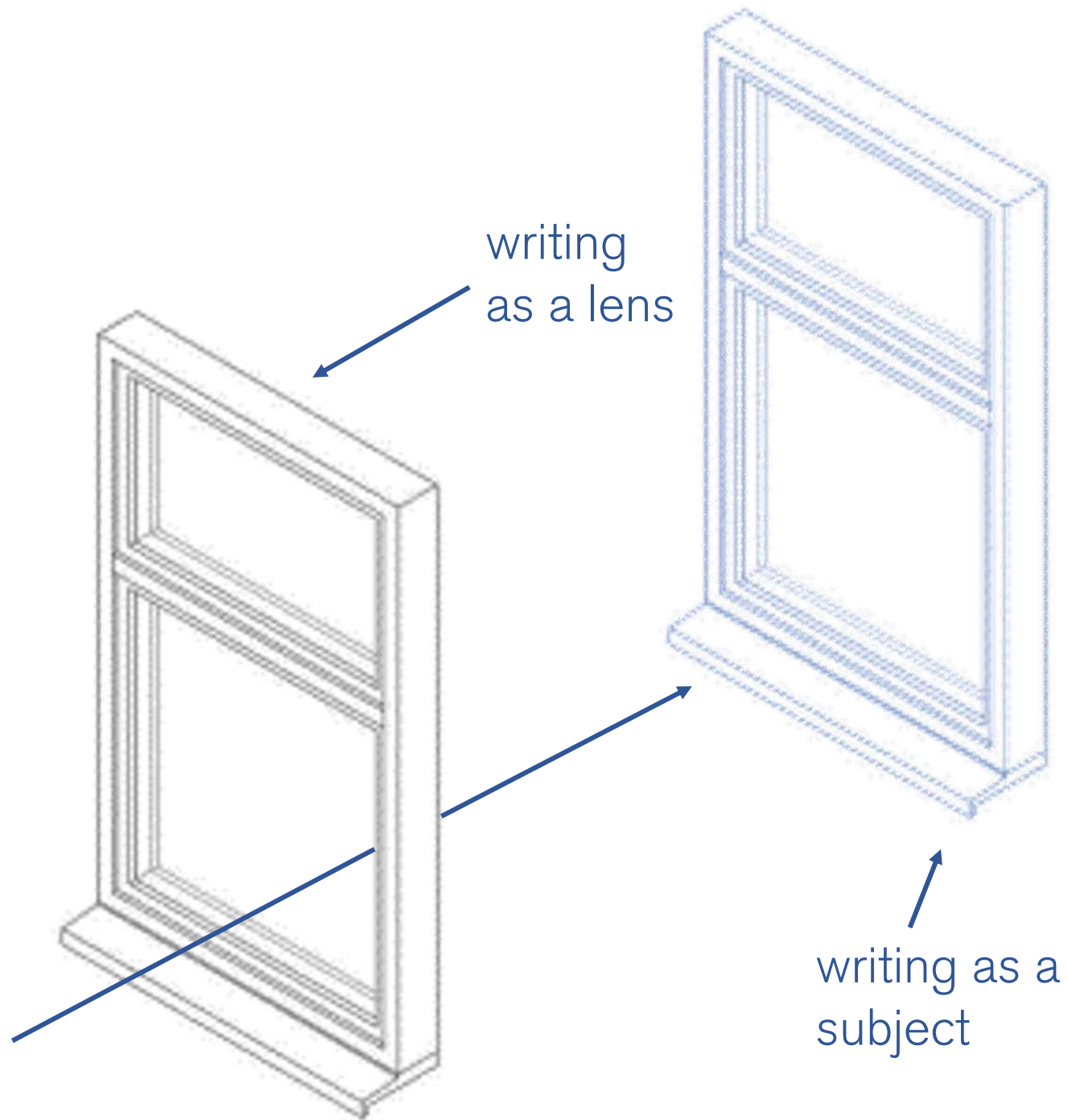
writing
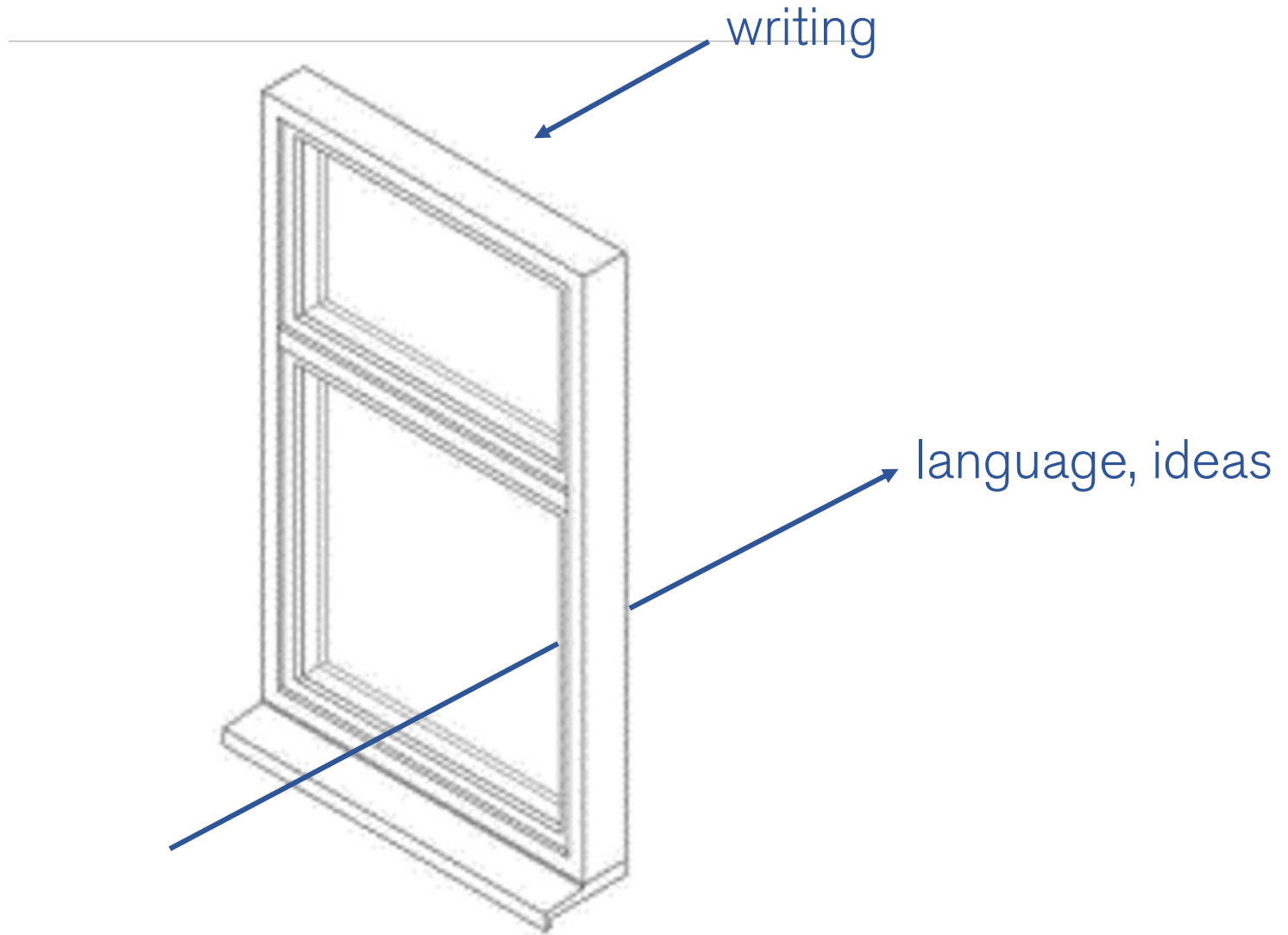
language, ideas

