

UCL Linguistics Seminar – 27 November 2019

Nicole Gotzner: Probing the role of focus in implicature computation

In this talk, I will present a series of experiments testing the role of focus in implicature computation. I will first show how focus activates alternatives in online processing. I then present evidence that focal pitch accents encourage implicature computation by (i) making relevant alternatives salient and (ii) providing a strong cue that an inference should be derived. Overall, the findings indicate that focus feeds directly into the implicature generation mechanism, above and beyond its role in activating alternatives. I will discuss some possibilities on how to model the role of focus in Neo-Gricean and grammatical accounts of implicature.