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But Where Can the Magic Hide Itself? Hypothetical Reported Speech in the Training of Entertainment Magicians



5:00 - 7:00 pm Haines Hall 352

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Entertainment magicians are acutely aware of how spectators perceive their every word and gesture. To enact their carefully designed deceptions, they must strategically manage an internally consistent flow of true and false information, orchestrating a participant framework in light of an intended illusion. Successful deception requires some degree of conscious reasoning about how spectators think and perceive. One common strategy for imagining spectators' viewpoints in the context of magic instruction and shoptalk is to verbalize their thoughts as hypothetical inner speech. Drawing on a long-term ethnographic study of entertainment magic in contemporary France, I explore how animating the thoughts of hypothetical spectators helps train magicians for real performances. By examining a number of examples, I show how magicians use talk to cultivate the cunning intelligence virtually synonymous with their vocation.

Dinner will be served at the conclusion of the talk