



## Linguistics Colloquium

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**“Variation in the association of uniqueness and familiarity with definiteness marking strategy”**

**Thursday, September 20, 2018 @ 5:30 pm  
in SAR (635 Comm. Ave.) room 101**



### Abstract:

Cuevas Mixtec is an Otomanguean language of southern Mexico which displays two alternative strategies for the marking of definiteness in the noun phrase: overt definite articles and the lack of articles on the noun. In line the findings of Schwarz (2009, 2003) and Jenks (2015) for other languages, these strategies turn out to correspond to distinct notions of definiteness in the literature. Nouns without (in)definite articles tend to be interpreted as 'unique' definites, while nouns with overt definite articles are interpreted as anaphoric or 'familiar' definites. However, this pattern holds true only for the majority of the nominal inventory in the language. Certain subsets of the nominal inventory instead invoke an English pattern of devoting only one definiteness marking strategy for the expression of both uniqueness and familiarity. For example, nouns denoting human entities require an overt definite article for the expression of uniqueness as well as familiarity. Therefore, this sensitivity to noun choice in the choice of definiteness marking strategy seems to find its source in etymological factors and the influence of an animacy hierarchy

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