GSAS Workshops
Linguistics Circle

Ian Kirby (Harvard)

Where is Additivity?

Many languages build quantificational NPs (QNPs) out of an indefinite pronoun (e.g. a WH-pronoun, some) and one or more particles. Outside of QNPs, these particles often serve numerous additional roles. In this talk, I focus on one type commonly known as "too-" or "mo-particles"—the latter based on Japanese -mo, which famously appears in myriad QNPs (negative polarity items, free-choice items, universal quantifiers), association-with-focus (X-mo 'X too'/ 'even X'), and in doubled coordination (X-mo Y-mo =X & Y in positive sentences, =~(X or Y) with negation) (see Shimoyama 2006, Szabolcsi 2015). Of these roles, a well-attested constellation of roles that too-particles serve is as i) additive also/too/either focus markers, ii) scalar even focus markers, iii) quantifier particles forming NPIs, and iv) both…and/neither…nor coordination particles, such as Hindi bhii, Hungarian is/sem, and Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian i/ni (Szabolcsi 2017). While it is straightforward to link one single one of these roles to one of the others, accounting for the entire group with a plausible assumption about the denotation of the particle itself is a challenge. One clear unifying factor is that these are all alternative-sensitive contexts—indeed, Szabolcsi (2017) proposes that one thing that too-particles do is activate the alternatives of their host (following the exhaustification-based theory of Chierchia 2013). This talk integrates data from the Northern Siberian Turkic language Sakha (also known as "Yakut") into the typological landscape of too-particles. This language has a particle daʁanɨ (often shortened to da) which appears in NPIs, even-focus, and both…and/neither…nor coordination. Intriguingly, da(ʁanɨ) is not felicitous in basic additive also/too/either focus environments—instead the language uses the particle emie here instead. This talk explores two families of approaches to account for da(ʁanɨ): the first is that this particle is on some level incompatible with additivity—while this jibes well with the licensing environments of da(ʁanɨ) (negation, standard of comparison) in that they are anti-additive functions, though it leaves much on the table; the second approach is that da(ʁanɨ) is a genuine too-particle, but a basic additive reading fails to obtain in basic cases (potentially because its additive supposition is tied with a scale, like even, or because the lexical insertion of the element is blocked by emie).