

International Workshop on Romance SE/SI Constructions

- **Venue:** The workshop will be held at the Universitat de Barcelona, at the Facultat de Filologia i Comunicació, located in the very heart of the city (Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 585, 08007 Barcelona). Room: Aula Joan Maragall
- **Dates:** 22-23 January 2026
- **Organisers:** Anna Pineda (Universitat de Barcelona) and Monica Irimia (Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia)
- **Invited speakers:**
 - Michaela Cennamo (Università di Napoli Federico II)
 - Alexandra Cornilescu (Universitatea din București)
 - Javier Ormazabal & Juan Romero (Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea; Universidad de Extremadura)

Call for papers

We invite abstracts for 20-minute oral presentations, followed by 10 minutes of discussion, that address any aspect of Romance SE/SI constructions. Contributions examining variation among Romance languages, data from less studied varieties, contexts that raise challenges to traditional analyses on SE/SI, as well as those that focus on the questions below are of particular interest.

Call deadline: 10 October 2025

Notification: Early November 2025

Abstract requirements: Abstracts, including examples interspersed throughout the text (but excluding references), should be limited to two single spaced pages with one-inch margins, minimum font size 11pt (Times New Roman). Abstracts must be submitted as PDF documents via email to se.si.workshop.barcelona@gmail.com and must be received by October 10th, 2025, 23:59CET. (NB: An email confirming the receipt of each abstract will be sent from the organizers so please make sure to get in touch if you don't receive it.)

General Questions

The reduced pronominal element SE/SI is pervasive across Romance languages, exhibiting a vast range of uses, from reflexive and reciprocal, to anticausative, inherent, aspectual, passive or impersonal, to cite just the most salient ones (Belletti 1982, Dobrovie Sorin 1998, D'Alessandro 2007, Cennamo 2016, Armstrong & MacDonald ed. 2021, a.o.). A crucial question is whether these uses can be unified structurally, and if yes, in what direction. Other relevant points of inquiry are related to the nature of SE/SI itself, which has received numerous analyses: a reduced pronominal element in argument position (Raposo & Uriagereka 1996, D'Alessandro 2007, a.o.), a category inserted at PF as a repair strategy (Pujalte & Saab 2012, Saab 2014), or the more common one as a verbal inflectional morpheme (Cuervo 2003, 2014, Kempchinsky 2004, Folli & Harley 2005, Basilico 2010, Ordóñez & Treviño 2011, Armstrong 2013 among others). The workshop is interested in whether less discussed or novel data can provide support in one direction or other, or does it have to be assumed that specific SE/SI constructions are correlated to distinct morpho-syntactic statutes of SE/SI (following Torrego 1995, Dobrovie Sorin 2006)?

SE/SI is also characterized by the impressive patterns of variation it gives rise to. This is extremely clear for the so-called impersonal (also known as non-paradigmatic) realization. Undoubtedly, impersonal SE/SI has given rise to numerous challenges both at the empirical and theoretical level. A section of the workshop will be dedicated to the non-paradigmatic uses of SE/SI and their challenges.

For example, it has been observed that not all Romance languages allow impersonal SE/SI constructions, Romanian and French being classical examples of their absence (Dobrovie Sorin 1998, Cornilescu 1998, a.o.). Recent discussions have shown that such restriction is also seen in various Italian dialects, whose data however are less studied (Pescarini 2017). The facts nevertheless bring further counterarguments to the correlation between a language being a null subject one and exhibiting impersonal SE/SI (Dobrovie Sorin 1998 vs. Belletti 1982). The question still remains about whether presence/absence of the impersonal realization can be tied to other structural properties (beyond the setting of the null subject parameter) in any given language. Additionally, do such clustering effects extend to other realizations of SE/SI which might be present/absent in a given language (for example, aspectual SE/SI which might be absent in languages which do not allow the impersonal realization)?

