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Italian *davvero* ('really') as a trigger of implicit contents in persuasive discourse☆

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ABSTRACT

It is generally maintained that, as a modal adverb, Italian *davvero* 'really' signals a high degree of certainty attributed by the speaker to the modified linguistic material, or expresses a positive evaluation. Differently from other modal adverbs, in its absolute use, *davvero* can react to an interlocutor's statement, reinforcing it or questioning it, thus expressing a judgement on an already existing assertion. In political monologues, we observe that the existence of an "interlocutor's voice" responsible for an asserted content can be presupposed, with *davvero* being the trigger of such presupposition. In such cases, a second implicit content (a conversational implicature) is also generally conveyed which expresses the epistemic judgement of the speaker. We observe that this happens typically in some specific discourse configurations (i.e., questions and conditional subordinates) and we label this pragmatic enrichment 'polemic polyphonic judgement'. We also show the manipulative potential of this pragmatic phenomenon. We finally suggest that *davvero* can trigger a conversational implicature also in other linguistic configurations, and we propose that context, and more specifically the stretch of text in which the adverb occurs, whether argumentative or non-argumentative, plays a crucial role in this pragmatic process.
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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the role of the Italian sentence adverb *davvero* ('really') in the triggering of implicit contents. In the literature, it is acknowledged that sentence adverbs, a category at the interface between syntax and semantics, have interesting impacts on the pragmatic level as well (On this issue, see Hengeveld, 1989 for a general classification of adverbs, Ramat and Ricca, 1998 for a focus on sentence adverbs in the languages of Europe). However, as far as *davvero* is concerned, only the syntactico-semantic features and discursive uses have been thoroughly described (De Cesare, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Ricca and Visconti, 2014).

Starting from the syntactico-semantic and discursive aspects emerging from the literature, we will analyze the pragmatic enrichment triggered by *davvero* in different text types: besides our main source, a corpus of political monologues, we will also refer to texts from advertising, spontaneous speech and journalistic writing. In particular, our analysis of the corpus of

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political monologues reveals that in two specific discourse configurations – namely questions and conditional subordinate clauses – *davvero* triggers what we define as a 'polemic polyphonic judgment'. More specifically, when using *davvero* the speaker hints at the existence of a second voice other than her own. To this voice, the speaker attributes a content that she considers untrue. The polyphonic textual dynamic is the result of the triggering of two implicit contents.

- a presupposition of existence of a voice responsible for some content of the proposition;
- a conversational implicature conveying the polemic speaker's stance on that content.

We will claim that the variation of context, particularly the text type, whether argumentative or non-argumentative, has a crucial role in triggering the implicit contents. Indeed, the pragmatic enrichment is only triggered if *davvero* occurs in argumentative stretches of discourse, where it can also be exploited for persuasive or (even) manipulative purposes.

The paper is organized as follows. Firstly, we focus on the syntactico-semantic accounts of *davvero* provided in the literature, highlighting the traits which constitute a starting point for our pragmatic account (§2). We then clarify the theoretical and empirical tools used in data analysis, including corpora and methodology (§3). We then present the analysis of our data, describing the implicit contents triggered by *davvero*, justifying their classification as presupposition and implicature respectively, and evaluating the impact of the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of *davvero* in context (§4). We conclude by providing some final remarks and further lines of research (§5).

2. State-of-the-art

As mentioned in the introduction, we are unaware of any specifically pragmatic analysis devoted to *davvero*. In our paper, reference will be made to some studies which have investigated the pragmatics of adverbs of other languages whose meaning is comparable to that of *davvero*. In particular, the work of Paradis (2003) and Romero and Han (2004) on the English *really*, and the work of Yuan (2015) on the Chinese *zhende* 'really'. In the following state of the art, we mostly focus on *davvero*'s syntactico-semantic traits relevant to its pragmatic description.

2.1. *Syntactico-semantic classification of* davvero

Davvero ('really') is an adverb pointing to the "semantic domain of truth/truthfulness", as it "derives from the base *vero* ('true')" (Ricca and Visconti, 2014:134).[1] The truth component is generally referred to the degree of certainty assigned by the speaker to the truth value of the sentence (De Cesare, 2002a: 215–222). Alternatively, the semantic truth component is used to reinforce gradable linguistic material, e.g., to intensify the meaning of predicates or to express (participle) adjectives' superlative degree (De Cesare, 2002a: 225–233). The 'degree of certainty' and the 'intensifying' semantic uses of *davvero* are illustrated by the invented examples in (1) and (2), respectively.

(1) *Davvero*, il pane è fresco.
'Really, the bread is fresh.'
(2) Il pane che hai comprato è *davvero* buono.
'The bread you bought is really good.'

In the classification of Italian adverbs, these different uses correspond to two distinct syntactico-semantic classes: modal adverbs of judgment (or evaluation) and intensifier adverbs, respectively. In its modal reading, *davvero* expresses a judgment on the certainty of a proposition by which the truth value of the proposition is ensured to the interlocutor. In these cases, *davvero* is usually paraphrasable with "It is true that" and is associated with a sentence scope. The intensifying reading equals the superlative degree of adjectives, carrying the meaning of 'to the highest possible degree' (Serianni, 1997: 153–154); in these cases, *davvero* is associated with a narrower scope, such as predicative lexical units.

When associated with narrower scopes, *davvero* can also modify non-gradable linguistic material, codifying what we label an *emphatic* reading (Quirk et al., 1985: 583).[2] In these syntactico-semantic configurations, *davvero* describes the modified lexical unit as the prototypical example of its class (De Cesare, 2002a: 231–232, and references cited therein). For example, in (3), the speaker insists on obtaining not a substitute or surrogate of a vacation, but an authentic one, that is, characterized by all the traits intended as prototypical for a proper vacation. The meaning conveyed is paraphrased in round brackets.

