

## PROVING SEMANTIC CONTINUITY VS HOMONYMIC DEGROUPING IN DIACHRONIC SEMANTICS

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### **Abstract:**

While much focus has been put on semantic change in diachrony (e.g. grammaticalization and pragmaticalization) the issue of *semantic continuity* has remained notably underconsidered. As a consequence, homonymic degrouping in diachrony, i.e. the fact that semantic change at some points may lead semantic autonomy, has not been studied thoroughly, even if paradoxically some synchronic approaches (e.g. Robert, 2003) have discussed the issue.

With the reason for overlooking such a major issue being mostly a technical one, namely the lack of tools that would allow identifying shared layers of semantic meaning from differentiated ones, our aim will be to introduce two techniques which may be used in order to do so, namely the “inversed dictionary” technique (Horchani, 2018: 267) and the testing of shared (morphemic) presuppositions (Horchani, 2018: 296).

We shall do so by considering what is traditionally described as the *tantum* family in French (Von Wartburg, 2009: 623-624), i.e. the set of words that include the segment /tant/ in French such as the adverbs [*tant*], *autant* (so many) (or such as) *pourtant* (however), *tandis (que)* (while), *tantôt* (sometimes), *tant pis* (too bad), *tant que* (as long as), etc.

We shall admit - given the very wide spectrum of meanings associated with these words - that unless proved otherwise, it must be assumed that autonomization and diachronic homonymic degrouping has taken place and that semantic continuity must be tested as such.

The first technique to test semantic continuity uses the fact that any representation by an etymological dictionary of words within a family such as the *tantum* family is based on paraphrases accessible to the contemporary reader. This in return makes it possible to “reverse” the dictionary by transforming the paraphrases into lexical entries and considering all the words within the family for which they are used as paraphrases. By highlighting the recurrence of the same paraphrastic descriptors at all stages of the family history and in association with distinct lexemes, such a techniques makes apparent lines of semantic continuity that we propose to call *diachronic semantic profiles* (Horchani, 2018: 340) are apparent. As an illustration of the technique, the profiles associated with the *tantum* family will be presented.

We shall then present a semantic methodology aimed at isolating, if they exist, the semantic presuppositions shared by the distinct lexemes within the *tantum* family. We shall notably detail the way exhaustive descriptions of the T-conditions of use of each lexeme, i.e., of “what has to take place for the lexeme to be used” (Nemo, 2020: 410), allow by comparing such T-conditions to identify overlaps between them, which are in fact shared (morphemic) presuppositions. We shall finally show the fact that when this method is conducted both with synchronic and diachronic data, it yields the same result and isolates the same shared (morphemic) T-conditions.

As for as our *tantum* family example, we shall conclude that the (unproven) intuition that all the lexemes at stake are forming a network of not unrelated lexemes is not groundless and may be proven both as a whole, with all lexemes sharing identifiable morphemic presuppositions and for subgroups which share identifiable diachronic profiles. We shall propose to name cognatic families that are proven not to have undergone homonymic degrouping *diachronic lexical nexuses*.

We shall conclude by showing that these two forms of semantic continuity are also illustrated for *tantum* in Latin by its relationship with its etymon.

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## On ‘Vulgar Intensifiers’ in Italian Interrogative sentences

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If the works on interrogative and negative constructions are innumerable, little has been said about the use of obscene terms - the « gros mots » and their substitutes - in negative and interrogative sentences. The aim of our communication is to investigate to what extent the term *cazzo* ‘cock’ has been grammaticalized as an interrogative marker. Due to its highly obscene value, the expression *cazzo* ‘prick’ only is attested in certain linguistic registers. It however belongs to the most frequent expressions in (informal) Italian.

Particular attention will be paid to the use of this expression in Interrogative contexts. As illustrated by examples (1)-(6), the noun *cazzo* ‘prick’ can form a complex interrogative construction with the interrogative marker it combines with :

- (1) Che / cosa cazzo stai facendo  
« What the fuck are you doing ? »
- (2) Chi cazzo lo conosce ?  
« Who the fuck knows him ? »
- (3) Ma perché cazzo non mi hai telefonato ?  
« But why the fuck didn’t you call me ? »
- (4) Dove cazzo ho messo le chiavi ?  
« Where the fuck did I put the keys ? »
- (5) Ma come cazzo parli ???!  
« But how the fuck are you talking ? »
- (6) Quando cazzo arriverà?  
« When the fuck will (s)he arrive ? »
- (7) Quanto cazzo ci mette sto treno ?  
How long does it take for the train to arrive ?

