

Quoi que ce soit as a context-proof maximal universal

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universal = semantic contribution is \forall in any context.

context-proof = no contextual restriction on the domain of quantification.

maximal = the domain is the set of all possible entities.

Challenges :

- Natural language quantifiers are typically open to contextual restrictions.
- A unitary analysis is controversial. Like *any*, *quoi que ce soit* is often said to have NPI uses and universal ones.

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A quick overview of the distributions

- Bare *quoi que ce soit* as argument:
 - (1) Qui que ce soit doit se plier au règlement.
Anyone must obey the rule.
 - (2) Si quoi que ce soit vous gêne, dites-le.
If anything bothers you, please let us know.
- *Quoi que ce soit* + *complement* as argument
 - (3) Quoi que ce soit qu'il ait proposé a été rejeté.
Anything he proposed was rejected
 - (4) Qui que ce soit d'intelligent s'en apercevrait.
Anyone intelligent would notice it.
- *Quoi que ce soit* + *relative clause* as a concessive adjunct.
 - (5) Qui que ce soit qui entre, fuyez.
Whoever who comes in, run away!
 - (6) Quoi qu' (-e ce soit) il fasse, on le critique.
Whatever he does, he is criticized.

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Analyses and problems

Analyses :

- NPI : Tovena et al. (2004)
- Free Choice indefinite : Vlachou (2007)
- TPN and Free Choice : Muller (2006)

Problems :

- One *quoi que ce soit* or two?
- If one, is it an indefinite or a universal quantifier?

The same issue is raised for *any* :

- Kadmon & Landman (1993) : *any* = indefinite
- Dayal (1995) : *any* = universal

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Dealing with acceptabilities

Whatever analysis is chosen, it faces the task to explain that *quoi que ce soit* is not felicitous in any context in which other universals or indefinites would be fine.

Salient problems:

- *Quoi que ce soit* is out in episodic sentences:
 - (8) * Quoi que ce soit m'est tombé sur la tête
Quoi que ce soit- fell on my head
 - *Quoi que ce soit* is out in increasing and non-monotonic contexts:
 - (9) * J'ai toujours mangé quoi que ce soit le soir
I have always eaten - quoi que ce soit at night
- Of course, NPIs are impossible in such contexts, but why is the universal interpretation unacceptable?

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A compositional approach

The talk will propose a new approach based on two considerations :

- *quoi que ce soit* is not a lexical item but a (fragment of?) complex construction which can be analyzed.

- The very same construction occurs in concessive adjuncts, and the semantics of these adjuncts cannot be unrelated to the use of the construction as an argument, and actually seems very close.

- (10) Quoi (que ce soit) qu'elle propose, je le critiquerai
- (11) Je critiquerai quoi (que ce soit) qu'elle propose.

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The claims:

- *Quoi que ce soit* always contributes a universal quantifier.
- The extended construction *quoi que ce soit* + *relative clause* conveys this meaning in any of its uses, in particular in its concessive conditional distribution.
- The bare *quoi que ce soit* as argument has only two specific properties:
 - It must take wide scope over the sentence
 - Its domain is maximal (immune to contextual restrictions)
- There are acceptability restrictions because some contexts do not admit a universal quantification over any possible object.

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Plan of the talk

1. The semantics of *quoi que ce soit* + relative clause
2. The semantics of bare *Quoi que ce soit*
3. Accounting for infelicities

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1. The semantics of *quoi que ce soit* + relative clause

There is a whole paradigm :

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Long forms | Short forms |
| (12) Qui que ce soit qu'il rencontre | ? Qui qu'il rencontre |
| (13) Qui que ce soit qui embrasse Marie | ? ? Qui qui embrasse Marie |
| (14) Qui que soit que Marie embrasse | Qui que Marie embrasse |
| (15) Où que ce soit qu'il aille | Où qu'il aille |
| (16) Quoi que ce soit qu'il dise | Quoi qu'il dise |

With some gaps :

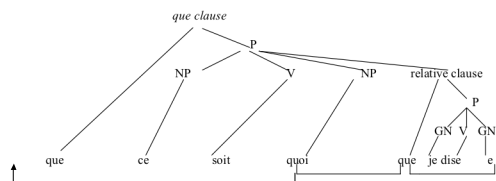
| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| (17) * Comment que ce soit qu'il aille | * Comment qu'il aille |
| (18) * Quand que ce soit qu'il vienne | * Quand qu'il vienne |

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Syntactic components



que clause, subjunctive, cleft sentence
WH item *quoi* raised in the initial position

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Disjunctive *QUE*-clauses. Syntax (1)

(19) *Que Pierre ou Marie vienne*

Standard *que*-clause, subjunctive, one argument is a disjunction.