written language bias

writing

language, ideas

Linell, Per. 2005. The written language bias in linguistics. Its nature, origins and transformations. (Routledge Advances in Communication and Linguistic Theory). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203342763

writing as a lens

writing as a subject

Writing is its own description.

Meletis, Dimitrios. 2020. The nature of writing. A theory of grapholinguistics. (Grapholinguistics and Its Applications 3). Brest: Fluxus Editions. https://doi.org/10.36824/2020-meletis
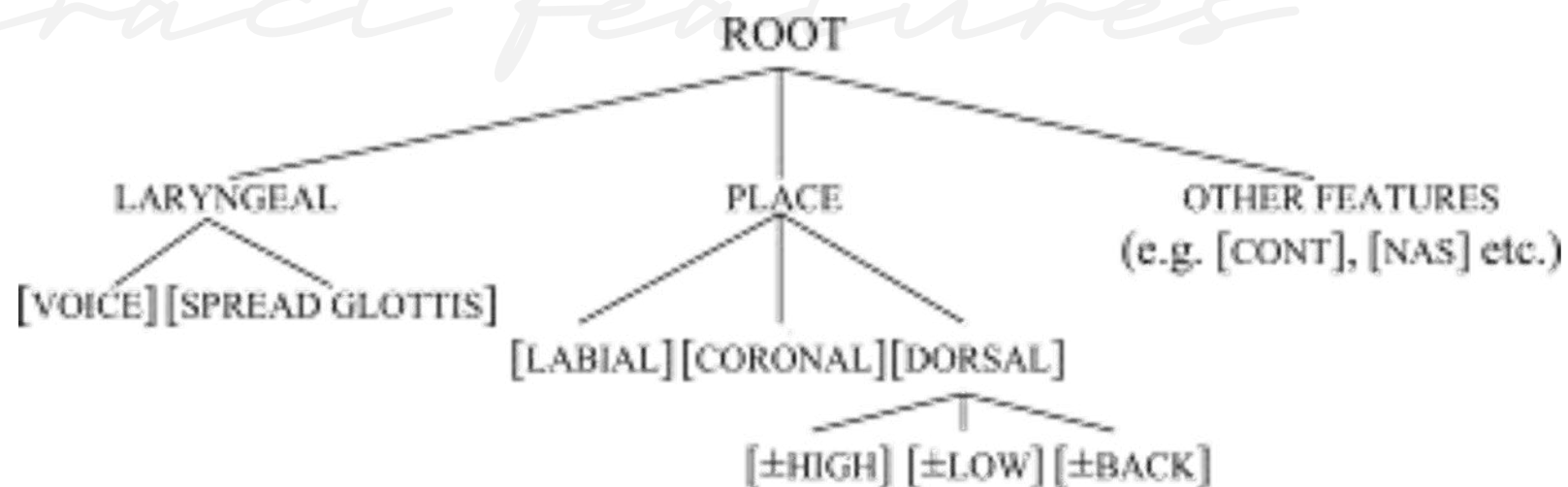
materiality

materiality

"The medium is the message."

McLuhan, Marshall. 1964. *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. New York City: McGraw-Hill.
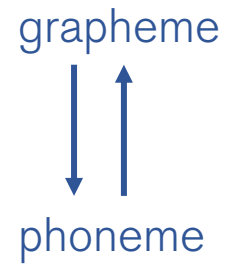
abstract features

ROOT

LARYNGEAL   PLACE   OTHER FEATURES
   (e.g. [CONT], [NAS] etc.)

