

Conditional connection explored: the case of Sicilian cusà

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line

uction

cusà around epistemicity and beyond

retical premises:

epistemicity

«impossible» questions

conditionality

discourse marking

ctional network of *cusà* and its developments

cusà from routinised rhetorical question to discourse marker

summary of *cusà* discourse profile

ents at the development of *cusà*

lusions and **prospects**

Introduction: *cusà* around epistemicity and and

cu meaning ‘who knows’ (wh-+ know:3SG; see also Spanish *quiza(s)*, ancient Portuguese *quiza*, Dutch *wie weet*; cf. De Smet & Van de Velde 2013; Houle & Martinez Gomes 2011; Ricca 1998), *cusà* defined as:

verb,

exclamation,

conjunction (Piccitto & Tropea 1977),

modal adverb on a par with *fuorsi* (‘maybe’ - Fortuna 2002: 61).

particle of ignorance (Bianchi and Cruschina 2020)

Introduction: *cusà* around epistemicity and condition

cusà meaning 'who knows' (wh-+ know:3SG; see also Spanish *quiza(s)*, ancient Portuguese *quiga* 'who knows', Dutch *wie weet*; cf. De Smet & Van de Velde 2013; Houle & Martinez Gomes 2011; Ricca 1998), *cusà* defined as:

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Chronically, it expresses **lack of knowledge**, **commitment modulation** and **conditional meaning** in different contexts with slightly different nuances → **EVENTUALITY** based on Mauri & Sansò (2011) with respect to *caso mai*: *As a complex conditional connective [...], caso mai [...] roughly means 'in case'*

Introduction: *cusà* around epistemicity and condition

Construction: a routinised interrogative clause displaying predominantly epistemic meanings

the work:

of the process whereby an original interrogative *wh*-clause including the predicate *sapere* ‘to know’ has developed into a CONDITIONAL DUBITATIVE CONNECTIVE, a DUBITATIVE ADVERB, and a DISCOURSE MARKER (see Hopper 1985; Hopper & Traugott 2003 [1993]; Heine et al. 1991).

Examining the contexts of occurrence of *cusà* in

chronic data: written data gathered on the web collected in the itTenTen Corpus hosted in the Penn Treebank, Google and Facebook data (oriented towards the informal domain),

chronic data from texts of 14th to 19th centuries. This corpus includes texts from Artesia (*Artesia, la città del Siciliano Antico*, 14th to 18th centuries), Giovanni Meli’s and Domenico Tempio’s works (*Le favole di Giovanni Meli*, 18th century), and Giuseppe Pitrè’s collection of tales and folk stories (19th century)

Introduction: *cusà* around epistemicity and
ond

range of functions expressed by *cusà* will be explored by seeking to verify.

How the different functions are connected to the notions of *epistemicity*;

Whether the answers to I) may find a diachronic basis and through which processes
mechanisms of change.

Theoretical premises: modal value

modality: “the evaluation of the chances that a certain hypothetical state of affairs under consideration (with respect to the aspect of it) will occur, is occurring or has occurred in a possible world” (Nuyts 2001)

Example from Dutch *wie weet* (‘who knows’)

*ik probeer ’t nog even **wie weet** dat ze stilvallen* (Corpus gesproken Nederlands)

I’ll try it a little longer **who knows** that they come to a stop

I’ll try a little longer, **maybe** they will come to a stop’

As shown by De Smet & Van de Velde (2013: 543), *wie weet* attests a path of change from parenthetical **adverb** displaying the **speaker’s stance of uncertainty**.

Theoretical premises: impossible question

cusà as an impossible question:

etically, the whole structure of *wie weet* and dependent question forms an **interrogative sentence**. **Rhetorically**, however, the structure rarely functions as a question but is exploited to **special effect**. On the one hand, it may function as a rhetorical question amounting to a negative assertion, signaling that the speaker knows whether or not a certain state of affairs holds. The speaker **rhetorically invites the hearer to answer an impossible question, thereby conveying all the more strongly the fact that the question is impossible to answer**" (De Smet & Van de Velde 2013: 540)

Theoretical premises: conditionality

As we see, *cusà* is involved in conditional functions:

Conditionality is an *if P then Q* relationship (where P is the background or frame which must be presumed to hold if true)
– adapted from Traugott 1985)

***Cusà* P (protasis) → Q (apodosis)**

[*iti o cimiteru*] → **Q** [*puttativi l'acqua*] *ca finì arrè*

<http://siciliaonpress.com/2018/08/07/cusa-iti-o-cimiteru-puttativi-lacqua-ca-fini-arre/>

Go to the graveyard, bring some water with you as the vases are again empty

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Go to the graveyard, bring some water with you as the vases are again empty

=if
Go to the graveyard=P
bring some water with you=Q



Which conditional relation?