(3) Sarà una vacanza *davvero*.
'It will be a holiday *really*.'
(It will be a real/true/authentic/proper holiday)
(Adapted from De Cesare, 2002: 232)

[1] The complex nature of *davvero* is here only briefly sketched. Our goal is to provide the reader with a general picture of *davvero*, against which we are building our analysis. For a thorough description of *davvero* we refer the reader to De Cesare (2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2003).

[2] This label is in line but not perfectly coinciding with Quirk et al. (1985) terminology. They choose to call 'emphasizers' a group of subjuncts reinforcing the truth value of non-gradable material and intensifying the semantic value of gradable material. Here we restrict the label to the function of reinforcement.

It should be noted that *davvero* can have an emphatic reading with gradable adjectives as well. In those cases, *davvero speciale* would be paraphrased as 'authentically/properly special' and not 'very special' as with the intensifying reading (see example 7 below).

In Section 4, we will show that, in our data, *davvero* in its modal reading can trigger a polemic polyphonic judgment, while in its emphatic reading it can trigger an implicature conveying contrast. In its intensifying reading, *davvero* does not appear to trigger specific implicit contents. In what follows, we discuss *davvero*'s semantic features of redundancy and dialogicality, which are crucial for our analysis of its potential pragmatic enrichment.

2.2. Redundancy and dialogicality

Davvero's modal reading (similarly to other epistemic adverbs, like *certamente* 'certainly') derives from the redundancy of the expression of truthfulness on the proposition.[3] Assertive speech acts normally commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition; therefore, using *davvero* to express the truthfulness of an assertive proposition would be semantically redundant. In fact, *davvero* plays the semantic role of expressing the speaker's stance on the degree of truth of the proposition. At the discourse level, the function of *davvero* in its modal reading is to insist on "the truth of […] a particularly important information, […] to convince a doubtful interlocutor or to highlight a judgment" (De Cesare, 2002a: 235), as in the invented example in (4):

(4) *Davvero*, devi interessarti di politica!
'Really, you need to get into politics!'

If the redundancy of the adverb is quite patent in assertions, it is more subtly recognizable also in questions and hypothetical clauses, particularly relevant to the following analysis.

(5) *Davvero* vuoi interessarti di politica?
'Do you *really* want to get into politics?'
(6) Se *davvero* vuoi interessarti di politica, Mario, allora agisci di conseguenza!
'If you *really* want to get into politics, Mario, then act accordingly!'

In an interrogative example like (5), the speaker uses *davvero* to ask the interlocutor "whether what he or she said (asserted) before is actually in line with reality and truth" (Paradis, 2003: 195). What is called into question is thus the interlocutor's stance on the asserted content. Since the interlocutor is also committed to the truthfulness of his assertion, the adverb proves semantically redundant, and can easily be connected to a pragmatic reason. Similarly, when *davvero* occurs in a conditional subordinate clause like (6), the speaker casts doubts on the truthfulness of the interlocutor's assertion.

The cases described above only concern the modal reading of the adverb. In the literature on *davvero*, we do not find a description of the discourse functions deriving from the semantic redundancy of *davvero* in its emphatic or intensifying readings. We only know that the interpretation of *davvero* in its emphatic reading, similarly to the modal reading, is derived from its semantic redundancy in the sentence. Indeed, "the addition of the comment or assertion in no way alters but merely emphasizes the truth of the communication" (Quirk et al., 1985: 583). De Cesare (2002a) points out that when uttering an emphasizing *davvero*, the speaker intends to create a contrast between two states of affairs. For example, in (7), the gradable adjective *speciale* 'special' is emphasized by the speaker to communicate that she did not believe that the recommended pizza would have been authentically special. Note that when conveying this meaning *davvero* is pronounced with a prosodic emphasis.

(7) Mi ha consigliato una pizza DAVVERO speciale!
'He/she recommended a REALLY special pizza!' (authentically/properly special)

In our understanding of De Cesare's works, these characteristics suggest that in its emphatic reading, *davvero*'s discursive use is to focalize the opposition true vs. non-true concerning referents or events. This is precisely the pragmatic enrichment we observed in some occurrences of *davvero* in its emphatic reading (and partly in its modal reading). The very use of *davvero* can indeed suggest the existence of an alternative scenario in which a state of affairs opposite to the relevant one is in place (see §4.4).

The second semantic trait crucial for the pragmatic analysis of *davvero* is its dialogicality. De Cesare (2002a, 2003) describes *davvero* as a secondary attitudinal marker since it "expresses a secondary degree attitude, concerning a previously expressed or only presupposed primary attitude" (De Cesare, 2003: 43, our translation). De Cesare relies on Helbig and Helbig (1993)'s description of the German correspondent of *davvero* (*wirklich*) as a marker of a secondary epistemic judgment, standing in response to another judgment.[4] Helbig and Helbig (1993) claim that *wirklich*'s function is to confirm, reinforce or question a proposition's truth value (and not assign it *tout court*): the truth needs to have been already asserted by another interlocutor. The epistemic judgment expressed from the speaker's point of view would then be linked to an already existing and known content, otherwise producing pragmatically infelicitous utterances. This holds true also for *davvero*, as it cannot, for example, open a dialogue that is being uttered out of the blue.

[3] In her work, De Cesare refers to this concept by resorting to the literature on the diachronic evolution of intensifiers (Bolinger, 2013; Latour 1974).
[4] With reference to English *really* Paradis notes that "epistemic modifiers presuppose that there is some kind of evidence on which an assertion is based." (Paradis 2003: 193). We think that this aspect is worth investigating in future research for *davvero* as well.

The semantic traits of redundancy and dialogicality are central to our analysis of *davvero*'s pragmatic enrichment (§4); their association to *davvero*'s syntactico-semantic uses (§2.1) is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Davvero's syntactico-semantic classification and traits.