[VOICE] [SPREAD GLOTTIS]

                        [LABIAL] [CORONAL] [DORSAL]

                                      [±HIGH] [±LOW] [±BACK]

CONSONANTS: [LABIAL]   [CORONAL]   [DORSAL]
VOWELS: [DORSAL]

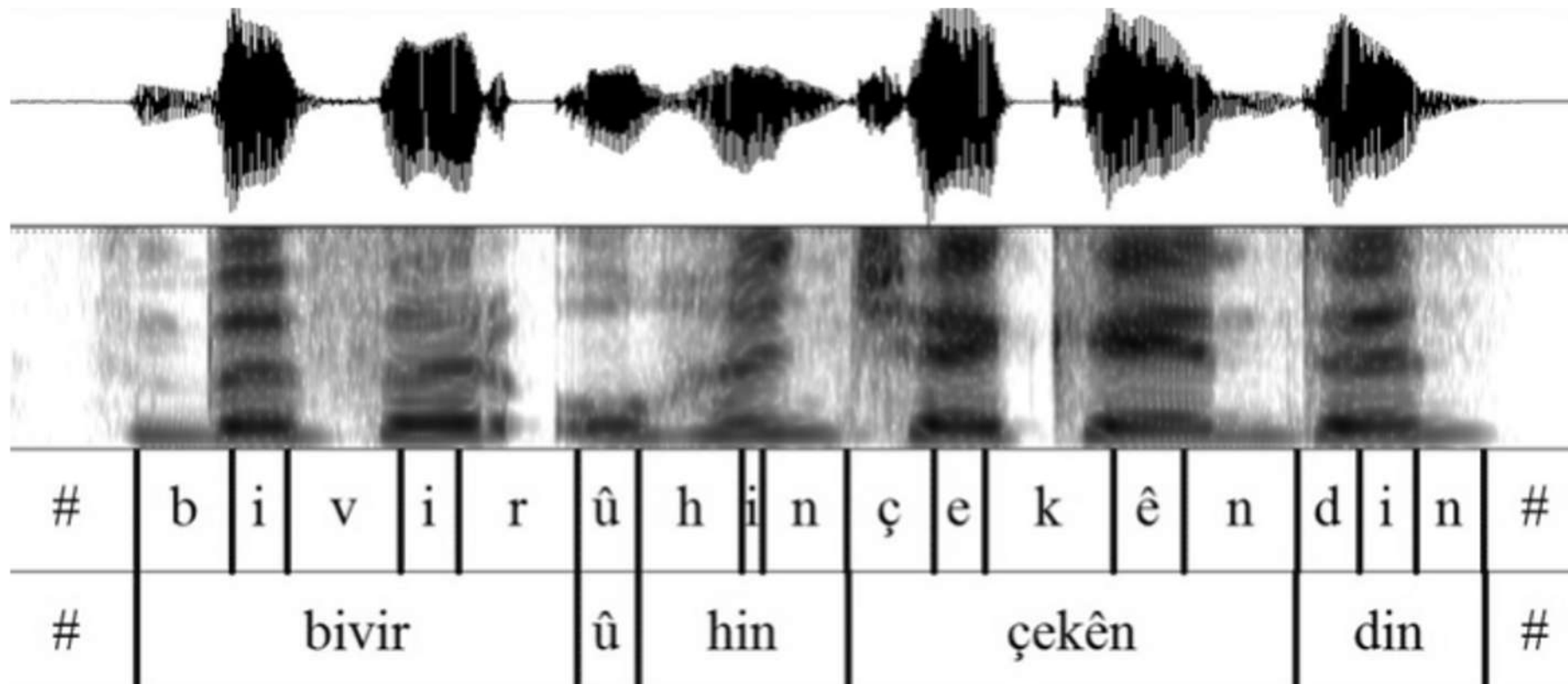*abstract features*

grapheme

↓ ↑

phoneme

abstract features

As a result, grapholinguistic concepts and terminology are to some degree an "expression of an attempt to share in the benefits of what has been achieved with considerable success in phonology" (Ehlich 2007: 728, my translation).

grapheme

↓ ↑

phoneme
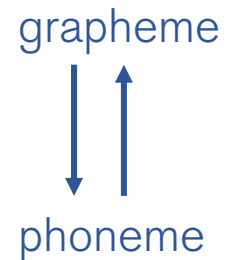
Ehlich, Konrad. 2007. *Sprache und sprachliches Handeln*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110922721

