University of Basel

**Department of
Languages and Literatures**

SWELL meeting 2022

Basel and online, 25 February 2022

Programme

Time	Presenter	on site / online
09:20 – 09:30	Opening of Swell meeting *Thomas Messerli and Basel English linguistics team*	Basel
09:30 – 10:00	Experiments on how speakers choose between consonant-final and vowel-final clippings *Jennifer M. Rains, Neuchâtel*	online
10:05 – 10:35	Redundancy in argument marking: Ditransitives in present day and historical English *Eva Zehentner, Zürich*	online
10:35 – 10:55	Coffee break (20')	
10:55 – 11:25	Instant messaging as an equalizer in the life of an intercultural MBA team *Carolin Debray, Basel*	Basel
11:30 – 12:00	Wordsmiths at work: Tone of voice stylization by advertising copywriters and social media influencers *Olivia Droz-dit-Busset, Berne*	Basel
12:05 – 12:35	The Change of the STRUT Vowel in Swiss German Speakers of English *Christine Graeppi, Berne*	Basel
12:35 – 14:05	Lunch break (90')	
14:05 – 14:35	"Yes, Agreed!": Microcopy, audience crafting, and the symbolic violence of little texts in UX writing *Lara Portmann, Berne*	Basel
14:40 – 15:10	Multimodality and Speech Act Perceptions across Cultures: The Case of Compliments *Fang Xie, Zürich*	Basel
15:10 – 15:30	Coffee break (20')	
15:30 – 16:00	Speaker reliability: calibrating confidence with evidence Mélinda Pozzi, Neuchâtel	Basel
16:05 – 16:35	A dynamic look at L2 development: The case of sojourners in Europe *Zeynep Köylü, Basel*	Basel
16:40 – 17:25	SWELL business meeting *Each university presents their news*	Basel
17:25 – 17:30	Closing of Swell meeting *Basel English linguistics team*	Basel

University of Basel

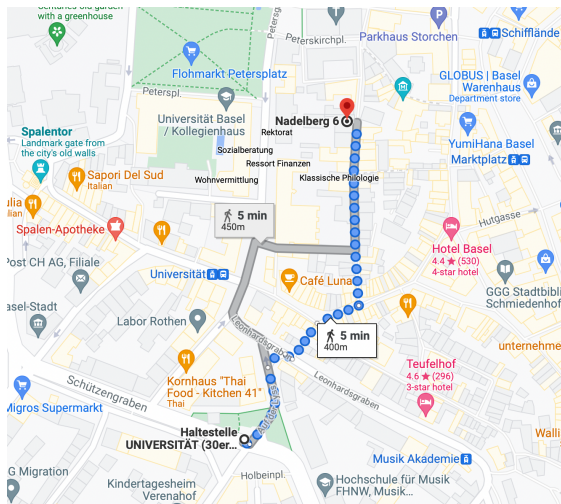Department of
Languages and Literatures

Physical attendance

The conference will take place in the grosse Hörsaal at the English seminar on Nadelberg 6 in Basel. Most presenters will be on site, online presentations will also be screened in the gr. Hörsaal.

How to get there from Basel SBB

Either take bus 30 or tram 8 or 11 from the station.

Bus 30 to 'Universität'   Tram 8 or 11 to 'Marktplatz'

Lunch and coffee breaks

Coffee breaks will be held on site at the English department (inside grosser Hörsaal and, weather-permitting, in the courtyard).
Lunch is self-paid, tables will be reserved for us at Kornhaus "Thai Food – Kitchen 41", Kornhausgasse 10, 4051 Basel.

Attendance online

The online part of the conference will take place on Zoom. If you have registered, you will receive the access data for the room by email the day before the conference. If you have registered for online attendance, but have not received anything from us by the evening of the 24th, please contact thomas.messerli@unibas.ch.

