The Random Choice Indefinite in Telugu: Agent, Speaker, or, Situation indifference

Introduction: Random Choice (RC) indefinites, existentials that trigger a modal inference of indiscriminate choice, have been investigated quite extensively in some languages, especially Spanish (Alonso-Ovalle & Menendez Benito (AM) 2011, 2013, 2016), where they are shown to be sensitive to certain semantic constraints, specifically the decision of the event's agent. In this paper we analyse the distribution and interpretation of the Telugu RC indefinite *eedoo oka* (EO), thus adding to our understanding of modal selectivity in the nominal domain. We show that EO is more free in its distribution than the Spanish equivalent as its lexical semantic conditions allow more freedom for modal anchors.

EO's Profile: EO has only the RC reading, it doesn't do double duty for the epistemic indefinite –no ignorance reading. The RC reading of EO does obtain when the agent's choice is indiscriminate (1). **Indiscriminate Decisions**? In Spanish the FC reading is restricted and only obtains in the object position because the semantics requires a volitional agent, as the RC modality is anchored to the agent's decision (AM). With EO an FC reading is possible in the subject position, and even in an unaccusative (2). So its semantics can't be tied to an agent's volitionality. Our analysis accounts for this wider distribution.

(1) ravi eed-oo oka pustakam konnaaDu
Ravi which-DISJ one book bought
'Ravi bought some book or the other.'

(2) eed-oo oka pustakam paDindi
which-DISJ one book fell
'Some book or the other fell.'

Proposal: Indifference. We contend that EO makes reference to the preferences of the agent, the speaker, or the situation, and that EO conveys that the agent, the speaker, or the situation, as the case may be, is indifferent to the options at hand. We cash out indifference in terms of equal desirability of all the alternatives, encoded using a bouletic ordering source in an alternatives and exhaustification approach (Chierchia 2013, Condoravdi 2013). **Agent Indifference**: In (1), lets say the choice Ravi has are the books *a, b, c*, in the store. We give it the LF (3a), and model the semantic computation in (3b-d).

(3) a. $\Box_{Agent's\ desire\ worlds}$[[which book in the store]$_{[+D]i}$ [Ravi bought t_i]
b. *Assertion*: $\Box_A \exists x \in \{a,b,c\}[buy(Ravi, x)]$
c. *D-alt*: $\Box_A \exists x \in \{a\}[buy(Ravi, x)]$, $\Box_A \exists x \in \{b\}[buy(Ravi, x)]$, $\Box_A \exists x \in \{c\}[buy(Ravi, x)]$
d. *Implicature*: $\Box_A \exists x \in \{a,b,c\}[buy(Ravi, x)] \wedge \neg \Box_A \exists x \in \{a\}[buy(Ravi, x)]$
$\wedge \neg \Box_A \exists x \in \{b\}[buy(Ravi, x)] \wedge \neg \Box_A \exists x \in \{c\}[buy(Ravi, x)]$

We capture the indifference as an unbiased equi-desirable, equi-probable, bouletic condition (4).

(4) For every two books, *a*, *b*, and for every alternative *w'* for Ravi in *w*: every world maximally similar to *w'* in which Ravi buys *a* is as desirable to Ravi in *w* as every world maximally similar to *w'* in which Ravi buys *b*.

For a model with three alternatives *a, b, c*, this would rule in only those models with total and equal variation (5), and rule out those with partial variation, or unequal (biased) variation, (6).

(5) w1: a w2: a w3: b w4: b w5: c w6: c
w1: a w2: b w3: a w4: c w5: b w6: c

(6) w1: a w2: a w3: a w4: b w5: b w6: b
w1: a w2: a w3: a w4: c w5: b w6: c

Speaker Indifference. The indifference can also be on the part of the speaker (7a). Here the agent is not indifferent to what he eats. It is the speaker who is indifferent to what the agent eats. The speaker has no interest in what the agent eat, as that is not germane to the speaker's goal, which is to highlight some other portion of what event took place. We analyse the modal anchor (modal domains, the worlds wrt which the sentence is interpreted, project from 'anchors' -events, individuals, situations: Hacquard 2006, 2009; Kratzer 2011, 2012) here to be the individual, the speaker (7b), as opposed to the reading in (3a), where the anchor is the event (agent). EO's Spanish relative does not allow this individual anchor.

