A computational theory of individual differences in pragmatic abilities

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Abstract

Pragmatics is a fundamental aspect of language use and learning. In recent years, computational models have been used to specify the computational processes involved in pragmatic inferences – however, this is mainly done for adults and mostly on a group level. In this talk, I will present three studies that use computational models to study individual differences in children's pragmatic word learning. First, I will introduce the modeling framework that allows us to predict children's behavior – on a group level – in a task that requires integrating different pragmatic cues. Next, I will show that we can use the same modeling framework to predict individual-level behavior. Finally, I will present a study that uses computational modeling to study individual differences in pragmatic reasoning across three different tasks. Taken together, I hope that this work contributes to a more precise understanding of individual differences in pragmatic abilities.

Bio

Manuel Bohn studied Psychology in Vienna, Austria, did his PhD with Josep Call and Mike Tomasello at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. He then went to do a Postdoc with Michael C. Frank at Stanford - funded by a Marie Curie Fellowship. Since 2019 he is back at Leipzig the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology as a group leader in the newly founded Department of Comparative Cultural Psychology (Director: Daniel Haun).