Theoretical premises: conditionality

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– adapted from Traugott 1985)

***Cusà* P (protasis) → Q (apodosis)**

NON-PREDICTIVE SPEECH ACT CONDITIONALS (Dancygier 1998)

you lost your car keys, take my bike today,

protasis (P) does not express conditions of appropriateness or felicity nor it constitutes grounds for prediction
it spells out the circumstances that prompt the speaker into performing the speech act in question

METADISCURSIVE CONDITIONALS (Lombardi Vallauri 1999: 98)

you are hungry, there are some cookies in the sideboard,

protasis (P) expresses the condition to be satisfied to make the events encoded in the apodosis acquire pragmatic
force. Such a condition is put against the performative act projected by the former (Dancygier 1998: 141)

stifies the speaker's **utterance** of the speech act carried out in Q

Theoretical premises: conditionality

ality is an *if P then Q* relationship (where P is the background or frame which must be presumed to hold if
- Traugott 1985)

Cusà P (protasis) → Q (apodosis)

P = justifies the speaker's formulation of the speech act carried out in Q



and the **conditional** relation:

ently from **predictive conditionals** [*if it rains (P), the match will be canceled (Q)*] (Dancygier 1998)

s not (necessarily) logically precede Q and
not affect the realisation of Q

relation between P and the formulation of Q = relation between an act and the **justification** of its **utterance**
PRAGMATIC RELEVANCE (outside the *dictum* - Visconti 2012)

Theoretical premises: conditionality

(1985) has suggested a set of main sources of conditional markers, specifically:

verbs and modals of possibility, doubt and wish (English *to suppose*),

interrogative constructions (cf. Russian *esli* 'if' (< *est' li* 'is it ...?'),

topulas, typically of the existential kind,

topic markers and demonstratives and

temporals, usually of the non-punctual type, i.e., generally durative or neutral between durative

and punctual (like, for instance, *when*, and *as long as*)

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and punctual (like, for instance, *when*, and *as long as*)

(a between i) and ii): *cusà* →

- ✓ it is a crystalised **interrogative** structure – despite its differences with respect to the interrogatives listed in (ii),
- ✓ it displays epistemic and conditional meanings as the ones listed under i)'s head → cross-linguistic correspondences?

Theoretical premises: discourse functions

Linguistically, epistemic markers often develop **discourse** functions related to the speaker's subjective stance on the level of the argumentative and rhetorical force (Schneider 2007, Beechinsley 2017) such as politeness and irony. Discourse markers (henceforth, DMs):

do not contribute to the propositional level (from epistemic commitment modulation to **attenuation**)

They are pragmatic cues that serve to interpret and contextualise the propositional level by virtue of their multifunctional and non-compositional character, as well as their positional mobility with respect to the proposition (Brinton 2017: 4; Traugott 2020: 17)

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ci cusà na cipudda? (face to face conversation, Palermo, Sicily, 19 May 2019)

Do you happen to have an onion? Lit. Have you got an onion, **maybe?**

- Medial position of an epistemic marker

- Epistemic function to convey **pragmatic attenuation** by



- **Foregrounding the possibility** that the hearer owns an onion

Results: the discourse profile of cusà between diachrony and synchrony

searching in the data: *cu sa, sa, cu lu sa, cusà, cusapi*

Cusà as opaque rhetorical question

Rhetorical question: expression of epistemic uncertainty (Nuyts 2001). The question addressed by the speaker is impossible to answer. It has the merely rhetorical role of expressing EPISTEMIC SUSPENSION (De Smet & Van der Auwera 2004), the commitment modulation refers to the identity of the referent saturating the *wh*- variable. In (5) it realises the realisation of the state of affairs

Phrase: ‘nobody knows’, ‘I don’t know’

Earliest attestation: not before Meli, *La fata Galanti* 1. 4-6 (18th century)

Distribution: *Cusà* may head partial (*wh*-) and polar (*if*) questions with mere rhetorical value, ‘...+ *wh* / *whet*’

cu’ sa, sta sira unni ti scura;

