

Fall 2016 SWIP-Analytic Events

Speaker | Date | Topic

Berit Brogaard

University of Miami

Monday, October 3rd, 1:00-3:00pm (A reception will follow)

New York University, 6th Floor Lounge, 5 Washington Place, NYC



“In Defense of Hearing Meanings”

According to the inferential view of language comprehension, we hear a speaker’s utterance and infer what was said, drawing on our competence in the syntax and semantics of the language together with background information. On the alternative perceptual view, fluent speakers have a non-inferential capacity to perceive the content of speech. On this view, when we hear a speaker’s utterance, the experience confers some degree of justification on our beliefs about what was said in the absence of defeaters. So, in the absence of defeaters, we can come to know what was said merely on the basis of hearing the utterance. Several arguments have been offered against a pure perceptual view of language comprehension, among others, arguments pointing to its alleged difficulties accounting for homophones and the context-sensitivity of ordinary language. After responding to challenges to the perceptual view of language comprehension, I provide a new argument in favor of the perceptual view by looking closer at the dependence of the justificatory qualities of experience on the notion of a defeater as well as the perceptual nature of language learning and language processing. (If you are planning to attend the talk, please email us swipanalytic@gmail.com and we will send you the paper).

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