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From *alter* / *alius* to *altro*:
ambiguity and context-dependence
of ‘other’ in Latin and in Italian

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Introduction

- joint work with Caterina Mauri (LILEC, Università di Bologna)
- preliminary observations and results of corpus work in Gianollo & Mauri (2020) (*Quaderni di Semantica*)
- ongoing work on cross-linguistic variation (Gianollo & Mauri *in preparation* for Amaral (ed.)) «*Other: Ambiguity, constraints, and change*», Brill



Italian *altro* «other» – starting point

Fundamental ambiguity of It. *altro* «other»:

- (1) *Posso avere un'altra borsa?*
«Can I have another bag?»



- «altra» = different – an item in **substitution**
- «altra» = further – an item in **addition**

Other (!) languages obligatorily disambiguate between these two meanings through lexical means:

e.g. German: *anderer* ‘different’ vs. *weiterer* ‘further’

- (2) a. *Könnte ich eine **andere** Tüte haben?*
b. *Könnte ich eine **weitere** Tüte haben?*



Roadmap

- Introduction
- The meaning of «altro»: a proposal
- Disambiguating factors and inferential mechanisms
- Discussion of Classical and Late Latin
- Conclusion



Italian «altro»: ambiguity

- **Altro-D** («**D**ifferent»): contrastive opposition between (two) compared entities that are in a relation of potential exclusion
→ cf. (3.a)
- **Altro-U** («**U**lterior»): the compared entities are presented as belonging to a set that is homogeneous with respect to some salient property and they are not mutually exclusive
→ cf. (3.b)

(3) a. Si ritiene che il virus sia stato trasmesso agli esseri umani dal pipistrello. Un'**altra** ipotesi riconduce il salto di specie, **invece** / **#inoltre**, al pangolino

“The virus is believed to have been transmitted to humans by the bat. **Another** hypothesis traces the spillover back to the pangolin **instead** / **#furthermore**”

b. Il tracciamento dei contatti è essenziale per sconfiggere la pandemia. Un'**altra** misura da mettere in atto è, **inoltre** / **# invece**, il distanziamento sociale.

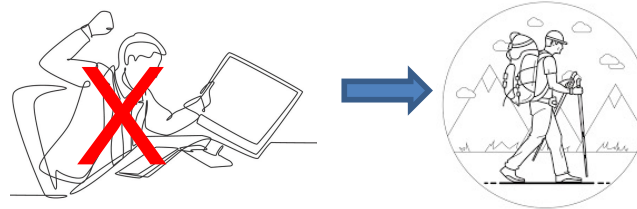
“Contact tracing is essential in order to control the pandemics. **Another** measure that should be implemented is, **furthermore** / **#instead**, social distancing”



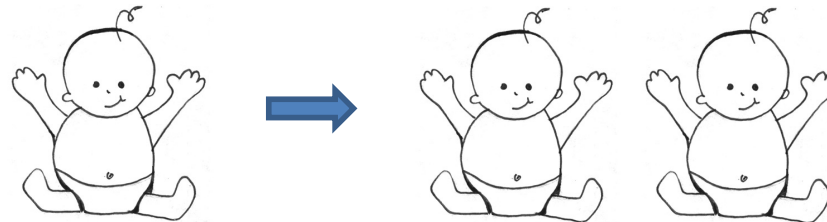
Substitution / Addition

English behaves like Italian:

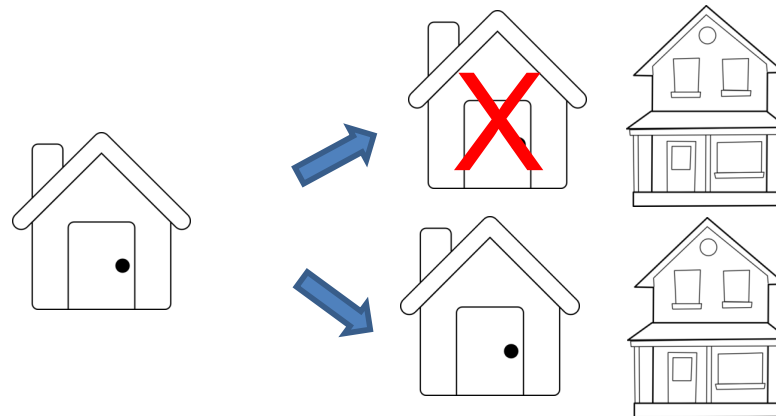
(4) Sam wants another life



(5) Sam wants another baby



(6) Sam wants another house



Disambiguating factors clearly relate both to world knowledge and to more specific contextual cues, such that the sort of ambiguity we investigate never causes serious misunderstandings → *how do speakers do that?*



