Tel Aviv University
School of Philosophy, Linguistics and Science Studies,
Department of Linguistics

THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM

Thursday 29/10/2026

16:15-17:45
Webb 103

Danny Fox, MIT
joint work with Omri Doron and Jad Wehbe

Gender in Nominal Structures, Assertion, Presupposition Weakening and the Strength of Presuppositions

In this talk we will look at the semantic contribution of gender features to study a surprising prediction of a new proposal for Local Accommodation that we've been developing. Our proposal, which treats LA as a particular form of Presupposition Weakening (PW), accounts, among other things, for two distinctions among presupposition triggers and for correlations between them. It has been suggested that presupposition triggers that can be deleted (in Katzir's sense) yield presuppositions that are more difficult to cancel (to be locally accommodated) than presupposition that cannot be deleted – that deletable triggers are uniformly strong triggers. It has also been suggested (a) that non-deletable/weak triggers yield structures where the assertion entails the presupposition – entailing triggers, and (b) that deletable/strong triggers yield assertions and presuppositions that are logically independent – non-entailing triggers. We suggest that these correlations follow from our approach to PW, together with a Katzir-inspired procedure that retrieves the assertion from the syntax of a sentence and its trivalent meaning. We will present some of the arguments for all of this, but will focus on the new prediction for gender. Based on observations made in Bobaljik and Zoca (2010), our proposal will make the new prediction that the presupposition triggered by gender a feature will sometimes behave like a weak/entailing trigger and sometimes like a strong /non-entailing triggers. We predict, more specifically, that the deletability of the trigger is a necessary, but insufficient, condition for a non-entailing assertion. Whether an assertion is non-entailing depends not just on the deletability of the trigger but also on the specific outcome of deletion (which we claim yield the assertion), and in particular on its logical relation to the presupposition.

Click here to see the colloquium program.