

Definite and Indefinite Free Choice Items: Evidence from English, French and Greek

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1 Introduction

The meaning of *freedom of choice* (hereafter FC) and its expression in natural language has received a lot of attention the last forty years.¹ Vendler (1967) has been the first to observe that the English item *any* has a very special meaning that he calls *freedom of choice*. More precisely, (Vendler, 1967, 80) argues that the speaker in (1) claims that “no matter whom you select from among you, I can beat him”. Ladusaw (1979) baptizes this use of *any* as Free Choice Item (FCI):

- (1) I can beat any one of you.

After Vendler, analyses on FCIs were primarily focused on their distribution in a crosslinguistic perspective (cf. Giannakidou (2001) and Jayez and Tovenà (2005)). In the present paper, I leave aside the distribution of FCIs and concentrate on another very interesting and not documented phenomenon; the fact that only some are presuppositional. Based on novel data from English, French and Greek, I propose that this is due to a very rich inherent semantics of FCIs; a cluster of quantificational properties and lexical semantic implications.

2 The facts

Except for *any*, English Free Relatives formed by the particle *ever*, are also involved in the discussion on FCIs, being grammatical in modal contexts as shown in (2). I refer to them as English complex wh-items:

- (2) I can beat whoever you want.

den Dikken and Giannakidou (2002), Giannakidou (2001), von Stechow (2000), Horn (2000a,b) and Quer (1998, 1999, 2000) equate *any* to English complex wh-items. However, a more detailed study shows that they differ. English complex wh-items, contrary to *any*, scope over negation:

- (3) I left before talking to anyone²
(4) I left before inviting whoever was at the conference.

Any scopes over negation only when preceded by *just*. (5) can be uttered in situations where there is the expectation that the speaker would talk to some person. This shows that *any* becomes presuppositional when preceded by *just*:

- (5) I left before talking to just anyone

The examples above are consequently represented as follows:

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²Here, *before* is in its negative use

- (6) $\neg\exists x(\text{person}(x)\wedge\text{I.talked.to}(x))$
 (7) $\exists x(\text{person.at.the.conference}(x)\wedge\neg\text{I.talked.to}(x))$
 (8) $\exists x(\text{invited.person}(x)\wedge\neg\text{I.talked.to}(x))$

The two French FCIs of the kind *qu- que ce soit* (French *concessive* FCI) and *n'importe qu-* (French *matter* FCI) have exactly the same differences. As FCIs, they are commonly grammatical in modal contexts:

- (9) On peut critiquer qui que ce soit.
 One can criticize FR.concessive.FCI
 One can criticize anybody [DB]³
 (10) Tu peux prendre n'importe quelle carte
 You can take FR.matter.FCI card
 You can take any card

However, only the French *matter* FCI scopes over negation. In (11), the speaker claims that she left before talking to anybody, with no exception. *Qui que ce soit* is not presuppositional. In (12), the speaker claims that none of the invited persons would be interesting for her. She is happy because she left the party without talking to anyone. *N'importe quel invité* presupposes the existence of invited persons.

- (11) Je suis parti avant de parler à qui que ce soit
 I am left before from talki to FR.concessive.FCI
 I left before talking to anyone
 (12) Heureusement, je suis parti avant de parler à n'importe quel invité
 Fortunately I am left before from talk to FR.matter.FCI invited
 I was so lucky that I left before talking to just any invitee

Greek FCIs have the same differences. As argued in Vlachou (forthcoming) Greek has five classes of FCIs. In this paper, I concentrate on three of them: 1) Greek complex wh- items, 2) Greek complex concessive wh- items and 3) Greek complex wh- items that are preceded by a definite article (*article+complex wh-* hereafter). As FCIs, they are all grammatical in modal contexts:

- (13) I anthropi afti tora dulevun ja tus amerikanus ke bori na exun opjadhypote
 The people these now work for the americans and can SUB have complex.wh-
 thesi ston kratiko mixanismo
 position to.the governmental mechanism
 These people are now working for the Americans and may have already occupied any
 governmental position. [DB]
 (14) I asthenis bori na exi erthi se epafi me opjondhipote ki an
 The patient may SUBJ have come to contact with complex.concessive.wh-
 vrethike brosta tis
 was.found front her
 The patient may have already come in contact with whoever she found
 (15) I asthenis bori na exi erthi se epafi me ton opjondhipote
 The patient may SUBJ have come to contact with complex+article.wh-
 The patient may have already come in contact with anyone

However, they differ in that Greek complex concessive wh-items (14) and article+concessive wh- items scope over negation (15). Greek complex wh- items (13) do not. In (16), the speaker

³Data presented with [DB] are extracted from the Free Choice Item Database (FCID). For more information, cf. Vlachou (2004) and Vlachou (forthcoming)

claims that the subject left before talking to anybody. The variable introduced by the Greek complex wh- FCI has narrow scope. In (17), it is presupposed that there were invited speakers and that Mary left without inviting them. (18) can be uttered in a situation where Maria is at a party and she feels very bored. None of the invitees looks interesting to her. Luckily for her, she left and therefore she did not talk to them. The existence of invitees is presupposed.