Research questions

- How are the meanings of «altro» best analyzed and what is the cause of the observed ambiguity?
- Are there morphosyntactic and discourse-related constraints limiting the extent of the ambiguity?
- Which discourse factors contribute towards making one inference more prominent than the other in the disambiguation process?
- With respect to **diachrony**: what was the situation in Latin? how did the contrastive / additive ambiguity interact with the lexical distinction between *alter* 'other of two' and *alius* 'other of more than two'? and does it give as a clue wrt the Romance developments?



Another interpretational dimension: token / type

Tekavčić (1972), Cinque (2015), Charnavel (2015) focus on the token / type ambiguity:

- a. different / further token(s) of x (where x is some substance/entity/measure)
→ individual level
- b. different / further type(s)/kind(s) of x (where x is some substance/entity/measure)
→ property level

(Cinque 2015: 22)

This dimension (also encoded by similarity terms) is intrinsic to the expression of alterity / otherness and manifests itself in all languages.

It cross-cuts with the interpretational variation between additive and substitutive meaning that we are interested in here and we will not discuss it further.



Other «other»: French *autre*

Milner (1984: 62) in Bortolussi (2015: 173)



When you order a second coffee it is equivalent to say:

(7) *Donnez-moi **la même chose!*** «give me the same thing»

and

(8) *Donnez m'en **un autre!*** «give me another one»

→ **otherness** and **sameness** become dangerously close!

See also Charnavel (2015): *sidi* terms (< similarity/difference)

→ it would be communicatively inappropriate to just say «give me a coffee» when you already had a previous one → strong preference towards signaling the anaphoric link



Other «other»: Spanish *otro*

Eguren & Sánchez (2004); Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2011), Brugè (2017, 2018)

(i) significado **aditivo**: *otro libro* ‘uno más’ (one more)

(ii) significado **de alteridad**: *otro libro* ‘uno distinto’ (a different one)
Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2011: 67)

→ The ambiguity seems to be pervasive in the Romance languages



Syntactic distribution

- In Italian the ambiguity only emerges in attributive position; when used postnominally or predicatively, *altro* only means ‘different’:

(9) Ma questo problema è **altro** da quanto appena visto
«But this problem is different from what we just saw»

(10) Alleanza fa rima con sudditanza ma significa **altro** (Twitter)
«"Alleanza" (alliance) rhymes with "sudditanza" (subjection) but means something different»

(11) Viaggiando si incontrano genti **altre** (da noi)
«Travelling we meet different people (from us)»



Syntactic distribution

Cinque (2015) connects this with two different positions in syntactic structure (cf. also Kayne 2021), but ambiguity can arise (at least for some speakers) also in the same position (cf. Del Prete 2022):

(12) Dammi **altri** cinque minuti!

«Give me another five minutes!» (additional)

(13) Se sopravviveranno, saranno due **altre** persone!

«If they'll survive, they will be two different people» (different)

(14) Sembrava ci fossero tutti, ma poi sono arrivate due **altre** persone /
altre due persone

«We thought everyone was there, but then two further people arrived»
(additional)



The meaning of 'altro': a proposal



The meaning of «altro»

- The meaning of **Italian *altro*** rests on one fundamental presupposition, common to both Altro-D and Altro-U:

The **existence presupposition** of an antecedent alternative x to the alternative y introduced by *altro*. The antecedent can be drawn from an explicitly presented set or from encyclopedic knowledge.