| # | b | i | v | i | r | û | h | i | n | ç | e | k | ê | n | d | i | n | # |

| # | bivir | | | | | û | hin | | | çekên | | | | | din | | | # |
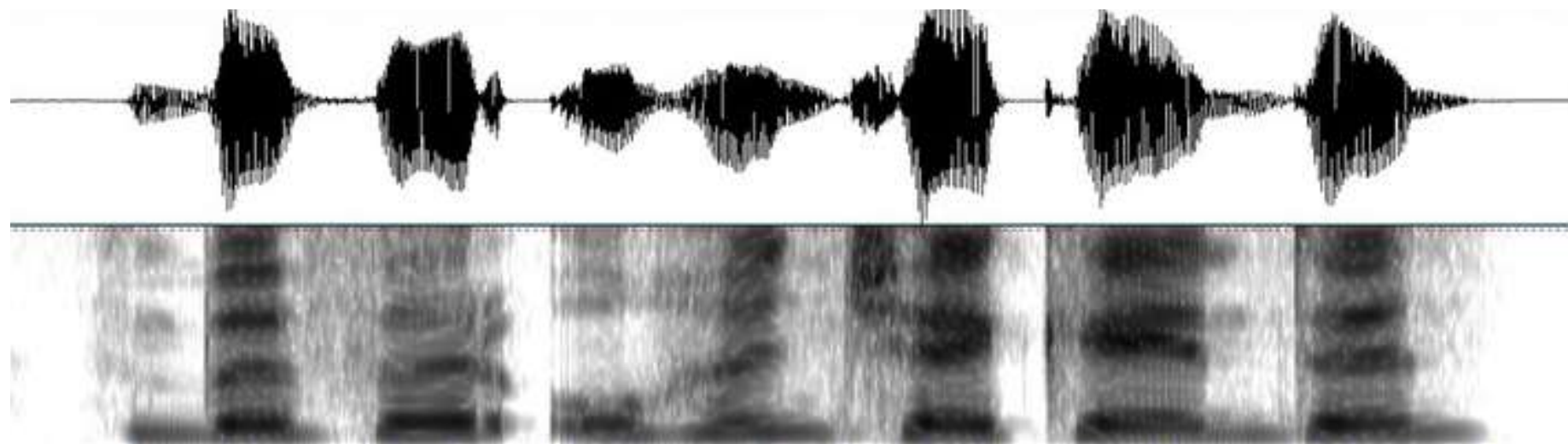
made possible through alphabetic literacy?

Davidson, Andrew. 2019. Writing: The re-construction of language. Language Sciences 72. 134–149. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2018.09.004

A

A

/a/

In Loving Memory
of
John

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Althaus, Hans Peter. [1973] 1980. Graphetik. In Hans Peter Althaus, Helmut Henne & Herbert Ernst Wiegand (eds.), *Lexikon der germanistischen Linguistik*, 2nd edn., 138–142. Tübingen: Niemeyer. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110960846.138
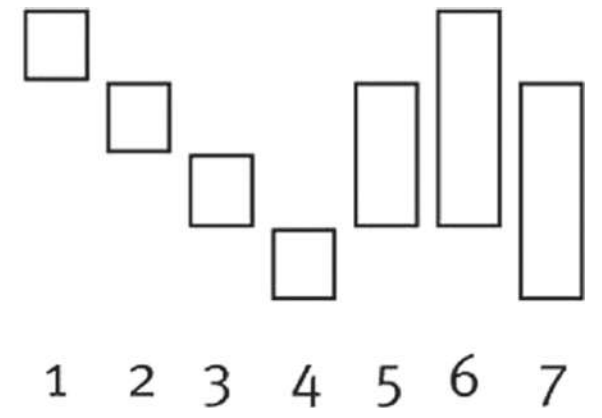
What is the proper characterization of the alphabet?

Watt, William C. 1975. What is the proper characterization of the alphabet? I: Desiderata. *Visible Language* 9(4). 293–327.

Watt, William C. 1980. What is the proper characterization of the alphabet? – II: Composition. *Ars Semeiotica* 3(1). 3–46.
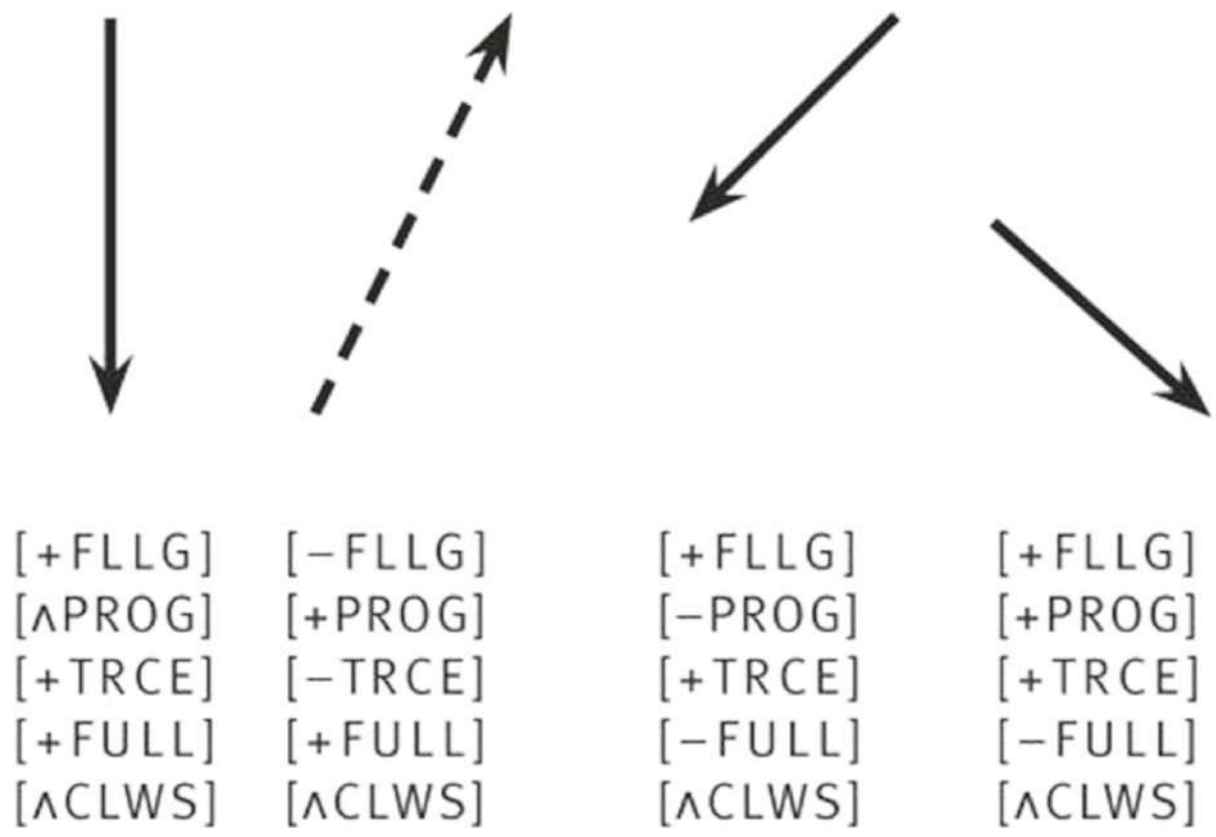
Watt, William C. 1981. What is the proper characterization of the alphabet? – III: Appearance. *Ars Semeiotica* 4(3). 269–313.

