Sarah Rossi

PhD Candidate in Theoretical and Experimental Linguistics

✉ sarah.rossi@iusspavia.it · 🌐 https://www.rossisarah.github.io ·
📅 3 April 1996, Naples
Citizenship: Italian and Sammarinese

Current Position

Dec 2022 –
Present

PhD Candidate in **Theoretical and Experimental Linguistics** at IUSS Pavia (Italy) under the supervision of Prof. Cristiano Chesi and Prof. Adriana Belletti.

Member of the **NeTS Linguistics Lab** @ IUSS (Laboratory for Neurolinguistics, Computational Linguistics and Theoretical Syntax) directed by Prof. Cristiano Chesi.

Research interests

Theoretical syntax: morphosyntax of imperatives, with a focus on Italian, Romance languages and beyond; syntax of expletive and standard negation.

Language acquisition: development of L1 grammar investigated through **corpus studies** and **computational approaches**.

Interfaces with semantics and pragmatics: non-canonical imperatives; syntactic and illocutionary differences between commands, prohibitions and instructions; expressive language in expletive negation clauses.

Education

Dec 2022 –
Present

University School for Advanced Studies IUSS Pavia – Pavia, Italy
PhD in Theoretical and Experimental Linguistics.
Thesis (in prep): *When not all clauses are CPs: the Morphosyntax of Italian/Romance Imperatives.*
Supervisor: Prof. Cristiano Chesi; co-supervisor: Prof. Adriana Belletti.

2019 – 2022

University of Siena – Siena, Italy
MA in Language and Mind: Linguistics and Cognitive Studies – *cum laude*
Thesis: *Low Imperative Hypothesis: a view from the acquisition of Italian imperatives.*
Supervisor: Supervisor: Prof. Adriana Belletti; co-supervisor: Prof. Luigi Rizzi.

2015 – 2019 **University of Macerata** – Macerata, Italy
BA in Language Mediation Sciences (Translation and Interpreting in English, French, German).
Thesis: *Speech acts: universali o particolari?*
Supervisor: Prof. Diego Poli.

Sept 2017 – Jan 2018 **University of Liverpool** – Liverpool, UK
Erasmus Program - Undergraduate Coursework.
Courses: *Pragmatics, General Linguistics, Multilingualism in Society.*
Supervisor: Prof. Diego Poli.

July 23-24 2025 **Chemnitz University of Technology** – Online
Summer School - Visualization of Linguistic Data with R
Intensive course on data visualization and analysis techniques using R, with application to linguistic datasets.

Publications

Peer-reviewed Journal Articles

Forthcoming **The syntax of Expletive Negation in English: the case of 'not-ACC-ing constructions'.**
Sarah Rossi, Cristiano Chesi, Matteo Greco.
English Language and Linguistics.

Forthcoming **From Recursion to Incrementality: Return to Recurrent Neural Networks.**
Cristiano Chesi, Veronica Bressan, Matilde Barbini, Achille Fusco, Maria Letizia Piccini Bianchessi, Sofia Neri, Sarah Rossi, Tommaso Sgrizzi.
Linguistic Vanguard.

2025 **Not-ACC-ing and not-NOM-that constructions: A Comparative Study of English and Italian Expletive Negation.**
Sarah Rossi, Cristiano Chesi, Matteo Greco.
Catalan Journal of Linguistics, 1–37.
doi:10.5565/rev/catjl.496

2023 **Italian/Romance imperatives as radically reduced structures: a corpus CHILDES study.**
Sarah Rossi.
Rivista di Grammatica Generativa, 45(5), pp. 1–39.
lingbuzz.com/j/rgg/2023/2023.05/

Peer-reviewed Proceedings

September 2025   **Acquisition in Babies and Machines: Comparing the Learning Trajectories of LMs in Terms of Syntactic Structures (ATTracTSS Test Set).**
Sarah Rossi, Guido Formichi, Sofia Neri, Tommaso Sgrizzi, Asya Zanollo, Veronica Bressan, Cristiano Chesi.
In Proceedings of the 11th Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics (CLiC-it 2025).
clic2025.unica.it-ATTracTSS

September 2025   **BLiMP-IT: Harnessing Automatic Minimal Pair Generation for Italian Language Model Evaluation.**
Matilde Barbini, Maria Letizia Piccini Bianchessi, Veronica Bressan, Achille Fusco, Sarah Rossi, Sofia Neri, Tommaso Sgrizzi and Cristiano Chesi.
In Proceedings of the 11th Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics (CLiC-it 2025).
clic2025.unica.it-BLiMP-IT

Forthcoming   **Current linguistic changes in contemporary Italian: the cases of *non io che* and *essere tipo*.**
Sarah Rossi, Tommaso Sgrizzi.
In Proceedings of ConSOLE XXXIII.

