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## Agent Indifference The Case of Spanish *Un NP Cualquiera*

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**Friday, December 2, 2011**

**3:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

**Room: 2203 Dunton Tower**

Across languages, we find indefinites that trigger modal inferences in non-modal contexts. Some of these ‘modal indefinites’, like Spanish *algún* or German *irgendein*, signal ignorance on the part of the speaker. Other modal indefinites, like Spanish *un NP cualquiera*, the Korean *-na* indeterminates, the French *n’importe qu-* indefinites, or German *irgendein*, can signal indifference on the part of an agent: the sentence in (1), for instance, is interpreted as saying that Juan took a book at random.

- (1) Juan cogió un libro cualquiera,  
Juan grabbed a book CUALQUIERA  
‘Juan took a random book.’

Agent indifference implications have not received much attention in the recent literature (some exceptions are Choi (2007), Choi and Romero (2008), and Zabbal (2004)). Many issues remain unanswered: What type of modality does the agent indifference component convey? What is the status of this component? Is it truth conditional? A conversational implicature? A presupposition? A conventional implicature? Can ignorance and indifference be analyzed along the same lines? Are the answers to the questions above the same for all languages? If not, what is the range of cross-linguistic variation?

To address these questions, we will probe into the interpretation of Spanish *un NP cualquiera*. We will claim: (i) that the agent indifference component that this indefinite conveys is truth-conditional, (ii) (contra Choi and Romero (2008)) that the modal component that this indefinite contributes requires projecting the modal possibilities from a particular event, in line with recent work on modality (Hacquard, 2006; Kratzer, 2011)), and (iii) that speaker ignorance and agent indifference should not be given a uniform analysis.

### References

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- ZABBAL, Youri (2004). *A Compositional Semantics of the French Expression n’importe*. Ms. University of Massachusetts Amherst.