

Unexpected personal pronouns in Catalan: Between semantics and pragmatics

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In this talk, I will defend that the restricted distribution of strong pronouns in the pivot position of Catalan existential sentences is not a consequence of the Definiteness Effect, as commonly assumed, but rather of the conjunction of the information conditions imposed by the existential sentence, which requires the pivot to be contrastive, with the pragmatic nature of contrast in the pronominal system, which blocks the contrastive reading of pronouns in precisely this position. Henceforth, it is argued that pronominal pivots can only obtain the required contrastive reading by external means generating a set of alternatives, such as focus particles (only and even) or lists. This analysis is tentatively extended to languages respecting the Definiteness Effect, as English or Spanish.