

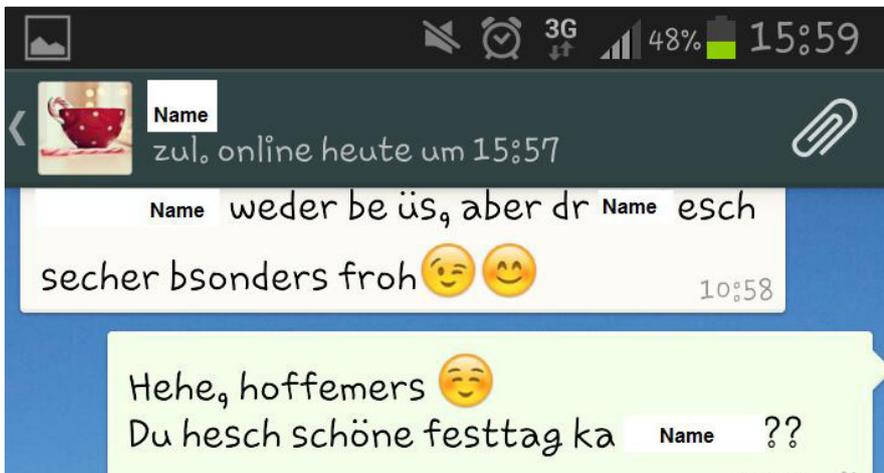


# Language & Space *News*

The Newsletter of the University Research Priority Program (URPP) Language and Space

October 2015

## Messaging in Switzerland



In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, electronic messages are often written in dialect.

**In July 2015, the Swiss National Science Foundation approved the Sinergia proposal “What’s Up, Switzerland? Language, Individuals, and Ideologies in Mobile Messaging.”**

Elisabeth Stark

What do Swiss WhatsApp messages look like? What has changed between Swiss SMS and Swiss WhatsApp messages, and why? These questions are raised from different perspectives within the research project “What’s up Switzerland” (PI: E. Stark), which unites four sub-projects, running from January 2016 til December 2018.

The sub-project “Language(s) of WhatsApp,” lead by E. Stark (Zurich) and S. Natale (Bern), investigates two salient linguistic struc-

tures in French, (Swiss) German, Italian WhatsApp messages, argument drop and the use of progressive verbal periphrases.

The sub-project “Language Design in WhatsApp,” lead by Ch. Dürscheid (Zurich) and F. Diémoz (Neuchâtel), 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.

The sub-project “Individuals in WhatsApp,” lead by B. Siebenhaar (Leipzig), will intensify the focus on individuals by investigating the features analyzed in the previous mentioned sub-projects plus patterns of code-switching as variables at the

## Editorial

We are glad to welcome you as readers of the first *Language and Space* newsletter! It is intended to be a forum for URPP news of various types: introducing new members, informing you about current research projects and new approvals of project proposals, as well as about URPP trends and changes, to keep you updated regularly with what is going on. Feel free to contact us and send us your news!

We wish you an interesting read and are looking forward to your feedback.

*Elvira Glaser & Heiko Hausendorf*  
*Directors of the URPP Language and Space*

level of the individual rather than the sociolinguistically defined group.

The fourth sub-project, lead by C. Thurlow (Bern), is dedicated to “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.

[www.whatsup-switzerland.ch](http://www.whatsup-switzerland.ch)

## Highly Endangered Dialects

**North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) is a highly diverse family of Semitic languages spoken by Christian and Jewish communities from northern Iraq and neighbouring countries.**

Eleanor Coghill

Work on NENA is particularly urgent as all dialects are highly endangered. Aramaic dialects present an almost unparalleled opportunity to trace changes in a language over nearly 3000 years. Variation within NENA is of particular interest because it involves not only geographical but also communal (religious) dialect distinctions.

My project focuses on morphosyntactic variation across NENA dialects, as well as parallels with regional languages. It involves the creation of a

morphosyntactically tagged digital corpus of oral and written texts. This will allow the tracking of variation and change across both space and time. With these tools I will address the following questions:

- To what extent do NENA dialects form a continuum, and to what extent distinct dialect groups?
- To what extent do different parts of the language (phonology, morphology, syntax) co-vary geographically?
- How does geographical variation intersect with communal variation?
- How can variation across NENA dialects be connected to the varying linguistic landscape involving diverse dialects of Kurdish, Arabic, Turkic and Persian?

## Interactions at the Train Station in Switzerland

**The research project “Am Schalter – Au guichet – Allo sportello” investigates complex interactions at train station counters. It is initiated by the universities of Basel and Zurich with the collaboration of the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB).**

Heiko Hausendorf and Lorenza Mondada

The train station counter is a special place arranged and built for highly institutionalized exchanges between customers and SBB staff members. As such it manifests a complex social situation: Being at the counter means for the participants before and behind the desk to establish an interactional space by utilizing the interaction architecture, bodily resources like movement, gaze, posture, gestures, and language.

