

The role of pragmatic and communicative factors in conceptual abstraction

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Natural languages offer multiple ways to describe the same target concept (e.g., *dalmatian*, *dog*, *animal*). Such terms can be situated within a conceptual hierarchy, ranging from subordinate (*dalmatian*) to basic-level (*dog*) to superordinate (*animal*) terms (Clark, 1997; Rosch et al., 1976). My talk aims to shed light on two questions: 1) Under what conditions are these terms chosen in communicative interaction to convey a relevant target concept? 2) How do such different terms for the same target concept become established in a language within the context of language evolution? I will present case studies using an interactive experimental paradigm between humans as well as agent-based models of language evolution. I will demonstrate that pragmatic factors such as context, communicative needs, and communicative efficiency play key roles in the formation and communication of such conceptual hierarchies both in concrete communicative situations and during language evolution.