2024   **Different Ways to Forget: Linguistic Gates in Recurrent Neural Networks.**
Cristiano Chesi, Veronica Bressan, Matilde Barbini, Achille Fusco, Maria Letizia Piccini Bianchessi, Sofia Neri, Sarah Rossi, Tommaso Sgrizzi.
In The Proceedings of the 2nd BabyLM Challenge at CoNLL 2024, pp. 106–117.
aclanthology.org/2024.conll-babylm.9.pdf

2024   **Recurrent Networks are (Linguistically) Better? An Experiment on Small-LM Training on Child-Directed Speech in Italian.**
Achille Fusco, Matilde Barbini, Maria Letizia Piccini Bianchessi, Veronica Bressan, Sofia Neri, Sarah Rossi, Tommaso Sgrizzi, Cristiano Chesi.
In Proceedings of CLiC-it 2024, pp. 382–389.
aclanthology.org/2024.clicit-1.46.pdf

Other Proceedings

Forthcoming   **Language Models Assessment through Linguistically Motivated Contrasts: a benchmark for Italian (BLiMP-IT).**
Veronica Bressan, Matilde Barbini, Achille Fusco, Sofia Neri, Maria Letizia Piccini Bianchessi, Sarah Rossi, Cristiano Chesi.
In Proceedings of GLOW 47.

Conference Presentations

Talks

December 2025   **Non-Directive Imperatives: the Case of Difficult Imperatives in Romance.**
Going Romance 2025, Venice, Italy.
(with Guido Formichi.)

October 2025   **Directive Force meets Genericity: A Cartographic Approach to Two Types of Italian Negative Imperatives with Infinitival Morphology.**
6th International Workshop on Syntactic Cartography, Hong Kong.

April 2025   **The Acquisition of Infinitival Imperatives: A Corpus Study on Early Italian.**
22nd STaPs, Budapest/Innsbruck/Tübingen.

June 2024   **The Syntax of Expletive Negation in (Social-Media) English: the Case of 'Not-Me Sentences'.**
Workshop on Functional Categories, Dimensions of Meaning, and Expletiveness, Barcelona, Spain.
(with Cristiano Chesi and Matteo Greco.)

May 2024   **The Syntax of Expletive Negation in (Social-Media) English: the Case of 'Not-Me Sentences'.**
33rd Colloquium on Generative Grammar (CGG33), Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain.
(with Cristiano Chesi and Matteo Greco.)

October 2023   **The Acquisition of Italian Imperatives: A Corpus Study on CHILDES and Notes on the Location of the Jussive Head.**
16th Brussels Conference on Generative Linguistics – Morphosyntax of Speaker and Hearer, Brussels, Belgium.

September 2023   **The Acquisition of Imperatives: A Corpus Study on Italian.**
The Romance Turn, Madrid, Spain.

July 2023   **Italian/Romance Imperatives as Computationally-Light, Reduced Structures: A Corpus Study on CHILDES.**
ColDoc SFL 2023 – 1st Conference of Doctoral Students of the SFL Laboratory, Paris, France.

July 2023   **Italian/Romance Imperatives as Radically Reduced Structures: A Corpus Study on CHILDES.**
53rd Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages (LSRL 53), Paris, France.

June 2023   **Italian/Romance Imperatives as Radically Reduced Structures: A Corpus Study on CHILDES.**
Rencontres Autour de la Linguistique Formelle (RALFE 2023), Nice, France.

Posters

October 2025   **Imperativi Non-Canonici: il caso degli "Imperativi Difficili".**
XLIX Convegno Annuale SIG (Società Italiana di Glottologia), Milan, Italy.
(with Guido Formichi.)

September 2025   **Acquisition in Babies and Machines: Comparing the Learning Trajectories of LMs in Terms of Syntactic Structures (ATTracTSS Test Set).**
11th Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics (CLiC-it 2025), Cagliari, Italy.
(with Guido Formichi, Sofia Neri, Tommaso Sgrizzi, Asya Zanollo, Veronica Bressan, Cristiano Chesi.)

September 2025   **BLiMP-IT: Harnessing Automatic Minimal Pair Generation for Italian Language Model Evaluation.**
11th Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics (CLiC-it 2025), Cagliari, Italy.
(with Matilde Barbini, Maria Letizia Piccini Bianchessi, Veronica Bressan, Achille Fusco, Sofia Neri, Tommaso Sgrizzi and Cristiano Chesi).

September 2025   **Negative and Infinitival Imperatives in Italian: A Rare Phenomenon in Early Child Speech.**
Child Language Symposium 2025, Reading, UK.

March 2025   **Large Language Models Assessment through Linguistically Motivated Contrasts: A Benchmark for Italian (BLiMP-IT).**
GLOW 47, March 26th, 2025.
(with Veronica Bressan, Matilde Barbini, Achille Fusco, Sofia Neri, Maria Letizia Piccini Bianchessi, Cristiano Chesi.)

February 2025   **BLiMP-IT: An Italian Linguistic Benchmark for Large Language Models.**
50th Incontro di Grammatica Generativa (IGG50), Padova, Italy.
(with Veronica Bressan, Matilde Barbini, Achille Fusco, Sofia Neri, Maria Letizia Piccini Bianchessi, Cristiano Chesi.)

Workshops

February 2024   **The Morphosyntax of Imperative Clauses and their Acquisition: A View from Romance and Beyond.**
21st STaPs, Augsburg/Budapest/Vienna, online.

