

Der Lehrstuhl für Romanische Sprachwissenschaft  
lädt herzlich ein zum Vortrag von

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# **Social media language: creative, dynamic and strategic**

im Rahmen des *Kolloquiums zur romanistischen Sprachwissenschaft*

Mittwoch, den 23. Oktober 2024

10.15–11.45 Uhr

ÜR18, Phil.-Geb.

As social media use is increasing, in a dynamic fast-paced landscape of change, which sees new platforms arising (beReal) and others rebranding (Twitter → X) or changing their features and functionality (Instagram, Facebook), this talk considers the language used on social media from a linguistics perspective. I begin by providing a definition of social media, reviewing what counts, and what does not count as social media. Two recent studies of social media are then presented.

Study 1 considers the hashtag *#wokeAF*, and reports on a diachronic analysis of the hashtag in English-language tweets posted between 2012 and 2022. First, we trace the use of the word *woke* from verb to adjective, with novel uses arising in African American Vernacular English. Analysing the changes in use of *#wokeaf* leads us to posit a novel grammatical construction: the *intensifying expletive* ([adjective + *as* + expletive]). Although examples of the intensifying expletive are listed in the Urban Dictionary, this is the first linguistic analysis of the construction (to our knowledge). The study also presents an overview of the semantic interpretations and syntactic characteristics of the intensifying expletive *#wokeAF* as they unfold over time.

Study 2 focuses on grammatical analyses of Māori possession constructions in tweets collected between 2007 and 2022. Māori is the Indigenous language of New Zealand, whose story is one of colonisation, marginalisation and in recent times, revitalisation. Carving out an important but tricky part of the possessive system in Māori, namely the A/O alternation, the study reports on the frequency of use of the two grammatical markers in tweets posted online by 200+ users, with a view to capture language variation and change over time. This is to date, the first large scale corpus study of Māori possession.

Drawing up what might be learnt by scrutinising the language of social media, I argue that this type of language shares important parallels with both spoken and written language, among which is its propensity for fast paced change. The talk concludes with some remarks on advantages and limitations of using social media language data.

Prof. Dr. Esme Winter-Froemel