The project investigates this complex situation and contributes to the study of interaction architecture and

interactional space within the URPP. It offers a comparative study of service encounters in the train stations of French-, German-, and Italian-speaking Switzerland. Based on audio- and videorecordings of hundreds of conversations at the stations of Basel, Geneva, Lugano and Zurich, the project investigates which practical problems participants are confronted with and which strategies and resources they use to solve them, especially when they do not speak the same language.

The Swiss Federal Railways are a federal institution spread over the entire Swiss territory. Train stations should treat users of all Swiss regions equally and respect their linguistic and cultural diversity simultaneously. This leads at times to communicative situations strained between standardization and variation.

## New Projects

This year members of the URPP *Language and Space* were extremely successful in raising external funds from the Swiss National Science Foundation, SNSF. The following research projects were approved in spring and autumn 2015:

*AIS, reloaded* (PI: M. Loporcaro; D. Pescarini)

*The aural aesthetics of Táng poetry* (PI: W. Behr)

*The imagery of Táng ‘poems on things’: a semiotic approach* (PI: W. Behr)

*Interactive discoveries: A video and eye-tracking based study of knowledge construction in science centres* (PI: W. Kesselheim; B. Neff, Y. Simon – Swiss Science Center Technorama)

*Language description as filter and prisma: the individuality of Slovene* (PI: B. Sonnenhauser)

*Linguistic morphology in time and space (LiMiTS)* (PI: B. Bickel; W. Behr, M. Jenny, M. Loporcaro, R. Weibel, P. Widmer; F. Zúñiga; C. Derungs, R. Van Gijn, F. Gardani)

*Modelling morphosyntactic area formation in Swiss German (SynMod), prolongation* (PI: E. Glaser; R. Weibel, Ph. Stöckle, P. Jeszenszky)

*The morphosyntax of agreement in Jauer* (PI: M. Loporcaro; S. Stoll)

*Placenames in Canton St Gallen* (PI: E. Glaser; R. Purves)

*Regional Linguistic Data Initiative (ReLDI)* (PI: T. Samardžić; M. Miličević, N. Ljubešić)

*Regional Variation in the Grammar of Standard German, prolongation* (PI: Ch. Dürscheid; A. Ziegler, St. Elspass)

*Vacational Postcards: Spatial Reference and Exemplariness* (PI: H. Hausendorf; J. Scharloth – TU Dresden)

*What’s up, Switzerland* (PI: E. Stark; Chr. Dürscheid, F. Diémoz, C. Thurlow, S. Natale, B. Siebenhaar; S. Ueberwasser)

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## Portrait

## Linguistics and Geography



Ekaterina Egorova joined the URPP Language and Space in September 2013. She is a doctoral student at the GISLab.

Interview: Curdin Derungs

*You studied Linguistics in Russia, “Global Studies” in Germany and now you’re in the second year of your PhD in GIScience at the Science Faculty. What do you see as the challenges and opportunities of working in an interdisciplinary context?*

My previous degrees fit well together in the PhD project. “Global Studies” attests to the critical reading of the concept of space, while linguistic intuition gained in the first degree helps a lot in my work with texts and linguistic structures. I think this is the major chance behind interdisciplinarity—the ability to bring together the conceptual framework of one discipline and the methodological toolkit of another, thus dealing with research questions that would not necessarily be addressed within a single discipline. As for the challenges ... one is coming to terms with

the “researcher identity”, another is an increased personal responsibility for the outcome of the project.

*Now that we know the context of your thesis, could you please briefly summarize what you are working on? (or, as a touch-stone for each PhD student, please describe your thesis in two sentences!)*

I am interested in the way context—space structure (mountains) and activity (mountaineering)—impacts space conceptualization. I work with alpine narratives and analyze linguistic choices in certain constructions (e.g., encoding of spatial information in motion events) that are indicative of cognitive representation of space.

*Your PhD thesis is associated with the URPP Language and Space. How does this effect your work?*

It readily provides me with a network of researchers who share interest in the concept of space. With regular meetings and discussions, it is much easier to find people with potentially overlapping interests or—equally important—needed expertise. That is quite a stimulating environment!

## New Home of the URPP Language and Space

Heiko Hausendorf and Agnes Kolmer

The release of our first newsletter coincides with moving in to the new rooms at Freiestrasse 16, 8032 Zurich. Good things come to those who wait. Having struggled for a spatial union of all employees right from the start we finally succeeded in receiving new offices in the centre,

convenient for co-locating almost all staff members, the three URPP labs and the management. Feel free to visit us whenever you like! Housewarming party with Apéro will be on Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> at 12 o’clock in the presence of the UZH President and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

## New PhD Candidate

Beginning in October 2015, **Antonia Steger** will pursue her PhD project “Interaction in public places” in the context of the research group Interactional Spaces.

