

Pronominal competition in grammar and processing

Organizers:

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Description: The workshop aims at further solidifying bridges between the study of grammar and the study of processing and acquisition by focusing on an empirical domain and a set of theoretical issues addressed within these sub-disciplines. We propose to look at pronouns, reflexives, and A-bar gaps, in grammar and in processing, through the lens of theories of competition. One proposal for the source of well-studied binding constraints on pronouns and anaphors invokes competitive processes, driven by a preference for local binding of anaphors wherever possible; similarly, the study of gaps and resumptive pronouns has often relied on a preference for gaps whenever possible. The broad question we aim to address is this: when we observe effects which suggest some sort of calculus of preference in comprehension and production, between pronouns and anaphors, between pronouns and gaps in A-bar dependencies, what is the nature of these constraints? For example, should economy-based preferences, to the extent that they are observed, be understood to characterize our grammatical competence or are they better understood in terms of the way that competition plays out in comprehension and production processes? Answering these questions requires us to link formal syntactic and semantic theories with psycholinguistic theories of production and comprehension processes. The goal of this workshop is to put these types of theories in conversation as a step towards achieving this goal.