Zurich, 15 May 2014. Linguists at the universities of Zurich, Bern and Neuchâtel start on 01 June 2014 the WhatsApp collection “What’s up, Switzerland?” (http://www.whatsapp-switzerland.ch). Almost five years after a successful SMS collection and intensive research on this form of communication, they now turn to WhatsApp messages.

Starting on 01 June 2014, all residents in Switzerland can take part in the project “What’s up, Switzerland?”, by sending in their WhatsApp messages to the project (send@whatsapp-switzerland.ch). Further information, instructions, and terms and conditions for the prize draw can be found on the project website http://www.whatsapp-switzerland.ch – participants can win prizes worth a total value of 4,000 CHF: every week, nine SBB-CFF-FFS travel vouchers and one Smartbox gift voucher can be won in the prize draw.

The aim of this multilingual project (German, French, Italian, Romansh, English) is to investigate the linguistic features of WhatsApp communication and to compare them with SMS. This comparison is possible because the research group conducted the big SMS collection “www.sms4science.ch – SMS communication in Switzerland” between 2009 and 2011.

Research questions are for example:

- How are different languages and dialects used in WhatsApp messages?
- How do WhatsApp users interact with each other?
- Are there linguistic differences between WhatsApp messages and SMS?
- Do new technologies bring about linguistic changes? And if so, what kind of changes?

With the help of the donated messages, the project “What’s up, Switzerland?” seeks a linguistic description of WhatsApp communication. Personal data will remain absolutely confidential and pictures, photos etc. should not be sent in but will, however, be deleted automatically. The project looks forward to receiving a generous number of donated messages. But hurry: the data collection (with 60 chances of winning) ends on 13 July 2014!
Professor Dr. Elisabeth Stark is the principal investigator of “What’s up, Switzerland?” and of the SNFS-funded project “www.sms4science.ch – SMS communication in Switzerland”. She is a tenured professor in Romance Linguistics at the University of Zurich. Together with her colleague Prof. Dr. Christa Dürscheid, an expert in Youth and Media Communication at the Institute of German Studies, and Dr. des. Charlotte Meisner, the coordinator of the sms4science.ch project, she welcomes any enquiries from the media.

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