Diversity of alternatives is intrinsic to this presupposition (similarly to what is assumed for additive particles and other anaphoric elements)

$$\exists x [x \in C \wedge x \neq y]$$

- At this stage of our research, we assume two different lexical entries for the Altro-D and Altro-U meanings



The meaning of «altro»

- Compare additive particle *also, too*:

(15) *I invited Peter and Mary to the party. I should invite John too*

(16) # *John had dinner in New York too*

- additive presupposition (e.g. König 1991)

y: focus associate (*John*)

x: alternative to y in context C

$$\exists x [x \in C \wedge x \neq y]$$



The meaning of «altro»

- **Altro-D**

Following Beck (2000) and Charnavel (2015), we assume that the contrastive-substitutive meaning emerges from a **comparative** nucleus: comparison between two entities x and y on the basis of a pragmatically determined property P in the context C

$$\exists P \in C, P(x) = 1 \ \& \ P(y) = 0$$

If P holds for the term of comparison (the antecedent alternative), it cannot hold for y

→ The way in which the relevant property is chosen is guided by *prominence* consideration that will be discussed later on



The meaning of «altro»

- **Altro-U**

In the case of Altro-U, the comparative component is not salient in context: the homogeneity of the alternatives with respect to the value assumed by the property P is not disputed

Altro-U anaphorically refers to this property and incrementally builds the relevant set, by adding an alternative that shares the relevant property → purely **additive** meaning

Homogeneity (a form of “identity”) becomes salient since it is the cohesive factor justifying the anaphoric link.

The only dimension of diversity (multiple distinct instantiations of a token or type) is encoded within the existential presupposition and is hence backgrounded.



The meaning of «altro»

- **Altro-D and Altro-U**

The choice between Altro-D and Altro-U is fundamentally a choice concerning the communicative relevance of non-identity vs. identity

The choice is strongly dependent on contextual cues of various nature

→ the disambiguation strategies will be explored in the next sections by analyzing corpus data from spontaneous conversations



Disambiguating factors and inferential mechanisms



Methodology: Spoken Italian

Gianollo & Mauri (2020)

Synchronic investigation focused on Spoken Italian

- ✓ 2028 occurrences of the lexeme *altro* attested in the KIParla corpus (KIP module)
- ✓ 356 occurrences are part of fixed expressions.
- ✓ semantic-pragmatic analysis for **1672 occurrences**, each of which has been classified by
 - **Function**: Altro-D vs. Altro-U
 - **Syntactic context**: definiteness, quantifiers, negation markers, additive particles

KIParla corpus – KIP module

- ✓ data collected between 2016 and 2018 (Mauri and Gorla [2018], Mauri et al. [2019]).
- ✓ 635,325 words, 70h of spontaneous conversations recorded in Bologna and Turin in the university context
- ✓ wide range of communicative situations
- ✓ Freely available at: www.kiparla.it



The two functions of *altro* in the KIP corpus

Function	N. occurrences	%
Altro-U <i>‘scrivo altre due mail e arrivo’</i> I write two more emails and I come	390	23%
Altro-D <i>‘non era qui, era da un’altra parte’</i> He wasn’t here, he was somewhere else	1282	77%
TOT	1672	



Altro-D: something else

Altro has the meaning of **different, else**, implying some discontinuity.

(17) TO052: *dai parliamo d'**altro** scusami* (TOA3009)

Come on let's talk about **something different**

(18) BO016: *siamo cresciuti con questa idea* (BOA3003)

we grew up with this idea

BO019: *perché come dice levi-strauss, va bene, aprirsi alle **altre culture***

because, as Levi-Strauss says, it's good to open up to **other cultures**



Altro-D: something else

(19) BO102: [...] *ma quello e' un conflitto politico **di altra natura*** [...] (BOD1009)
but that is a political conflict of a **different nature** [...]

(20) BO100: [...] *la capacità di mettere in relazione le informazioni per ottenere qualcosa d'**altro** e qualcosa **di più*** (BOD1007)
the ability to connect information to get **something else** and **something more**



Altro-U



Altro-D



Altro-D: correlative structures

Correlative structures: *altro* denotes one of two referents within a binary set, leading to an inherently **dual mutual interpretation**, very close to the original value we will see for Latin *alter*.

