Disjunction and alternatives in Egyptian Arabic
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This talk focuses on Egyptian Arabic ‘walla’ and ‘aw’. These lexical items are both translated into English as ‘or’ and conform to Haspelmath’s (2007) basic description of interrogative versus standard disjunctions. Languages with these type of disjunctions are of particular interest because they seem to lexically encode the difference between polar and alternative questions. I present novel data that gives a broader understanding to how these lexical items behave in other interrogative environments, and show parallels between their distribution and the availability of interpretations for English ‘or’. The new data provide strong evidence for the idea that ‘walla’ and ‘aw’ differ in how their semantic disjuncts are realized as discourse alternatives. I discuss previous analyses of standard and interrogative disjunctions and provide additional data from Egyptian Arabic that these theories do not account for.