Watt, William C. 1988. What is the proper characterization of the alphabet? IV: Union. *Semiotica* 70(3–4). 199–241. https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1988.70.3-4.199

Watt, William C. 2002. What is the proper characterization of the alphabet? V: Transcendence. *Semiotica* 138. 131–178. https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.2002.001

Watt, William C. 2012. What is the proper characterization of the alphabet? VI: Three-finger exercises. *Semiotica* 190. 177–209. https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2012-0046

Watt, William C. 2015. What is the proper characterization of the alphabet? VII: Sleight of hand. *Semiotica* 207. 65–88. https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2015-0064

[+FLLG]   [−FLLG]   [+FLLG]   [+FLLG]
[∧PROG] [+PROG]   [−PROG] [+PROG]
[+TRCE] [−TRCE]   [+TRCE] [+TRCE]
[+FULL] [+FULL]   [−FULL] [−FULL]
[∧CLWS] [∧CLWS]   [∧CLWS] [∧CLWS]

Watt, William C. 1980. What is the proper characterization of the alphabet? – II: Composition. *Ars Semeiotica* 3(1). 3–46.

commonalities

International
Graphetic
Alphabet

International Graphetic Alphabet

But why should there not be an International Graphetic Alphabet, identifying all the marks the human hand can make that are capable of playing a contrastive role in some language – the array of straight lines of varying length and orientation, curves, dots, thicknesses, and so on, which when combined result in written letters, syllables, and logograms?

Crystal, David. 1997. Toward a typographical linguistics. *Type* 2.1: 7–23.

International Graphetic Alphabet

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Crystal, David. 1997. Toward a typographical linguistics. *Type* 2.1: 7–23.

* writing is also tactile/haptic and sometimes this is the primary channel through which it is used, cf. braille

How are humans ocularcentric animals?

How are humans ~~spatiocentric~~ animals?

Structures we find in scripts echo our brain's restrictions.

Dehaene, Stanislas. 2009. *Reading in the brain: The new science of how we read*. New York: Penguin.

neuronal recycling
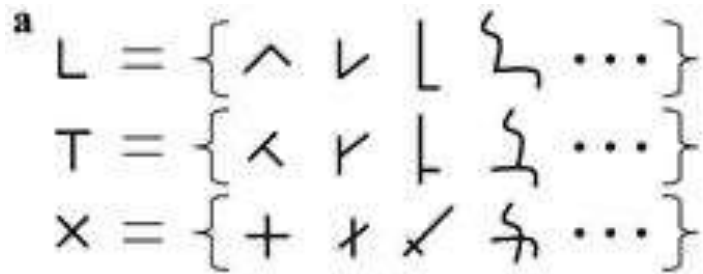
Changizi, Mark A., Qiong Zhang, Hao Ye & Shinsuke Shimojo. 2006. The structures of letters and symbols throughout human history are selected to match those found in objects in natural scenes. The American Naturalist 167(5). E117–E139. https://doi.org/10.1086/502806
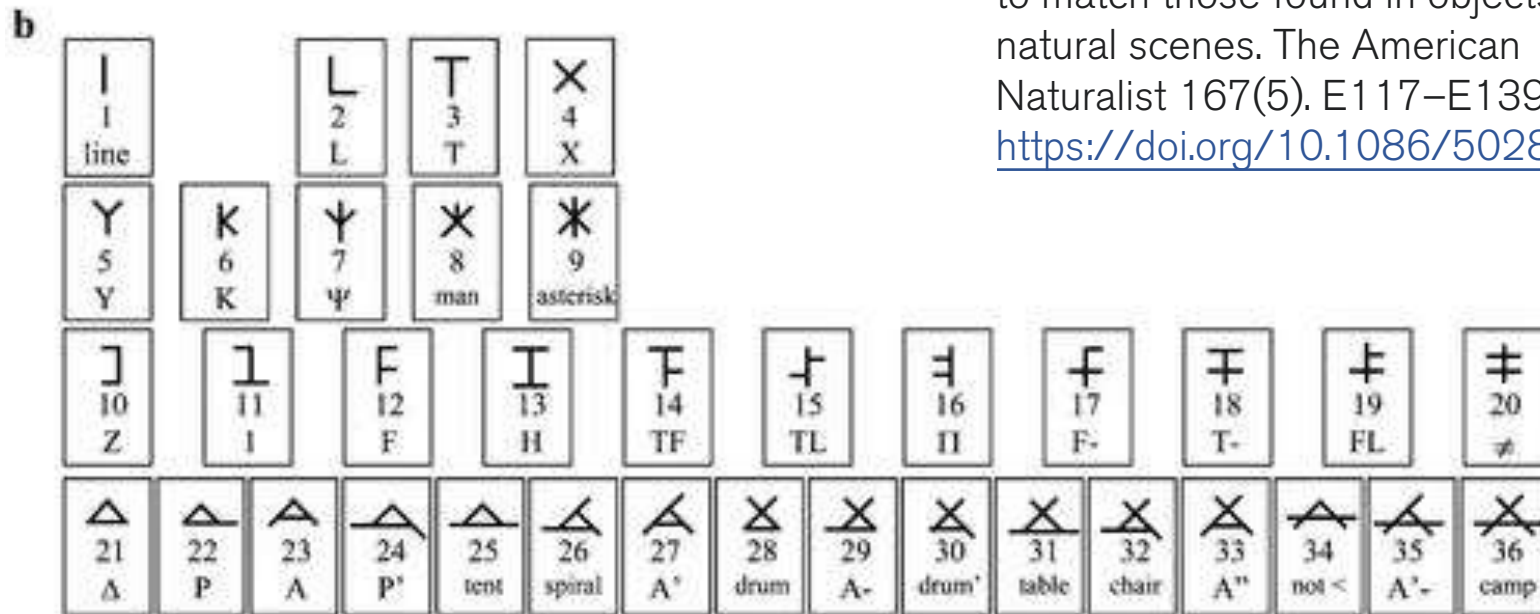
cognition and culture