As illustrated by the preceding examples, the catch-all swear word *cazzo* ‘prick’ is used to strengthen interrogative pronouns. As a rule, the addition of *cazzo* to the interrogative pronoun does not seem to modify the propositional content of the sentences : in examples (1)-(7), it would be the same if the vulgar word *cazzo* were missing – at least in (6)-(7) the interrogative sentence may have a rhetorical value. In other cases however, the noun *cazzo* implies a radically different interpretation and triggers some kind of malefactive value :

- (8) Dove sei stato stamattina ?  
« Where have you been this morning ? »
- (9) Dove cazzo sei stato stamattina ?  
« Where the fuck have you been this morning ? »

As a matter of fact, in example (9) the interrogative expression is not used simply to ask the listener to fill an informational gap, as is the case in (8). It presupposes as well that the question is motivated by some kind of detrimental situation on the part of the speaker, and it

is this detrimental situation that triggers such a particular interrogative sentence (i.e., I've been looking for you for a while but I didn't find you : where the fuck have you been ?). This raises the question as to the real contribution and effect of this kind of marker. Interestingly, in a subset of the contexts in which the complex string Interrogative Pronoun + *cazzo* is used, it is possible to find instances such as (10), where *cazzo* endows the function of an independent interrogative marker :

- (10) Cazzo fai a Praga ?  
« What the fuck are you doing in Prague ? »

We'll show that the transgressive use of a tabooed concept or referent cannot account for the success and generalization of *cazzo* in all the contexts in which it occurs. By the way, the synonym *pene* « penis » would be completely excluded in these contexts. We shall argue that the success and generalization of *cazzo* also relies on its phonetic shape. From this point of view, it is the conjunction of transgression and phonetic expressivity that produces the emphatic effect of these constructions and ensure their success and their expansion.

Needless to say, the question of Vulgar words (and their replacement by more neutral ones) is highly relevant from a diachronic point of view. In the discussions concerning Jespersen Cycle of negation, the emergence of negative items from the grammaticalization of vulgar words is rarely mentioned. And the same observation holds for interrogative constructions : it has repeatedly been observed that interrogative structures share many properties with focus constructions. Given that focus particles may fuse with indefinite expressions to form new interrogative words, we shall argue that vulgar words may contribute to renew and enrich the formal means of expression of interrogative sentences.

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## TÍTULO DO TRABALHO: On Universal Free Choice

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**Palavras-chave:** free choice, universal force, *cualquier NP*, Rioplatense Spanish, alternative semantics.

### Resumo:

Since Vendler (1974), the freedom of choice of items such as *any* has not been questioned, but little has been said with regards to what it means to choose freely. In this presentation, we will try to provide an answer to what it means to choose freely by analyzing the interaction of negation and *cualquier* in negative episodic statements in Rioplatense Spanish (RpS).

It has been argued that FCI *cualquier* cannot appear unsubtrigged in episodic statements, but it does so in negative episodic statements in RpS, as in (1) and (2) (the sentences are taken from <https://www.corpusdelespanol.org/web-dial>).

We will argue that *cualquier NP* in those sentences has a covert modifier (see Dayal 2004) which presupposes a selection, such as that I can choose. Thus, they would be subtrigged cases which would allow for a type shift  $e$  (as in Aloni 2007) and the apparition of *cualquier NP* in negative episodic statements. We will defend that the reason why, in those cases, *cualquier NP* only appears in the object position is due to the fact that there must be an agent that has the ability to choose between the alternatives introduced by the FCI, and the sentences would be read as in examples (3) and (4).

Since they can be interpreted as subtrigged cases in episodic statements, they may be formalized, in an alternative semantics framework as the one presented in Menéndez-Benito (2010) and Aloni (2019), as in (5), where  $\text{SHIFT}_e$  (exh[*cualquier historia, que pudiera elegir*]) yields the maximal collection of histories I could choose in  $w_0$ . To avoid vacuous quantification,  $\downarrow$  is applied and produces a set of individuals. Then, it combines with the denotation of the verb to produce a set of alternatives. Since the set occurs in the scope of a negated universal operator, we get the desired interpretation: not every story was chosen by me.

The previous representation correctly predicts that the agent did not select all of the possible alternatives. She selected the ones that she wanted to select, thus the free choiceness effect is maintained even within the scope of negation. This shows that there is an intentional action performed by the agent when she chooses the one or the ones that she wants to choose and that it does not collide with the universal value the FCI has.

Overall, we will defend that a universal approach to FCI *cualquier* in an alternative semantics framework can account for the free choice interpretation that *cualquier NP* has in negative episodic statements, which is a context that has not been analyzed by Menéndez-Benito (2010) or Aloni (2019).

Examples:

- (1) No enviaron a cualquier periodista a cubrir el viaje de el candidato, sino a sus informativistas principales. (Uruguay)  
 ‘They did not send any journalist to cover the trip of the candidate, but their main newsreporters.’
- (2) No agarré cualquier historia y la produje aunque no tuviera nada que ver con lo que creo. (Argentina)  
 ‘I did not grab any story and produced it even though it had nothing to do with what I believe.’
- (3) No enviaron a cualquier periodista (que pudieran elegir) a cubrir el viaje de el candidato, sino a sus informativistas principales. (Uruguay)  
 ‘They did not send any journalist (that they could choose) to cover the trip of the candidate, but their main newsreporters.’
- (4) No agarré cualquier historia (que pudiera elegir) y la produje aunque no tuviera nada que ver con lo que creo. (Argentina)  
 ‘I did not grab any story (that I could choose) and produced it even though it had nothing to do with what I believe.’
- (5) (a) No agarré cualquier historia (que pudiera elegir)...  
 (b) [NEG][▼] (Yo agarré ↓ (SHIFT e (exh[cualquier historia, que pudiera elegir]))

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