Reading	Scope	Semantic content	Redundancy	Dialogicality
modal	sentence	it is true that	+	+
emphatic	(non-)gradable predicative lexical units	real/authentic	+	−
intensifying	gradable predicative lexical units	to the highest possible degree	−	−

3. *Davvero* as a trigger of implicit contents. Empirical and theoretical tools

3.1. Corpora and methodology

The main source of examples for our qualitative investigation of *davvero*'s pragmatic enrichment is a large corpus of Italian political speeches, which is currently being constructed and pragmatically annotated per implicit contents, named IMPAQTS.[5] The IMPAQTS corpus includes speeches delivered in different political situations: official assemblies, meetings, election rallies, party assemblies, declarations in press conferences and broadcast messages. The speeches were selected according to a scheme of balancing which includes both sociolinguistic and textual parameters (cf. Cominetti et al., 2022 for details). Each speech was extracted from official transcripts (if available) or automatically transcribed, and then manually revised by two members of the IMPAQTS team. Standard orthographic conventions were adopted, with the elimination of minor fragments void of semantic value to improve the readability. As for punctuation, a slightly simplified model of that used in Italian was adopted. The insertion of concluding marks was based on prosodic cues (cfr. http://impaqts.it for details).

The corpus is representative of Italian political discourse: it provides a sample of controlled, spoken, monological, diaphasically high language, from 1946 to present. Most importantly for this paper's purposes, the texts can generally be described as persuasive since their ultimate communicative goal is to convince the audience of certain political ideas.

We interrogated the currently available section of the corpus, amounting to 763 speeches, 1,470,144 tokens, and 1,268,850 words. In this section, 466 occurrences of *davvero* were automatically retrieved. We annotated a random sample of 100 occurrences for their semantic and pragmatic traits. More precisely, we described the semantic reading of the adverb (modal, intensifying, or emphatic), its scope (sentence, gradable or non-gradable predicative lexical), and the modified lexico-syntactic material (type of phrase and gradability of the linguistic material). The annotated pragmatic traits include the absence/presence of pragmatic enrichment and the nature of implicit strategy triggered by *davvero*: in particular, whether the sentence includes a *presupposition*, an *implicature*, or both. A brief explanation of the adopted pragmatic categories can be found in the next paragraph.

After annotating the sample, we scanned the remaining 366 retrieved instances of *davvero* to collect more examples of pragmatically enriched occurrences. In a final step, we compared our persuasive monologic political discourse data with spontaneous conversation and journalistic prose. More precisely, we considered KIParla, a corpus of spontaneous spoken Italian of around 1 million tokens (Mauri et al., 2019), and a 1,421,721 tokens subsection[6] of the corpus Repubblica (Baroni et al., 2004), a large Italian written journalistic corpus. We retrieved 255 and 103 occurrences of the adverb, respectively, and searched for specific examples in which *davvero* triggers the pragmatic enrichment. The diamesic variation and, most importantly, the investigation of texts with different communicative goals is crucial to verify whether the pragmatic behavior of *davvero* is sensitive to the type of the text of occurrence (cf. §4.4).

3.2. Pragmatic categories

For presupposition, we are adopting the definition given by Stalnaker (2002: 701): "to presuppose something is to take it for granted, or at least to act as if one takes it for granted, as background information – as common ground among the participants in the conversation". Typically, what is presupposed is the existence and/or unicity of some entity, the being in place of some state of affairs, or the happening of an action. Presupposition is considered a heterogeneous category (Levinson, 1983: 217; Sbisà, 2007) and is activated by many different linguistic triggers, including a.o. definite descriptions (Frege, 1892), change of state predicates (Karttunen, 1973), factives (Kiparsky and Kiparsky, 1971), some adverbial clauses (e.g., temporal clauses, Frege, 1892). Research on presupposition triggers has also gone beyond these "classic" lexical and syntactic categories, with some studies investigating the possibility that particles, conjunctions and discourse markers may also trigger

[5] The corpus is named after the project funded by the Italian Ministry of Science as part of the PRIN project (Research Project of National Interest) IMPAQTS (Implicit Manipulation in Politics: Quantitively Assessing the Tendentiousness of Speeches, grant n. 2017STJCE9). Due by the end of 2023, the corpus will include 1500 speeches held by Italian politicians during the history of the Republic (since 1946).

[6] We only considered the articles published in 2000 (the most recent year available in the corpus) and, most importantly, we exclusively selected the text genre 'news', excluding opinion articles (labeled 'comments' in the corpus).

presupposition (Lagerwerf, 1998; Karagjosova, 2001; Zeevat, 2004; Yuan, 2015). Interestingly, in such accounts, the presupposed content typically includes expectations and requirements on the prior contents: we will adopt a similar perspective in our analysis of *davvero*.

As for implicatures, we follow Grice (1975) in defining them as propositions that in specific contexts can be communicated through an utterance without being explicitly said. According to Grice, conversational implicatures arise as a consequence of the apparent violation in discourse of one of the four *maxims of conversation*, which jointly express a general *co-operative principle*. We also adopt the Gricean category of conventional implicatures which indicates implicatures depending on the conventional meaning of the words or expressions used.[7]

4. *Davvero* as a polemic polyphonic judgment trigger. Data analysis

4.1. The polyphonic textual dynamic

As seen in §2, in the literature on *davvero* there is no clear reference to its pragmatic properties. However, we believe that the semantic traits of redundancy and dialogicality (§2.2) characterize *davvero* as a possible trigger of pragmatic enrichment. In particular, we believe that the description of *davvero* as a secondary attitudinal marker characterizes it as inherently dialogical. Since it is pragmatically infelicitous for modal *davvero* to be uttered out of the blue (§2.2), then a dialogic context must be hypothesized when speculating on its pragmatic use. Indeed, in actual texts, at least in its modal reading, the use of *davvero* points to a dialogue between two disagreeing attitudes or beliefs (as verified in our data, see §4.2 below).