Specific properties of disjunctive *que*-clauses:

(20) *Que Pierre ou Marie vienne, fuyez.*
que-Peter or Mary come, run away

(21) **Que Pierre vienne, fuyez.*

Rough description: D-*que* clauses, if fronted to the main clause give a correct complex sentence without any anaphoric link between the two clauses.

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Disjunctive *QUE*-clauses. Syntax (2)

• For standard *QUE*-clauses, an anaphoric link is required

(22) *Que Pierre vienne, j'aime[le].*
je le redoute.

• Or a consecutive « et » :

(23) *Que Pierre vienne, et Marie est aux anges.*
que-Pierre come, and Mary is delighted.

For the specific interpretation of D-*que* clauses exemplified in (20) above, « et » is impossible, and no anaphoric link is necessary.

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Disjunctive *QUE*-clauses. Semantics (1)

• The interpretation of (20) is roughly :

Que P, Q = for any alternative without exception introduced by P, Q

Phenomenon known as « concessive conditional ». Leuschner (2006, p. 19).

Good track : strong universal quantification, a flavour attached to *quoi que ce soit*.

• *Quoi que ce soit* as involving a « generalized » disjunction :

Que ce soit [Pierre ou Marie] qui vienne
Que ce soit { qui }

Will inherit this semantics.

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The distributions of *quoi que ce soit* +relative clause

• Concessive clause:

(24) Qui que ce soit qui vienne, fuyez
Qui que ce soit-who come, run away

• Subcategorized argument :

(25) Je reçois qui que ce soit qui le demande
I receive -qui que ce soit-who asks for it

There is a very strong similarity of interpretation between (25) and (26), which is a concessive clause :

(26) Qui que soit qui le demande, je le reçois

A proof that (26) is a concessive clause (not a dislocation) is (27):

(27) * Je le reçois, qui que ce soit qui le demande.

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Quoi que ce soit +relative clause as a universal quantifier

Simplest assumption : *Quoi que ce soit* +relative clause is a strong universal quantifier as well when used as an argument.

•As a quantifier it should have any scope hierarchy with other quantifiers.

•No acceptability constraint is expected.

Actually, this is what can be observed.

Free scope hierarchy

No constraints on acceptability

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Free scope hierarchy

(28) Je n'ai pas mangé quoi que ce soit qu'il ait cuisiné
I did not eat -quoi que ce soit- that he cooked

Two interpretations :

A. wide scope universal : preferred

$\forall x$ (he cooked x) $\rightarrow \neg$ (I ate x)

B. Narrow scope universal : accepted

$\neg \forall x$ (he cooked x) \rightarrow (I ate x)

The same is true in non-decreasing contexts:

(29) Deux policiers ont interrogé qui que ce soit qui était présent

Two policemen asked-qui que ce soit-who was present.

A. Wide scope universal : No one is asked by a single policeman.

B. Narrow-scope: A couple of policemen did the task of asking anyone.

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No acceptability constraints

•Episodic

(30) J'ai mangé quoi que ce soit qu'il a servi.

I ate -quoi que ce soit- that he served

• Non-decreasing contexts

(31) Beaucoup de gens mangent quoi que ce soit qu'il sert.

Many people eat -quoi que ce soit- that he serves

(32) Vingt personnes ont mangé quoi que ce soit qu'il servait.

Twenty people ate-quoi que ce soit-that he served

NB: I do not comment on the subjunctive/indicative variation.

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2. The semantics of bare disjunctive *que ce soit* -clauses

Que ce soit Jean ou Marie

You are free to let the relative silent, but in that case some mechanism will be triggered for doing what a real relative does.

Bare *D-que ce soit* clauses are incomplete or unsaturated sentences.

