



The International Council
of Onomastic Sciences

Onomastics Online
12 December 2024
17:00-18:00 CET
Microsoft Teams

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Moderator: Marga Stander (Sol Plaatje University,
South Africa)

Onomastics and Sign Language: An Unexplored Terrain

Abstract: Onomastics offers valuable insights into the linguistic, cultural, and historical dimensions of naming practices across various societies. While onomastics has traditionally focused on spoken languages, its application to sign language reveals a unique and unexplored terrain. This presentation explores the intersection of onomastics and sign language, examining how proper names are conceptualized and used within Deaf communities.

Sign languages, as visual-spatial languages, utilize a distinct system of name signs that are shaped by Deaf social norms and visual language structures. These name signs reflect the shared identity and cultural values of the Deaf community. While current onomastic studies in sign language primarily concentrate on signed place names and personal names, this presentation will expand the scope to encompass other name categories. The International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) identifies 32 types of names, including brand names, by-names, and theonyms, each with potential relevance to sign language analysis.

By examining the diversity of name types within sign language, this presentation aims to introduce signed names from an onomastic approach to deepen our understanding of Deaf naming practices, cultural identity, and the interplay between language, culture, and society.

Keywords: Onomastics; Sign Language; Deaf community; Cultural practices

Meeting details. Please register at this link:

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/f97dbb2d-3757-4e39-b352-3d3907909412@8efc1bb9-b90f-4a48-bf6c-ba0686193b80>.

The ICOS policy on privacy can be found here: <https://icosweb.net/membership/icos-personal-data-protection-policy/>.





Biography: Jani de Lange is a South African researcher and a Deaf Studies lecturer at the University of the Free State (South Africa). Her research interests include onomastics (especially toponomastics), and language policy and planning. She is currently a PhD student; the title of her thesis being 'The standardisation of geographical place names and the planning of signed place names in South Africa'. De Lange is actively involved in promoting South African Sign Language (SASL) and Deaf Culture through her scholarship, as well as various projects and initiatives. She was recently appointed to serve on PanSALB's SASL National Language Body until 2029.

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Onomastics Online lecture series:

Onomastics Online is a series of online lectures dealing with important timely topics related to names and naming. Given by distinguished scholars from various academic backgrounds, the lectures demonstrate the importance and the multidisciplinary nature of onomastic research. To see the list of upcoming and past lectures, please visit our webpage at: <https://icosweb.net/onomastics-online/>.

Previous lectures can be found on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE-DZXOsJNKAo6K-OfTEdpA>.

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