Furthermore, the polemic dynamic between disagreeing attitudes or beliefs has a good chance of being retained not only in dialogues, but also in monologic texts since "every text is intrinsically dialogic" (Calaresu, 2022: 12). Consider the example in (6) above, here reported as (6′). Imagine that this fictious example is uttered in a party assembly for young new members.

(6′) Se *davvero* vuoi interessarti di politica, Mario, allora agisci di conseguenza!
'If you *really* want to get into politics, Mario, then act accordingly!'

In (6′) *davvero* enters in a complex textual dynamic: the speaker is addressing the audience of young party members, and, at the same time, she makes explicit reference to one of them: Mario. Following Calaresu (2022), we describe the dialogue between the author of the text and her audience as "primary dialogicality"; while we define "secondary dialogicality" the explicit or implicit reference to a different voice (to *Mario*, in the example) by the author. This plurality of voices in texts is classically described as *polyphony* (but see Carel and Ducrot, 2009 for a discussion of the term); it is thus safe to claim that in examples like (6′), when *davvero* participates both in primary and secondary dialogicality, it enters a polyphonic textual dynamic.

As we will show in the next section, in our dataset the polyphonic textual dynamic is triggered by specific discourse configurations, in which *davvero* expresses what we call a 'polemic polyphonic judgment'. In (6′) the primary and secondary dialogicality are activated to insinuate that Mario is not really interested in politics. We recognize in this textual dynamic an argumentative move of the speaker, based on the contrast with an implicitly encoded point of view (Mario is interested in politics), implicitly presented as untrue, which argumentatively reinforces her own (Mario does not act as if he was interested in politics). In this sense, the counter-argumentative purpose exploits the polyphony of the text (for the association between polyphony and counter-argumentation see Calaresu, 2022: 67 and references cited therein).

4.2. Discourse configurations triggering the polyphonic textual dynamic

When analyzing the 100 occurrences random sample extracted from the IMPAQTS corpus, we noticed that *davvero* enters in a polyphonic textual dynamic in specific discourse configurations.

Consider the following example of *davvero* in a conditional subordinate clause, extracted from a talk given at a party assembly.

(8) Caro presidente del Consiglio, caro Matteo Renzi, caro ministro Calenda, caro ministro Poletti, se volete *davvero* impedire che il braccialetto di Amazon e ogni altro braccialetto entri nella produzione in questo paese, c'è un modo molto semplice: potete insieme a noi, dal 5 di marzo in Parlamento, sottoscrivere una legge per dire che il Jobs Act che avete approvato va cancellato!

(IMPAQTS)

'Dear Prime Minister, dear Matteo Renzi, dear Minister Calenda, dear Minister Poletti, if you really want to prevent the Amazon bracelet and every other bracelet from entering production in this country, there is a very simple way: you can with us, from March 5 in Parliament, sign a law to say that the Jobs Act you approved must be canceled!'

In (8), the main dialogue is held between Nicola Fratoianni, a member of the left party Liberi e Uguali, and his fellow party members attending the assembly. Still, a secondary dialogue is activated with another voice: that of the members of the government, addressed through an explicit plea. The explicit dialogue-mimicking traits of this construction pair with the dialogicality carried by *davvero* (§2.2), which in (8) triggers two implicit contents.

[7] The notion of conventional implicature has been challenged (Karttunen and Peters 1979; Bach 1999, a.o.), in particular by pointing out that it may be hardly distinguishable from presupposition. However, we follow Sbisà (2007: 120–125) in finding it useful to distinguish between presuppositions and conventional implicatures.

i) the named Ministers mentioned or let others believe that they want to prevent the Amazon bracelet from being distributed in Italy;
ii) the speaker does not believe that it is true that the Ministers want to prevent the bracelet from being distributed.

The presence of these implicit contents can be verified through semantic tests.

(8a) *Cari ministri, se volete *davvero* impedire che il braccialetto di Amazon entri nella produzione in questo paese, *anche se non avete mai detto di volerlo*, c'è un modo molto semplice.
*Dear Ministers, if you *really* want to prevent the Amazon bracelet from entering production in this country, *even if you never mentioned that you want to*, there is a very simple way.

Example (8a), where implicit content (i) is explicitly negated, results in unacceptability.
Let us now manipulate the example, deleting *davvero*.

(8b) Cari ministri, se volete impedire che il braccialetto di Amazon e ogni altro braccialetto entri nella produzione in questo paese, c'è un modo molto semplice.
Dear Ministers, if you want to prevent the Amazon bracelet and every other bracelet from entering production in this country, there is a very simple way.

Differently from (8), (8b) is also compatible with the scenario (introduced in 8a) that the Ministers never mentioned or let others believe that they wanted to prevent the Amazon bracelet from being distributed in Italy, as can be verified in (8c).

(8c) Cari ministri, se volete impedire che il braccialetto di Amazon entri nella produzione in questo paese, *anche se non avete mai detto di volerlo*, c'è un modo molto semplice.
Dear Ministers, if you want to prevent the Amazon bracelet from entering production in this country, *even if you never mentioned that you want to*, there is a very simple way.

In this case, the explicit negation of implicit content (i) is compatible with the rest of the sentence. Also, differently from (8), (8b) does not convey implicit content (ii): the fact that the speaker does not believe that the Ministers want to avoid the bracelet.

Besides conditional clauses, the same polemic polyphonic dynamic is triggered in rhetorical questions. Consider (9), where Rosy Bindi, a politician belonging to an opposition party at the time of utterance, is speaking during a meeting at the House of Representatives (*Camera dei Deputati*).

(9) Presidente, se lo lasci chiedere: lei crede *davvero* che si possa pensare che in questi due anni avete ottenuto dei risultati? (IMPAQTS)
'Mister Prime Minister, let me ask: do you really believe that one could think that in these two years you have obtained any results?'

