Language, Individuals and Ideologies in mobile messaging

What's up, Switzerland?

Project leader: Elisabeth Stark (estark@rom.uzh.ch)
Project sum: CHF 1'597'904 (SNSF, Sinergia)
Project duration: 36 months (1/1/2016 – 31/12/2018)
Overall Research Questions: 1. What do Swiss WhatsApp messages look like? What has changed overall between Swiss SMS and Swiss WhatsApp messages, and why (as regards linguistic structures, use of images in a broad sense, spelling, register-specific style, individualization vs. accomodation)? 2. What is said / done by the individual users and the media in/on WhatsApp messages and chats, in relation to the findings for question 1?

Language(s) of WhatsApp: Verbal Periphrases and Argument Drop: Two optional salient linguistic structures in French, (Swiss) German, Italian (and partially Romansh) WhatsApp messages will be investigated: argument drop (already investigated in the SMS project), and the use of progressive verbal periphrases, in order to find out whether they are register-specific features (in the sense of Biber 1995) or mainly technologically provoked structures.

Language Design in WhatsApp: Icono/Graphy: We will have a look at changes in graphic strategies enabled by new correction software, virtual keyboards, and especially new sets of iconographic signs (emojis) across linguistic communities, as well as the specific function of these in shaping communicative identity.

Individuals in WhatsApp: This project will intensify the focus on individuals by investigating the features analyzed in sub-projects A and B plus patterns of code-switching as variables at the level of the individual rather than the sociolinguistically defined group, focusing on Swiss German dialects and patterns of accommodation in interaction.

Ideologies: The Cultural Discourses and Social Meanings of Mobile Communication: This project will describe and analyze the public discourse on graphic mobile communication via WhatsApp (and SMS), trying to pin down the way Switzerland looks at the revolutionary developments in our communicative behavior and its evaluation by the media.

Legend:
- **Project A:** Language(s) of WhatsApp
- **Project B:** Language Design in WhatsApp
- **Project C:** Individuals in WhatsApp
- **Project D:** Ideologies
- **Administration**

Chat example:
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A: Pfirtiiii
B: Nighty night
B: 🌙
A: Slop lecker
B: Was n das
A: Chuide nacht
B: Schlaf gut ahhhh
A: Holländisch
A: Jaaaaaaa
B: Kanst du rede?
A: Wär schön!
B: Schrib mir ab jetzt nur no uf
   schwizer dütsch
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Computational Linguistics

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