

*The UCLA Department of Linguistics is proud to present:*

**Elsi Kaiser**

*University of Southern California*

On Friday, 8 October 2010, at 11:00 AM in Public Policy 2250

Followed by social hour at 1:00 PM in Campbell 2122

## **On the Relation between Information Structure and Reference Resolution**

I will present some recent work on the *relation between information structure and reference resolution*, with an emphasis on how the presence of contrastive focus in prior discourse influences the interpretation of subsequent pronouns. Prior research aiming to reconcile *contrastive focus* effects with the widespread view that pronoun interpretation is sensitive to *topicality-related* factors has led to mixed results. To improve our understanding of how pronoun interpretation is influenced by information structural considerations, I present two eye-tracking experiments investigating how topicality-related factors (subjecthood and pronominalization/givenness) and contrastive focus influence the real-time interpretation of pronouns. The results indicate that structural and semantic prominence (in particular, agentive subjects) influence pronoun interpretation even when separated from information-structural notions, and need to be taken into account when investigating effects of topic and focus. Furthermore, the results also show that when grammatical role is taken into consideration, we can observe effects of contrastive focus on salience even in the presence of a discourse-old, pronominalized ('topical') referent. These patterns point to 'salience' being a phenomenon that emerges from the interplay of diverse ingredients. Time permitting, I will also explore the relation between *information structure and choice of referring expression*, in particular the role that contrastive focus and topic-switching play in the use of strong/emphatic pronouns in languages like Estonian and Dutch.

Faculty host: Carson Schütze

Student hosts: Byron Ahn & Grace Kuo