Related to this is the assumed split between passive (or accusative) SE/SI and impersonal (or nominative) SE/SI (Cinque 1988, Dobrovie Sorin 1998, subsequent literature). This dichotomy has been claimed to affect various languages (e.g. Romanian, assumed to lack impersonal SE, Brazilian Portuguese which appears to permit only impersonal SE/SI, see especially Martins & Nunes 2016) and has been linked to other grammatical features. For example, impersonal SE/SI is taken to allow differentially marked objects but not agreement with the overt DP (Dobrovie Sorin 1998, 2016, 2021, Martins & Nunes 2016, Ormazabal & Romero 2022, a.o.). Recent investigations into less studied Romance languages demonstrate, however, that such a split does not hold uniformly. For example, many dialects of southern Italy permit differentially marked objects under non-paradigmatic SE/SI but agreement with the overt DP is obligatory. This weakens the hypothesis that passive and impersonal SE/SI are distinct classes, a conclusion further supported in the recent work by Ormazabal & Romero (2022). But if such a split dissipates, what accounts for the absence of differentially marked objects in non-paradigmatic SE/SI in some languages, such as Romanian? The workshop is interested in data from less discussed languages which do not conform to the traditionally assumed picture and which could bring further insights into the nature of non-paradigmatic SE/SI.

Impersonal SE/SI raises challenges for other important theoretical aspects, such as the licensing of structural accusatives. For example, to explain the presence of differentially marked objects, which behave like structural accusatives (López 2012, a.o.), it must be assumed that an implicit argument is generated syntactically in non-paradigmatic SE/SI, such that to avoid a violation of Burzio's Generalization (Burzio 1986 and subsequent literature). Major challenges have been pointed out on the empirical side: various diagnostics (eg., possibility of depictives, binding of anaphors, etc.) that are canonically taken to support the syntactic presence of an implicit argument (Landau 2010) fail in various languages. MacDonald (2017) has, instead, examined a novel diagnostic related to implicit possession, which however has been shown to be problematic (Irimia 2023). What other (less studied, novel) diagnostics might be relevant across Romance languages in order to settle this issue? Or does it have to be assumed that structural accusatives can be licensed in Romance non-paradigmatic SE/SI even if Burzio's Generalization is violated, bringing this family closer to other languages in which non-dependency between structural accusatives and the presence of an (implicit) external argument has been demonstrated to hold (Legate 2021, Šereskaitė 2021, a.o.)? What does this picture imply when it comes to variation with respect to *by*-phrases? Why do some languages (eg. Italian) disallow them, while others (Spanish, Catalan, Romanian, French, etc.) permit them more easily, at least in some contexts (Cinque 1988, de Miguel 1992, Cornilescu 1998, Mendikoetxea 1999, Sánchez-López 2002, Bartra 2002, D'Alessandro 2007, Cornilescu & Nicolae 2015, a.o.)?

If a violation of Burzio's Generalization might be avoided when it comes to differentially marked objects which could be assumed to imply an exceptional type of licensing (Torrego 1998, Ormazabal & Romero 2013, Ordóñez & Treviño 2011, 2016, a.o.), a problem still persists when it comes to the possibility of accusative clitics in some languages such as Catalan, Spanish varieties of South America, Northern Italian dialects, etc. (Mendikoetxea & Battye 1990, Mendikoetxea 1999, Saab 2021, Pescarini 2017, MacDonald & Melgares 2021, a.o.). Assuming that structural accusative cannot be licensed in non-paradigmatic SE/SI configurations (Ordóñez & Treviño 2011, 2016) leaves these types of languages unexplained, despite the fact that it derives both the ungrammaticality of SE-ACC clitic sequences and the presence of dative clitics in standard Spanish. Additionally, why is it that there are differences between various types of clitic clusters involving the accusative form, for example Spanish *se lo* vs *se la* or *se las*? Do such differences have a syntactic or a morphological nature? What prohibits the presence of an accusative clitic in the immediate vicinity of non-paradigmatic SE/SI in some languages, while allowing it as long as the two categories are not in linear adjacency (MacDonald & Melgares 2021)? What other possibilities are seen across less studied languages?

The nature of the implicit argument (whether projected in the syntax or not) has consequences on another aspect of non-paradigmatic SE/SI, namely PCC restrictions, their variation and their derivation. It is known that the sole DP can be 1st/2nd person in some languages, such as French, while not in others, such as Spanish, Italian or Romanian (Cinque 1988, Kempchinsky 2006, D'Alessandro 2007, Mendikoetxea 2008, Cornilescu & Nicolae 2015)? What is the source of variation in this domain?

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