- (21) BO100: *sono due logiche che sono apparentemente opposte
contraddittorie ma che in realtà [...]
molto spesso si intrecciano e dipendono **l'una dall'altra***
They are two ways of thinking that are seemingly opposite
contradictory but that actually [...]
are very often intertwined and depend on **each other** (BOD1007)

Correlative structures are often also used to indicate referents within a **succession**, where the element denoted by *altro* is identified on the basis of some non-identity in terms of the individual (cf. Tekavčić [1972: 691]), but within the same broad set.

- (22) BO021: [...] *venendo un sacco di idee **una dopo l'altra*** (BOA3004)
coming up with a lot of ideas **one after the other**



Altro-U: something more

(23) BO044: *posso?*

BO026: *prego*

BO026: *è l'ultima lei vero?*

BO044: *no c'è **un'altra** ragazza fuori*

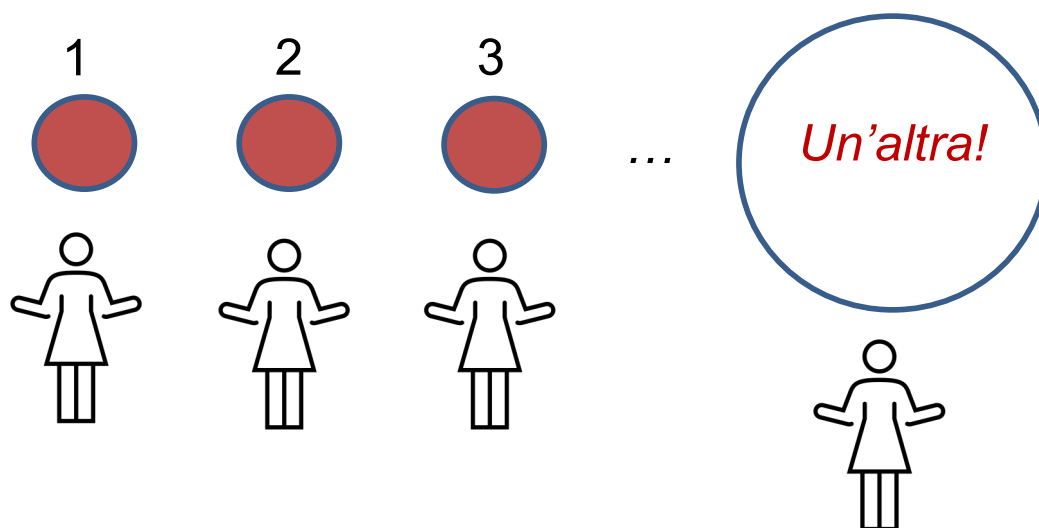
May I?

please

You are the last one, right?

No there's **another girl** outside

(BOA1014)



Altro-U or Altro-D or both?



Ambiguous cases!

(24) TO065: [...] *perché tanto gli devo scrivere anche **per altre** questioni*
(TOA1003)

[...].because anyway I have to write to him for **other issues** too

It is NOT possible to decide whether the speaker intended to refer to

- matters **different from** the ones he is discussing with the interlocutor
- or to **further, additional issues**.

...the two functions of Altro-D and Altro-U could both be present:

- ✓ the **additional** issues for which the message is written are also **different** issues



Ambiguity and disambiguation: Definiteness

- Ambiguity is **higher** when *altro* has **indefinite reference** and is preceded by an **indefinite determiner** (cf. English *another* < *an other*):

The presence of an indefinite article is not predominantly associated with a specific function, but is distributed fairly evenly between Altro-D (58%) and Altro-U (42%).

	Function	N. occurrences	%
INDEF	ALTRO-U	250	42%
Tot. 596	ALTRO-D	346	58%
DEF	ALTRO-U	41	6%
Tot. 648	ALTRO-D	607	94%
NO DET	ALTRO-U	99	23%
Tot. 380	ALTRO-D	329	77%



Ambiguity and disambiguation: Definiteness

- Ambiguity is much **lower** if reference is definite: the use of **definite article** is systematically associated with the function of Altro-D (94% of cases), presenting an additive function only in 6% of cases.
- The absence of determiner also shows a strong tendency for Altro-D, at 77% of cases.