(7) *Context*: Ravi carefully chooses what to eat. Uma is describing to Hari some important information Ravi conveyed to her at the restaurant. Hari asks what Ravi ate. Uma says:
a. Ravi eed-oo oka-Ti tinnaaDu. 'Ravi ate something or the other.'
Ravi which-DISJ one-thing ate
b. $\Box_{Speaker's\ desire\ worlds}$[[which item on the menu]$_{[+D]i}$ [Ravi ate t_i]

Situation Indifference. Finally, it is possible for the indifference to be that of the situation (8a). Here the agent is not indifferent to what is bought, the speaker is not indifferent to what is bought, but the situation is. The situation obliges that something be bought. In other examples like this, where a

card has to be picked (AM), or a particular program used to send an email (von Fintel 2000), overriding the desires or interests of the agent or speaker, it is the situation which obliges an outcome, and which is indifferent to the identity of the entity that EO is projecting alternatives for. We analyse the modal anchor in this case to be the situation (8b). The situation anchor cannot project with the Spanish version.

(8) *Context*: Ravi and Uma are sent to buy a present at a store for Hari. They are both very choosy. They find some good gifts, but keep looking for better. In the process time runs out. Ravi ultimately is forced to pick a gift at random. Uma then comes back and reports:

a. Ravi eed-oo oka-Ti konnaaDu 'Ravi bought something or the other.'
Ravi which-DISJ bought

b. $\Box_{Situation's\ desire\ worlds}$[[which item in the gift shop]$_{[+D]i}$ [Ravi bought t_i]

Total vs. Partial Variation: In a hide-and-seek scenario (Alonso Ovalle & Menendez Benito 2010), where some options are not live, EO is good only if the hearer accommodates to what the live options are. If the speaker knows that some options are not live, but the hearer does not know it, EO is bad. For example, if two rooms in the house are always locked, and the hearer knows this or is told about it, the speaker can utter (9). If the speaker knows that the hearer is unaware of this, (9) is unfelicitous.

(9) ravi eed-oo oka gadi-loo unnaaDu
Ravi which-DISJ one room-in is
'Ravi is in soom room or the other.'

(10) naaku eed-oo oka-Ti kaavaali
I which-DISJ one-thing want
'I want something or the other.'

Combination with verbal modals: Since our analysis constrains the bouletic worlds to be equally distributed among the live options, one could expect that EO does not combine with a **Bouletic Modal** verb like *want*. But this is not the case. For example a child at the gift store can utter (10) to the parent. We rule this example in by analysing the desire of wanting to be restricted to 'an item' from the store, with the bias of which particular item is being desired equally distributed among the objects in the context. **Deontic Modals**: With deontic verbal modality and with imperatives, two readings are possible (11). In one reading the speaker is indifferent to what the agent chooses (who could be very picky), (11a). We analyse this reading as taking the Speaker as the modal anchor. In the other reading, the speaker is telling the agent to be indifferent to what the agent chooses (11b). We treat this reading as arising because of the event/agent as the modal anchor. Both the readings are seen with the Spanish FC indefinite as well (AM). According to AM a speaker FC reading is possible with the Spanish item because the Speaker is the agent of the order, and can thus also be an anchor to the modality that the FC indefinite introduces. This is in addition to the agent of the action being able to be the anchor for the modality, which gives rise to the embedded agent RC reading. Since the Telugu FC indefinite is not restricted by the agent-modal-anchor constraint, it too has no problems with either of the readings.

(11) eed-oo oka-Ti paTTukuraa!
which-DISJ one-thing bring
'Bring something or the other!'

a. Speaker Random Choice: Agent can be choosy, Speaker cannot.

b. Agent Random Choice: Agent cannot be choosy.

Epistemic Modals: The Spanish indefinite shows only an agent RC reading with epistemic modals, because in these situations the speaker is not an agent of any action. The speaker RC reading is blocked. On the other hand, EO even with epistemic modals show both readings (12). We analyse these again as Speaker vs. Agent anchors for the bouletic nominal modality associated with EO, which does not have a volitional-agent constraint. Here again EO has a wider distribution than its Spanish relative.

(12) ravi eed-oo oka cinema-ki vellunDaali.
Ravi which-DISJ one cinema-to go-must
'Ravi must've gone to some movie or the other.'

a. Speaker RC: Agent can be choosy, Speaker cannot.

b. Agent RC: Agent cannot be choosy.

Conclusion: Thus while its Spanish counterpart places an event (agent) restriction on the anchor of its modality (AM), EO does not place any such restriction, and freely takes events(agent), individuals (speaker) and situations as the anchors for its modality, thus accounting for its wider distribution, and the wider range of readings associated with it. **Further Work**: The important question of building EO from its parts –wh-pronoun, *eedi*, disjunctive marker *-oo*, and indefinite, *-oka*. Cross-linguistically these are the usual suspects recruited to form modal indefinites, leading us to speculate that they are obeying a universal grammaticalization path, if not directly responsible for the interpretation of the FC indefinites.