Invited Talks

January 2026	**Infinitival Imperatives**
	Seminari del Centre de Lingüística Teòrica, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain.
February 2024	**Italian/Romance imperatives as radically reduced structures.**
	CISCL Seminar, University of Siena, Siena, Italy).

Research Experience

Dec 2022 – Present	**PhD Research Project – NeTS Lab @ IUSS Pavia & CISCL @ University of Siena**
	Mentors: Prof. Cristiano Chesi, Prof. Adriana Belletti.
	Theoretical morphosyntax of imperatives and infinitives in Romance languages and beyond, from both adult grammar and L1 acquisition perspectives.
	Empirical analysis of spontaneous child data using CHILDES and CLAN.
	Interface with computational linguistics: creation of annotated datasets for evaluating syntactic knowledge on imperatives in small language models.
2024 – Present	**BabyLM Challenge – NeTS Lab @ IUSS Pavia**
	Director: Prof. Cristiano Chesi.
	BabyLM Challenge: cognitively-plausible training and building of small language models on limited child-directed input.
	Construction and pre-processing of an Italian corpus of child-directed speech.
	Design of evaluation protocols for model performance (benchmarks and datasets).
	Research on human and machine language acquisition/learning processes.
2024 – 2026	**T-GRA2L: Testing GRAdeness and GRAmmaticality in Linguistics**
	I.U.S.S. - Istituto Universitario di Studi Superiori, Pavia.
	PI: Prof. Cristiano Chesi.
	Research project focused on the perception of grammaticality from both categorical and gradient perspectives.
	Development of the BLiMP-IT dataset carried out within the framework of the project.
2023 – Present	**PRIN–PNRR Project "REACH" – Reading Comprehension for Inclusion**
	PI: Prof. Matteo Greco.
	EU-funded project – NextGenerationEU.
	Research on the syntax (at the interface with semantics and pragmatics) of Expletive Negation in English and Italian.

Conference Organization

2026   **ConSOLE34 – Conference of the Student Organization of Linguistics in Europe.**
Member of the Organizing Committee, IUSS Pavia.
(28–30 January 2026, Pavia, Italy).

2024   **IGG49 – Incontro di Grammatica Generativa.**
Member of the Organizing Committee, IUSS Pavia.
(23–24 February 2024, Pavia, Italy).

Teaching

10 November 2025   **Rethinking Imperatives: Morphosyntax, Interfaces, Acquisition.**
Lecture within Cristiano Chesi's course on Advances in Linguistic Computation @IUSS Pavia.

15 September 2025   **Imperatives: Small Structures in Small Children.**
Lighting Talk within Adriana Belletti's Teaching Seminar for the TEL PhD program @IUSS Pavia, called 'Theoretical and descriptive insights: The role of stages of language acquisition during development'.

25 June 2024   **La crescita del linguaggio: strumenti e mappe dello sviluppo linguistico.**
Interactive classes at IUSS Pavia Orientation School (Scuola di Orientamento).
(with Veronica Bressan and Achille Fusco).

27 October 2023   **Italian/Romance imperatives as radically reduced structures: a view from acquisition.**
Lecture during Adriana Belletti's course on Morphosyntax, University of Siena.
(Siena, Italy).

Academic Service

Peer Reviewing

2024   **Reviewer – Lingbuzz Press.**
Peer review for *A Cartesian Dream: A geometrical account of syntax. In honor of Andrea Moro*, eds. Matteo Greco and Davide Mocci.

2023   **Reviewer – Proceedings of ConSOLE XXXIII (forthcoming).**
Peer review for the *Conference of the Student Organization of Linguistics in Europe.*

Prize Committees

2024   **Local Committee Member – Premio Marica De Vincenzi.**
49th Incontro di Grammatica Generativa (IGG), IUSS Pavia.
With Prof. Maria Teresa Guasti and Prof. Luigi Rizzi.

Institutional Student Representation

2024–present   **PhD Student Representative – All Humanities PhD Programs.**
IUSS Pavia.

2022–2024   **PhD Student Representative – PhD in Theoretical and Experimental Linguistics.**
IUSS Pavia.

Outreach

2023   **SHARPER – European Researcher's Night.**
Science communication at SHARPER PAVIA 2023.
Public vulgarization of linguistic research; interactive pilot experiment on relative clauses for children.

Professional Work Experience and Internships

2018   **Translator – CLA, University of Macerata - Macerata, Italy**
Translation (ITA ↔ ENG) of administrative documents and website content.
Language mediation for international students on behalf of CLA.

Languages

Italian (native)

Neapolitan (native, passive competence)

Romagnol (native, low passive competence)

English (near-native)

French (advanced)

German (intermediate)

Japanese (beginner)

Esperanto (beginner)

Technical skills

Programming languages
R, RStudio (basic), HTML (beginner), Python (beginner).

Software
CLAN (advanced), SketchEngine (advanced), UAM Corpus Tool (advanced), LaTeX (intermediate), Overleaf (intermediate), Microsoft Word (advanced), Excel (advanced), Github (basic), Astro (basic).