Morin, Olivier. 2018. Spontaneous emergence of legibility in writing systems: The case of orientation anisotropy. *Cognitive Science* 42(2). 664–677. https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.12550

Descriptive Grapholinguistics is central to cognitive science.

humans make *systems*
of things

Watt, W. C. 1983. Grade der Systemhaftigkeit: Zur Homogenität der Alphabetschrift. *Zeitschrift für Semiotik* 5(4). 371–399.
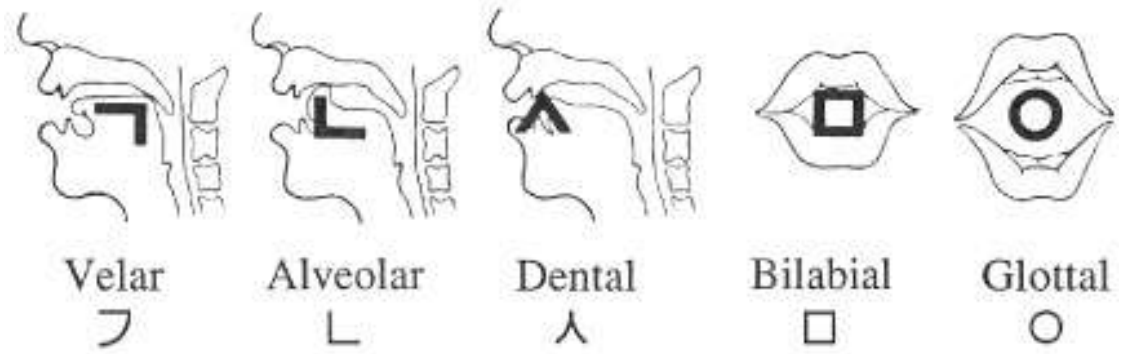
Korean
Hangul

Velars:	ㄱ	ㅋ	ㄲ	
Alveolars:	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㅌ	ㄹ	ㄸ
Bilabials:	ㅁ	ㅂ	ㅍ	ㅃ	
Dentals:	ㅅ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅆ	ㅉ
Glottals:	ㅇ	ㅎ			

Velar	Alveolar	Dental	Bilabial	Glottal
ㄱ	ㄴ	ㅅ	ㅁ	ㅇ

Latin

increasing sonority →						
FREE/OBSTR				¬FREE/SONOR		
¬CURVED/MAXCONSTR		CURVED/MINCONSTR		¬CURVED/MAXCONSTR		CURVED/MINCONSTR
FREEDOWN/MINSON	FREEUP/MAXSON	FREEDOWN/MINSON	FREEUP/MAXSON	FREEDOWN/MINSON	FREEUP/MAXSON	
⟨p, q⟩ ⟨t⟩	⟨b, d⟩	⟨f, ſ⟩	⟨j⟩	⟨n⟩ ⟨r⟩	⟨u⟩ ⟨i⟩	⟨e, a, o⟩

