Game Theoretic Modelling for Social Meaning and Semantic Change

Heather Burnett (Laboratoire de Linguistique Formelle, CNRS-Université Paris 7-Diderot)
E. Allyn Smith (Département de Linguistique, Université du Québec à Montréal)

This workshop aims to give a general, accessible introduction to the use of game theory in the modeling of language use and interpretation. In the past 15 years, decision/game theoretic methods have become widely used in the fields of semantics and pragmatics (see Benz et al. 2005, Franke & Jäger 2016, for overviews). The goal of this workshop is to show how these tools could also be fruitful for analyzing language variation and change phenomena of the kind commonly studied in variationist sociolinguistics. As compared to other kinds of formal models, game theory is well-suited to this purpose because it is based on actions and reactions, which is consistent with a constant co- construction of meaning and identity. The workshop will provide participants with a working knowledge of the basic principles of game-theoretic pragmatics, show how these models have been used to analyze pragmatic phenomena of interest to sociolinguists (politeness, slurs, slang terms etc.), and explore how they can be used to treat social meaning and semantic change within a variationist perspective.

References

Benz, A., Jäger, G., & Van Rooij, R. (Eds.). 2005. *Game theory and pragmatics*. Springer.
Franke. M. & G. Jäger. 2016. Probabilistic pragmatics, or why Bayes' rule is probably important for pragmatics. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft*, 3-44.