In (9), the politician addresses the Prime Minister, mimicking a personal dialogue with him, implicitly conveying two contents comparable to those triggered by the conditional clause in (8).

i) The Prime Minister mentioned or let others believe that one could think that they have obtained some results in these two years.
ii) According to the speaker, this is not true: nobody, not even the Prime Minister, could believe that one could think that they have obtained any results in these two years.

In the presence of any of the two constructs, the polyphonic dynamic also holds when a secondary interlocutor is not explicitly mentioned.

(10) Noi non abbiamo nessun imbarazzo a dichiarare che consideriamo fondamentale, nella nostra strategia, un rapporto unitario con i socialisti. Anzi, non riusciamo neppure a concepire una politica di rinnovamento, di progresso, di trasformazione senza un rapporto fra tutte le forze della sinistra e quindi anche, in primo luogo, con il Partito Socialista. Ma può *davvero* il Partito Socialista prescindere da un'analoga esigenza? (IMPAQTS)
'We have no shame in declaring that, in our strategy, we believe that a unitarian relationship with the socialists is fundamental. Actually, we cannot even conceive of a politics of renovation, progress and transformation without a relationship between all the left forces and so, first and foremost, with the Socialist Party. But can the Socialist Party *really* disregard an analogous necessity?'

In (10), two implicit contents analogous to those found in (8) and (9) are encoded.

(i) someone mentioned that the Socialist Party could disregard a relationship with the other left parties, and
(ii) the speaker does not believe the Socialist Party can disregard a relationship with the other left forces.

Differently from (8) and (9), in (10), the external voice involved in the polyphonic dynamic is not identified: in fact, the question has no specific addressee. However, the existence of a voice expressing a stance deemed untrue by the speaker is accommodated since, as mentioned, the epistemic stance conveyed by *davvero* is necessarily dialogic.[8]

Generalizing and summarizing this analysis, we, therefore, claim that *davvero* triggers a polemic polyphonic judgment activating two implicit contents.

[8] For a similar analysis of English *really*, see Paradis (2003).

i) an external voice is called into question, to which the responsibility of some content of the proposition is attributed;
ii) the speaker does not believe the content of the predication to be true.

We analyze these two contents as, respectively, a presupposition (i) and a conversational implicature (ii), as we will discuss in §4.3.

4.3. Pragmatic analysis of the implicitly conveyed contents

We will start our pragmatic analysis by observing that implicit contents (i) and (ii) contribute differently to the meaning of the utterance. The first stipulates that something has been mentioned or implied by others, providing a preparatory condition, whose acceptance is necessary to validate the illocutionary act. For example, with reference to (9), unless we accept that the Prime Minister and his governance team have mentioned that they have obtained some results in these two years, we cannot ask them if they really believe so. As such, the first implicit content can likely be described as a presupposition.[9] Presupposition persistence tests, aimed at verifying the constancy of the supposedly presupposed contents under different conditions, can accordingly be applied to validate this interpretation.

The most common presupposition persistence test, constancy under negation, is not convincing enough, because its application to the examples in our corpus often proved very problematic. In particular, many of the examples where *davvero* appears in a question, if negated, would be interpreted as confirmation questions, which consist of different illocutionary acts. Good results can, on the contrary, be obtained by applying another presupposition persistence test: the sentence insertion in an "se … allora/*if … then*" construction (Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet, 1990; Sbisà, 2007):

(9b) Presidente, se lo lasci chiedere: se lei crede *davvero* che si possa pensare che in questi due anni avete ottenuto dei risultati, allora perché agisce in questo modo?
Mister President, let me ask: if you really believe that one could think that you have obtained any results in these two years, then why do you behave in such way?

In (9b), the content that the President mentioned or let others believe that they obtained some results is still in place. Since implicated contents are never maintained under persistence tests, we can conclude that the mentioned content is presupposed.

We will now discuss why the second implicit content triggered by *davvero* can instead be described as a conversational implicature, even if with some aspects of conventionality[10]. We can first notice that implicit content (ii) appears to be *qualitatively* different from a presupposition. In fact, it does not represent a preparatory condition or background, taken-for-granted information. On the contrary, it represents information inferable from the asserted content, that is, the utterance including *davvero*. We can recall the distinction between *impliciti della responsabilità* (implicitation of responsibility) and *impliciti del contenuto* (implicitation of contents) introduced by Lombardi Vallauri and Masia (2014, further developed in Lombardi Vallauri, 2019) to distinguish (among other categories) presuppositions and implicatures. According to such classification, implicatures disguise some content, resulting in the implied content never explicitly being mentioned in the text. In contrast, presupposed contents are present in discourse, and what is implicit is rather the speaker's commitment to that content. In the case of the implicit contents triggered by *davvero*, while the presupposition disguises the speaker's responsibility on the content, which is committed to others, the second implicit element disguises something different: the speaker's polemic stance. This stance is never explicitly asserted, thus qualifying as an instance of implicitation of content. Furthermore, biased questions, like those involving polemic polyphonic *davvero*, have been described as conversational implicatures in the literature (Krifka, 1995; Romero and Han, 2004). Accordingly, we will hypothesize that the speaker's stance (implicit content ii) is encoded as an implicature, whose degree of conventionality may be discussed.

Even if the presence of a lexical trigger may suggest the conventionality of the implicature activated by *davvero*, its features can be traced to conversational implicatures. In particular, differently from conventional implicatures, the implicatures triggered by *davvero* appear to be cancellable.

(9c) Presidente, se lo lasci chiedere: lei crede *davvero* che si possa pensare che in questi due anni avete ottenuto dei risultati? Il suo comportamento non lascia dubbi: lei lo crede!
Mister President, let me ask: do you *really* believe that one could think that you have obtained any results in these two years? Your behaviour leaves no doubts: you believe so!