Programme with abstracts

Time	Presenter
09:20 – 09:30	Opening of Swell meeting *Thomas Messerli and Basel English linguistics team*
09:30 – 10:00	**Experiments on how speakers choose between consonant-final and vowel-final clippings** *Jennifer M. Rains, Neuchâtel* This presentation discusses English clippings, which are shortened word forms such as *prof* (< *professor*), *delish* (< *delicious*), or *condo* (< *condominium*). Clipping is a highly variable process (Davy 2000; Durkin 2009; Haspelmath & Sims 2010; Don 2014), so that the same source word may be clipped in different ways. A growing body of evidence suggests that clipping variability follows predictable tendencies (Lappe 2007; Berg 2011; Arndt-Lappe 2018, Hilpert et al. 2021). As yet, however, experimental work on clipping variability is scarce. The present investigation addresses this gap by focusing on one aspect of clipping variability, namely speakers' choices between consonant-final clippings (e.g. *renov* < *renovation*) and vowel-final clippings (*reno* < *renovation*). We devise two experimental studies in order to analyze the factors that impact speaker behavior. Our first study is a forced choice task in which participants are presented with a source word (e.g. *emollescence*) and two possible clippings that differ in their final segment (*emo* vs. *emol*). We find that speakers' choices are sensitive to word length in syllables, stress position, compound status, and the vowel type that appears in the final syllable. Our second study is a production task in which participants see a source word and propose a clipping. The responses show a preference for final consonants in monosyllabic clippings and clippings that derive from compound source words. We contextualize our results against the background of empirical work on clipping that has been carried out on the basis of large databases (Lappe 2007; Berg 2011; Hilpert et al. 2021).
10:05 – 10:35	**Redundancy in argument marking: Ditransitives in present day and historical English** *Eva Zehentner, Zürich* **Redundancy in argument marking: Ditransitives in Middle English** Linguistic systems are frequently discussed in terms of communicative efficiency, implying, among other things, that redundant strategy use or marking should be dis-preferred. On the other hand, redundancy may be useful in aiding learning and increasing a language's robustness. In the present paper, we (a) assess how frequent redundancy really is, both in terms of number of strategies available in a language, and in terms of redundant marking of specific relations within individual utterances, and (b) discuss the usefulness of redundancy in light of the competition between efficiency versus robustness. Our test case is participant role disambiguation in Middle English, specifically the interaction of constituent order, case, prepositional marking, and agreement to distinguish agents and recipients in ditransitive clauses. Using evidence from the Penn Helsinki Corpus of Middle English (PPCME2), we find that redundancy is prevalent, albeit within certain limits.
10:55 – 11:25	**Instant messaging as an equalizer in the life of an intercultural MBA team** *Carolin Debray, Basel* Technological advances have provided more and more means of communication that work teams can use to accomplish their tasks. Even in teams mostly operating face-to-face, alternate modes of communication accompany the more traditional work forms, including email or whatsapp, but also specially developed work tools such as team-based messaging system Slack, which in 2019 had over 10 million daily users. The body of research on team interactions in contemporary digital modes, while growing, remains relatively scant in comparison with studies of face-to-face meetings (Darics, 2016).

	In particular, longitudinal research is lacking that addresses crucial questions including: What is the role of digital communication in face-to-face teams? Are certain topics or interactions only present in one mode of communication and not in another? How is the interaction organised and is there a different share in participation in the different modes? What different interactional features appear in the two different modes? These questions will be addressed through exploring the communications of a team of six culturally and functionally diverse MBA students, who completed a series of projects for real world clients over nine months. Alongside frequent face-to-face meetings, the team used a variety of technological tools to facilitate their interactions, with Whatsapp as the most frequently used tool to facilitate remote interactions. The dataset consists of the recorded team meetings and the Whatsapp chat the team used across the nine months. Interactions in the two different modes are compared in the talk with a specific focus on the different functions the two modes seem to fulfil. Participation in the different modes is also discussed and important implications are drawn, including as to the role of less proficient and marginalised speakers. **References** Darics, E., 2016. Digital media in workplace interactions, in: Georgakopoulou, A., Spilioti, T. (Eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication. Routledge, pp. 197–211.
11:30 – 12:00	**Wordsmiths at work: Tone of voice stylization by advertising copywriters and social media influencers** *Olivia Droz-dit-Busset, Berne* As part of their work, copywriters are increasingly tasked with designing a so-called tone of voice for companies. This technique entails creating public communications that exude a uniform corporate "personality". In turn, social media influencers (SMIs), as new-generation copywriters, are given a kindred yet slightly different task: they have to adhere to advertising briefs' talking points – while lending their own personal style to the commercial message they disseminate on their social media accounts. Following Bakhtin's (1981) classic ideas about *polyphony* and Tannen's (2003) work on *ventriloquism*, my paper examines how these two types of wordsmiths – i.e., 'high-end' language workers (Thurlow, 2020) – work with and around the notion of voice. I draw on nearly 20 semi-structured interviews with copywriters and SMIs focusing on their reported production processes. My work is further supplemented by metadiscursive accounts from industry blogposts and newsletters and/or social media posts by other professionals in these industries. The analysis centres on the different ways these old- and new-generation advertisers work with language for ventriloquizing the companies or brands they represent. While copywriters are usually expected to "disappear" behind clients' brands, SMIs instead have to mediate working within the framework of their clients' advertising briefs, while ensuring that they still sound (sufficiently) like "themselves". These stylized performances of an authentic self effectively require that SMIs engage simultaneously in branding and self-branding. Following Thurlow (2020), I argue that research, like mine, on the language work of wordsmiths helps broaden critical-sociolinguistic perspectives on the contemporary political economy of language. **References** Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Discourse in the novel. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (pp. 259-422). Austin: University of Texas Press. Tannen, D. (2003). Power maneuvers or connection maneuvers? Ventriloquizing in family interaction. *Linguistics, language, and the real world: Discourse and beyond*, 50-62. Thurlow, C. (Ed.) (2020). *The Business of Words: Wordsmiths, Linguists and Other Language Workers*. London: Routledge.

