Olinco 2027 – Olomouc Linguistics Colloquium
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Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc, Czechia

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Semantic flavours of complementation: the picture from Romance causatives

[joint work with Clémentine Raffy, Giulia Mazzola & Liam Garside]

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In this talk, I explore the syntax-semantics mapping in relation to the FACERE make causative in contemporary French, Spanish, Italian, and European/Brazilian Portuguese. Using a bottom-up approach informed by the literature (notably Wolff 2003, Bellingham et al 2020, Donazzan et al 2020), we define six kinds of causation from most direct to least and track their syntactic encoding as clauses which range in size from VP to CP (see Kayne 1975, Guasti 1983, Folli & Harley 2007, Sheehan & Cyrino 2024, Casalicchio & Sheehan 2025).

Comparing complement size with directness of causation, we find a correlation but also considerable flexibility of encoding. All meanings are possible with all sizes of clausal complements, but there are clear preferences for smaller complements to denote more direct causation and vice versa. We discuss the implications of these findings for the syntax/semantics interface.