As far as the property of detachability is concerned, the implicatures triggered by *davvero* seem to behave like conversational ones: the same implicature can be generated by other linguistic means. In fact, the speaker's disbelief on some content can be obtained by several strategies, and it does not necessarily involve the use of *davvero* in certain configurations. Finally, conventional implicatures are context-independent, while those activated by *davvero* are systematically in place only in conditional clauses and rhetorical questions, thus suggesting that context does have a role.

[9] This interpretation is consistent with the one on Chinese *zhende* 'really' (Yuan 2015).
[10] In their analysis of epistemic *really*, Romero and Han (2004) also suggest that the epistemic content triggered by the addition of *really* in a polar question should be considered a conversational implicature.

Summing up, we can maintain that the second implicit content generated by *davvero* in questions and conditional clauses is an implicature and is cancellable, detachable and context-dependent. Accordingly, we say that it is a conversational implicature.

Taking a classic Gricean point of view, we can further observe that the implicature is related to the apparent violation of the Maxim of Quality (Grice, 1975). In co-operative language, the truthfulness of an assertion (or answer, as in (9)) is normally taken for granted by virtue of the "don't lie" Maxim. Consequently, the stressing of such truthfulness – what *davvero* semantically does (§2.2) – can trigger another content. In particular, addressees can be induced in evoking scenarios where the mentioned state of affairs is "not real". In the case of questions and conditional clauses, this is due to the counter-argumentative context they build. If I ask someone if they *really* believe something, it is because I have good reasons to think they do not; if I wonder whether an eventuality could *really* happen, it is because I have good reasons to think it could not. Even in not counter-argumentative contexts, addressees may be induced to think of relevant states of affairs which involve analogous but "not real" situations. The strength of this mechanism is why the triggering of an implicature, although different, happens not only in questions and conditionals but also in other constructions, as we will discuss in §4.5.

4.4. Davvero's manipulative potential

The polemic polyphonic dynamic characterizing *davvero* in conditional clauses and rhetorical questions also makes it potentially manipulative.[11] When the speaker alludes to an additional source through the use of *davvero*, she has the power to persuade her addressee that such content was actually mentioned. If the alleged additional voice did not actually mention the presupposed content, a deceptive use of the presupposition triggered by *davvero* is in place.

(11) Ma *davvero* pensate che un dialogo politico serio possa fondarsi sull'offerta di poltrone e poltroncine, di cui, peraltro, il governo neppure dispone? (IMPAQTS)

'Do you *really* believe that a serious political dialogue can be founded on the offer of seats and other appointments of which, what is more, the government has no availability?'

In (11), it is presupposed that the addressees of the secondary dialogue, the members of the government, mentioned or let others believe that they think a serious political dialogue can be founded on the offer of seats and other appointments of which the government has no availability. Such content is obviously exaggerated, if not patently false. If the speaker had asserted: "You members of this government believe that a serious political dialogue can be founded on the offer of seats and other appointments of which the government has no availability", the primary addressees would probably have been more likely to acknowledge that such assertion is exaggerated or false. Packaging it as a presupposition reduces the addressees' epistemic vigilance (Sperber et al., 2010) and increases the chances that some part of the message is smuggled into the addressees' beliefs. From a rhetorical point of view, this mechanism qualifies as a straw man argument: the alleged interlocutor is attacked for something which is not her argument but an oversimplification or an exaggeration of it.

The manipulative power of polemic polyphonic *davvero* can be exploited in advertising as well, with the same rhetorical pattern. Example (12) is the slogan of a commercial for a frozen fish brand.[12]

(12) Siamo onesti! Peschiamo e lavoriamo il pesce in maniera sostenibile. *Davvero* ci vogliamo mettere gli additivi? C'è un altro modo? (TV broadcast)

Let us be honest! We fish and process fish sustainably. Do we *really* want to put additives in it? Is there another way?

In (12), *davvero* activates the polemic polyphonic judgment: i) presupposing that someone relevant in the universe of discourse mentioned that additives should be added to frozen fish; ii) implying that the advertised brand does not want to put additives in the fish. Like in (11), the presupposition is not *bona fide* true: in Italy, the use of additives in frozen fish is regulated by law, and it is forbidden in most fish products. However, the presupposition suggests that competitors use additives and propose it as a standard procedure from which only the advertised brand moves away.

An interesting point that can be observed both in (11) and (12) is that, alongside a manipulative presupposition, the implicature consists of obvious, easily shareable content. In (11), the implied content is that the speaker does not believe it true that the government intends a serious political dialogue to be founded on the offer of seats and other appointments of which it has no availability. As this content is obvious, mentioning it results in a disqualification of a government, described as clumsily attempting a flashy deception to the detriment of the people. In (12), it is implied that the source does not believe it true that they want to add additives to the fish. Consumers will easily appreciate this stance, with the consequence that they will be more suspicious of other brands presupposed to have suggested the use of additives.

4.5. The role of context

In the IMPAQTS's monologic political discourses, we observed a systematic correlation between the triggering of implicit contents by the polemic polyphonic *davvero* and its context of occurrence. More precisely, the polemic polyphonic *davvero* exclusively occurs in two discourse configurations: rhetorical questions and conditional subordinate clauses (§4.1). This

[11] This analysis relies on the acknowledgment by many authors that implicitating strategies, such as presuppositions and implicatures, can be exploited to persuade the receiver (cf. a.o. Givón 1982; Sbisà 1999; Sbisà 2007; Macagno 2015; Lombardi Vallauri 2016a, 2016b, 2019).

[12] The commercial is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vBEjhYf-sE (last access 08.03.2023).

section compares the data on monologic political discourses with spontaneous dialogues and press articles. Based on these enlarged and diversified data, we argue that, more generally, *davvero*'s pragmatic enrichment directly depends on the aim of the stretch of text in which the adverb occurs and only partially on the syntactico-semantic features of the adverb.

