

## **Conjunction as a Default Meaning of Disjunction**

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This presentation is based on joint work with Andreea Nicolae (ZAS Berlin), Anton Benz (ZAS Berlin), Gabriela Bîlbîie (University of Bucharest), Mara Panaitescu (University of Bucharest), Alexandre Cremers (BKKI, Vilniaus Universitetas), and Lyn Tieu (University of Toronto)

Previous research (e.g., Paris 1973, Singh et al. 2016, Tieu et al. 2017) shows that children often interpret disjunction conjunctively (as ‘and’). In Romanian, this conjunctive reading is not an experimental artifact but a genuine interpretation (Bleotu et al. 2025). An open question is whether conjunctivity arises as an implicature (Singh et al. 2016) or reflects a semantic/cognitive default (Aloni et al. 2024). I will present findings from two new studies. A nonce word study reveals that both children and adults tend to interpret nonce connectors as ‘and’, suggesting a conjunctive default. A developmental study with Romanian 3- and 5-year-olds further distinguishes between theoretical accounts: while the implicature view predicts early inclusivity and later conjunctivity, default/ambiguity accounts predict early conjunctivity. Strikingly, we find that 3-year-olds interpret disjunction conjunctively more often than 5-year-olds. These results challenge implicature-based accounts and instead support the view that conjunctivity is an early default interpretation of disjunction.