

Semantic and syntactic change of Free Choice Items in Romance. A case study of *cualquiera* in Argentinian Spanish and *n'importe quoi* in French.

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My talk will deal with the linguistic change from Free Choice (FC) indefinite pronouns such as *n'importe quoi* and *cualquiera* 'anything' in (1) into evaluative nouns with the meaning 'nonsense' in (2) in Argentinian Spanish and French.

(1) Free Choice indefinites:

a. *Tu peux choisir n'importe quoi, un stylo, un livre,!* French

'You can choose anything, a pen, a book,!'

b. -A: *¿Cuáles de estos libros puedo elegir?*

'Which book can I choose?'

-B. *Puedes elegir cualquiera.* Argentinian Sp./European Sp.

'You can choose anyone.'

(2) Evaluative nouns:

a. *Juan me contestó/dijo cualquiera (total).* Argentinian Sp./*European Sp.

b. *Jean m'a dit (du grand) n'importe quoi.* Fr.

'Juan/Jean answered me (a complete/big) nonsense.'

I will argue that the evaluative interpretation in (2) - observed a while ago by linguists (see Paillard 1997, Vlachou 2012, Rivero 2011, Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2018, among others) - can be analysed as a case of doxastic modality (see Stalnaker 1984, Heim 1992) that operates on the (agent's) modality of free choice indefinites (see Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2018 on agent's modality).

I assume that (2) expresses speaker's preferences. The speaker prefers in (2) that Juan said something particular or distinguished than that that Juan said something undistinguished or random. I will make this account more explicit and explain what degree modification (see *total/du grand* 'ful/complete' in (2)) means with respect to speaker's preferences.

Moreover, we will look at different types of verbs, especially those that take different kinds of arguments, such as propositions (e.g. *say*), individuals (e.g. *buy*) or properties of individuals (e.g. *be*, *seem*) and see how the evaluative interpretation changes with respect to these verbs.

Literature:

Luis Alonso-Ovalle & Paula Menéndez-Benito 2018 Projecting Possibilities in the Nominal Domain: Spanish *Uno Cualquiera*. *Journal of Semantics* 35 (1):1-41.

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