	Function	N. occurrences	%
INDEF	ALTRO-U	250	42%
Tot. 596	ALTRO-D	346	58%
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NO DET	ALTRO-U	99	23%
Tot. 380	ALTRO-D	329	77%



Ambiguity and disambiguation: Definiteness

- The additive meaning of *altro* (Altro-U) occurs only in **11%** of cases with a definite determiner, while in 89% of occurrences it occurs with an indefinite determiner or bare.

Function	Determiner	N. occurrences	%
ALTRO-U	INDEF	250	64%
	DEF	41	11%
	NO DET	99	25%
ALTRO-D	INDEF	346	27%
	DEF	607	47%
	NO DET	329	26%



Ambiguity and disambiguation: Definiteness

(25) TO084: *ho sempre vissuto in quella casa lì,*
I've always lived in that house there,
*poi vabbé ho **un'altra casa**, la casa al mare* (TOD2004)
then well I have **another house**, the house by the sea

(26) TO058: [...] *perché ehm quando quando stavamo (lì)*
because er when when we were (there) (TOD2013)
*avevamo **un'altra casa** e poi abbiamo preferito prendere questa.*
we had **another house** and then we preferred to take this.

(27) BO073: [...] *lui viveva **nell'altra casa** per eh cercare di avere*
[...] he lived in **the other** house to eh try to have
per diciamo un distacco meno traumatico (BOD2005)
to say a less traumatic detachment



Ambiguity and disambiguation: Quantifiers (>2)

The empirical observation of spoken Italian shows an almost systematic association of **quantifiers indicating an amount >2** and an incremental interpretation (Altro-U):

(28) TO004: *il sito internet dell'università si è praticamente bloccato*

the university's website has pretty much stuck

con l'impossibilità di vedere

with the inability to see

le aule di lezione

the classrooms

e molte altre cose del genere

and **a lot of** other things *like that*

(TOD1002)



Ambiguity and disambiguation: Quantifiers (>2)

(29) TO056: *e mi ha detto* (TOD2012)

and he told me

eh sì però ci mettiamo in questa stanza in quest'altra no [...]

eh yes but we stay in this room, not in this other room [...]

*e dopo **qualche altro minuto***

and after **a few more minutes**

mentre guardava da fuori sempre questa stanza mi ha detto

as he continued looking from outside, he told me

(30) TO028: *eh poi ci sono altri* (TOA1002)

eh then there are other

altre tre domande, una è se quando siamo in erasmus [...]

three other questions, one is whether when we're in erasmus



Disambiguation: prominent inferences and abstractions

The analysis of the ambiguity observed in the data clearly shows a **multifactorial determination of the prominent interpretation of *altro***.

➤ Central role of **context**:

- ✓ **syntactic constructions** that correlate in a non-random way with one of the two functions (definiteness, quantifiers) → low level of ambiguity.
- ✓ **contextual inferences** through which the referent of *altro* is identified by analogy (Altro-U) or by difference (Altro-D) → **COMPARATIVE CORE!**

... How do these contextual inferences work?



Disambiguation: prominent inferences and abstractions

Given its comparative core, the interpretation of *altro* always activates an **abstractive inferential process**.

- the **anaphoric antecedent** and the elements provided by the **discursive context** allow to identify the **property** against which the comparison should be established.
- This property behaves like a **variable (P)**, to which a specific value is assigned according to the context (cf. Mauri and Sansò 2018)
- Once the **relevant value of P** is identified, it can be **confirmed** (Altro-U) or **replaced** (altro-D)



Disambiguation: prominent inferences and abstractions

(31) Speaker A, after trying on a [**long red skirt**]_X, says addressing the saleswoman: *I would like* [**another one**]_Y



Disambiguation: prominent inferences and abstractions

(31) Speaker A, after trying on a [long red skirt]_X, says addressing the saleswoman: *I would like [another one]*_Y

A): «*This red is beautiful*»

P_{1_colour}

P₁ = red IS CONFIRMED

→ Altro-U: Y = red skirt

P₁ = colour

B): «*It's a bit of a strong color*»