In §2.2, we hinted at the importance of the semantic traits of redundancy and dialogicality for the triggering of implicit contents. In our data, we observed that there is a one-way relation between the semantico-pragmatic properties of *davvero* and the presence of any pragmatic enrichment. As shown in Table 1 (§2.2), *davvero*'s modal reading is characterized by both redundancy and dialogicality, the emphatic reading only by redundancy, and the intensifying reading by neither. Accordingly, only modal *davvero* is compatible with a polemic polyphonic judgment. Emphatic *davvero* may trigger the implicature that a contrast stands between relevant referents or events (cf. §2.2), and intensifying *davvero* may trigger neither a polyphonic judgment nor a contrast. It is worth stressing that neither the modal nor the emphatic occurrences of *davvero* necessarily trigger an implicit content. In other words, the semantic traits of redundancy and dialogicality are not sufficient conditions for triggering the polemic polyphonic pragmatic enrichment and contrast. Indeed, in our data on political monologues, dialogues, and press articles, we found occurrences of modal and emphatic *davvero* not triggering any pragmatic enrichment.

Consider example (13) of *davvero* in its modal reading in a press article published in the culture section of the newspaper.

(13) De Chirico, a proposito delle sculture di Francesco Messina, ha scritto che “odoravano di buono”, quasi fossero pani usciti dal forno; parafrasandolo si può dire che le statue di Giuseppe Ducrot “odorano di museo”. *Davvero* sembra di stare dentro un Antiquarium, appena varcata la soglia del Magazzino d' Arte Moderna, due stanze in cui, alle pareti, immersi in una luce acquorea, si appoggiano busti di imperatori romani e semidei in marmo, bronzo e terracotta.

(Repubblica)

‘De Chirico, speaking of Francesco Messina's sculptures, wrote that they "smelled good", as if they were loaves coming out of the oven; to paraphrase him, we can say that the statues of Giuseppe Ducrot "smell of a museum". Really, it seems to be inside an Antiquarium; as soon as you cross the threshold of the Warehouse of Modern Art, two rooms in which, on the walls, immersed in an aqua light, lean busts of Roman emperors and demigods in marble, bronze, and terracotta.’

Despite being redundant and dialogic, in (13) *davvero* does not trigger a polemic polyphonic judgment. *Davvero* is redundant since it insists on the truthfulness of the assertive speech act “sembra di stare dentro un Antiquarium/It seems to be inside an Antiquarium”. It is dialogic since it refers to the previously expressed linguistic material “smell of a museum”, explicitly committed to another source. However, it is not a polemic polyphonic occurrence since the writer does not cast doubts on the truthfulness of a certain stance. On the contrary, he confirms for the reader the external voice's point of view. Indeed, as seen in §2.2, *davvero*'s semantic redundancy can be exploited at the discourse level not only to doubt the interlocutor's voice, but also to confirm or ask for confirmation.

As anticipated in §2.2, for the emphatic reading, we also retrieved in our monologic political corpus occurrences where *davvero* triggers a pragmatic enrichment. Consider the example in (14), where a politician speaks at his party assembly.

(14) L'idea del Lingotto, lo ha ricordato Matteo, non era solo costruire la sintesi tra cattolici democratici e sinistra, era fare un partito del tutto nuovo per identità, per programmi e per forma. Un partito del nuovo millennio *davvero* riformista e *davvero* radicale nel suo riformismo.

(IMPAQTS)

The idea of the meeting at Lingotto, as Matteo has recalled, was not just building a synthesis between democratic Catholics and the left; it was creating a completely new party for identity, programs, and shape. A new millennium party *really* reformist and *really* radical in its reformism.

Differently from the occurrences triggering a polemic polyphonic judgment, here, only one implicit content is triggered: a conversational implicature suggesting that at the moment of the meeting, the party was not really reformist and radical (or that other relevant parties were not). It is not possible to acknowledge the presence of a presupposition of existence of a first voice, responsible for the first assertion of the content. The polyphony between two voices maintaining disagreeing points of view is not in place; rather, an opposition stands between two different states of affairs, one of which is intended as truthful by the speaker. This is in line with the fact that, from a semantic point of view, emphatic reading *davvero* is only characterized by redundancy and not by dialogicality (cf. Table 1). However, in other cases, emphatic *davvero* can be exploited to confirm the truth of non-gradable linguistic material, without triggering any pragmatic enrichment, as in (15).

(15) All'Italia, che assiste sgomenta alla crisi inedita di questi giorni, non abbiamo il diritto di riservare in quest'aula le parole di un comizio. Troppo facili e troppo ovvie. Penso che il governo e in particolare il presidente del consiglio abbiano responsabilità *davvero* storiche. So bene, perché non sono un fazioso, che oggi nessuno è al riparo da una condizione generale dell'occidente che ha un nome che fa venire i brividi. Si chiama recessione, la crisi della produzione e dei consumi.

(IMPAQTS)

‘To Italy, which is witnessing in dismay the unprecedented crisis of these days, we do not have the right to reserve in this assembly the words of a rally. Too easy and too obvious. I think the government and the prime minister, in particular, have *really* historical responsibilities. I know well, because I am not biased, that today no one is safe from a general condition of the West that has a name that makes you shiver. It is called recession, the crisis of production and consumption.’

Although this occurrence of *davvero* is characterized by redundancy, we cannot observe a pragmatic enrichment. The speaker does not insist on the truth of the adjective *storiche* ‘historical’ to contrast it with the assumption that someone would argue against his stance, nor that an opposing state of affairs could be deemed true by the beneficiary of the text. The communicative aim of the above-considered stretch of text is to confirm and highlight the truth of the modified linguistic material, and to recognize the importance of government decisions publicly, given the difficult historical moment. Again, similarly to modal *davvero*, the lack of pragmatic enrichment does not depend on the syntactico-semantic or semantico-pragmatic properties of the adverb.

