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Susanne Mohr (NTNU Trondheim)

The meaning of *I love you*: a multimodal analysis of the representation of South African Sign Language on social media

Web 2.0 and social media are characterized by user-generated content and social interaction (Herring 2013). Users draw on different semiotic resources, such as text, pictures or speech to make meaning online. However, due to persistent semiotic ideologies (cf. Thurlow 2017) text and spoken language still dominate computer-mediated communication. With respect to Deaf communities and sign languages, these ideologies become visible and important in order to foster what has been called “Deaf spaces”, allowing Deaf users to socialize and exchange experiences through visual communication (Solvang & Haualand 2014; Kurz & Cuculik 2015). Viewed the characteristics of communication on social media, i.e. an emphasis on communing affiliation with the ambient (speech) community, conviviality, phatic practices and self-interpellation (Lange 2009; Varis & Blommaert 2014; Zappavigna & Martin 2018), an analysis of the representation of Deafness and sign languages online is intriguing.

The talk presents a case study of the online representation of Deafness and South African Sign Language (SASL) by a large hotel chain and a small café in Cape Town. It is based on multimodal data from the companies’ websites, various social media platforms and interviews. Applying a discourse-centered online ethnographic approach, it analyses if Deaf people could benefit from that representation but it also discusses the question if and in how far the companies themselves might be commodifying Deafness and SASL for their benefits. The #Signtember campaign and the I-LOVE-YOU sign are the focus of analysis and showcase a unique kind of multimodal meaning making online.

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Institutskolloquium Sommersemester 2021 (Leitung: Nico Nassenstein)

Wann? Dienstag, 20. April 2021, 18:00-19:15 Uhr

Wo? Konferenzschaltung via Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4362747051?pwd=ZW85YmFKUjQ1aHZFeFIWVjF0bVdnZz09>

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