



PhD Position in Historical and Quantitative Linguistics

With the launch of a new NCCR Evolving Language, which involves nearly 40 different research groups from a large variety of disciplines across Switzerland, we seek to fill a **PhD position** (4 years; start date: May 1, 2020, open until filled).

Our goal is to identify how the use and structure of human language and animal vocal communication is constrained and shaped by pre-established form-meaning correspondences, and how novel, arbitrary forms evolve and diversify under different social and ecological conditions. In this work package we carry out experimental research with animals such as meerkats and observational research on human language. Within this PhD project, we will in particular apply a corpus-based approach using corpora of Indo-European language varieties (spoken and extinct) in order to explore the extent and the evolutionary dynamics of form-meaning mappings, focussing on the systematic relationships between phonological form and grammatical vs. lexical semantic functions.

The successful PhD student in quantitative historical linguistics will become part of an interdisciplinary team of scientists tackling the topic of language evolution. Research supervision of this work package will be assumed collectively by Profs Paul Widmer (Comparative Linguistics), Marta Manser (Animal Behaviour), Balthasar Bickel (Comparative Linguistics), Robert Weibel (GI Science), Kentaro Shimizu (Genetics) and possibly others. The candidate will join the Indo-European Studies Group group at the Department of Comparative Language Science where he/she will become part of a team with expertise in qualitative and quantitative historical linguistics, typology, first language acquisition, and data science. The main task will be to extract patterns of systematicity in a sample of Indo-European languages, supported by a team of ML experts, and to explore the evolutionary dynamics using phylogenetic and phylogeographic methods.

The successful candidate will have an **MA in linguistics** with a specialization in historical linguistics/typology/quantitative methods, a strong interest in corpus linguistics, a solid background in statistics and in at least one scripting language (e.g. R, Python). We look for evidence of personal initiative and seek candidates who have excellent teamwork skills and are interested to go beyond disciplinary boundaries.

Please submit the following documents and information as a single PDF to paul.widmer@uzh.ch (whom you may contact for further information) and marta.manser@uzh.ch:

- cover letter emphasizing motivation to apply (1 page max.)
- curriculum vitae
- contacts of two referees
- writing sample (e.g. summary of MA thesis; 2 pages max.)

The NCCR places great emphasis on gender balance; we particularly encourage women to apply.

The position is available until filled (first deadline: 3 April 2020).