12:05 – 12:35	**The Change of the STRUT Vowel in Swiss German Speakers of English** *Christine Graeppi, Berne* The name Trump is everywhere to be heard. However, a vast variety of pronunciations of the name can be observed by ESL speakers (e.g. /trɑmp/, /troemp/, /trʊmp/). Through conversation in an SLA setting, accents are recognisable, therefore, certain features can be assigned to a specific first language. There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of the difficulty in realising vowel sounds by EFL learners (i.e. Cunningham, 2008; del Rosario Garita Sánchez, González Lutz & Solís Pérez, 2019; Hunter & Kebede, 2012; Leemann, 2008). The Swiss German phonemic inventory does not feature the STRUT vowel, its speakers, according to Swan (2001), produce a more open back vowel such as /ɑ/ rather than /ʌ/. The present study investigates this vowel in particular, in order to highlight its difficulty for foreign language learners whilst analysing whether intelligibility issues could occur with Swiss German learners of English. The current data set encompasses read speech from 30 grammar school students of the first three years at school. All 30 participants had been taught English between five and seven years, aged 14 to 17. In total 33 words including a STRUT vowel were analysed while applying an interval duration formant frequency measurement. The most striking result to emerge from the data is not only the STRUT vowel formant frequencies deviating substantially between speakers but also when compared to the benchmark values, for example, regarding women: the formant frequencies in GAE are on average F1 753, F2 1426 (Hillenbrand, Getty, Clark & Wheeler, 1995) and for SSBE F1 914 and F2 1459 (Deterding, 1997).
14:05 – 14:35	**"Yes, Agreed!": Microcopy, audience crafting, and the symbolic violence of little texts in UX writing** *Lara Portmann, Berne* This paper investigates the professional practices and linguistic products of user experience (UX) writers. UX writers are relatively elite language workers who design the linguistic content of websites, apps or other software interfaces. Orienting to algorithmic pragmatics (Jones, 2020), my analysis focuses on an emblematic example of this work: the so-called microcopy produced for cookie consent notices. Drawing on a convenience sample of 151 cookie consent notices, I demonstrate how these "little texts" (Pappert & Roth, 2021) act in ways which are both agentful and influential. More than a matter of implicit audience design (Bell, 1984), UX writers actively use the affordances of software interfaces for inventing, stylizing, and *crafting* an audience. This is akin to what Bakhtin (1986) has called the superaddressee. I propose that cookie consent notices thus constitute a form of conversational inequality; more than this, they are also a form of symbolic violence. While UX writers are aware of the rhetorical force of their work, they typically misrecognise its wider cultural-political ramifications – how, therefore, these "little texts" are much bigger than one might imagine. **References** Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (M. Holquist & C. Emerson, Eds.; V. W. McGee, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press. Bell, A. (1984). Language style as audience design. *Language in Society*, *13*(2), 145–204. Jones, R. H. (2020). The rise of the Pragmatic Web: Implications for rethinking meaning and interaction. In C. Tagg & M. Evans (Eds.), *Message and Medium: English Language Practices Across Old and New Media* (pp. 17–37). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. Pappert, S., & Roth, K. S. (eds.). (2021). *Kleine Texte*. Berlin: Peter Lang.
14:40 – 15:10	**Multimodality and Speech Act Perceptions across Cultures: The Case of Compliments** *Fang Xie, Zürich* Speech acts have received a great deal of attention from pragmaticists for years, and compliments are perhaps one of the most investigated speech acts. Various aspects have