The semantic incompleteness of such sentences comes from the fact that they are reduced cleft sentences.

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Cleft sentences as the origin of incompleteness

Not any *D-que clause* has this property.

Que Pierre ou Marie vienne is autonomous

Incompleteness is an effect of cleft sentences structures:

C'est Pierre is not autonomous

I will not discuss the fact in itself.

Suffice it to say that simple bare *D-que clauses*, if they are reduced to the initial part of a cleft sentence (*que ce soit* +disjunction) have the same kind of dependence to their context than any reduced cleft.

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Dependence of simple Disjunctives

Typical example :

- (33) - Qui est venu?
- Que ce soit Pierre ou Marie [*qui est venu*] , ça m'est égal.

We observe exactly the same kind of contextual dependence we get for :

- (34) - Qui est venu?
- C'est Pierre ou Marie [*qui est venu*].

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Dependence of *quoi que ce soit* as concessive adjunct

Typical example :

- (35) - Qui est venu?
- Qui que ce soit [*qui est venu*] , ça m'est égal.

We observe exactly the same kind of obligatory contextual dependence than what we get for simple disjunctives.

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Bare *quoi que ce soit* in argument position

- (36) A - Qui avait les clés? *Who had the keys?*
B - Qui que ce soit peut avoir fait le coup.
Qui que ce soit-might have done it.
Qui que ce soit = anyone, and not only the key holders.

- (37)A - Interrogeras-tu ceux qui ont l'air louche?
Will you question shabby persons?
B - J'interrogerai qui que ce soit.
I will question -qui que ce soit.

≠ I will question shabby person.
= anyone, not only shabby looking ones

Conclusion : no contextual reconstruction of a relative clause

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Context-proofness

- (38) - Ceux qui avaient les clés sont naturellement suspects?
Those who had the keys are under suspicion ?

- a- La plupart peuvent avoir fait le coup.
b- Beaucoup peuvent avoir fait le coup.
c- Tous peuvent avoir fait le coup
(most, many, all) might have done it.

Positive answer : quantification over a restricted domain.

- d- Qui que ce soit peut avoir fait le coup.
Qui que ce soit- might have done it.

Negative answer : quantification over an unrestricted (maximal) domain.

Conclusion : context proof domain, hence maximal.

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Context-proofness. Other manifestations

As-tu lu ces articles?
Je n'ai pas lu quoi que ce soit.
Je n'ai pas tout lu.

As-tu lu ces articles?
Non, mais je peux tout lire en 5 minutes
Non, mais je peux lire quoi que ce soit en cinq minutes

Difficult to interpret *quoi que ce soit* as a quantification restricted to a set provided by its context of use.

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Context-proofness slightly toned down

It is not absolutely impossible to use a contextual domain, especially if the syntactic structure imposes a partitive reading:

- (39) Dans ma future maison, quoi que ce soit sera en bois.

- (40) Dans ce film, qui que ce soit est cynique.

- (41) Parmi mes étudiants, qui que ce soit me respecte.

But there is strong tendency for French speakers to prefer « tout » or « chacun » in such contexts.

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Context-proofness

Bare *quoi que ce soit*

-as adjunct, not saturated, borrows a relative-like restriction.

Qui que ce soit, je le trouverai
= Qui que ce soit (who+restriction), I'll find it

-as a subcategorized argument saturated : no contextual restriction
This is actually the special thing about bare *quoi que ce soit* as argument...

Qui que ce soit peut lire ce texte
= Qui que ce soit « tout court ». Maximal domain of interpretation

Apart from this, the behavior of *quoi que ce soit* is, for a large part, a consequence of its composition.

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Concessive and argumental uses : intermediate making up

| | concessive | modif. argument | bare argument |
|---------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------|
| domain | restricted in context | restricted | unrestricted |
| meaning | strong \forall | strong \forall | ? |
| scope | wide | free | ? |
| acceptability | no constraint | no constraint | ? |

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Meaning of argumental *quoi que ce soit* : strong \forall

If it is related to concessive uses it is the minimal assumption.

