

# (In)transitivity and its Variation: A Workshop on Morphosyntactic and Semantic Interfaces

**Introduction:** Transitivity encompasses both syntactic and semantic dimensions: syntactically, it features accusative government and two-place argument structures, while semantically it ties to control, volition, and change of state. A long tradition of studies highlighted that two-place verbs fall into subclasses — like not fully transitives, non-canonical transitives, experiential etc. — with distinct case-marking patterns driven, for example, by agentivity and telicity (Creissels 2018, 2024; Haspelmath 2015; Dahl 2014).

**Transitivity prominence:** Recent typological work highlights cross-linguistic variation in the degree of what has been regarded as transitivity prominence, that is how extensively a language employs transitive encoding (Haspelmath 2015). For example, English favors transitive constructions, unlike German or Basque, which display more restricted use of canonical transitive constructions (Hawkins 1986; Creissels 2018). Databases like *ValPaL* reveal that transitive/intransitive classifications often stem from typological biases rather than universals (Say 2014).

**Encoding of (in)transitivity:** Across languages, there is no uniformity in the marking of transitive or intransitive verbs either. As a result, valency marking varies widely, with languages showing basic orientations toward transitive or intransitive defaults, often encoding alternations morphologically. For instance, Russian uses *-sja* for anticausatives (*slomat'sja* 'to break') or antipassives (*doest'sja* 'to eat up full'); again, Persian causatives transitive verbs like *xābid* 'he slept' to *xābānd* 'he put him to sleep'; and Georgian prefixes differentiate transitive (*aašena* 'he built it'), intransitive (*aišena* 'it was built'), and indirect intransitive (*aešena* 'it was built for him') forms. Additionally, labile verbs (for instance, English: 'he broke the stick' vs. 'the stick broke') further complicate this scenario.

**What is left:** Despite this well-established variation, the functional and semantic motivations underlying case alternations and valency patterns remain insufficiently explored, in (ancient) Indo-European and especially in typologically less-studied languages (Dahl 2014; Creissels 2024; Haspelmath 2011, 2022; Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019; Kulikov 2011; Perlmutter 1978).

## Workshop Aims

Our workshop addresses this gap. First, it approaches the relationship between transitivity and intransitivity through the lens of transitivity prominence. Second, it brings together research on languages well beyond the Indo-European family, thereby introducing new challenges and refinements to the transitivity prominence framework itself. Third, the workshop will explore the properties and levels typical of (in)transitivity in both the verbal and the nominal domains.

We aim to explore the interplay of semantics, morphology, and syntax in encoding transitivity and intransitivity, by focusing on parameters like agentivity, telicity, affectedness, animacy (etc.).

## Topics of Interest

We welcome contributions dealing with (but not restricted to) the following topics:

- Transitivity prominence especially of understudied languages;
- Mismatches between semantic and syntactic transitivity;
- Morphological and syntactic marking of valency alternations (causatives, anticausatives, reflexives, labile verbs);
- Formal syncretism of valency alternations or divergent encodings for the same valency alternations;
- Semantic restrictions on valency operations (agentivity, telicity, affectedness, etc.);
- Diachronic changes in the domain of (in)transitivity;
- Split Intransitivity encoding;
- (In)transitivity surfacing in nominalizations, and eventual mismatches.

## Submission Guidelines

Abstracts should be anonymized and not exceed 500 words (including examples, excluding references). They should clearly state the research questions, methods, data, and (expected) results. Guidelines on [How to write a good abstract](#) are gently provided by SLE. Please, include title, five keywords, and no author information. Send as PDF or anonymized .doc(x) document to [intr.workshop2026@gmail.com](mailto:intr.workshop2026@gmail.com). Presentations will last 20 minutes and will have additional 10 minutes for discussion.

## Important Dates

- ★ Abstract submission deadline: 15th May, 2026
- ★ Notification of acceptance: until 15th June, 2026
- ★ Registration for active participants: 25th June, 2026
- ★ Registration for passive participants: 1st August, 2026
- ★ Workshop date: 28, 29th September, 2026

**Accommodation:** There is a limited budget available for shared lodging of active participants in one of the dormitories of Adam Mickiewicz University.

**Website link:** <https://sites.google.com/view/intransitivity-workshop/home>

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## References

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