	been studied with a large range of different methods, but few studies, so far, have focused on the evaluations or perceptions of this speech act. Speech act perception is a recent research interest appearing in this field, but the existing studies mainly focus on the speech act itself, without taking the accompanying non-verbal behaviours into consideration, such as facial expressions and body gestures. This study, therefore, examines native speakers' perceptions of compliments in a multimodal context, and compares such evaluations across different language groups, age groups, gender groups, etc. Various modes of compliment materials are used for the perception experiment in this study, which includes different forms of the same compliment, compliments at different speeds and with different accents, compliments issued with different facial expressions and three types of compliment responses. The compliment perceptions and rationales are collected from English native speakers, Swiss German native speakers and Chinese native speakers through online experiments and retrospective interviews. According to the data collected so far, different age groups, gender groups and language groups show some differences in the evaluations of multimodal compliments, but whether they are statistically significant needs to be tested further after the final data collection.
15:30 – 16:00	**Speaker reliability: calibrating confidence with evidence** *Mélinda Pozzi, Neuchâtel* Overconfidence is typically damaging for one's reputation as a reliable source of information. When deciding whether to trust a speaker, addressees do not exclusively rely on the speaker's confidence ("confidence heuristics"), but consider, whenever possible, whether the speaker's degree of confidence matches with the accuracy of their claim. As a result, a confident speaker whose messages turn out to be false will typically lose their credibility (Tenney et al., 2007; 2008; 2011; Vullioud et al., 2017). Crucially, though, preliminary findings from Tenney et al. (2008) indicate that an overconfident speaker does not suffer any reputational costs if their mistake is taken to be *justified*. This suggests that the speaker's perceived reliability as a source of information depends on whether their confidence matches with the quality of the evidence at their disposal ("confidence-evidence calibration"). If this is the case, then, even an accurate informant should lose their credibility if the evidence available to them does not warrant the degree of confidence expressed (bad confidence-evidence calibration). In the present study, we replicated Tenney et al. (2008) results showing that overconfidence does not backfire if inaccuracy is justified by strong evidence, and we showed that confidence can backfire if accuracy is not justified by enough evidence (the speaker is accurate "by chance"). Reputation management in communication therefore depends on how well the speaker's confidence is calibrated to her evidential basis. **References** Tenney, E. R., MacCoun, R. J., Spellman, B. A., & Hastie, R. (2007). Calibration trumps confidence as a basis for witness credibility. *Psychological Science, 18*(1), 46–50. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01847.x Tenney, E. R., Spellman, B. A., & MacCoun, R. J. (2008). The benefits of knowing what you know (and what you don't): How calibration affects credibility. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 44*(5), 1368–1375. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2008.04.006 Tenney, E. R., Small, J. E., Kondrad, R. L., Jaswal, V. K., & Spellman, B. A. (2011). Accuracy, confidence, and calibration: How young children and adults assess credibility. *Developmental psychology, 47*(4), 1065–1077. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0023273 Vullioud, C., Clément, F., Scott-Phillips, T., & Mercier, H. (2017). Confidence as an expression of commitment: Why misplaced expressions of confidence backfire. *Evolution and Human Behavior, 38*(1), 9–17. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2016.06.002

16:05 – 16:35	**A dynamic look at L2 development: The case of sojourners in Europe** *Zeynep Köylü, Basel* Second language development (SLD) has long been kept equal to measurable linear changes in L2 proficiency (Verspoor et al., 2021), mostly through the use of standardized tests (e.g., TOEFL) or the analysis of task-based oral or written performance data through a complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) assessment framework (Norris & Ortega, 2009). Although the latter has provided a broader understanding of L2 development, no form of systematicity has been found to confirm that each CAF construct conjointly develops over time (Bulté & Housen, 2020). The significance of the problem here is that if we learn more about the nature of the relationship between, for instance, syntactic and lexical complexity, we might provide useful insights to language classroom pedagogy. Operationalizing SLD and the nature of relationships among CAF constructs drawing on the tenets of complex dynamic systems theory (CDST), the current study aims to investigate any form of systematicity in a group of sojourners' SLD over the course of an academic semester abroad through their written performance elicited at frequent intervals. As part of a larger project (Pérez-Vidal, 2014), 12 Spanish/Catalan bilingual learners of English as an L2 sojourner participants provided weekly diary entries over 14-17 weeks spent abroad. A total of 175 diary entries (110K words) were coded for measures of accuracy and syntactic and lexical complexity via CLAN (MacWhinney, 2000) to see if any form of systematicity could be traced. The nature of relationship between the given constructs were quantitatively analyzed to determine if there was a competitive, supportive, growing, or precursor relationship through non-linear analysis methods. The preliminary results indicated a competitive relationship between syntactic and lexical complexity and a supportive one for accuracy and lexical diversity, along with high levels of individual variation confirming the DST argument of individual learning trajectories. These results might bring useful insights to language classroom pedagogy. **References** MacWhinney, B. (2000). The CHILDES project: Tools for analyzing talk. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Norris, J. M., & Ortega, L. (2009). Towards an organic approach to investigating CAF in instructed SLA: The case of complexity. Applied linguistics, 30(4), 555-578. Pérez-Vidal, C. (2014). *Language acquisition in study abroad and formal instruction contexts*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Verspoor, M., Lowie, W., & Wieling, M. (2021). L2 Developmental Measures from a Dynamic Perspective. In B. Le Bruyn & M. Paquot (Eds.), *Learner Corpus Research Meets Second Language Acquisition* (Cambridge Applied Linguistics, pp. 172-190). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108674577.009
16:40 – 17:25	SWELL business meeting *Each university presents their news*
17:25 – 17:30	Closing of Swell meeting *Basel English linguistics team*