

# Great pizzas, ghost negations: The emergence and persistence of mixed expressives

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**Proposal:** This paper presents two novel cases of mixed expressives (in the sense of McCready 2010 and Gutzmann 2012): Italian *gran* and Cantonese *gwai2*. We show that in both cases expressive meaning survives through grammaticalization processes and is preserved atop of newly created truth-conditional meaning. We argue that (i) mixed expressivity is a diachronically stable semantic category, and that (ii) expressivity need not be affected by changes involving the truth-conditional level, providing empirical support to theories that assign to expressive and truth-conditional meaning independent and parallel semantic representations (McCready 2010, Gutzmann 2012).

**Background:** Researchers have recently identified a category of MIXED EXPRESSIVES (henceforth, ME), with *both* expressivity (henceforth, E) and truth-conditional (henceforth, TC) meaning (Sawada 2009, McCready 2010, Gutzmann 2011, cf. Potts 2005). While most work on MEs aims to formally capture their semantic composition at the synchronic level, an intriguing question concerns the *diachronic* status of MEs. Is this category stable over time? And do E and TC meaning interact diachronically? Besides being empirically interesting for language change, such questions could also cast light on the synchronic models currently invoked to model mixed expressivity. It is argued that MEs represent a transitional stage (Gutzmann 2013), along trajectories with TC meaning as a start and E meaning as a final point (cf. subjectification, Traugott 2004). Other accounts (e.g., Jespersen’s Cycle) leave little room for mixed expressivity, suggesting that the E component dies out as soon as a new TC meaning arises. We propose a third alternative, in which E meaning keeps existing alongside TC one, even when the latter undergoes further changes.

**Italian *gran*:** In Standard Italian, the adjective *gran*, originally derived from size adjective *grande* (= ‘big’), is a ME. On the TC level, it conveys that the NP is outstanding ( $\approx$  Eng. *great*, we assume POS to saturate the degree argument); on the E level (type *u*, separated via  $\diamond$ ) it conveys a strong excitement of the speaker. That the latter component is expressive is shown by the fact that (i) only the TC part can be negated/temporally displaced, the E part cannot (2b) and (ii) the E part is anchored to the speaker (in(2c), tests from McCready and Kauffman 2013).

- (1)  $\llbracket (\text{POS}) \text{ gran } \langle e, t \rangle \diamond \langle e, u \rangle \rrbracket = \lambda x. \text{OUTSTANDING}(x) \diamond \lambda x. \text{EXCITED}_{\text{speaker}}(x)$
- (2) a. Marco mangio’ una **gran** pizza lo scorso mese.  
Marco ate a *gran* pizza the last month  
TC: Marco ate an outstanding p.za last month. E: The speaker is excited about the pza.
- b. No! {#Mangio’ una gran pizza, ma non provo (piu) nulla /  $\checkmark$  Mangio’ una pza mediocre}  
No! {# He ate an outstanding p.za, but I don’t care (anymore) /  $\checkmark$  He ate an average one}
- c. Marco mangio’ una **gran** pizza, ma non { $\checkmark$  gli / #mi} interessa.  
Marco ate a *gran* pizza, but { $\checkmark$  he is / #I am} not excited.

In a variety of Italian spoken in Bologna, *gran* has turned into a quantificational predicate, with new TC meaning (= many) and unchanged E meaning (3). We suggest that, at the TC level, *gran* went from evaluating individuals to evaluating cardinalities of individuals, where “n” is a contextually large number. As (4a) shows, despite the change at the TC level, *gran* still qualifies as a ME.

- (3)  $\llbracket \text{gran } \langle et, t \rangle \diamond \langle et, u \rangle \rrbracket = \lambda P. \text{for } x: P(x), |x| > n \diamond \lambda P. \text{for } x: P(x): \text{EXCITED}_{\text{speaker}}(|x|)$
- (4) a. Marco ha mangiato delle **gran** pizze lo scorso mese’.  
Marco has eaten some **gran** pizzas last month.  
TC: Marco ate many pizzas last month. E: Speaker is excited about this quantity
- b. Non e’ vero! { #Ne ha mangiate tante, ma non provo nulla. /  $\checkmark$  Ne ha mangiate poche}  
It’s not true! {#He’s eaten many, but I’m not excited. /  $\checkmark$  He’s only eaten a few }

- c. Marco mangio' delle **gran** pizze, ma non {✓**gli**/#**mi**} interessa.

Marco ate some *gran* pizzas, but {✓**he** is/#**I** am} not excited.

