Theme 3: Social Meaning & Semantics/Pragmatics of Harmful Speech

Thursday, 18 February 2021

13:55-14:00	Welcome
14:00-15:00	**Elin McCready**: Enriched dogwhistles and ideologies (11pm JST)
	10 min break
15:10-16:10	**Julia Zakkou**: "Real" and "True"
	10 min break
16:20-17:20	**David Pietraszewski**: Understanding oppressive speech through the lens of humans' evolved coalitional psychology
	10 min break
17:30-18:30	**Eric Swanson**: If You See Something, Say Something: On the Dynamics of Deniable Possibility Raising (11:30 am EST)
	10 min break
18:40-19:40	**Robin Jeshion**: What's Wrong with Slurs (9:40 am PST)
19:40-20:40	Optional round-table discussion

Friday, 19 February 2021

13:55-14:00	Welcome
14:00-15:00	**Uli Sauerland**: The division of socio-emotive and logical meaning from the meaning first perspective
	10 min break
15:10-16:10	**Anton Benz**: Precision and Vagueness: Social meaning in Bayesian games
	10 min break
16:20-17:20	**Michael Franke**: Modeling manipulative language use
	10 min break
17:30-18:30	**Roland Mühlenbernd**: Politeness and Reputation
	10 min break
18:40-19:40	**Justin Khoo**: Code words and community norms (12:40 pm EST)
19:40-20:40	Optional round-table discussion

Enriched dogwhistles and ideologies

Elin McCready (Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo)

2 pm CET — 11:00 pm JST

Henderson and McCready (2018,i.a.) propose a classification of dogwhistles into two types: identifying dogwhistles, which indicate aspects of the speaker's social persona, and enriching dogwhistles, which also alter the truth-conditional content of the sentence including the dogwhistle. This talk explores the mechanism of enrichment, proposing that recognition of the persona of the speaker produces ideologically mediated inferences about the speaker's attitudes, which in turn induce conclusions about the content they intend to communicate.

"Real" and "True"

Julia Zakkou (Bielefeld University)

3:10 pm CET

TBA

Understanding oppressive speech through the lens of humans' evolved coalitional psychology

David Pietraszewski (Max Planck Institute, Berlin)

4:20 pm CET

Humans have an evolved psychology that operates with great precision but without our conscious awareness. This talk will explore how the basic information-processing requirements of one such element of our evolved psychology—our ability to represent and keep track of group relationships—provides novel insights into what, precisely, hateful and oppressive speech is doing to the minds of the sender, receiver, and bystanders. The pragmatics of oppressive speech, in other words, are a window into how our minds represent group conflict, and vice a versa.

If You See Something, Say Something: On the Dynamics of Deniable Possibility Raising

Eric Swanson (University of Michigan)

5:30 pm CET — 11:30 am EST

Many speech acts raise the possibility that p in ways that are compatible with straightforwardly denying that p, for example by asserting that not p. This paper describes the dynamics of such speech acts and develops hypotheses about their social and political import.

What's Wrong with Slurs?

Robin Jeshion (University of Southern California)

6:40 pm CET — 9:40 am PST

While many forms of speech harm and oppress, speech acts with weaponized uses of slurs are frequently singled out for special, deeper social censure. This paper aims to illuminate why this is so by revealing how one central wrong in such acts structurally parallels one of the deepest

moral wrongs in interrogational torture.

The division of socio-emotive and logical meaning from the meaning first perspective

Uli Sauerland (ZAS Berlin)

2:00 pm CET

Different categories of social and expressive meaning share a number of properties: projection, immediacy, and identity irrelevance. Why do they differ from logical meaning in this respect? I present a proposal based on the Meaning First view of Sauerland & Alexiadou (2020, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.571295).

Precision and Vagueness: Social meaning in Bayesian games

Anton Benz (ZAS Berlin)

3:10 pm CET

TBA

Modeling manipulative language use

Michael Franke (Osnabrück University)

4:20 pm CET

Linguistic theories of language use have focused very strongly on cooperative exchange of useful information. This neglects the fact that language is often used to manipulate opinions of an audience in subtle ways. We therefore propose an extension of recently popular probabilistic pragmatic models, couched in the Rational Speech Act framework, to also include an argumentative dimension. Drawing on earlier work on argumentative language use (Ducrot, 1973; Anscombre & Ducrot, 1983; Merin, 1999), we integrate a notion of argument strength derived from statistical measures of observational evidence into a model of the speaker's utterance choice. We report on novel empirical data from two production-related studies. We conclude that speakers are willing and able to engage in manipulative language use and that the probabilistic formalization of argumentative strength entertained here offers potential new insights into utterance choice.

Politeness and Reputation

Roland Mühlenbernd (ZAS Berlin)

5:30 pm CET

Politeness in conversation is a fascinating aspect of human interaction that directly interfaces language use and human social behavior more generally. We show how game theory, as a higher-order theory of behavior, can provide the tools to understand and model polite behavior. We model and study how the polite communications of thanking and apologizing impact two different types of an agent's social image: perceived warmth and perceived competence. Our analysis shows that in a society of agents who value status-related traits over reciprocity-related traits, both the less and the more polite strategies are maintained in cycles of cultural-evolutionary change.

Code words and community norms

Justin Khoo (MIT)

6:40 pm CET — 12:40 pm EST

Community norms may limit promotion of certain types of racist or sexist policies or views by introducing social costs to their implementation and expression. But holding people accountable to such norms is costly as well; misapplying the norms can lead to sanctions by way of second-order community norms. I argue that coded speech is a way of exploiting the costs of community norm-enforcement—by creating unclarity regarding whether an action violates the norm, the actor can violate the norm while avoiding accountability to it. I argue that this way of thinking about coded speech motivates strong constraints on how it should be understood semantically and pragmatically and discuss the upshots for various theories.