P_{1_colour}

P₁ = red IS NOT CONFIRMED

→ Altro-D: Y = blue skirt



Disambiguation: prominent inferences and abstractions

(32) Speaker A, after trying on a [long red skirt]_X, says addressing the saleswoman: *I would like [another one]*_Y

A): «*This red is beautiful*»

P_{1_colour}

$P_1 = \text{red}$ IS CONFIRMED

$P_1 = \text{colour}$

B): «*It's a bit of a strong color*»

P_{1_colour}

$P_1 = \text{red}$ IS NOT CONFIRMED

→ Altro-U: Y = red skirt

→ Altro-D: Y = blue skirt

C): «*I really like the style*»

P_{2_length}

$P_2 = \text{long}$ IS CONFIRMED

$P_2 = \text{length}$

D): «*I'm not convinced by the style*»

P_{2_length}

$P_2 = \text{long}$ IS NOT CONFIRMED

→ Altro-U: Y = long skirt

→ Altro-D: Y = short skirt



Disambiguation: prominent inferences and abstractions

- ✓ The identification of the **correct value of P** is the very result of the abstraction process and allows to reach the intended interpretation:
 - **Altro-D** → different and replaceable alternative with respect to P
 - **Altro-U** → an alternative that, with respect to P, is equal and incremental.

- !!! The abstraction process that leads to the identification of P is therefore crucial both
- ✓ for the purpose of disambiguation between Altro-D and Altro-U
 - ✓ and for the purpose of identifying the referent designated by *altro*.

The **prominent** inferential path is dynamically determined by elements in the (preceding and following) discourse context



Classical and late Latin



Latin and Proto-Indo-European

Does the etymology and the history of the lexeme help us single out the origins and determinants of the Altro-D / Altro-U ambiguity?

Latin: two different lexemes

- ***alter***: «other of two» → this is the item formally continued by all Romance languages (surprisingly, since it is the more marked)
- ***alius***: «other among many»

Indo-European stem ****al-*** (****H₂el-***) (cf. also *alienus* ‘stranger’, *aliquis* ‘some or other’ > Fr. *aucun*, etc.; Fr. *aussi* ‘also’ < *aliud sic*); cf. Engl. *else*

→ reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European as a (possibly) distal deictic (Lat. *ille* ‘that’ would come from a different grade of the same root)

Ernout (1945: 146): «*le sens de ‘un autre’ est voisin de ‘celui-là’*»

Mayrhofer (1992), Pokorny (1959), Sihler (1995), de Vaan (2008)



Latin

- ***alter***: «other of two» → **al-ter-*, with the suffix *-ter-* specialized to express binary contrast (and secondarily a comparative meaning);
 - cf. *uter* ‘which one of the two?’, *noster* ‘our’, *sinister-dexter* ‘left-right’, Gk. *héteros* ‘other’ from the root of ‘one’;
 - various Indo-European parallels (a.o. English *other*, German *anderer*)
- ***alius***: «other among many» → **al-yo-*, with a deadjectival suffix; various Indo-European parallels
- From root reduplication or construction with other pronominal stems: many Indo-European reciprocal pronouns (cf. Engl. *each other*, Germ. *einander*)
- Latin has also other lexical items for the plural (*reliqui*, *ceteri*)



Latin

- Both *alter* and *alius* have Altro-D (contrastive substitution) and Altro-U (additive homogeneity) uses
- Moreover, *alter* strongly correlates with definiteness (given the duality of the presupposed set and the resulting uniqueness of the introduced alternative)

OLD dictionary:

alter

- (i) additive-ordinal: “with emphasis on the aspect of addition: a second, a further, another”; “with reference to numerical and temporal series”
- (ii) contrastive in terms of individuals: ‘one of two’
- (iii) contrastive in terms of property: OLD “opposite in quality”: ‘different’
- (iv) correlative and reciprocal uses

alius

- (i) contrastive in terms of individuals: ‘another’
- (ii) contrastive in terms of property : ‘another’, ‘a different one’
- (iii) additive: “a further”; “as well, also”
- (iv) correlative and reciprocal uses



Latin

▪ Altro-D

alter

(33) Eorum Amphitruonis **alter** est, **alter** Iouis.