- (16) Efije prin na milisi se opjondhipote
Left before SUBJ speak to complex.wh-
She left before talking to anybody
- (17) I Maria efije prin na proskalesi opjondhipote ki an itan sto parti
I Mary left without SUBJ invite complex.concessive.wh- was to.the party
Mary left before inviting whoever was at the party
- (18) Eftixos i Maria efije prin na milisi ston opjodhipote
Fortunately the Mary left before SUBJ talk SUBJ to.complex+article.wh-
Mary left before talking just anyone

In the following sections, I propose that the differences above can be explained in terms of the quantificational properties of FCIs and of their lexical semantic implications. In section 3, I argue that French FCIs are indefinites just like (*just*)*any* and the Greek (article+) complex wh-items. In section 4, I argue that Greek concessive complex wh- items are definite, just like English complex wh- items. By the end of these two sections, it will have been shown that the quantificational properties of FCIs are not enough to account for the above differences. In section 5, the full proposal is presented.

3 Indefinite Free Choice Items

In the present section, I argue that French FCIs are indefinites just like (*just*)*any* and the Greek (article+) complex wh-items.

According to Heim (1982), Partee (1986), Kadmon and Landman (1993), Lee and Horn (1994) *any* is an indefinite. Giannakidou (2001) argues the same for Greek complex wh- items. The differences between universal quantifiers, *any* and the Greek complex wh- FCI together with the similarities between *any*, Greek complex wh- items and simple indefinites have been used by scholars as the main arguments to show that *any* is an indefinite. In this section, I first present these arguments and then show how they also apply to French FCIs under consideration.

The discovery of the double quantificational status of *any*, first observed by Hamilton (1858), divides researchers into two camps: ambiguiists and unitarians.⁴ Scholars that belonged to the first group supported the hypothesis that *any* is either a universal or an existential. In the first group belonged the following scholars: Reichenbach (1948), Quine (1960), Lasnik (1972), (Horn, 1972, ch. 3), Kroch (1975), Carlson (1981), Eisner (1995), Dayal (1995a) and Dayal (1998). Lee and Horn (1994) and Horn (2000a) give a very clear summary of the diagnostics for the universal character of *any* that have been used in the literature. First of all comes the diagnostic of *adverb modification*. Just like universal quantifiers, *any* can be modified by adverbs like *almost* and *absolutely*:

- (19) Absolutely everybody/anyone/*someone can win.

Second, this item, just like universal quantifiers, is not grammatical in the scope of existential constructions:

- (20) *There is anybody/everyone in the garden

Third, neither *any* nor universal quantifiers can modify predicate nominals:

⁴Term used by Horn (2000a)

(21) *He is any/every student of mine.

This way of approaching *any* presents two basic problems. The first problem concerns the validity of tests used for universality. As explained first by McCawley (1981) *almost* is not a good test for universal quantification. For instance, it can modify a predicate as *be stupid*:

(22) He is almost stupid.

There-insertion is not a valid criterion either. As shown by McNally (1998), it can modify a universal quantifier when it denotes kinds of individuals as in (23).

(23) There was every kind of doctor at the convention.

Finally, *any* can modify predicate nominals if it is in the scope of negation:

(24) I am not just any person– I am your husband

The second flaw in the universalists' approach is that universal flavor is not always available. For instance, *any* in (3) is not universally interpreted. If it did, (3) would be synonymous to *I left before talking to everyone* (for extensive discussion on this issue cf. Dahl (1970), Hoeksema (1983), Horn (1972), Lakoff (1972) to mention some). These problems show that *any* is not a universal quantifier.

Regarding the similarities between *any*, the Greek complex wh- item and simple indefinites, three are the most crucial arguments. First, a *CN*⁵ and *any CN* and Greek complex wh- items exhibit alternation between generic and existential readings in the same way that simple indefinites do; they are generically interpreted in generic contexts (25), (26-a), (26-b) and existentially interpreted in negative contexts as (27), (28-a) and (28-b) (see Diesing (1992) for discussion on existential and generic indefinites):

(25) A doctor will tell you that stopsneeze helps

(26) a. Any doctor will tell you that stopsneeze helps
b. Ojosdhupote jatros tha su pi oti to "stopsneeze" voitha

(27) I did not see a student

(28) a. I did not see any student
b. Dhen idha opjondhipote fititi⁶

Second, a *CN*, *any CN* and Greek complex wh- items take narrow scope in negative contexts. (27), (28-a) and (28-b) are represented as (29).

