

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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Aim of the talk

Offer an analysis for the linguistic change in (1)

- ‚Free Choice‘-Indefinites → **evaluative** nouns/adjectives

(1) a. du grand n'importe quoi
of-the big INDEF
,big nonsense‘

French

b. cualquiera total
INDEF total
,complete nonsense‘

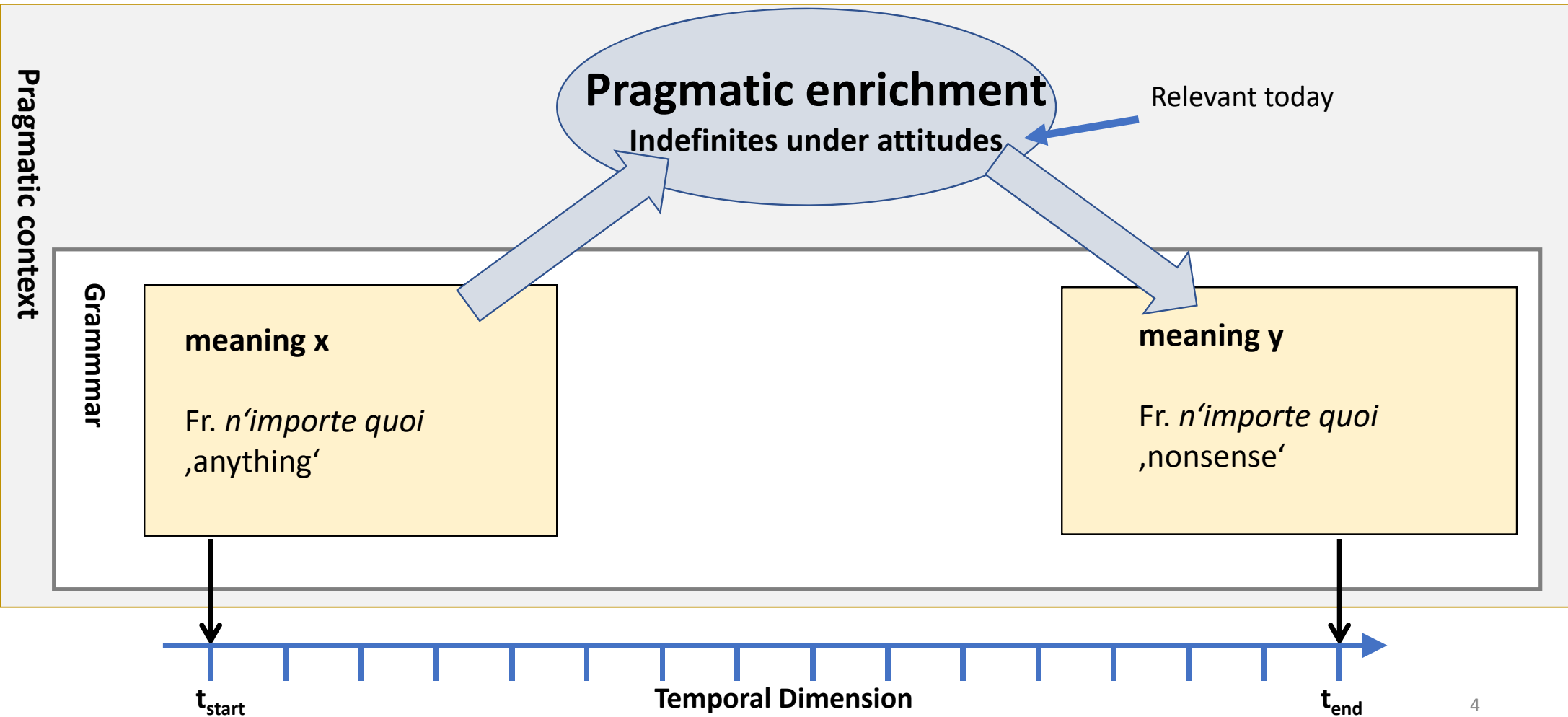
Argentinian Spanish (Arg.Sp.)

c. muy cualquiera
very INDEF
,very ordinary‘

Argentinian Spanish (Arg.Sp.)

