

Non-verbal forms of language in ritual practices in west Cameroon

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Non-verbal communication encompasses everything related to body language acting as an unconscious vector of emotions: postures, gestures, facial expressions, physical facts, movement, etc... Non-verbal or non-linguistic elements refer to all behaviors that manifest themselves physically or psychologically to transmit a direct or indirect message. These non-verbal elements are semiotic signs when they are intentionally produced to transmit a message. The purpose of this contribution is to show the expression of power through proxemic acts. It is part of the theory of pragmatics since non-linguistic acts find their meaning only in context. We therefore wonder about the semantics of the gestures performed during the rites: of intercession for healing, giving access to sit on the stool, goat sacrifice, purification and customary marriage. To clarify these non-verbal acts whose function would fall under the relational order to participate in the regulation and mutual adjustment of the interlocutors, we will focus on the illocutionary acts as defined by Austin (1975), because gestures are accompanied by words and produce effects that are realized during the rites.