(29) $\neg\exists x(\text{student}(x)\wedge I.\text{saw}(x))$

On the other hand they take wide scope with respect to modal operators as in (30), (31-a) and (31-b) as shown in (32):

(30) A student can solve this problem

(31) a. Any student can solve this problem.
b. Opjosdhipote fititis bori na lisi afto to provlima

(32) $Gx(\text{student}(x))\diamond(x \text{ solve.this.problem})$

Third, as shown in (33), (34-a) and (34-b), they are unselectively bound by an operator whereas universal quantifiers are not (35):

(33) If a farmer owns a donkey, he beats it

⁵CN stands for Common Noun

⁶I do not include in the discussion examples with the Greek complex wh-item preceded by an article. Since the Greek complex wh- item is indefinite, this result passes over to this item as well.

- (34) a. If any farmer owns a donkey, he beats it
 b. Ean opjosdhipote agrotis exi ena ghaidhuri, to xtipa
- (35) *If every farmer owns a donkey, he beats it

These arguments show that the English FCI *any* and the Greek complex wh-item are indefinites. In the remainder of this section, I argue that the French concessive and *matter* FCIs are also indefinites.

As their English counterpart *any*, they can both be modified by adverbs like *presque* (almost). However, as explained above, this is not a valid argument for universal quantification:

- (36) Alfred mangera presque quoi que ce soit
 Alfred will.eat almost FR.concessive.FCI
 Alfred will eat almost any meal
- (37) Alfred mangera presque n'importe quoi
 Alfred will.eat almost FR.matter.FCI
 Alfred will eat almost anything

The first fact that shows that these two French FCIs are indefinites is their ambiguity. As their English and Greek counterparts, they are existentially interpreted in negative contexts as in (38) and (39). They are generically interpreted in generic contexts as in (40) and (41):

- (38) Il n'a pas bu quoi que ce soit.
 He not.has not drunk FR.concessive.FCI
 I did not drink anything
- (39) Marie n'a pas parlé à n'importe qui. Elle a parlé au président.
 Mary not.has not talked to FR.matter.FCI She has talked to.the president
 Mary did not talk to just anyone. She talked to the president
- (40) Quelque chat que ce soit a quatre pattes.
 FR.concessive.FCI cat has four feet
 Any cat has four feet
- (41) N'importe qui a des amis
 FR.matter.FCI has friends
 Anyone has friends

Second, both French FCIs are unselectively bound by an operator, just like simple indefinites (33). On the contrary, as shown in (35), universal quantifiers are not unselectively bound.

- (42) Si quelque fermier que ce soit a un âne, il le bat.
 If FR.concessive.FCI farmer has a donkey he it beats
 If any farmer has a donkey, he beats it.
- (43) Si n'importe quel fermier a un âne, il le bat.
 If FR.matter.FCI farmer has a donkey he it beats
 If any farmer has a donkey, he beats it

In the present section, I showed that French FCIs are indefinites. However, the fact that the FCIs considered in this section are indefinites does not explain why the French *matter* FCI, *any* preceded by *just* and the Greek article+complex wh- item are presuppositional as shown in (12), (5) and (18) respectively.

4 Definite Free Choice Items

In the present section, based on the similarities between English complex wh- FCIs and Greek complex concessive FCIs, I argue that the latter are definite.

Elliott (1971), Richardson (1995), Jacobson (1995), Dayal (1995b), Rullmann (1995) and Dayal (1997), Vlachou (2003b,a, 2005) have argued that English complex wh-items are definites. Let me present the arguments initially proposed by Jacobson (1995).

Consider (44). It either has a definite reading, and is paraphrased by a definite NP *there is a lot of garlic in the thing that Arlo is cooking*, or it has a universal interpretation: *there is a lot of garlic in all meals Arlo is cooking*

(44) There is a lot of garlic in whatever Arlo is now cooking

In order to account for both readings, Jacobson (1995) argues that the meaning of FRs is that of plural definite NPs. Their apparent universal meaning comes from the fact that they denote a maximal plural entity. First, in order to derive the definite semantics of English complex wh-items, she uses tools from Partee and Rooth (1983) who propose that the syntactic category NP corresponds to a variety of semantic types. For instance, an NP can denote an individual type e , the characteristic function of a set of individuals whose denotation is of type $\langle e, t \rangle$ or of a set of properties $\langle e, t \langle t \rangle \rangle$. As proper names, which are of type $\langle e \rangle$, the definite article *the* maps a common noun (a property) into an individual. Jacobson (1995) makes the hypothesis that wh-expression shifts “down” from a property to an individual by the *iota type shifting rule* proposed by Partee (1987). This operation is defined for those properties which characterize one and only individual. Therefore, we can have an inherently predicative expression to shift into an individual denoting expression if the set characterized by the predicate is a singleton. If the definite reading of an FR involves shifting down rather than up, then it ends up being equivalent to definite descriptions.