Meaning Change

(Blank 1997, Traugott & Dasher 2002, Eckardt 2006, Deo 2006, Kellert in press, among others)



Main hypotheses

Change from indefinites into PPTs

- From generalized quantifiers into Personal Taste Predicates PPTs (like *tasty-predicates*) (see Lasersohn 2005, among others on PPTs)
from $\langle et, t \rangle$ to $\langle e, t \rangle$
- Syntax (Degrammaticalization?) :
 - from $Q^\circ / \text{Det}^\circ$ *n'importe quoi/cualquiera* \rightarrow N° *cualquiera/n'importe quoi*
 - from $Q^\circ / \text{Det}^\circ$ *cualquiera* \rightarrow A° *cualquiera*

Change from indefinites into PPTs

- Semantic conditions: interpreting indefinites under **attitude verbs** that order the **modal component** of indefinites (e.g. Free Choice, Agent's Indifference) on a **preference or relevance scale of the attitude holder x**
 - free choice is **less preferred** method for choosing according to the judge x than choosing according to some other criteria (e.g. according to a relevance order):
 - $\diamond (p \vee q) <_{\text{preference } k_{\langle x, w \rangle}} \neg \diamond (p \vee q)$ (=k is an ordering source, x the judge and w world)
 - e.g. *Juan me contestó cualquiera (total)*. 'Juan told me total *cualquiera*.'
 - x prefers that Juan says something non-random/reflected than that Juan says something random/not reflected (**EVALuative component of *cualquiera***)
- Syntactic conditions: using indefinites in *non-modal contexts* (e.g. under present and past tense predicative verbs)

Outline

1. Data: Different uses of *cualquiera* and *n'importe quoi*
2. Free Choice Modality of *cualquiera* and *n'importe quoi*
3. Free Choice Modality under attitude predicates
4. Modelling linguistic change
5. Summary and outlook

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Indefinites under modals

Free Choice: Every possibility is an option= It is possible that A applies and It is possible that B applies

(2) a. Esto lo puede hacer cualquiera. Arg.Sp.
this it can do INDEF
,Anybody can do this.'

b. Tu peux choisir n'importe quoi un stilo, un sac,.... Fr.
you can choose INDEF a pen, a bag
,You can choose anything: a pen, a bag,...

Indefinites in episodic contexts under perfective verbs

Random Choice: Agent's choice was not discriminative. (Choi & Romero 2007, A&M 2018, Larrivé 2016,)

Indifference: Agent was indifferent wrt. what to choose (Buccola & Haida 2017)

(3) a. Juan cogió una carta cualquiera. Arg.Sp.

Juan took a card INDEF

,Juan picked a card.'

Random Choice: 'Juan chose the card he picked indiscriminately.' A&M 2018

Agent's Indifference: 'Juan did not have any preference in picking a card.'

b. J'ai dit n'importe quoi (qui m'est passé par la tête, et ça s'est trouvé à être la bonne réponse!)

I have said INDEF

,I said something random (that came to my mind (first), and it happened to be the right answer).' (Larrivé 2016)

Indefinites in episodic contexts under perfective verbs in Arg.Sp.

Evaluative Component (EVAL): agent's choice does not fit the criteria of a good choice according to an evaluator/judge.

- (4) a. Me mandaste **cualquier cosa**, yo pedí esta faja Talle XG y me mandaste un body Talle M, que hacemos ahora, yo quiero lo que te pague, por favor..

,You sold me a **random thing**, I asked for size XG and you sold me size M.
What shall we do now? I want my money back.'

- b. Es una mujer que hizo **cualquiera** por plata hasta tener un hijo para enganchar a uno con plata.

'she is a woman that did **anything possible** for money, including even to give birth to a child to catch a guy with money.'

Indefinites in episodic contexts under perfective verbs

- Buccola & Haida 2017 on the role of German *einfach* that reinforces the indifference reading of *irgendein*

(5) Er hat einfach irgendein Bild genommen, ohne überhaupt zu verstehen was darauf ist.
,He just took some random picture, without understanding what it represents.'

(6) Du kannst nicht einfach irgendein Bild posten und erwarten, dass die Leute es verstehen.
,You cannot just post some random picture and expect that the people will understand it.'

Lexicalized EVAL

(7) a. J'ai dit /C'est **du grand** n'importe quoi Fr.
I have said/It is of-the big INDEF
,I said/It is big nonsense'

b. es (muy) cualquiera Arg.Sp.
it very INDEF
,it is very ordinary/big nonsense'

Lexicalized EVAL

If the object of evaluation refers to individuals, *cualquiera* ,ordinary‘ as in a.
If it refers to propositions, *cualquiera* ,nonsense‘ as in b.

