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Beyond Strength and Weakness

Prof. Norvin Richards
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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A standard way of describing the distinction between overt and covert movement involves ascribing diacritics to features or to Probes; we say that a feature is 'strong' when it triggers overt movement, or that the Probe 'has the EPP property'. In this talk I try to develop a theory without diacritics of this kind; the goal will be to account for the distribution of overt and covert movement while assuming cross-linguistically uniform properties for the features that drive syntactic operations. The account will crucially allow features to make direct reference to properties of the PF interface, imposing linear orderings on the phrases with which they Agree. The discussion will mainly center on properties of wh-movement, and (time permitting) on Holmberg's Generalization.