Problem : NPI behaviour

- (2) Si quoi que ce soit vous gêne, dites-le.
If anything bothers you, please let us know.
(42) Il dit rarement quoi que ce soit.
He says rarely-quoi que ce soit

But only an apparent problem :
For any NPI-like use, there is a correct translation of *quoi que ce soit* as a wide scope universal.

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Argumental *quoi que ce soit* as a wide scope universal

A typical NPI behaviour like (43) :

- (43) Je n'ai pas mangé quoi que ce soit
I did not ate-quoi que ce soit

Can be translated as:
 $\forall x \neg (\text{I ate } x)$

This gives correctly the « strong » flavour of *quoi que ce soit*.

For any possible x and without any exception, I did not eat x.

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Wide scope

A striking contrast between bare *quoi que ce soit* and *quoi que ce soit +relative* is that the former cannot be interpreted as a narrow-scope universal:

- (44) Je ne mange pas quoi que ce soit
= je ne mange rien.
 \neq je ne mange pas tout
(45) Je ne mange pas quoi que ce soit qu'il prépare
= je ne mange rien
= je ne mange pas tout

Bare argument : context-proof (maximal), wide scope.

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Bare argument : context-proof (maximal), wide scope.

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The correlation wide-scope/maximality (1)

Maximality : since deprived of modification and context-proof the quantifier is bound to quantify over any possible entity.

Empirical generalization : wide scope and maximality are related.

Argument :

Consider the paradigm : Quoi que ce soit
 Qui que ce soit
 Où que ce soit

Quoi que ce soit is less restricted than *Qui que ce soit* (domain = +human), and than *où que ce soit* (domain = +location).

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The correlation wide-scope/maximality (2)

If there is a correlation, it should be more easy to get narrow scope for *qui que ce soit* and *où que ce soit*, than for *quoi que ce soit*.

This prediction is borne out :

Je n'invite pas qui que ce soit
= je n'invite personne
= je n'invite pas tout le monde

Je ne veux pas m'installer où que ce soit
= je ne veux pas m'installer
= je ne veux pas m'installer n'importe où

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The correlation wide-scope/maximality (3)

In other word, it is striking that :

Je ne mange pas quoi que ce soit
= I do not eat anything
≠ I do not eat everything

Je m'embrasse pas qui que ce soit
= I do not kiss anyone
= I do not kiss everyone

Proposal:

Because the bigger the domain is, the greater is the necessity to give wide scope to the quantifier.

Note that *quoi que ce soit* +relative clause is a special case of restricted domain, and it allows narrow scope.

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Accounting for acceptability constraints

Bare argumental *quoi que ce soit* :

A- is infelicitous in episodic sentences
B -is infelicitous in increasing or non-monotonic contexts
C. Is happy in (some) modal contexts

(A) **Quoi que ce soit m'est tombé sur la tête*
Quoi que ce soit- fell down on my head

(B) Je mange rarement quoi que ce soit le soir

*Je mange souvent quoi que ce soit le soir

*Deux fois par semaine, je mange quoi que ce soit le soir
(rarely/*often/*two days a week) I eat-*quoi que ce soit- at night*

(C) -*Quoi que ce soit peut arriver*

Quoi que ce soit- can happen.

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More on combinability with modals

A good survey in Vlachou (2007).

Quoi que ce soit is fine with possibility modals:
Pierre peut battre qui que ce soit

With necessity modals volitionals and imperatives there are infelicities:

? Pierre doit manger quoi que ce soit

? Pierre veut manger quoi que ce soit

? Prenez quoi que ce soit

Recall:

a. if a relative clause is added the sentence is OK.

b. The infelicity is stronger for *quoi que ce soit* than for *qui que ce soit* and *où que ce soit*

Un enfant doit respecter qui que ce soit.

*Un enfant doit manger quoi que ce soit

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Alonis's proposal for similar facts with any

Aloni (2002) suggests that this can be explained on the basis of this non-standard analysis of modal operators:

Possibility modal operator by Aloni (2002)

$\diamond \phi$ is true iff every alternative induced by ϕ is compatible with the relevant set of worlds A_w .

Necessity modal operator by Aloni (2002)

$\square \phi$ is true in w iff at least one alternative induced by ϕ is entailed by A_w .

By extending Kadmon & Landman (1993) widening/ strengthening approach to these new definitions, she deduces that *any* is odd in necessity modal contexts (existential) and fine in possibility modal ones.