- (8) a. Es una flaca cualquiera, que se cree que es Marilyn Monroe. Arg.Sp.
is a woman INDEF that believes that is M.M.
,She is an ordinary woman that believes to be Marilyn Monroe.‘
- b. Lo que me contestó Juan es cualquiera total. Arg.Sp.
what me answered Juan is INDEF total
,What Juan told me was complete nonsense.‘

EVAL *cualquiera/n'importe quoi* are PPTs

PPTs express a **judge/evaluator** and **perspective shift** under attitude verbs (from speaker to other attitude holder).

(9) a. No lo terminé de leer porque **me** pareció cualquiera. Arg.Sp.
I did not finish it, because it seemed nonsense **to me**.

b. **Je trouve** que c'est du n'importe quoi. Fr.
,**I find** it nonsense.'

(10) haría lo mismo pero si hay **gente** que no le gusta porque **piensa** que es **cualquiera** (yo no pienso eso).....

'I would do the same but there are people that don't like it because **they think it is nonsense (I don't think so)....**'

EVAL under modals

EVAL and FCI/RCI do not exclude each other!

(11) Aca el problema es que estos tipos, como los chantas KK, se abusan porque hay fanáticos como este Juan emilio que no ven la realidad, viven en otro mundo y **les pueden mandar cualquiera total** no les da la cabeza para darse cuenta que lo estan verseando.

‘Here the problem is that these guys like the chantas KK, ... they live in a different world **and you can tell/sell them completely anything/complete bullshit**, they don’t have the intelligence to realize that people are mocking about them.’ (CDE)

[<http://www.eduardocastillopaez.com.ar/2009/05/los-sonidos-de-una-mediocre-campana.html>]

Summary

- Interpretations in cooccurrence with word category:
 - pronoun *cualquiera* and *n'importe quoy*: FCI, RCI or EVAL
 - **noun or gradable adjective: EVAL only, behave like *tasty*-predicates**
- Interpretations in cooccurrence with verbal mood and verb type:
 - Under modals: FCI/EVAL
 - Under past or present tense: RCI/EVAL
 - **Under past or present tense of predicative verbs *be/look like*: EVAL only.**

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Free Choice Modality of *cualquiera* and *n'importe quoy*

- **indefinites** activate sets of alternatives.
- Alternatives can be of different types (e.g. individual, propositional).
- Individual alternatives can expand to propositional alternatives, which then get caught by a sentential operator $\exists p$ or $\forall p$
- (Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002, Chierchia 2006, Aloni & Port 2013, Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2018)

(12) Indefinites in alternative semantics after Kratzer and Shimoyama 2002:8

For $[[\alpha]]^{w,g} \subseteq D_{\langle s,t \rangle}$:

a. $[[\alpha]]^{w,g} = \{\lambda w'. \exists p [p \in [[\alpha]]^{w,g} \text{ and } p(w') = 1]\}$

Prose: the proposition is true in case at least one alternative in the relevant set is true

b. $[[\alpha]]^{w,g} = \{\lambda w'. \forall p [p \in [[\alpha]]^{w,g} \rightarrow p(w') = 1]\}$

Prose: The proposition that is true in case every alternative in the relevant set is true.

FCIs under modals

- Formalization of the propositional alternatives $\langle_{s,t}$ that get caught by the universal operator \forall in modal (\diamond) contexts (see Aloni & Port 2013, Menéndez Benito 2010, among others)

(13)	Canonical FCI
a.	Sentence: You can bring any book.
b.	LF $[\forall](\diamond \text{SHIFT}_{\langle_{s,t}} ([\text{any book}, \lambda x. \text{You bring me } x]))$
c.	Prose: For each book it is possible that you bring me that book.
(14)	Embedding of the FC effect
a.	Sentence: You cannot bring any book.
b.	LF: $[-][\forall](\diamond \text{SHIFT}_{\langle_{s,t}} ([\text{any book}, \lambda x. \text{You bring me } x]))$
c.	Prose: You cannot freely choose which book you bring me. It is not the case that for each book you can bring me that book.

