

Keynotes SSLP 2018

1st Keynote: Tuesday, 9:30

Language comprehension, emotion and sociality

Jos van Berkum, UiL OTS, Utrecht University

Abstract

Thanks to language, humans are great at computing highly flexible discrete compositional structures such that they can refer to just about everything with great precision, in fictional worlds or the real one. However, we're also a highly social species, using language to actually move each other around and to share what we care about. One can therefore expect to see intimate ties between language processing and systems involved in affect and sociality. In my talk, I will discuss some of our work on emotional language processing, including EEG research on the impact of morally offensive language, and facial EMG research on processing mini-narratives that feature morally 'bad' characters and actions. Along the way, I will also briefly outline the Affective Language Comprehension model (Van Berkum, in press, Oxford Handbook of Psycholinguistics), an attempt to decompose the rather fuzzy notion of 'emotional language processing' into something more precise.

2nd Keynote: Tuesday, 13:45

Language External Effects on Speech

Stefanie Jannedy, ZAS Berlin

Abstract

Consistent with the broader sociophonetic literature, we show that speech perception is highly contextualized and therefore mediated and bootstrapped by inferred and assumed knowledge about the speaker and situation (Niedzielski 1999; Hay & Drager 2010; Jannedy & Weirich 2014). In this talk, I will try to show the link between speech production and speech perception and how i.e. attitude mediates these two. I will argue for integrating approaches to social psychology in linguistic work to get at the causes and consequences of linguistic variation and language change through estimating attitudes towards linguistic forms.

3rd Keynote: Wednesday, 9:00

What kind of meaning is social meaning?

Laura Staum Casasanto, Cornell University

Abstract

Speakers use language to signal aspects of their identity and social group membership, and listeners are sensitive to social information in the discourse context when they comprehend language. But what are the mechanisms and representations underlying these acts of meaning construction? This question is often framed in terms of how speakers and listeners integrate social and linguistic information. This framing of the question assumes that these two streams of information are computed independently and then combined, which is consistent with traditional theories of meaning; however, in this talk, I'll discuss an alternative framework for thinking about concepts and word meanings, in which words don't have core meanings but instead are cues to construct meanings in context. This framework may provide an opportunity to understand the integration of social information into language processing as an example of exactly the same processes that underlie meaning construction more broadly.

4th Keynote: Wednesday, 13:30

The development of linguistic skills from a social network perspective

Shiri Lev-Ari, Royal Holloway London

Abstract

In this talk I will show how the size of our social network influences our communicative skills even as native speaking adults. Using converging evidence from individual difference studies, experimental studies, and computational simulations I will show how the size of our social network influences the distributional properties of our input, and consequently, how well we understand other people at the phonological and semantic levels. Furthermore, I'll show how the size of our social network influences our own behavior during interaction in a manner that promotes or hinders our ability to communicate. The size of our social network thus influences our ability to communicate with others by shaping our input, our behavior, and their interaction.