Thomas Weskott

Title: Making Items Matter More, or: What Experimental Linguistics Can Learn From Major League Baseball

In this talk, I will discuss two recent insights into the refinement of methodological and statistical tools for acceptability judgment studies in experimental linguistics: first, the notion of *encounters* (Barr, 2018) as the target of generalization, and how it affects our understanding of the role of items in acceptability studies, and, secondly, (Bayesian) distributional models (Kneib, Silberstorff, & Säfken, 2023), which allow researchers to move beyond the binary conception of systematic variance vs. error variance favoured by classical regression techniques. Both ideas will be substantiated by recent empirical studies. We will discuss how they might allow us to advance our understanding of acceptability as a dependent variable, and, ultimately, of the role of acceptability experiments in linguistic theory construction.