## Upcoming Colloquia Talks

Room KOL F-123, Rämistrasse 71, 8006 Zurich, 16:15–18:00

October 22, 2015

Helen Christen (Université de Fribourg)  
*Vom Umgang mit Raum oder wie Dialektolog/innen und Alltagsmenschen mit arealer Sprachvariation verfahren*

November 5, 2015

Eleanor Coghill (URPP Language and Space)  
*Aramaic Dialects across Space and Time*

November 19, 2015

Mathieu Avanzi (Institute of Romance Studies)  
*A crowdsourcing approach to lexical, syntactic and phonological variation in Franco-Provençal French*

November 26, 2015

Kenan Hochuli (URPP Language and Space)  
*Interaktionen auf Märkten in Istanbul und Zürich: ein Vergleich*

David Gerards (URPP Language and Space)

*Mass-Determinanten im Altiberoromanischen*

December 3, 2015

Philipp Stöckle (Department of German Studies)  
*Horizontale und vertikale Variation in der schweizerdeutschen Morphosyntax*

December 10, 2015

Nathalie Meyer (URPP Language and Space)  
*Massively multimodal communication and space: a case study of video game livestreams*

Florian Sommer (URPP Language and Space)

*The impact of diachronic and diatopic interaction on morphology: a case study from Baltic*

December 17, 2015

Darja Fišer (University of Ljubljana)

## Guests

**Anke Lüdeling** (Humboldt University Berlin), member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the URPP *Language and Space*, visits the CorpusLab at Freiestr. 16, 8032 Zurich, on Nov 12, 2015, 10:00–12:00. Interested linguists are welcome to get in touch!

**Malene Monka** (University of Copenhagen) introduces to the Language and Place project realised at the University of Copenhagen. If you are interested come along at room KO2 D-54, Karl Schmid-Str. 4, 8006 Zurich, on Dec 11, 2015, 14:00–15:45.

## Working with Linguistic and Spatial Data

The Corpus-, GIS-, and VideoLabs initiated a workshop series with the overall objective of fostering spatial linguistic research through efficient data management and use.

C. Derungs, W. Kesselheim, T. Samardžić

The workshop initiative reflects the central role of data and empirical research in the URPP Language and Space. The workshops, organized in cooperation with other members of the URPP, cover various issues in data collection, management, analysis and visualization.

The first workshop, “Visualizing Linguistic Data”, was held in November 2014. The aim was to give a broad overview of visualization approaches, to critically discuss these approaches, and to address the participants’ actual needs through hand-on work with real data. Input was given and discussions were guided by international experts in the field. The workshop attracted considerable attention and led to an increasing use of visualization techniques. It was also positively re-

ceived beyond the URPP.

In May 2015, the second workshop posed the question: “How to make data reusable?” Consequently, the aim of the workshop was to create an overview of available data sources in the URPP and to discuss issues of data collection, management, and standardization. As a major output, the idea was born to initiate a central URPP data, metadata, and documentation repository, accessible within and across the URPP. This infrastructure is considered crucial for integrating the research activities in the URPP and for advancing empirical linguistic research.

Future workshops in this series will address more advanced topics in computational data analysis. They will aim at providing researchers with a set of skills in multi-medial data analysis, natural language processing, spatial analysis and statistics. The workshops will address common issues and recurring help requests. The solutions will be made permanently available through a common infrastructure.

## New Linguistic Data

CorpusLab has started a two-year institutional partnership with the Department of General Linguistics, University of Belgrade, and the Department of Information and Communication Sciences, University of Zagreb, to collect and analyze linguistic data.

Tanja Samardžić

The partnership is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation grant “Regional Linguistic Data Initiative.” The goal of the partnership is two-fold. Firstly, we will collect and distribute various kinds of linguistic data and tools to support empirical research on Croatian and Serbian. Secondly, we will organize didactic activities and establish a regional community of researchers who will use these resources in their work.

The partnership is expected to result in a community of researchers working with linguistic data in a shared empirical framework, exchanging ideas, and adhering to common research quality standards. Some of the contacts established through the initiative are expected to result in research collaborations that will extend beyond the duration of the partnership. The project will contribute to the empirical study of the complex linguistic developments on the territory of former Yugoslavia and to the general development of linguistic data.



Quite a few members of scientific staff and management, present on a Tuesday during lunch time (f.l.t.r.): Ch. Meisner, E. Coghill, A. Kolmer, H. Ruch, N. Graf, T. Samardžić, Ch. Hottiger, C. Derungs, A. Steger, K. Hochuli

### First Internships at the Labs

CorpusLab and VideoLab offered internships of two weeks in length during the summer months of August and September. The first interns were **Simon Stammers** (VideoLab), **Christof Bless** and **Heath Gordon** (both CorpusLab).