Second, in order to account for the definite and universal interpretation of FRs, Jacobson (1995) uses Sharvy (1980) and Link (1983)’s way of analyzing plural entities. Link argues that a plural entity can be seen as a special kind of individual. A given property P can be associated to a maximal plural entity namely that entity with the property P. Thus if in a given domain there is only one atomic individual with a given property then the maximal plural entity with that property is the one consisting of just this atomic individual. This gives the reading of singular definite. If there is more than one, then the NP denotes the single entity composed of all other entities and so is universally interpreted. For Jacobson (1995) *whatever* differs from *what* in that it *broadens the possible domain*. Apart from that, they do not differ. The meaning of *whatever Arlo is cooking* is the property true of all entities that Arlo is cooking:

- (45) a. what’/whatever’ = $\lambda P[\lambda X[P(X) \wedge \forall Y(P(Y) \rightarrow Y \leq X)]](X$ and Y are variables over members of e^* and e^* is the set of plural entities)
 b. what’/whatever Arlo is cooking’ = $\lambda X[\text{is.cooking}'(X)(A) \wedge \forall Y(\text{is.cooking}'(Y)(A) \rightarrow Y \leq X)]$

Since *whatever Arlo is cooking* characterizes a set which is a singleton, then it can easily shift into an NP type of meaning, where it shifts to denote the single individual characterized by the predicate:

- (46) [whatever Arlo is cooking]’ = $\iota X[\text{is.cooking}(X)(A) \wedge \forall Y(\text{is.cooking}'(Y)(A) \rightarrow Y \leq X)]$

Another very important argument that shows that English complex wh- items are definite comes from the fact that they escape negation as shown in (4). Also, (Jacobson, 1995, 473) (see also Elliott (1971)) argues that (47-a) compared to (47-b), “more strongly suggests the existence of a delinquent student”. This is *par excellence* a property of definite NPs.

- (47) a. Whoever handed in the assignment late failed.
 b. Anyone who handed in the assignment late failed.

Greek complex concessive wh- FCIs are, then, also definites. First, they are interpreted both as definites and as universals:

- (48) Iparxi poli skordho se otidhipote ki an majiervi tora o Janis
 There.is much garlic to GR.complex.concessive.FCI cooks now the John.
 There is a lot of garlic in whatever John is now cooking (cf. (44))

In (48), the speaker either claims that there is a lot of garlic in the meal that Janis is now cooking or that there is a lot of garlic in all meals that Janis is now cooking.

Second, presupposition escapes negation. In (17) repeated under (49), there is the presupposition that Maria left before inviting the persons who were at the party.

- (49) I Maria efje prin na proskalesi opjondhipote ki an itan sto parti
 I Mary left without SUBJ invite complex.concessive.wh- was to.the party
 Mary left before inviting whoever was at the party

Third, Greek complex concessive FCIs presuppose the existence of an entity with the relevant property, like their English counterpart (47-a). In (50), the speaker describes how her friends are.

- (50) Opjoshipote ki an ine filos mu kapnizi pipa
 Greek.complex.wh- is friend my smokes pipe
 Whoever is my friend smokes a pipe

This is a very crucial difference between indefinite and definite FCIs. For instance, as argued in Vendler (1967), *any* is not presuppositional in the same kind of context. As stated in (Vendler, 1967, 87), (51) means that “if somebody is my friend, he smokes a pipe; if he does not he is not my friend. [...] Then it is quite possible that I have no friends. ”

- (51) Anyone who is my friend smokes a pipe

In the present section, I showed that English complex wh- items and Greek concessive complex wh- items are definites. This fact explains why they are presuppositional as it has been initially argued in (4) and (17).

