

## Harvard Linguistics Colloquium Talk Series

**Speaker:** Matthew Mandelkern (NYU)

**Title:** Disjunction and Possibility

**Time:** Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 12-1:30pm

**Location:** Fong Auditorium, Boylston Hall 110

### **Abstract:**

I explore constructions which contain an embedded disjunction  $\ulcorner p \text{ or } q \urcorner$  which is interpreted as  $(p \vee q) \wedge \diamond p \wedge \diamond q$ , where  $\diamond$  is a possibility modal whose flavor is epistemic, circumstantial, or deontic. I argue that no extant theory can account for these interpretations. I propose that the best way to do so is with a direct theory on which  $\ulcorner p \text{ or } q \urcorner$  simply means  $(p \vee q) \wedge \diamond p \wedge \diamond q$ . In addition to accounting for the novel cases I discuss, this theory explains both wide- and narrow-scope free choice inferences, in a similar way as the theories of Zimmermann (2000); Geurts (2005); Goldstein (2019). It also accounts for recent observations about the relation between disjunction and possibility from Degano et al. 2025; Feinmann 2023.