Syntactic Variation in Swiss German: Preliminary Results from Two Case Studies
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This paper presents some preliminary results of a long-term project investigating syntactic variation in Swiss German. Based on a parsed corpus of spontaneous speech of currently about 900'000 words, we will focus on the variation that can be found in two areas of the grammar: (1) The distribution of the verbal elements in the verb cluster (Verb (Projection) Raising); (2) V2 vs V3. For each phenomenon, we will start by providing quantitative evidence to determine the status of the different variants and we then explore some issues our results raise. With respect to (1), we will divide our quantitative data into different contexts depending on the type of auxiliary, and we will show that, while in the high-frequency contexts, there is very little variation, the different options are more common in low frequency-contexts. We will then explore why, despite full grammaticality of the different options according to judgments, one option is so rare in high-frequency contexts, but much more common with low-frequency contexts. As for (2), we will show that V2 order is extremely robust with initial objects. Much more variation is found with initial adverbs, and we will aim to shed some light on the nature of this variation.