Who knows where you’re spending the night

cu’ sa s’annu a scanciariti pri mulu; (La fata Galanti 1. 4-6)

Who knows if they’re mistaking you with a mule

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Phrase: ‘nobody knows’...+ *wh* / whether – if

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Distribution: *Cusà* may head partial (*wh*-) and polar (*if*) questions with mere rhetorical value, as in (1) and (2)

Example 1: *cu’ sa, sta sira unni ti scura*; → **Cusà + wh** _____

Who knows / I don’t know **where** you’re spending the night

Example 2: *cu’ sa s’annu a scanciariti pri mulu*; (La fata Galanti 1. 4-6) → **Cusà + if** _____

Who knows / I don’t know **if** they’re mistaking you with a mule

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English translation: **Who knows / I don’t know where** you’re spending the night

Example 2: *cu’ sa s’annu a scanciariti pri mulu*; (La fata Galanti l. 4-6) → **Cusà + if** _____

English translation: **Who knows / I don’t know if** they’re mistaking you with a mule

Cusà

For *wie weet*, syntactically the whole structure made up of *cusà* plus the interrogative dependent clause forms a question sentence. Nonetheless, on the pragmatic ground, the structure rarely behaves as a real question. Rather, it has specific communicative effects (De Smet & Van de Velde 2013: 540) → **commitment removal**

Cusà as a question

ritical vs real questions

What about *real* questions employing *cusà*?

lu sapi ca vui aviti tri figghi? faciti cuntu ca nn'aviti dui. (Pitrè, Vol I XLII)
Does he know that you have three daughters? Pretend that you only have two.

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it) knows that you have three daughters? Pretend that you only have two.

Insertion of the clitic *lu* ‘it’ in between *cu* and *sapi*

Usage of the full form: *sapi* instead of *sa* – as happens in previous examples of rhetorical function

Cusà as adverb towards connective functions: *cusà if*

towards connective functions: *cusà* is used to strengthen the dubitative value of the following *if*-clause, adding a nuance of eventuality. It depicts the target content as a *possible* event, whose realisation/felicity depends on the following clause

phrase: ‘on the chance’, ‘maybe’

first attestation: not before Pitrè, II, 428-9 (XIX sec.)

distribution: in between two acts, the latter constituting a justification for the utterance preceding *cusà*; in 7) placed between a clause containing a directive speech act and an indirect interrogative clause introduced by *si* (7)

marking hypothesis: special position – **medial** in between two clauses conceptually connected – showing that *cusà* is placed while and in that specific position it is presumably associable to *if* → **trigger of conditional connective functions**

mi lu dicissi a mia: cu' sa si lu pozzu ajutari... (II, p. 162)

let me know: **on the chance** / **maybe if** I can help you

Cusà as adverb towards connective functions: *cusà* (*if*)

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phrase: ‘on the chance’, ‘maybe’

first attestation: not before Pitrè, II, 428-9 (XIX sec.)

distribution: in between two acts, the latter constituting a justification for the utterance preceding *cusà*; *cusà* is also used between a clause containing a directive speech act and an indirect interrogative clause not introduced by *ca* anymore

working hypothesis: special position – medial in between two clauses conceptually connected – shows that it has absorbed *if* and in that specific slot it absorbed *if* → **trigger of conditional connective functions**

a circari a mastru Juseppi; cu' sa era ancora ddà vicinu (II, 428-9)

around looking for Master Joseph **on the chance / maybe** that he might still be nearby.

Cusà as a dubitative adverb

adverb: *cusà* refers to a generic and unexpressed condition of possibility or necessity that makes the event with *cusà* possible (Visconti 2000: 124). *Cusà* behaves as an adverb generically meaning ‘in case’ (conjunction =eventuality).

phrase: ‘in case’, ‘in the eventuality’

attestation: not before Meli, *Canzuni XXVII*

...cchiù guai e cchiù suspiri

...vui cusà!...Canzuni XXVII

...do you not want to sympathise with this innocent person?

...in the eventuality, you could get more trouble and more sighs ...

Some hints at the evolution of *cusà*

ancient attestations gathered so far show an advanced stage in the process of **grammaticalisation** of

maintaining the original form of a question, *cu sa/cusà* no longer expresses a question at this stage; rather, it
confer a dubitative/eventual value to the co-occurring sentence.

ly, the original components ('who' + 'knows') merged. The **erosion of the boundary** between
is typically correlated with a semantic **weakening and an increase in its generality** (Brinton &
2008). While the components may appear as separate units (more likely for stylistic reasons), it is im-
portant to note that there is no material between them (e.g. the clitic *-lu* 'it' between *cu e sa* in **culusa* 'whoitknows').

