

Big 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* (literally ‘big’) as a quantifier+expressive and Cantonese *gwai2* (literally ‘ghost’) as a negator+expressive. We show that in both cases expressive meaning survives through grammaticalization processes and is preserved on top of newly created truth-conditional meaning. At a broader level, 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 semantic representations (McCready 2010, Gutzmann 2012).

Background: Researchers have recently identified a category of MIXED EXPRESSIVES, with *both* expressivity and truth-conditional meaning (Sawada (2009), McCready (2010), Gutzmann (2011), *pace* Potts (2005, 2007)). An intriguing question concerns the *emergence* of mixed expressives: how do expressivity and truth-conditional meaning end up co-existing in a lexical item? On the one hand, it has been proposed that mixed expressives represent a transitional stage (Gutzmann, 2013) along trajectories having truth-conditional meaning as a starting point and expressive meaning as an endpoint (consistent with pragmaticalization/subjectification models; Traugott (2004)). On the other hand, other models of language change predict that expressive meaning might morph into truth-conditional one (e.g., Jespersen’s Cycle, with an emphatic marker becoming a negator), but leave little room for the emergence of mixed expressivity, implicitly suggesting that the expressive component dies out as soon as this transformation is complete. To capture our data, we propose a third alternative, in which mixed expressivity emerges out of grammaticalization of expressive meaning into truth-conditional one and is a final stage of change.

Italian *gran*: In Standard Italian, the adjective *gran*, originally derived from *grande* (= ‘big’), is a ME. On the TC level, it conveys that the NP is (metaphorically) big; on the E level (type *u*, separated from the TC part, following Gutzmann 2012) it conveys a strong excitement towards the referent on the part of a relevant contextual judge (often the speaker, Potts 2007). That this latter component of *gran* qualifies as expressive is shown by the fact that (i) it is judge-dependent (1a) and that (ii) it cannot be negated/temporally displaced independently from the TC one (1b). Crucially, in a variety of Italian spoken in Bologna, *gran* has turned into a quantificational predicate, with new TC meaning (= many) and unchanged E meaning (2). We suggest that, at the TC level, *gran* went from evaluating individuals to evaluating cardinalities of individuals (we adopt a cardinality predicate semantics for *many*, where “n” is a number large to a contextual degree). As (3a) shows, despite the semantic change at the TC level, *gran* still qualifies as a ME, in which the E component is judge-oriented and cannot be independently targeted by negation. That quantificational *gran* originates from adjectival *gran*, and not directly from size adjective *grande*, is confirmed by the fact that speakers from Bologna cannot get the quantifying reading with *grande*. Also, a search on Bolognese internet blogs/forums returned no results for *grande* as a quantifier. In type-theoretic terms, the proposed trajectory is: $\langle e, t \rangle$ (big) $\Rightarrow \langle \langle e, t \rangle, \langle e, u \rangle \rangle$ (big + expressive) $\Rightarrow \langle \langle et \rangle, \langle d, et \rangle \rangle \bullet \langle et, u \rangle$ (many + expressive).

Cantonese *gwai2*: Like *gran*, Cantonese *gwai2* (originally ‘ghost’) also behaves as a ME, being both a negative quantifier (= nobody) and an expressive conveying that the speaker is in a heightened emotional state (= *goddamn*, see (4); Lee & Chin 2007, Matthews & Yip 2011). That the two components are independent is shown in (5) by the fact that (i) the default negation *m4* ‘not’ interacts with and flips the polarity of *gwai2* ((5a), with *gwai2* as an E taking the widest scope), and that (ii) third-party objection to (5a) can deny the TC content (5b) but not the E meaning (5c). Crucially, like *gran*, *gwai2* as a ME underwent change, turning into a full-fledged *sentential* negator at the TC level while retaining its E part, as in (6); the same diagnostics for MEs apply (7b,c). This diachronic story is supported by the fact that corpus data of early/mid 20th century Cantonese (Chin 2013) show numerous instances of *gwai2* as in (4,5a), but nothing like (6,7a), which suggests that the usage of *gwai2* as in (6,7a) emerged only recently. Formally, the diachronic trajectory is: $\langle e, t \rangle$ (ghost) $\Rightarrow \langle et, t_\alpha \rangle \bullet \langle t_\alpha, u \rangle$ (nobody + expressive; (8a)) $\Rightarrow \langle t_\alpha, t_\beta \rangle \bullet \langle t_\beta, u \rangle$ (not + expressive; (8b)).

Conclusions: We have discussed two cases of mixed expressives from unrelated languages, both of which have recently undergone a shift at the TC level. Interestingly, in both cases, the expressive component is not affected by this shift: (i) it continues to co-exist along with the newly created meaning and (ii) it still qualifies as expressive, as shown by various diagnostics. Looking at the big picture, these data extend the inventory of known MEs, strengthening the cross-linguistic empirical basis of the category. 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 empirical support to current synchronic models of mixed expressivity (McCready 2010, Gutzmann 2012), which treat E and TC meaning as pertaining to distinct levels, assigning them separate semantic representations.

Italian data:

- (1) a. Marco mangio' una **gran** pizza lo scorso mese.
Marco ate a *gran* pizza the last month
TC:Marco ate a big pizza last month. E:The judge(≠Marco) is excited about the pza.
b. No!{#Mangio' una gran pizza, ma non provo nulla/√Mangio' una pizza nella media } No!{#He ate a big pizza, but today I don't care/√He ate an average pizza}
- (2) $\llbracket \text{gran} \langle \langle et \rangle, \langle d, et \rangle \rangle \bullet \langle et, u \rangle \rrbracket = \lambda P. \text{ for } x: P(x), |x| > n \bullet \lambda P. x: P(x): \text{excited}_j(|x|)$
- (3) 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:Judge (≠Marco) is excited about this quantity
b. Non e' vero! { #Ne ha mangiate tante, ma non provo nulla. / √Ne ha mangiate poche}
It's not true! {#He's eaten many, but I'm not excited. / √He's only eaten a few }

Cantonese data:

- (4) **Gwai2** sik1
GHOST know
'Nobody knows shit.'/
'God knows.'
- (5) a. **Gwai2** m4 sik1
GHOST not know
'Every goddamn
person knows.'
- Objection from another interlocutor:
b. √ M4hai6, kei4sat6 ngo5 sik1
No, actually I know.
c. # Lei5 m4 lau1
You're not mad.
- (6) Keoi5 **gwai2** sik1
s/he GHOST know
'He knows jackshit.'
- (7) a. Keoi5 **gwai2** m4 sik1
s/he GHOST not know
'He goddamn knows.'
- Objection:
b. √ Keoi5 m4 sik1
He doesn't know.
c. # You're not mad.
- (8) a. $\llbracket \text{gwai2} \langle et, t_\alpha \rangle \bullet \langle t_\alpha, u \rangle \rrbracket = [\lambda f. q = \neg \exists x. f(x)] \bullet [\lambda q. \text{heightened-emotion}_j(q)]$
b. $\llbracket \text{gwai2} \langle t_\alpha, t_\beta \rangle \bullet \langle t_\beta, u \rangle \rrbracket = [\lambda p. q = \neg p] \bullet [\lambda q. \text{heightened-emotion}_j(q)]$

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