Abstract:
This talk will explore a puzzle about even and its crosslinguistic kin. Even-like items in several languages are subject to a surprising restriction when they appear in declarative sentences that deny presuppositions: these items are only acceptable in presupposition denials that contain negation, as shown in (1) for English.

1. A: Did Kenji bring his wife to the picnic? (Presupposes: Kenji has a wife, i.e., is married)
   B: He isn’t even married!
   B’: #He’s even unmarried/a bachelor!

I show that the contrast between sentences like (1B) and (1B’) is not straightforwardly reducible to independent properties of even or of presupposition denial, but instead reflects something about how even and presupposition denial interact. I propose a solution to the puzzle that makes crucial use of i) the additive presupposition of even, ii) presuppositions triggered within the salient focus alternatives, and iii) an independently motivated mechanism for denying presuppositions under negation. The additive presupposition of even is controversial; I argue that the evidence used to challenge its presence does not show what it is claimed to show. I explore crosslinguistic predictions of the proposed analysis and discuss what the puzzle can teach us about focus-sensitive operators, presuppositions, and focus alternatives in discourse.