The difference between the two last examples (14) and (15) is the type of text in which they occur. More precisely, in our data, the pragmatic enrichment arises only when polemical interrogative/hypothetical *davvero* constructions appear in

argumentative stretches of texts, with the purpose of modifying, influencing, or simply reinforcing addressees' opinions through language (Amossy, 2006). We are, in fact, following Labinaz and Sbisà (2018) in considering that argumentation should not be considered only as a discourse genre itself but more as a dimension of discourse, which can contribute to instances of different discourse genres. Accordingly, as also noticed in the discourse analysis field (Amossy, 2005: 90), argumentation does not appear solely in discourse genres traditionally classified as argumentative. *Davvero*'s polyphonic pragmatic enrichment is also attested in journalistic prose, in sections that are usually less prone to exploit manipulative implicitating strategies (Lombardi Vallauri and Masia, 2020: 116). Consider the following example extracted from the news section of the Repubblica corpus (16).

(16) Perché quella ragazza non aveva niente addosso? Perché è scesa di due piani (la camera che occupava era al quinto) prima di gettarsi dalla terrazza dell'hotel Valverde se *davvero*voleva uccidersi?

(Repubblica)

'Why was that girl naked? Why did she go down two floors (the room she occupied was on the 5th floor) before throwing herself from the terrace of hotel Valverde if she really wanted to kill herself?'

Here the journalist suggests to the reader the possibility that the girl did not want to kill herself. The writer's stance is presented as disagreeing with a judgment derived from other sources, which allegedly maintain the opposite. The idea that the truth coincides with the journalist's stance is reinforced by casting doubts on the opposite stance. The polemic polyphonic use of *davvero* in a crime news section, usually narrative, is thus only motivated by the persuasive aim of the writer. At the same time, in genuinely persuasive texts, stretches of non-argumentative discourse may be found (cf. ex. 15 above). This is the case with our corpus: even if the text genre of political discourse (and more specifically discourse given by politicians, cf. Fetzer and Witczak-Plisiecka, 2021: 526) is generally recognized as an argumentative text type, not every stretch of text is necessarily driven by persuasive aims. In other words, not every political speech has a global persuasive aim.

Finally, the use of polemic polyphonic *davvero* seems to be related to the communicative situation as well. More precisely, to the number of active participants in the construction of the text (monologic vs. dialogic discourses). Analyzing a 100 occurrences sample of spontaneous dialogic speech, we did not find any occurrence of polemic polyphonic *davvero*, although it seems possible to invent examples. In the majority of occurrences, a holophrastic use of *davvero* can be observed fulfilling a discursive function of request for confirmation, like in (17), where two Italian friends are chatting about pizza in Boston.

(17) A: e poi un'altra che era appunto pomodoro mozzarella ananas e prosciutto
A: era buonissima
B: ananas
B: *davvero*
A: buonissima

(KIParla)

'A: and then another which was precisely tomato, mozzarella, pineapple, and ham
A: it was very tasty
B: ananas
B: *really*
A: very tasty'

The absence in the corpus of polyphonic occurrences can be explained precisely with reference to the monologic vs. dialogic nature of the communicative exchange. Counter-argumentative discourse involving the interplay of primary and secondary dialogicality (cf. §4.1) are typical of monologic and planned exchanges (Calaresu, 2022: 77). In unplanned dialogic speech counter-argumentative dialogic moves do not necessarily recall the word of others, which can be retrieved contextually. In speech, the dialogicality of *davvero* is thus less likely to trigger polyphonic pragmatic enrichments.[13]

5. Conclusions

In this paper we have shown that the Italian adverb *davvero* can potentially trigger what we call a polemic polyphonic judgment, that is a pragmatic enrichment based on two implicit contents.

- a presupposition of existence of a first voice responsible for part of the content of the proposition;
- a conversational implicature conveying the polemic speaker's stance on the content of the proposition (specifically, the speaker believes the content to be untrue).

We have suggested that the presupposition is derived from the inherent dialogicality of *davvero*, while the implicature is related to the redundancy of the adverb. When *davvero* appears in questions and conditional subordinate clauses, which are exploited as counter-argumentative discourse configurations, the polemic polyphonic judgment is in place. Most importantly, in our corpus, the polemic polyphonic effect was identified exclusively in those configurations. When appearing in discourse configurations other than questions and conditionals, *davvero* may trigger an implicature of contrast. In such cases, the

[13] Further analysis on the holophrastic uses of *davvero*, with particular reference to spontaneous spoken discourse, can be found in Cominetti and Cimmino, in press.

implicature does not build a contrast between the speaker's stance and another voice, which is not presupposed, but between two relevant states of affairs.

Both in polemic polyphonic and contrast occurrences, the criterion that we have identified to predict the triggering of the implicit contents relies on the text type: the text must have an argumentative structure and the stretch of text including *davvero* must have persuasion as its communicative goal.

While the context of occurrence plays a crucial role, the syntactico-semantic features are not sufficient conditions for triggering the pragmatic enrichment. Namely, modal *davvero* does not necessarily trigger a polemic polyphonic judgment, neither does emphatic *davvero* necessarily trigger a contrast.

Finally, comparing different corpora, we have shown that the polemic polyphonic dynamic is only retrieved in monologic texts, both spoken and written, despite being based on the presence of dialogic features in monologues. It was not retrieved in spontaneous dialogues. Of course, we cannot exclude that in larger corpora of spontaneous spoken Italian, the polemic polyphonic mechanism may emerge. In that case, we can also predict a persuasive aim of the speaker to be in place.

The question whether the diamesic factor has an impact on the triggering of pragmatic enrichment thus remains open. It would indeed be worth analyzing other text types and languages to confirm if our hypothesis still stands. Another aspect worth investigating is certainly the epistemic and evidential components of the adverb (see note 4), both in an intra- and inter-linguistic perspective. We will investigate these aspects in future research.

Declaration of competing interest

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Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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