



October 11, 2024 3pm-5pm Paris time

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Dean McHugh (Amsterdam), Figure and Ground in Conditionals

If Socrates resembled Adonis, they would both be handsome. If Adonis resembled Socrates, neither would be handsome. And if Adonis and Socrates resembled each other, they might both be handsome and they might not. This is a puzzle for theories of conditionals that predict *if A, would C* and *if B would C* to be equivalent provided *A* and *B* have the same truth conditions. For Socrates resembles Adonis just in case Adonis resembles Socrates, which holds just in case they resemble each other. Moreover, the corresponding facts are plausibly taken to be the same: the state of Socrates resembling Adonis is identical to the state of Adonis resembling Socrates, which is identical to the state of them resembling each other. I offer a solution to the puzzle by developing a semantics of conditionals that is sensitive to what conditional antecedents are *about*. Making use of Leonard Talmy's work on figure-ground relations, I propose that when we interpret a conditional antecedent, we allow the figure to vary and don't touch the ground.

Zhuosi Luo (National Research Centre for Foreign Language Education, Beijing Foreign Studies University): Contextual causee interpretation and the elusive nature of agency

This talk addresses the puzzle that the animate causees across five periphrastic causatives in Teochew (Southern Min, Sinitic) demonstrate different thematic interpretation patterns, even when the embedded predicates are the same. In my last COCOA talk, I propose a modal analysis to account for the complex causal event structure interpretations of these five causatives featuring multidimensionality, which the monolithic CAUSE operator cannot capture. Based on acceptability data collected from 30 Teochew consultants, in this talk I argue for a two-step post-syntactic contextualization mechanism at the LF for the interpretation of a shared argument fed by the overall eventuality, which helps account for the diverse causee interpretations, including its elusive agentive nature.