Primus, Beatrice. 2004. A featural analysis of the Modern Roman Alphabet. *Written Language & Literacy* 7(2). 235–274. https://doi.org/10.1075/wll.7.2.06pri
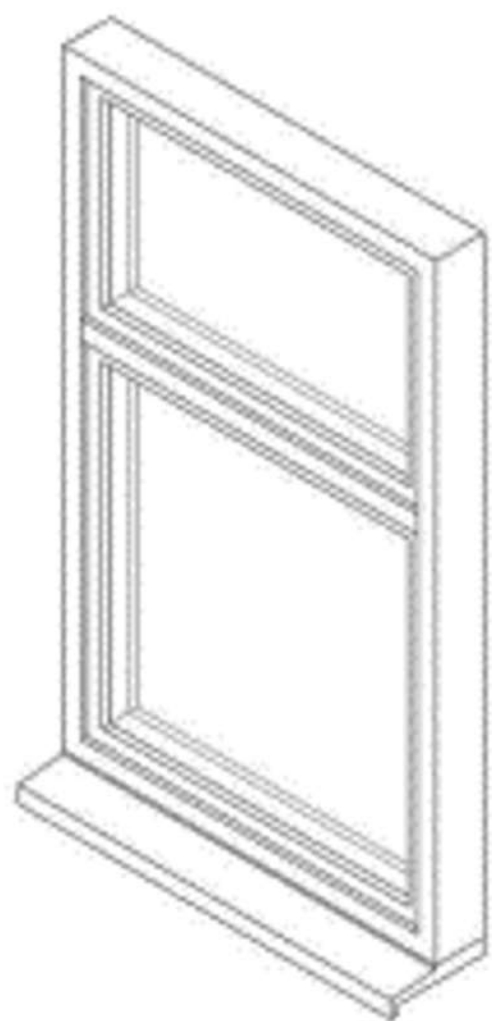