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Free Choice Items under attitude predicates

- 1st diachronic step into EVAL noun/adjective = embedding indefinites in a judgement context
- (Hacquard 2006, Stephenson 2007 on embedded epistemic modality, Buccola & Haida 2017 on embedded Free Choice indefinite *irgendein* in German)

(15) FCIs in predicative position

a. Sentence: *Juan me parece cualquiera*. ‘John resembles anyone **to me**.’

b. Modal component: $[\forall](\diamond \text{SHIFT}_{\langle s,t \rangle}([\text{anyone } \lambda x. \text{ look like (Juan, x)}])])$

Prose: For all men x , John looks like x .

c. **Evaluative/Judgement component** of the sentence (15 a.) operates on the modal component in (15 b.):

Prose: Juan looks like anyone else **to the speaker**. =

Speaker believes that for each person x , it is possible that Juan looks like x .

Free Choice Items under attitude predicates

- In certain pragmatic contexts, the speaker **objects** to the modal component, i.e. the speaker believes that the modal component **should not hold in w** or is **less preferred** candidate for w than the opposite which is the negation of the modal component/free choice (see Heim 1992 for *want*-predicates)
- **15 c` = variant of 15 c.**

Prose: speaker prefers that it is not the case that for each person x, it is possible that Juan looks like x than that for each person x it is possible that Juan looks like x.
- => speaker wants that it is only possible that Juan looks like himself.

Free Choice Items under attitude predicates

- Linguistic evidence: Explicit marking of z's preferences by pragmatic context, intonation/gestures and focus particles:

(16) Respondí cualquiera, **pero no lo que realmente quería contestar.**

answered anything, but not what I really wanted answer.

,I answered something random, but not what I really would have wanted to answer.'

(17) Juan **no es nada más que** un hombre cualquiera. No es particular.

'Juan is **nothing but** a man that looks like anyone else. He is not particular/distinguished.'

(18) Er ist **einfach** irgendein Typ. Nur ein Typ wie jeder andere auch! Google

,He is just some guy. Just a guy like everyone else.'

Semantics of *believe*

- *believe* is a universal quantifier over doxastic alternatives – worlds that the attitude holder considers candidates for the actual world (Hintikka 1969, Pearson to appear).
- The candidates of *z*'s belief for the actual world are a set, called *z*'s doxastic alternatives, i.e. $\text{Dox}_{\langle z, w \rangle}$
- $\text{Dox}_{\langle z, w \rangle} = \{w' : \text{in } w, z \text{ considers } w' \text{ a candidate for } w\}$
Sentence: Maria believes that Juan looks like Alex.
- $\{\text{Maria considers Alex be similar to Juan a candidate for } w, \text{ Maria considers Peter be similar to Juan a candidate for } w\}$
- For all w' , element of $\text{Dox}_{\langle z, w \rangle}$ $\{w' : \text{in } w, z \text{ considers } w' \text{ a candidate for } w\}$

Modal component of *es cualquiera* is judge-centered

(15): 'Juan looks like anyone to me.'

Evaluative component of (15):

$[[\text{speaker believes } [[\text{Juan resembles everyone}]]]_{c, \langle \text{speaker}, w \rangle} = 1$

iff $\forall w' \in \text{DOX}_{\text{speaker}, w} [[\text{Juan resembles everyone}]]_{c, \langle \text{speaker}, w' \rangle} = 1$

Prose: **speaker believes** that the sentence in (15) is true , iff all candidates of the form [Juan resembles x] are part of speaker's belief state in the actual world.

What are the candidates of $\text{Dox}\langle\text{speaker},w\rangle$ in (15)?

Simplification:

W1= Alex is similar to Juan,

W2= Alex is similar to Peter

{speaker considers Alex is similar to Juan a candidate for w, speaker considers Peter is similar to Juan a candidate for w}

For $\forall w' \in \text{DOX}_{\text{speaker},w}$ {speaker considers that Juan looks like Peter a candidate for w, speaker considers that Juan looks like Alex a candidate for w,....}= 1

What are the candidates of $\text{Dox}\langle\text{speaker},w\rangle$ in (15)?