‘one of them [of Alcumena’s sons] is Amphitruo’s, the **other** Jupiter’s’
(Plaut. Amph. 483)

(34) sed erus eccum ante ostium, et erus **alter** eccum ex Alide rediit.

‘But look, my master’s in front of the door, and my **other** master’s returned from Elis’ (Plaut. Capt. 1005-1006)

alius

(35) sedem eam acceperat a Tarquinio Prisco, seu quis **alius** regum dedit

‘he had received the district as a settlement, either from Tarquinius Priscus or by the gift of **another** of our kings’
(Tac. Ann. 4,65,1)

(36) iam cum fluxerunt continuae plures translationes, **alia** plane fit oratio

‘When there is a continuous stream of metaphors, a wholly **different** style of speech is produced’ (Cic. Or. 94)



Latin

- Altro-U

alter

(37) Ennius et sapiens et fortis et **alter** Homerus
'Ennius, the wise and valiant, the **second** Homer'
(Hor. Ep. 2,1,50)

alius

(38) Unam hanc noxiam amitte; si **aliam** admisero umquam, occidito
'Forgive this one offence. If I ever commit **another**, you can put me to death' (Ter.
Eun. 850-851)



Latin *alter*

- The meaning of **Latin *alter*** (“**other of two**”) is based on two main presuppositions:
 - (i) The **existence presupposition** of one antecedent alternative *x* to the alternative *y* introduced by *alter*. Diversity of alternatives is intrinsic to this presupposition, as we saw for ‘altro’
 - (ii) The **exhaustivity presupposition**: the alternatives *x* and *y* exhaust the relevant set → this derives definiteness (as uniqueness)

Alternatives can be contrasted because they share some contextually salient dimension (Lakoff 1971, Mauri 2008)

- If this shared dimension is more salient in context, the Altro-U (additive or ordinal) reading emerges
- If a partition of the domain obtains, *alter* behaves as complement anaphora (Sanford & Moxey 1993, Nouwen 2003) and the Altro-D (contrastive-substitutive) reading emerges



Latin *alius*

- Latin *alius* (“other of two”) shares only one of the presuppositions of *alter*:
 - (i) The **existence presupposition**, which is the condition for its anaphoric (and cataphoric) behavior

The exhaustivity presupposition is extraneous to the meaning of *alius*.

- Since the set from which *alius* picks its alternative has a more ‘flexible’ structure (being exempt from the binary condition), *alius* can incrementally add homogeneous alternatives to the set, resulting in Altro-U readings
- However, *alius* can also choose a contrasting dimension, resulting in Altro-D readings → this requires two different lexical entries for the Altro-D and Altro-U readings



Late Latin

- In Late Latin texts both *alter* and *alius* are attested, but *alius* is clearly predominant! The situation would lead to expect the disappearance of *alter* and the extension of *alius* in Romance; instead, the opposite happens.

cf. FEW – Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch

s.v. *alius*

[The Rom. languages continue only *alter*]

“Therefore if in the Per.

Aeth. *alius* is used instead of *alter*, this is simply

a sign for the fact that the author did not know any more the difference of Cl.

Lat. and put the more elegant *alius* in place of the more popular *alter* also

where the latter would have been right”

bewahrt, mit ausnahme des gallorom. Wenn daher in der Peregrinatio Aetheriae *alius* statt *alter* gebraucht wird, so ist das nur ein beweis dafür, dass die verfasserin die unterscheidung des klt. nicht mehr genau kannte und das nach ihrem empfinden feinere *alius* an stelle des volkstümlichen *alter* auch dort setzte, wo letzteres am platz gewesen wäre. Meister RhMus 64, 373; Löfstedt 145. Viele belege für *alius* statt *alter* im 7. und 8. jh. bei Pei 329. Die gleiche unsicherheit im gebrauch der beiden pronomina zeigen auch Filastrius (s. KrJbr 9, 53) und Johannes Cassianus aus Marseille (s. RF 2, 418).



