Abstract:
Syntactic approaches to the causative alternation disagree as to whether lexical causatives differ from their anticausative counterparts crucially in the addition of a causing event (Harley 1995, Pylkkänen 2008) or in the addition of a causer participant (Alexiadou et al. 2006, 2015; Schäfer 2008). In this talk, I focus on productive causative constructions of the “X made Y do Z” type and demonstrate that both strategies are in fact attested in the formation of productive causatives. Using a number of eventhood diagnostics, I show that while productive causatives involve an added event in Japanese and Turkish, they only involve an added participant in Tagalog. Bi-eventive causatives (with an added event) involve a structure with two little v heads, where the higher v introduces a causing event. Mono-eventive causatives (with an added participant) involve a structure with two Voice heads, where the higher Voice introduces a causative thematic role.

I demonstrate that the choice of causatives formation strategy also correlates with a previously unexplored property: the ability to recurse causatives (“X made Y made Z … ”). Bi-eventive causatives can recurse, while mono-eventive causatives cannot. I show that this difference in the availability of recursion falls out of an approach whereby causation relations can be encoded either as an event or as a thematic role.