

Thomas Hills - Abstract

Semantic Change Across One or More Lifetimes

Words fall in and out of individual and group lexicons. The half-life for replacement of a word in a language by a cognate ranges between 750 to 10,000 years, but words change their relationships with other words over much shorter periods of cultural time and even within a single lifetime. In this talk, I will discuss work on how semantic networks are formed during an individual's early development, how the structural semantics of a single lexicon change across the lifespan, and how this is further embedded in cultural changes in language that take place over hundreds of years.