Difficult to use this approach for *quoi que ce soit*, if we maintain that it is a universal quantifier.

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Maximality as the key factor for infelicities

A line of explanation is as follows :

- The adjunction of a relative clause makes the sentence OK
- Hence it is the maximality (of the domain) which triggers infelicities of *quoi que ce soit* in some contexts.

The general idea :

- bare argumental *quoi que ce soit* induces a strong wide scope universal quantifier over all possible entities.
- Some semantic contexts do not accept such a large and unspecified argument.

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No-maximality contexts: 1. Episodic sentences

? J'ai mangé quoi que ce soit
J'ai mangé tout

Suppose that episodic sentences impose (in general) some sort of existential binding of their arguments. An episodic sentence can be true for some part of the world, but not for any possible object.

- *tout*, context-permeable inherits this restriction from its context.
- *quoi que ce soit*, context-proof, does not. Hence the infelicity.

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No-maximality contexts: 2. Preference for decreasingness

Why a NPI behaviour for a universal quantifier?

Intuition : arguments in the scope of a decreasing operator accepts a wide scope quantification on the maximal domain.

Consider the set of typical decreasing contexts :

I do not read
Do you read?
If I read, I get sick

They easily accept a representation like :

$\forall x \rightarrow \neg (I \text{ read } x)$
 $\forall x \rightarrow ? (I \text{ read } x)$
 $\forall x \rightarrow [(I \text{ read } x) \rightarrow (I \text{ am sick})]$

Decreasing arguments are compatible with a wide-scope maximal quantification.

Just stronger than a quantification without any lexical expression. (Kadmon et Landman 1993).

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No-maximality contexts: 3. Non decreasing contexts

Non-decreasing contexts :

- * Chaque enfant a mangé quoi que ce soit.
- * Un enfant exactement a mangé quoi que ce soit.

Chaque enfant a mangé
Deux enfants ont mangé

The representation is :

$\forall x [\text{child}(x) \rightarrow \exists y (\text{ate}(x,y))]$
 $\exists ! x [\text{child}(x) \wedge \exists y (\text{ate}(x,y))]$

Non-decreasing contexts arguments are bound by an existential quantifier. Same kind of infelicity than episodic sentences

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Some advantages of this explanation of infelicities

As a whole, we treat infelicities as a categorial mismatch between the context and the unrestricted universal quantification over a variable.

More or less what Dayal (1995) assumes for English *any*

Probably weaker than other semantic accounts and making less strict predictions.

A big advantage of the present approach is that the so-called *subtriggering* comes for free : a relative clause reduces maximality, and makes possible a narrow scope interpretation.

By weaker prediction, we mean that accepting a universal maximal argument may depend, to some extent, on the kind of lexical predicate used in the sentence.

It is expected that felicity will not be a yes/no matter.

Note that this is not the case in most semantic accounts like Kadmon & Landman's, for instance. A context is decreasing or not, and strengthening will accordingly hold or not.

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Infelicities and lexical context

Consider the following non-decreasing contexts:

- (92) *Beaucoup de gens mangent quoi que ce soit.
*Pierre mange souvent quoi que ce soit

The prediction that they are odd is common to the present approach and to semantic accounts like K&L's.

But the same semantic context gives good sentences with other verbs:

- (93) Beaucoup de gens critiquent quoi que ce soit.
Pierre critique souvent quoi que ce soit.

This is not predicted by semantic treatments but conform to my proposal: it is natural that to *criticize* can accept more easily an argument quantifying over any possible entity, than to *eat*, which can apply to objects of a very restricted sort, and present in the context of the activity.

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Conclusions

In subcategorized argument positions:

- bare *quoi que ce soit* translates as a strong universal taking wide scope and context-proof (maximal).

All we have shown is that it is a view compatible with the data.

- Strong (« with no exception ») universality is common to all uses of *quoi que ce soit*, and derivable from its parts, but neither maximality, not wide scope for argument positions.

This is actually the mysterious part of the story.

If this proposal gives to *quoi que ce soit* as argument a behaviour predicted from its composition, the specific restrictions maximality and wide scope are not predicted, and require further investigations.