

## ON A DISCOURSE PARTICLE IN SICILIAN

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1. *The phenomenon.* In Sicilian, the wh-word *quantu* has (at least) three distinct uses:

– *quantu*<sup>1</sup>: A subordinating conjunction introducing temporal or rationale clauses:

- (1) *Vadd'                    ô picciriddu    quantu                    v àiu    a-ddàpir'      a potta.*  
 look.after.IMP    the child    while                    go.1SG to open      the door
- (2) *Racci                    na caramella    quantu                    s'accodda.*  
 give.IMP.him    a candy      so-that                    calm-down.3SG

– *quantu*<sup>2</sup>: A correlative conjunction introducing the first of two conjoined clauses (cf. de Vries 2005), where the second conjunct has to be introduced by *e* 'and':

- (3) *Quantu      mi ttrasu    i rrobbi                    e      (\*quantu)    mi pulizziu      a casa*  
*quantu*<sup>2</sup>    1SG take-in the washing    and    (\**quantu*<sup>2</sup>) 1SG clean      the house  
 'As soon as I take the washing in, I clean the house'

– *quantu*<sup>3</sup>: A discourse particle optionally introducing main declarative clauses:

- (4) (*Quantu*)            *mi ttrasu      i rrobbi .*  
*quantu*<sup>3</sup>            1SG take-in    the washing  
 'I'm going to take in the washing.'

2. *The constraints on quantu*<sup>3</sup>. The three uses represent three distinct evolutions of the same etymological basis (the Latin interrogative *quantus*) and exhibit a progressively increasing number of constraints. *Quantu*<sup>2</sup> is compatible with a second person subject (5) and with a past tense (6):

- (5) *e allura    tu    quantu    fai    sta cosa    e vveni?      (Ggiustu?)*  
 and then    you    *quantu*<sup>2</sup>    do.2SG this thing and come.2SG (right)  
 'So you're coming right after you have done this, right?'
- (6) *U rintista    quantu    ni taliau    a ucca      e n'addummannau    centu euru.*  
 the dentist    *quantu*<sup>2</sup>    1PL look-at the mouth    and 1PL asked-for    one hundred euros  
 'The dentist just looked into our mouth and wanted one hundred euros'

On the other hand, *quantu*<sup>3</sup> imposes the following specific requirements on the host clause:

- i) the tense must be present *pro futuro*;
- ii) the subject must be first person singular;
- iii) the verb must have an agentive subject; both statives and non-agentive change of state verbs are excluded:

- (5) (\**Quantu*)    *mi    siddu.*  
 (\**quantu*<sup>3</sup>) 1.sg    get-angry.

Syntactically, *quantu*<sup>3</sup> is not allowed in an embedded clause (6); it can follow a left-dislocated topic (7)), but it is incompatible with a fronted focus, either preceding or following it (8):

- (6) \**iù    ti                    ricu    ca    quantu                    mi ttrasu    i rrobbi*  
 I      you-DAT    1SG tell that    *quantu*<sup>3</sup>                    1SG take-in the washing
- (7) *I rrobbi<sub>i</sub>,*            *quantu    m'    i<sub>i</sub>      ttrasu.*  
 the washing    *quantu*<sup>3</sup>    1.SG    them    take-in
- (8) a. \* *I RROBBI<sub>i</sub>    quantu    mi ttrasu t<sub>i</sub>.*  
 the washing    *quantu*<sup>3</sup>    1SG take-in
- b. \* *Quantu            I RROBBI<sub>i</sub>            mi ttrasu t<sub>i</sub>.*  
*quantu*<sup>3</sup>            the washing            1SG take-in

Thus, *quantu*<sup>3</sup> meets the following diagnostic criteria that identify it as a discourse particle (cf. Bayer & Obenhauer 2011: 451-452): it is (a) immovable, (b) the result of grammaticalization, (c) optional and (d) confined to root clauses.

3. *Analysis*. We propose that *quantu*<sup>3</sup> occupies an intermediate position in the left periphery of main declarative clauses (cf. Coniglio & Zagrean 2010, Corr 2016), which is devoted to encoding a conventional implicature about the proposition expressed by the sentence radical. We build on Bianchi et al. (2015, 2016), who propose an analysis of “mirative focus fronting” (in the sense of Cruschina 2012) in terms of a left-peripheral functional projection (FAI, for “focus-associated implicature”) which activates the immediately lower Focus Projection and conveys the conventional implicature that the proposition expressed by the sentence radical is less expected, or less desirable, than its relevant focus alternatives:

- (9) *Accidenti! MARINA hanno invitato!*  
 damn Marina have.3PL invited  
 ‘Damn! (Of all people,) they invited *Marina!*’
- (10) [FP Force ... [FaiP FAI<sup>0</sup><sub>[mir]</sub> [FocP XP<sub>i</sub><sub>[+foc]</sub> Foc<sup>0</sup><sub>[+foc]</sub>... [TP ... <XP<sub>i</sub>> ... ]]]]  
 (adapted from Bianchi et al. 2015, (15))

We propose that *quantu*<sup>3</sup> is an alternative realization of the same functional projection, whose implicature, however, does not rely on a set of alternative propositions: this is why the Focus projection cannot be activated (cf. (8)). Semantically, we will model the conventional import of *quantu*<sup>3</sup> in terms of Lauer’s (2013) characterization of optimal actions: the speaker conveys to the interlocutor that the action type expressed by the sentence radical is optimal with respect to the common beliefs and preferences of the interlocutors, and thereby becomes committed to performing the relevant action. This explains the constraints observed in (i)-(iii):

- i) as commitment to optimal choice is undefined for past events, past tenses are excluded;
- ii) since the selection of the optimal action choice is relative to the speaker, only a first person subject is allowed;
- iii) since optimal choice is only defined for actions, and not for non-agentive events (Lauer 2013: 112), the conventional implicatures is infelicitous if the predicate is non-agentive.

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