Late Latin

- The explanation of Egeria's use as hypercorrection clashes against the nature of the text, the actual distribution, the constant presence in idioms; moreover, it is a general trait of Late Latin

Itinerarium Egeriae

alius	alter
40	3

e.g. 14x *alia die* 'the next day' vs. Class. Lat. *altero die*; *nihil aliud* 'nothing else'

cf. Vulgata, Matth. 22.3

(39) et misit servos suos vocare invitatos ad nuptias et nolebant venire
iterum misit alios servos dicens

illi autem neglexerunt et abierunt **alius** in villam suam **alius** vero ad
negotiationem suam

«And he sent his servants to call the guests to the banquet and they did not want to come. He sent other servants again saying...

Those however neglected the task and went away, one to his village and the other to his business»



Late Latin

Itinerarium Egeriae

alter

‘different’ (cf. **Altro-D**)

(40) subter montem, non Nabau, sed **alterum** interiorem
‘below the mountain, not Nabau, but a different inner one’
(It. Eg. X.9)

‘second’ (cf. **Altro-U**)

(41) mittet uocem archidiaconus et dicit **primum**: <<.....>>
Item mittet uocem **alteram** et dicet: <<.....>>
‘The archidiaconus speaks and says as first: <<...>>
Further he speaks for a second time and says: <<...>>’
(It. Eg. XXX.2)



Late Latin

Itinerarium Egeriae

alius

‘other of two’!

(42) et ostensae sunt nobis inde a contra **duae civitates**, id est Esebon, quae fuit regis Seon, regis Amorreorum, quae nunc appellatur Exebon, et **alia** Og, regis Basan, quae nunc dicitur Sasdra.

‘and from there two towns were shown to us in front, that is Esebon, which was of King Seon, king of the Amorites, which now is called Exebon, and the other Og, of King Basan, which is now called Sasdra’ below
(It. Eg. XII.8)



Late Latin

Itinerarium Egeriae

alius

‘different’ (cf. **Altro-D**)

(43) ut lapis cum corpore non moveretur in **alio** loco

‘so that the stone with the body was not moved in a different place’

(It. Eg. XVI.6)

‘further’ (cf. **Altro-U**)

(44) locus ille, filia, quem requiris, decima mansione est hinc intus in Persida.

nam hinc usque ad Nisibin mansiones sunt quinque, et inde usque ad Hur, quae fuit civitas Chaldaeorum, aliae mansiones sunt quinque

‘The place that you ask is ten stations from here inside Persia. From here to Nisibin there are five stations, and from there to Hur, which was a/the city of the Chaldeans, there are five other (additional) stops’

(It. Eg. XX.12)



Late Latin

Bertocchi, Maraldi, Orlandini (2010: 160-161)

- hypothesis on the interaction with the development of the definite and indefinite articles
- *alter* tended to be definite because of the dual cardinality of the set
- due the new opposition between definite and indefinite article, the usefulness of the functional opposition between *alter* and *alius* decreases (since it was mostly useful in disambiguating definiteness)

According to this scenario, the rise in frequency of *alter* is late and contemporaneous with the development of articles (after the VI cent., Adams 2013)

Remains of *alius*:

- Fr. additive particle *aussi* ‘also’ < ALIUD SIC ‘further so’ (cf. It. *altresì* ‘also’, ‘on the other hand’ < ALTER SIC
- Old French *e/* ‘other’, Old Catalan *a/s*, Old Spanish, Old Portuguese *al* ‘something else’



Conclusions



Conclusions

- ✓ We have discussed a hitherto rarely explored dimension of **ambiguity: contrastive-substitutive** vs. **homogeneous-additive** meaning of the word for *altro* “other” in Italian
- ✓ We have proposed that the ambiguity is reducible to two distinct meanings, differing with respect to the semantic status of the **comparative component** (asserted vs. backgrounded)
- ✓ We have studied the strategies leading to disambiguation in an extensive **corpus of spontaneous conversation**, highlighting the **morphosyntactic** and **discourse-related** factors constraining interpretation → multifactorial determination of prominence
- ✓ We have addressed the diachrony, showing that the relevant ambiguity characterized also Latin *alter* and *alius*. The dual condition on *alter* leads it to become specialized as inherently definite: thus less flexible, hence superseded by *alius* in late Latin? and used again only once articles appear?



*As we say in
Bologna...*

... altro?

= Anything else?

Altro!

= That's it





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Thank you!

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