In the unverbated and the non-unverbated forms, the *wh*- element (*cu*) **loses its personal referential**
value and no longer refers to an individual (whose identity is being sought in the question "who knows
'personalisation'. The predicate *sa* loses relevance and semantic autonomy, and shifts into a generic
expression of uncertainty or doubt about a certain proposition. The process of change results in a form displaying the s-
hift **e** towards what is being said (Traugott 1995: 32). This shift may have been favoured by the use
of the negative structure *cu sa* as a rhetorical impossible question, as postulated by De Smet & Van de Veld
1998: 193-194). Such *wie weet* 'who knows' (cf. also Ramat & Ricca 1998: 193-194).

Some hints at the evolution of *cusà*

Diachronic description in slides 18) through 25) shows, at the end of the process, *cusà* comes to perform different yet related functions, namely:

opaque rhetorical question preceding the *wh*- or *if*- element modalising the sentence with a dubitative value;

adverb occupying **medial** position between two clauses (in possible co-occurrence with *si* 'if'), to strengthen the dubitative value of the clause in its scope and to provide a nuance of eventuality;

dubitative adverb with scope on the entire sentence. At this stage, *cusà* has acquired syntactic independence and has become an 'extra-clausal constituent' (in Dik's 1997 terms), although it continues to operate at the semantic level conveying the propositional attitude of the speaker.

Cusà as a conditional connective

connective: The plain emergence of **connective functions** related to conditional meanings can be observed where *cusà* may be paraphrased as *if* in non-predictive constructions

paraphrase: ‘if’

earliest attestation: not before Pitrè, I, 391 (XIX sec.)

conditional relation: *cu sa / cusà* P → Q (P= precondition of Q’s relevance → **pragmatic** level)

aviti bisognu di mia, arditi 'na pinna di chisti (I, 391)

the need of me, just burn one of the feathers

negozio di pc cusà ti serbi un cavettu (face to face conversation, Palermo, Sicily, 17 March 2019)

computer store nearby **If** you need a cable

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“Aviti bisognu di mia, arditi 'na pinna di chisti (I, 391)

METADISCURSIVE conditional

“I need of me, just burn one of the feathers”

“In un negozio di pc **cusà** ti serbi un cavettu (face to face conversation, Palermo, Sicily, 17 March 2019)

computer store nearby **If** you need a cable → **cusà’s mobility**

SPEECH ACT conditional

Conditionals and beyond: cusà as a iterative-corrective adverb

iterative-corrective adverb: the marker refers to an implicit content. In doing so, it i) challenges the implicit content of the preceding statement, depicting it as a hypothesis, and (ii) presents the co-occurring clause as the correct consequence if the presupposition holds, as opposed to the preceding one (Mauri & Sansò 2014). The relation between the presupposition and the expressed content may be summarised as follows: $A, \text{cusà } (P) \rightarrow Q$ (P= is contextually relevant, Q= is contextually expressed)

English phrase: ‘in case’

Earliest attestation: not before Pitrè, II, 175 (XIX sec.)

*«Chi havi?» cci spija la vecchia. — «Vattinni, ca 'un l'hê diri a tia.» — «Ma vassia mi lu dici; **cu' sa!**» (II, 175)*

“What’s wrong with you?” the old woman said to him. “Get out of here. I’m not going to tell you!” what might happen if you talk to me! (lit. “But Sir, just talk to me, **in case**”).

Conditionals and beyond: *cusà* as a iterative-corrective adverb

iterative-corrective adverb: the marker does not merely refer to, but rather challenges the presupposed statement (i) it presents the clause in which it occurs as the correct consequence, in case the presupposition is not relevant to the preceding one (Mauri and Sansò 2014). The configuration may be summarised as $A, \textit{cusà} (P) \rightarrow Q$ (P=iteratively relevant)

Phrase: ‘if anything’

First attestation: Pitrè, II, 175 (XIX sec.)

Example: «*Chi havi?*» *cci spija la vecchia*. — «*Vattinni, ca 'un l'hê diri a tia.*» — «*Ma vassía mi lu dici; **cu' sa!***» (II, 175)
“Wrong with you?” the old woman said to him. “Get out of here. I’m not going to tell you!” Who knows what your lordship talks to me! (lit. “But Sir, just talk to me, in case).

