

The Department of Linguistics
is pleased to present

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speaking on

A unified semantics for additive particles

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Location: HUM 2 - Room 259

Abstract:

English has several additive particles, which differ in their distribution. One of these is *also*, a common choice to signal additivity in assertions and polar questions, (1a-b). It has been suggested that this particle can't appear in a wh-question without triggering a so-called *showmaster interpretation* (Umbach, 2012), in which the speaker already has a certain answer in mind when asking the question, (1c).

- (1) Mary danced all night.
a. John **also** danced.
b. Did John **also** dance?
c. #Who **also** danced?

In this talk, I will challenge this generalization based on a previously unnoticed class of questions, which I call *summoning questions*. To account for the resulting more differentiated empirical picture, I will generalize Beaver and Clark (2008)'s QUD-based account of additive particles by lifting it to an inquisitive semantics setting (Ciardelli et al., 2018). This allows us to capture the contribution of *also* in declaratives and interrogatives in a unified way, while still accounting for its distributional restrictions.

Additive particles are just one example of expressions that can appear with declarative and different kinds of interrogative clauses. In the remainder of the talk, I will briefly walk through two other examples—clause-embedding verbs like *know*, and the German discourse particle *denn*—to show how the proposed account of additive particles forms part of a larger research program that aims to develop formally unified accounts of expressions in this family.