5 Lexical semantics

In the previous sections, I argued that the class of FCIs is divided into two subclasses; indefinite and definite FCIs. As already showed, these quantificational properties do not explain why the English item *just anyone* (5), the French *matter* FCI (12), and the Greek FCI formed by a complex wh- item preceded by an article (18) are presuppositional. Relevant examples are repeated below:

- (52) I left before talking to just anyone (from (5))
 (53) Heureusement, je suis parti avant de parler á n'importe quel invité
 Fortunately I am left before from talk to FR.matter.FCI invited
 I was so lucky that I left before talking to just any invitee (from (12))
 (54) Eftixos i Maria efje prin na milisi ston opjodhipote
 Fortunately the Mary left before SUBJ talk SUBJ to.complex+article.wh-
 Mary left without inviting just anyone (from (18))

A detailed study of the semantics of these three indefinite FCIs is enlightening. All three FCIs have a very special interpretation: The subject leaves before talking to persons that are considered to be very boring for her. Therefore, if she had talked to them then she would have chosen to talk to them randomly; all persons look the same to her. In order for the crux of this meaning to become clearer, let me introduce into the discussion three examples in which these three FCIs are not in the scope of any sentential operator:

- (55) She got married with just anyone

- (56) (...)fait à Orly: Société ICP . Je ne savais pas ce que signifiaient les initiales. J'ai avalé ma salive, j'ai dit:
 in Orly: Society I C P I didn't know the meaning of these initials. I swallowed my saliva I said:
 -c'est une agence de publicité.
 -It's an advertisement agency
 -Et alors?
 -And so what?
 J'ai répondu n'importe quoi:
 I said something/whatever/just anything
 -International Caraville Publicité. [DB](see also Vlachou (in press))
- (57) *Ed Wood (1922-1978) is considered to be the worst film director of the American cinema ever*
- Ekane ta panda monos tu-paragogi, senario, skinothesia- ke xrisimopiise
 Did the all alone himself-production scripts staging and used
 ton opjodhipote ja ithopio.
 complex+article.wh- for actor

He did everything alone: production, scripts, staging; He also used just any actor [DB]

In (55), the speaker argues that the subject chose randomly whom to marry. She did not pay attention to her choice. It is very probable that she married the first person that she met in her life. In (56), the speaker did not know what to say and suddenly she said something without even thinking. Among all alternatives that she had, she chose to say something that is equally probable to be chosen by the agent. Finally, the same holds for (57). Ed Wood chose his actor or actors at random, without any proper consideration. Both three FCIs have the flavor of indiscriminacy (see Horn (2000a) and Vlachou (forthcoming)) defined in Vlachou (forthcoming) as follows:

Definition 5.1 *Working definition of indiscriminacy implication*

An agent makes a choice in such a way that, before choosing, any alternative is equally probable to be chosen.

Indiscriminacy therefore describes the way that an agent will make a choice among alternatives that are equally probable to be chosen. Since indiscriminacy describes a choice, the existence of possible alternatives is consequently presupposed. If this was not the case, then the semantics of these FCIs would be vacuous. For this reason, *just anyone*, *n'importe qui* and *ston opjodhipote* scope over negation in (5), (12) and (18) repeated above.

On the contrary, the indefinite FCIs that are not presuppositional have a different lexical semantics; widening defined by Kadmon and Landman (1993) as follows:

Definition 5.2 *Widening by Kadmon and Landman (1993)*

In an NP of the form any CN, any widens the interpretation of the common noun phrase (CN) along a contextual dimension.

In (3) repeated under (58), the speaker argues that she left and she did not talk to a person, not even to the most likely one.

- (58) I left before talking to anyone

The same holds for French concessive FCIs and for Greek complex wh- items as shown in (11) and (16) repeated below:

- (59) Je suis parti avant de parler à qui que ce soit
 I am left before from talki to FR.concessive.FCI
 I left before talking to anyone
- (60) Efi je prin na milisi se opjondhipote
 Left before SUBJ speak to complex.wh-
 She left before talking to anybody

Indefinite FCIs that express widening, contrary to the indefinite FCIs that express indiscriminacy, are not presuppositional due to their lexical semantics. Nothing in the meaning of widening requires the existence of actual witnesses. For this reason, they do not scope over negation.

6 Conclusion

In this paper I attempted to explain the reason for which some Free Choice Items are presuppositional whereas some others are not. I argued that the fact that some FCIs are presuppositional is due to a very strong inherent semantics, cluster of quantificational properties and lexical semantic implications. More precisely, I claimed that the class of FCIs is divided into two big subclasses; indefinite and definite FCIs. I showed that only the quantificational properties of definite FCIs predict that they are presuppositional. As for indefinite FCIs, I proposed that their being presuppositional or not, is subject to their lexical semantic implications; indiscriminacy or widening. The results presented in this paper, show that the class of Free Choice Items is composed by items with very strong inherent semantic properties. This fact calls for detailed and systematic investigation of their semantics.

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