- ✓ P=a condition **highly generic** and contextually relevant;
- ✓ in 13), ***cusà* (P) → Q** (P=if there is anyone to whom you want to say that)

Cusà as a discourse marker of mock teness

marker: *cusà* acquires interpersonal functions related to the expression of rhetorical and ironical meanings, insinuation (i.e., lack of overt verbalisation)

phrase: difficult to spell out lexically

attestation: not attested in historical data

hypothesis: later attestation, genres represented in our historical data?

ai a aiutari o zio a sbarazzari u malaseno?

ci la fazzu

.. (face to face conversation, Palermo, Sicily, 25 April 2019)

you please help our uncle to clean the garage up?

n't do that

o knows' → **If you helped him, it would get hurt!** (ironic nuance)

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✓ **Cusà (P,**
implicitly
communi

→ Ironical m
through
Inference (in

→ **Idiomati**

Discourse marker use: which evidence?

CLUES induce to consider *cusà* as a DM.

In 14) *cusà* is **syntactically** detachable and it constitutes an **intonation** phrase. Nevertheless, it does not seem to affect the global interpretation cancelling an important interactional component aimed at making the speaker's intentions and her relationship with the interlocutor explicit (Molinelli 2014).

Due to its presupposition of a **common ground**, *cusà* may be considered as an intersubjectively shared marker (Molinelli and 2014), which performs **interpersonal rather than epistemic functions**. Consistent with previous empirical and theoretical correlations, *cusà* displays a propositional content, which is difficult to spell lexically (Molinelli 1983: 106; Traugott 2020: 17).

Discourse marker use: which evidence?

VALUES induce to consider *cusà* as a DM.

In 14) *cusà* is **syntactically** detachable and it constitutes an **intonation** phrase. Nevertheless, it does not affect the global interpretation cancelling an important interactional component aimed at making the speaker's intentions and her relationship with the interlocutor explicit (Molinelli 2014).

Due to its presupposition of a **common ground**, *cusà* may be considered as an intersubjectively shared marker (Molinelli 2014), which performs **interpersonal rather than epistemic functions**. Consistent with these functional correlations, *cusà* displays a propositional content, which is difficult to spell lexically (Molinelli 1983: 106; Traugott 2020: 17).

In all, the **epistemic meaning** is eclipsed in favour of the expression of **irony** and **mock politeness** at the **implicit** level (subjectification – Fedriani & Molinelli 2019).

Historical data in 19th century

wh _____

cu' sa' a cu' l'hai! (II, p. 57)

where your mind is!

f _____

va?... Cu' sa s'è morta? (II, p. 166)

if she's alive or dead?

cusà + if _____

lu dicissi a mia: cu' sa si lu pozzu ajutari... (II, p. 162)

we know: maybe I can help you

cusà (if) _____

rcari a mastru Juseppi; cu' sa era ancora ddà vicinu (II,

around looking for Master Joseph on the chance that he might
by.

19. cusà _____

Cu' sa aviti bisognu di mia, arditi 'na pinna di chisti (I

If you have need of me, just burn one of the feathers”

20. _____ cusà

«*Ma chi havi?*» *cci spiija la vecchia.* — «*Vattinni, ca 'u
diri a tia.*» — «*Ma vassia mi lu dici; cu' sa!*» (II, 175)

“What’s wrong with you?” the old woman said to him

“Get out of here. I’m not going to tell you!” Who knows
what might happen if your lordship talks to me! (lit. “
Sir, just talk to me, who knows).

Historical data in 19th century

wh _____

if _____

cusà + if _____

cusà (if) _____

_____ cusà

→ Historical data reveal that this functional network is already fully developed as early as the 19th century, represented in Pitrè's collection (in fact generally regarded in literature as contemporary Sicilian). Here *cu sà* (always in the uninflected form) occurs in the contexts in a)-f).

- In a) and b), *cu sa* is involved in an **opaque rhetorical question**;
- In c), it behaves as an **adverb** introducing a hypothetical clause with or without the connective *if*;
- In d), it behaves like an adverb being *if* presumably absorbed by *cusà*;
- In e), it behaves like a **dubitative conditional connective** and
- a **dubitative corrective adverb** in f).