More complex solution: the argument of speaker's belief are sets of worlds that match the quantified proposition of the modal component:

$[[z \text{ believes } [[\text{for each person } x, \text{ it is possible that Juan looks like } x]]]^{c,\langle j,w\rangle} = 1$
iff $\forall w' \in \text{DOX}_{z,w} [[\text{for each person } x, \text{ it is possible that Juan looks like } x]]^{c,\langle z,w'\rangle} = 1$

Semantics of *want*

- Stalnaker 1984 and Heim 1992 suggest that *want* is treated as a universal quantifier over worlds. *X wants S* is interpreted as *X believes that a world in w in which S is true is more desirable than a world in which S is false*. Thus *want* is interpreted with respect to a doxastic modal base:
 - $\llbracket \text{want} \rrbracket_{g,w} = \lambda p \in D_{\langle s,t \rangle} . \lambda x \in De. \text{Dox}_{x,w} \subseteq \{w' : \text{any world } w'' \text{ maximally similar to } w' \text{ such that } w'' \in p \text{ is more desirable to } x \text{ in } w \text{ than any world } w''' \text{ maximally similar to } w' \text{ such that } w''' \notin p\}$ [Heim 1992: 193]

Free Choice Items under attitude predicates

- *cualquiera* expressing speaker's preferences.

(15') FCIs in predicative position

a. Sentence: *Juan no es nada más que cualquiera*. 'John is (just) like everyone (else).'

b. Modal component: $[\forall](\diamond \text{SHIFT}_{\langle s,t \rangle}([\text{anyone } \lambda x. \text{look like (Juan, x)}])$

Prose: For all men x , John looks like x .

c. Evaluative component of the sentence (a.):
Speaker believes that the worlds in which Juan does not resemble to everyone are more preferred than the worlds in which Juan resembles everyone.

$[[15'a]]_{g,w} = \lambda p \in D_{\langle s,t \rangle} . \lambda x \in De. \text{Dox}_{x,w} \subseteq \{w' : \text{any world in which Juan does not resemble everyone is most desirable in } w \text{ according to } x \text{ than any world in which Juan resembles to everyone in } w \text{ acc.to } x\}$ [my adaptation of Heim 1992: 193]

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Linguistic change

- indefinites of type $\langle\langle e,t \rangle t \rangle \rightarrow$ properties of type $\langle e,t \rangle$
- and their evaluative interpretation under certain attitude verbs (believe, want) is hard-wired into the lexical meaning.

