



Panel title: **West African gestures and sign languages**

Panel coordinator: **Izabela Will**

Gestures and language are closely interrelated. Research on co-speech gestures is included into the field of linguistics (McNeill 1992). According to some researchers gestures are a necessary component of language (McNeill 2008) and together with language form a part of one system (Bates and Dick 2002). Even those who do not support this theory admit that these two activities: talking and gesturing are intimately connected (Kendon 2004).

There are not many descriptions of West African gestures. The existing ones include the gestures used by Mofu-Gudur (Sorrin-Barreateau 1996) living in Cameroon, Yoruba (Agwuele 2014), Wolof (Coly 2017) and Hausa (Will and Ahmad 2008) among others. Looking at these descriptions one notices that some gestures are common in West Africa and this commonness cut across the linguistic, geographical and cultural barriers. Another standing out feature of West African gestures is the crucial role of facial mimicry in communication, especially in expressing emotions (Cole 2017, Will 2017). In West Africa, many gestures performed by members of a given society are also used in the local sign language which makes the communication between hearing people and deaf much easier (Nyst 2009). This dependency shows that more emphasis should be put on analysis of the relationship between gestures and sign language. These two systems cannot be analyzed separately, at least in African context.

The participants of the panel are invited to present papers on:

- relation between language and gestures (co-speech gestures, gestural idioms)
- conceptualization patterns in the spoken language and the sign language of the same community
- common West African quotable gestures and gestures specific to West Africa
- gestural strategies (referring to time and space, counting strategies, pointing strategies)
- West African gestures used in the Caribbean
- West African sign languages
- relationship between signs and gestures used in a given community

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