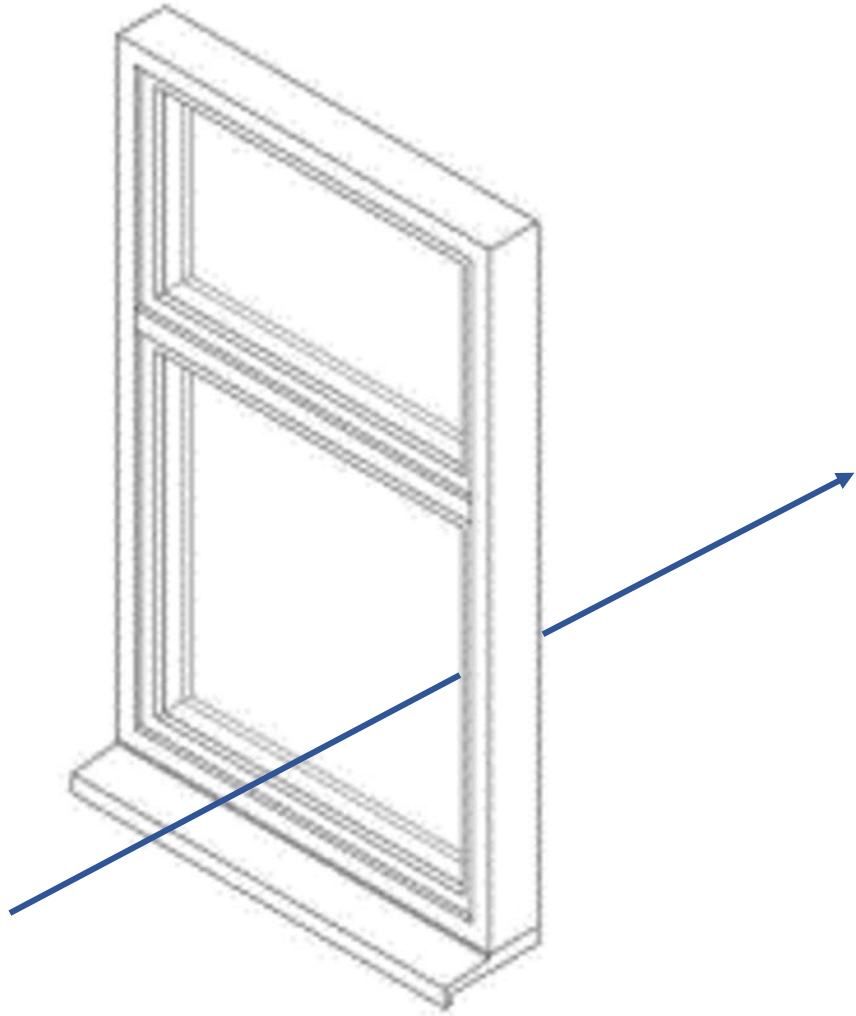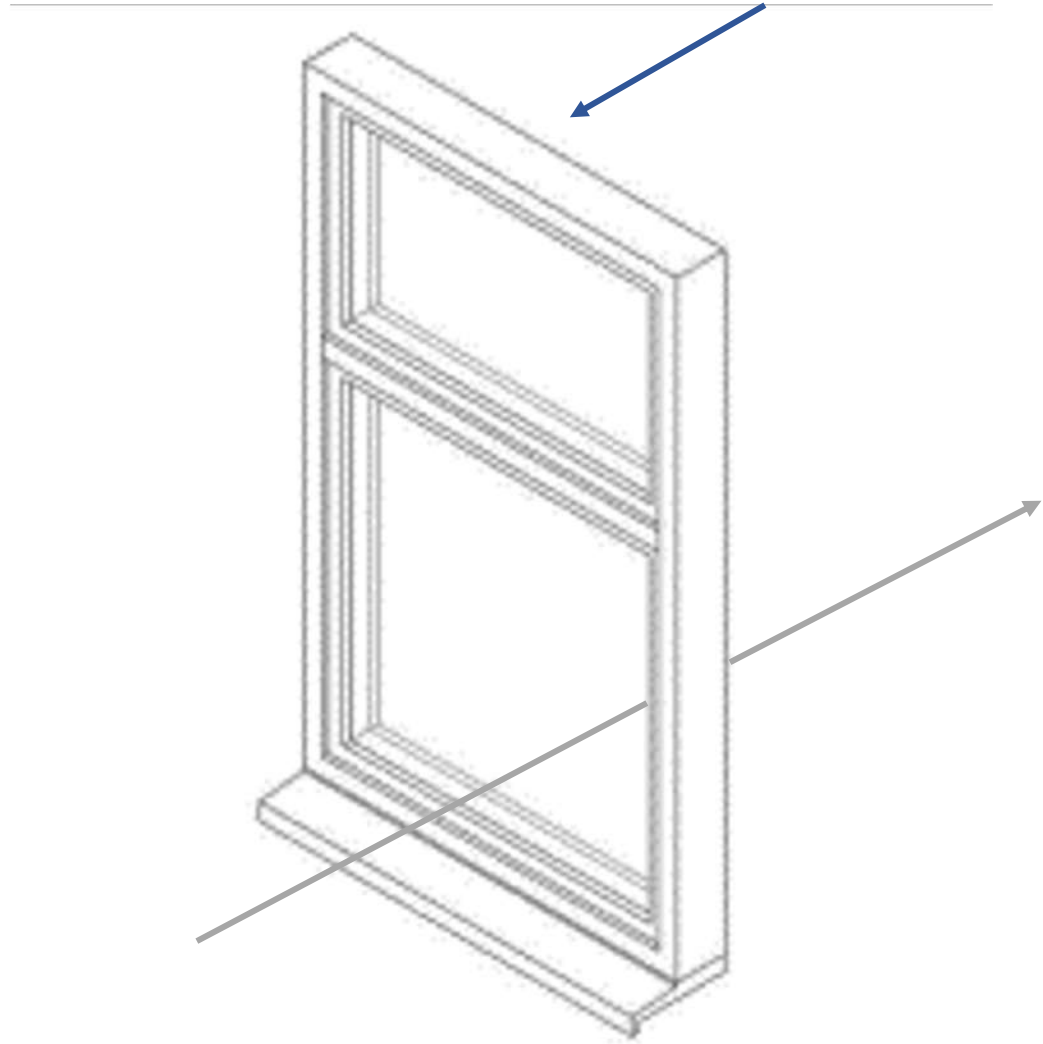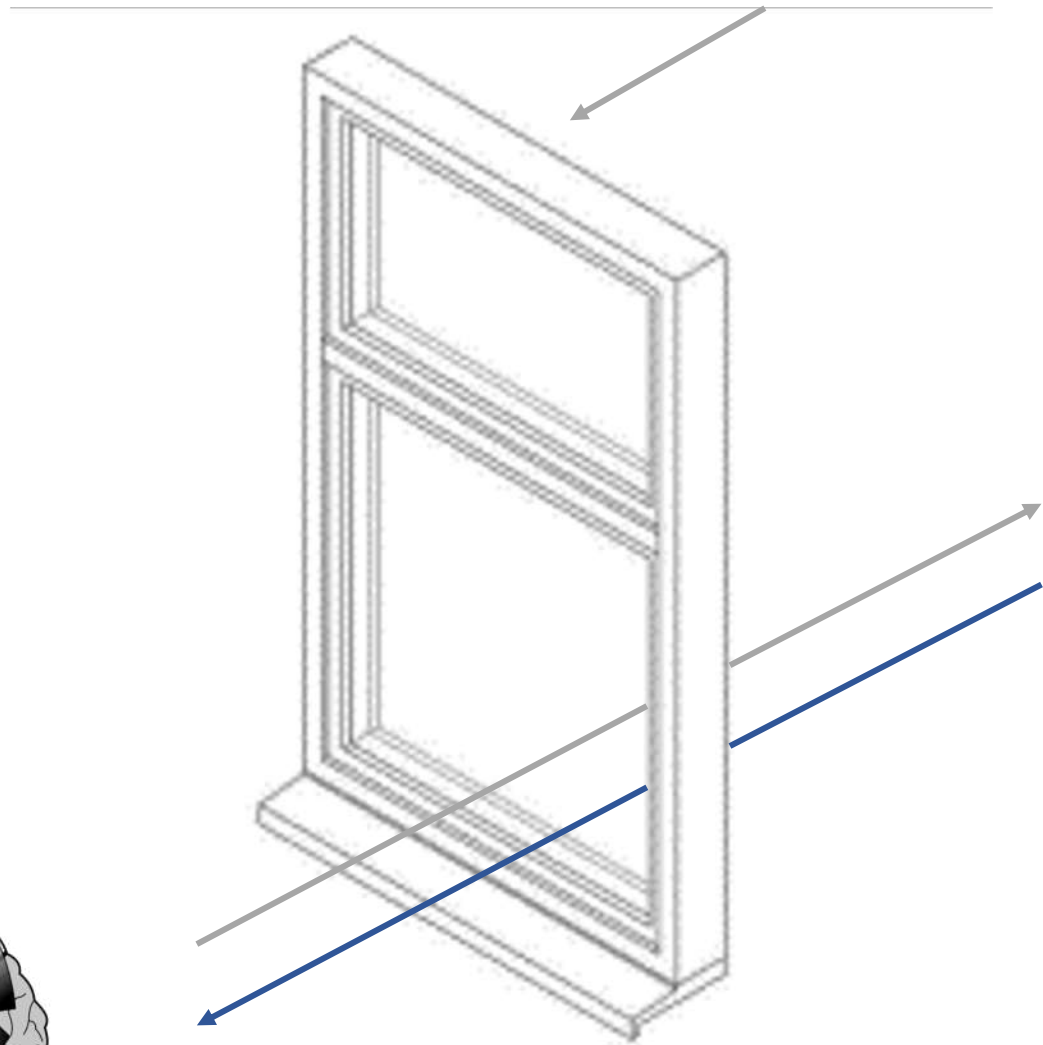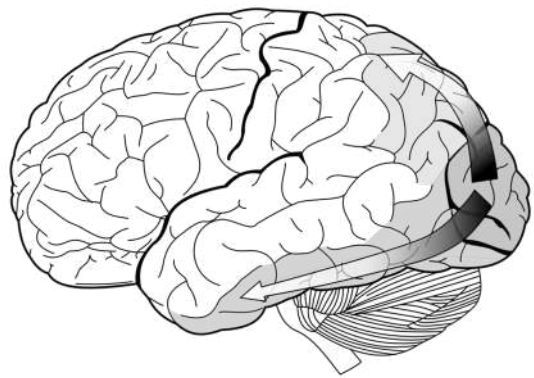
Writing is a core subject of visiolinguistics.