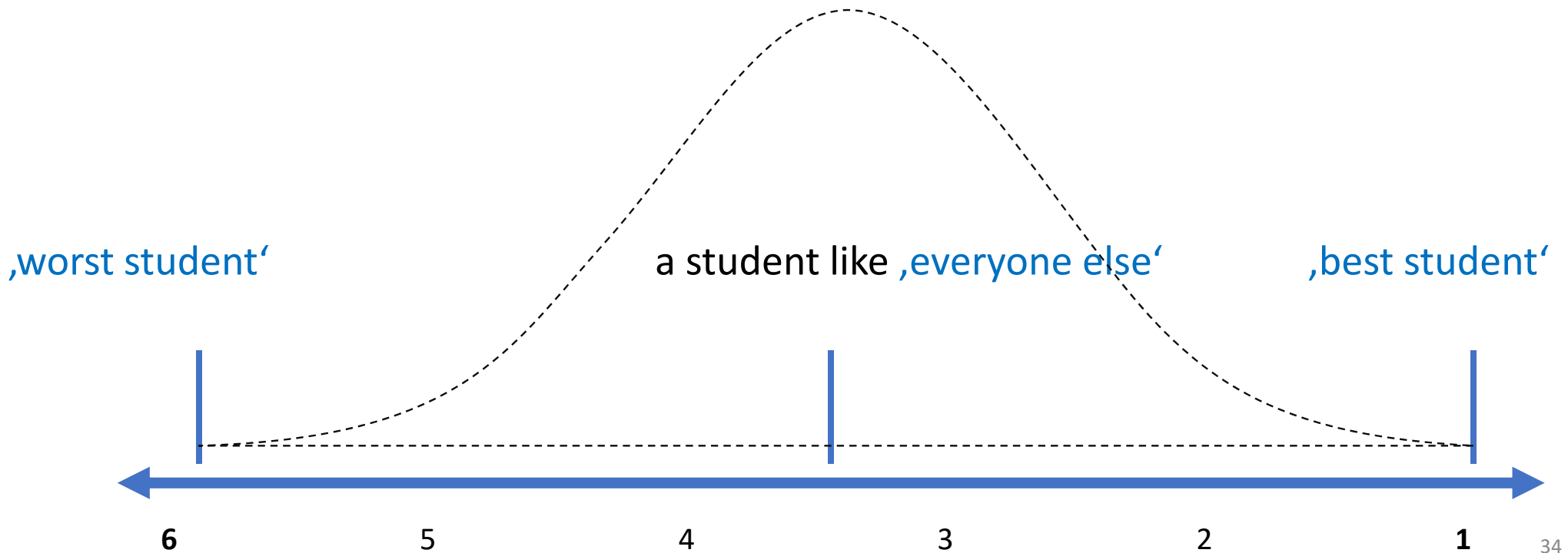
Meaning of *un estudiante cualquiera*

(19) *Juan es un estudiante cualquiera.*

Juan is a student INDEF

‘Juan is a student like anyone else.’ => ‘Juan is an unremarkable student’

(see Alonso Ovalle & Royer 2019 for the meaning ‘average’)



Pejorative interpretation of being ,unremarkable‘

- Pejorative interpretation of ,unremarkable‘, because of not being remarkable.
- Known change in many languages (Frz. *vulgaire, mediocre*) (Borkowska & Klepanski 2007: 43, among others)

Linguistic change: Q° to A° reanalysis

(20) Juan es [PPT <et> $\leftarrow_{\text{type shift}}$ [<<e,t>t> cualquiera]].

- [[PPT cualquiera]]: λx [(**cualquiera** (x))]=1,
- iff All y, y is not x, x is similar to y.

(21) [[DegP medio/muy [PPT <<e,t>d> cualquiera]]]: $\lambda d \lambda x$ [(**cualquiera** (x)(x))]=1,

- iff All y, y is not x, x is similar to y to degree d.

Linguistic Change

- Interpreting *cualquiera* as PPT (i.e, judge parameter) (see Lasersohn 2005, Stephenson 2007, among others):

(22) $[[\text{PPT } \text{cualquiera}_{\text{NEUTRAL EVAL}}]]^{c, \langle j, w \rangle} = 1$ iff x similar to everyone according to judge j

(23) $[[x \text{ think ...cualquiera}]]^{c, \langle j, w \rangle} = 1$ iff $\forall w' \in \text{DOX}_{x, w} [[\text{cualquiera}]]^{c, \langle x, w' \rangle} = 1$

(24) $[[\text{PPT (nothing but) cualquiera}_{\text{NEG EVAL}}]]^{c, \langle j, w \rangle} = 1$

- iff similar to everyone for judge j and being similar to everyone $\langle k \langle j, w \rangle$ than not being similar to everyone (k is an ordering source)

Q° to N°

- [DP **du** [KindNP_{<e>} 'kind of' [PPT_{<e,t>} ←type shift Q_{<<e,t>t>} *n'importe* [NP **quoi**]]]
'a (kind of) thing with an evaluative property'
- [[PPT *n'importe*]]^{c,<j,w>} : $\lambda x_k [(n'importe\ quoi)(x_k)] = 1$,
 - iff PPT describes the kind *thing* in a way that all instances of this kind are undistinguished to the judge *j* in *w* than some other kind of a thing *y* that all instances are distinguished and iff *n'importe quoi*(*x*) <_{k<j,w>} than *non-n'importe quoi*' (*y*)

5. Summary

Summary

- Evaluative component (Eval) = Judgement upon free choice/random choice modality
 - Evaluative component is hard-wired into the **lexical** meaning of *n'importe quoi/cualquiera* as NPs/DegPs.
 - Evaluative component is a **pragmatic implicature** in case, *n'importe quoi/cualquiera* are indefinite pronouns.
- EVAL operates on top of FCI/RCI! → NO lexical ambiguity! (contra A&M's working hypothesis 2018)

Summary

- The Free choice Modality is no longer expressed **compositionally** in DegP/NP *cualquiera/n'importe quoi*, i.e. no longer as a result of the interaction between a modal and an indefinite pronoun.
- It is possible that the Modality has disappeared already from *du n'importe quoi* or *es cualquiera*
 - i.e. *du n'importe quoi* is no longer related to 'anything', but simply interpreted as a kind of speech/thing that is not part of judge's preferences.

Merci pour votre attention!
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appendix

Modification of n'importe quoi

- *Du grand n'importe quoi* is 'thing' that the judge considers being especially undistinguished and big:
- [DP du 'some' [Kind <e> ,kind of'[grand [Pr _{<e,t>} n'importe [NP quoi]]]