That quantificational *gran* originates from adjectival *gran*, and not directly from size adjective *grande*, is confirmed by the fact that speakers from Bologna can't get the quantifying reading with *grande*. Also, a search on Bolognese internet blogs returned no results for *grande* as a quantifier.

**Cantonese gwai2:** Cantonese *gwai2* (literally 'ghost') also behaves as a ME (5), being both a negative quantifier (= nobody) and an expressive conveying that the speaker is in a heightened emotional state (= goddamn; Lee & Chin 2007, Matthews & Yip 2011). To run comparable diagnostics for Italian *gran*, the E component is shown by the fact that (i) it cannot be negated independently from the TC one (6b) and (ii) it is speaker-oriented (6c).

$$(5) \llbracket gwai2 \langle et, t \rangle \diamond \langle t, u \rangle \rrbracket = \lambda f. q = \neg \exists x. f(x) \diamond \lambda q. HEIGHTENED-EMOTION_{speaker}(q)$$

- (6) a. Gwai2 ho2ji5 leong2 lin4 duk6 jyun4 bok3si6.

GHOST can two year study finish PhD

**TC:** Nobody can get a PhD in two years. **E:** The speaker is in h. emotional state.

- b. M4hai6! {#Mou5jan4 ho2ji5, ngo5 m4 gok3dak1 dak6bit6. / ✓Jau5jan4 ho2ji5.}

No! {#Nobody can, but I don't feel anything special. / ✓Someone can.}

- c. Gwai2 ho2ji5 zou6 dou2, daan6hai66 {✓**keoi5**/#**ngo5**} m4 gok3dak1 dak6bit6.

No *goddamn* person can do it, but {✓**he** does/#**I** do} not feel anything special.

Like Italian *gran*, *gwai2* as a ME underwent change and has been reanalyzed as a *sentential* negator at the TC level while retaining its E part (7). The same diagnostics for MEs apply, (8b,c)):

$$(7) \llbracket gwai2 \langle t, t \rangle \diamond \langle t, u \rangle \rrbracket = \lambda p. q = \neg p \diamond \lambda q. HEIGHTENED-EMOTION_{speaker}(q)$$

- (8) a. Keoi5 gwai2 ho2ji5 leong2 lin4 duk6 jyun4 bok3si6.

s/he GHOST can two year study finish PhD

**TC:** He cannot get a PhD in two years. **E:** The speaker is in h. emotional state.

- b. M4hai6! {#Keoi5 m4 ho2ji5, ngo5 m4 gok3dak1 dak6bit6. / ✓Keoi5 ho2ji5.}

No! {#He can't, but I don't feel anything special. / ✓He can.}

- c. Keoi5 gwai2 ho2ji5, daan6hai66 {✓**kei4taa1jan4**/#**ngo5**} m4 gok3dak1 dak6bit6.

He can't *goddamn* do it, but {✓**others**/#**I**} do not feel anything special.

This diachronic story is supported by the fact that corpus data of early/mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Cantonese (Chin 2013) show numerous instances of *gwai2* as nobody+exp (5), but nothing like not+exp (7), which suggests that the usage of *gwai2* as not+exp emerged only recently.

**Conclusions:** In both cases, the expressive component is not affected by the shift at the TC level, as it continues to co-exist along with the newly created meaning. Looking at the big picture, these data extend the inventory of known MEs, while carrying two important implications. First, they show that mixed expressivity need not represent just a transitional stage of semantic change, but can be a stable category, capable of persisting through semantic shifts. Second, they provide evidence that the E and the TC meaning diachronically proceed in a parallel fashion, interacting very little in the process. This provides novel support to current theories of mixed expressivity (McCready 2010, Gutzmann 2012) which treat E and TC meaning as pertaining to distinct levels, showing how historical data can be relied on to test synchronic models of semantic composition.

**References:** Chin 2013. New resources for Cantonese... • Gutzmann 2011. Expressive modifiers... • Gutzmann 2012. Use-conditional...Ph.D Diss. • Gutzmann 2013. Pragmaticalization... • Lee & Chin 2007. A preliminary study of gwai... • Matthews & Yip 2011. Cantonese: a comprehensive... • McCready 2010. Varieties of... S&P • McCready & Kauffman, 2013. Maximum intensity. Oral presentation. • Potts 2005. The logic of... • Sawada 2009. Pragmatic aspects...Ph.D Diss. • Traugott 2004. Historical pragmatics