



15th SFB-Colloquium, Friday, 14 June 2019, 12.15 pm
University of Potsdam, Campus Golm, Building 14, Room 2.15-16

At the invitation of projects B02, B03 and Q

Prof. Dr. Whitney Tabor (University of Connecticut)
will give a talk on

Modeling Ungrammaticality: A Self-Organizing Model of Islands

Formal theories of grammar and traditional parsing models, insofar as they presuppose a categorical notion of grammar, face the challenge of accounting for gradient judgments of acceptability. This challenge is traditionally met by explaining gradient effects in terms of extra-grammatical factors, positing a purely categorical core for the language system. We present a new way of accounting for gradience in a self-organized sentence processing (SOSP) model, which generates structures with a continuous range of grammaticality values. We focus on islands, a family of syntactic domains out of which movement is generally prohibited. Islands are interesting because, although most linguistic theories treat them as fully ungrammatical and uninterpretable, experimental studies have revealed gradient patterns of acceptability and evidence for their interpretability. We report simulations in which SOSP largely respects island constraints, but in certain cases, consistent with empirical data, coerces elements that block dependencies into elements that allow them.

Everyone is cordially invited.