→ The only function that cannot be observed is that of **DM**

A summary of *cusà*'s discourse profile

micity and conditionality

a marker of **EPISTEMIC** functions more or less
to conditionality

ditional meanings are retrievable in examples 10)
ferrable conditional meanings are observed in 12),
à, however, maintains purely adverbial functions
to an absent **presupposed hypothesis**

temic meaning may contain a nuance of
lity (i.e., eventuality) - (9) - as *cusà* makes
to a generic condition contextually relevant for the
of a given Q without being the latter plainly

A summary of *cusà*'s discourse profile

Epistemicity and **conditionality**

cusà is a marker of **EPISTEMIC** functions more or less related to conditionality

Conditional meanings are retrievable in examples (10) and (11). In (11), the preferred conditional meanings are observed in (12), but *cusà*, however, maintains purely adverbial functions related to an absent **presupposed hypothesis**

The epistemic meaning may contain a nuance of conditionality (i.e., eventuality) - (9) - as *cusà* makes reference to a generic condition contextually relevant for the realisation of a given Q without being the latter plainly

Epistemicity and **discourse functions**

Cusà is a marker of **EPISTEMIC** functions related to discourse values

More often than not *cusà* may be paraphrased as 'intrinsic conditional meaning (**eventuality** – related to the dependence between contents – which may be more or less explicitly encoded and placed either on the propositional or on the speech act level – Mauri & Sansò 2014) favouring the realisation of an act → attenuation of illocutive force

In the end, the conditional relation can be **realized** or **alluded** to in order to convey mock politeness in an idiomatic way (14 – Fiorentini & Sansò, Fiorentini & Molinelli 2019)

Concluding remarks: the development

à

matrix clause heading *wh*- and *if*-clauses, *cusà* shifts towards connective, adverbial and conditional functions. *Cusà* may play **connective functions** with non-predictive conditionals. In these cases it conveys eventuality. This meaning is mirrored in the modal adverbial functions.

In developing dubitative functions, *cusà* refers to a content depicting generic **conditions** of possibility affecting a given content and expresses the speaker's epistemic stance (subjectification – Traugott & O'Neil 1991). The reference to conditionality may be used to convey **discourse functions**. The use of eventuality is exploited to convey attenuation in the context of a face-threatening speech act. The subjunctive potential of the marker is exploited in cases of insinuating functions (*Cusà* (P, Q)). In such cases, the conditional in the scope of *cusà* is not verbalised as the speaker's main purpose is to propose the conditional meaning on the level of common ground.

Concluding remarks

matrix clause heading *wh*- and *if*-clauses, *cusà* shifts towards connective, adverbial and conditional functions. At the beginning of the process, *cusà* plays **connective functions** with non-predictive conditional contexts, it expresses eventuality. This meaning is mirrored in the modal adverbial function $Q / Cusà (Q) \rightarrow P$.

Developing a dubitative function ($Cusà (P) \rightarrow Q$), *cusà* refers to a P depicting generic conditionality/necessity affecting Q and expresses the speaker's epistemic stance (subjectification). The conditionality may be used to convey **discourse functions** ($Cusà (P) Q$). The source notion of eventuality is used to convey attenuation in the context of a face-threatening speech act (*Cusà*. First, the subjective potential of the marker is exploited in cases of insinuating functions ($Cusà (P, Q)$). In such cases, the conditional in the scope of *cusà* is not verbalised as the speaker's main purpose is to pose the conditional meaning on the level of common ground.

Common denominator of *cusà*'s functions is the expression of **epistemic commitment in conditionality**: the speaker suspends her epistemic positioning by virtue of some pre-conditions, which may be verbalised either on the proposition level or on the speech act level.

Concluding remarks

Diachronic level, we can observe a gap in the timespan between medieval and modern texts. First occurrences are found before 18th century.

Only in 19th century, represented by Pitre's collection, that we find evidence for a more complex yet slightly different picture than the one attested in present-day Sicilian. Data from Pitre do not show any evidence of the form in particular, as an expression of the *insinuating pragmatic function*, which can therefore be postulated as an advanced one in a hypothetical path of development as that represented below:

rhetorical question → *turn-medially adverb eventually followed by 'if'* → *conditional connective*
adverb → *dubitative-corrective adverb* → *discourse marker*

Concluding remarks and prospects

data suggest but do not allow this reconstruction to be confirmed with certainty, which only future research will be able to verify, shedding light on the details of the different stages of diachronic development.

face-to-face communication data needed...

Many thanks for your attention!

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