The School of Humanities and Social Sciences cordially invites you to the Lecture Series.

Topic of the Lecture:

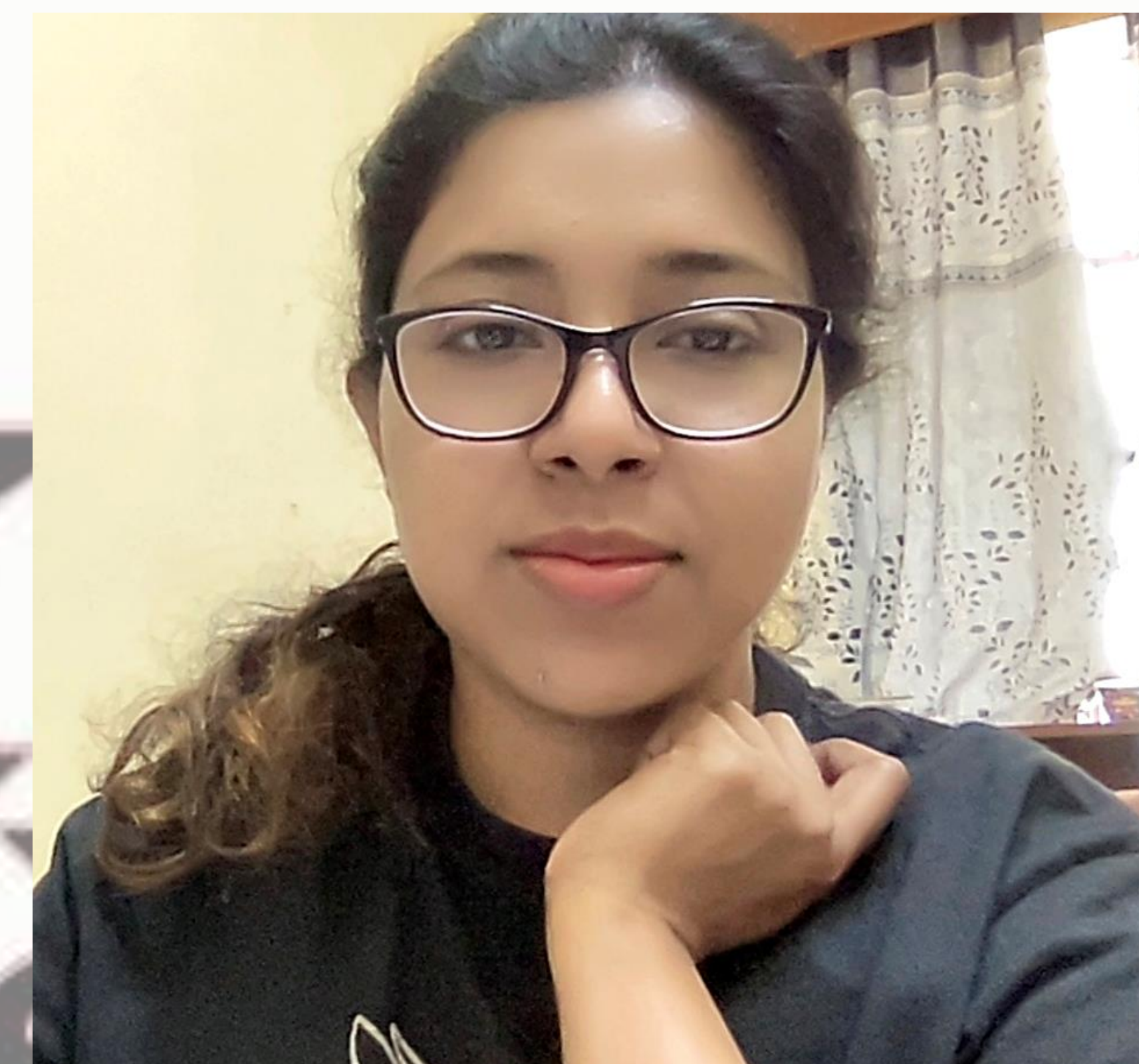# In Search of Quantifier Scope Ambiguity

Synopsis of the Lecture

In this talk, Dr. Ishani Guha will be sharing the findings of her collaborative research on the interpretation of ambiguous sentences. There is a particular variety of ambiguity, called "Quantifier Scope Ambiguity", that is related to quantifier words like 'everybody', 'someone', etc. In general, when there are two of such quantifier words in a sentence, the sentence becomes potentially ambiguous. However, it has been observed that languages that have flexible word order, such as those spoken in India, do not exhibit this kind of ambiguity. This has led to the conclusion that the word order of a sentence plays a central role in determining its interpretation.

Ishani, along with a couple of her colleagues, conducted a series of behavioral psycholinguistic experiments on Bengali (Bangla) and English, to investigate whether Quantifier Scope Ambiguity can be predicted for a given language, solely based on the word order flexibility of that language. Based on the results, they concluded that in predicting this ambiguity or its resolution, studying the inventory of Quantifier words in a language is more useful than the flexibility of word order.

Speaker

Dr. Ishani Guha
DST-CSRI Postdoctoral Fellow (Linguistics)
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

About the Speaker

Dr. Ishani Guha is a linguist who primarily works on the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of Indian languages. Her journey as a linguist started from the University of Delhi, where she did her MA and MPhil in Linguistics, focusing on studying the syntactic structure of languages. During PhD however, Ishani became interested in studying meaning and started exploring how various aspects of linguistic meaning are manifested in Negation, in Focus particles, and then ultimately in Quantifiers and Numerals. Her thesis, completed in September 2018, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts studied Distributive Numerals in Bengali. The present work on ambiguity has been sponsored by her DST-CSRI Postdoctoral Fellowship, which is hosted by IIT Delhi. Post-PhD, Ishani has worked as a Guest Faculty at Jadavpur University and at the University of Delhi, teaching post graduate courses in Linguistics. In the past few years, she has also worked on a number of projects on the documentation and propagation of the indigenous and under-studied languages of India.

Design: Ananya Ghoshal

Day and Date: Thursday, 28 March, 2024 **Time:** 11:00 AM **Venue:** POD 1C-301 (SHSS Seminar Hall)