



A refinement of the definition of Manner and its expression through Italian indefinites

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to study how Manner is coded in Italian through expressions other than the verb, specifically investigating expressions containing the paucal indefinites *niente* (“nothing”), *qualcosina* (“something.DIM”), *poc-/po’* (“a few”, “a little”), *certo* (“a certain”) and the pattern *N/V [da N/V]* (“N/V [da.PREP N/V]”), such as: *come niente* (“in an effortless way”), *mangiamo qualcosina* (“let’s eat together spending some time leisurely”) *scrive un po’* (“s/he writes without commitment”), *certi sguardi* (“certain peculiar looks”), *sguardi da far paura* (“scary looks”). This work complements the vast literature on the subject, mainly focused on manner of motion verbs. For this purpose, 6000 occurrences were extracted and analysed using a corpus-based and corpus-driven approach. The hypothesis is that paucal indefinite items semantically change along a path of the type Quantity > Quality > Manner. The results substantiate this hypothesis and help refine the definition of Manner from an onomasiological point of view.

KEYWORDS: manner, indefinites, corpus linguistics, semantic change, inferences.

1. Introduction

Decades of studies have mainly focused on Manner lexicalisation in the verb root and in verb-external modifiers in the semantic field of movement (Berman and Slobin, 1994, eds.; Talmy, 1972; 2000; Iacobini and Vergaro, 2012). The expression of Manner through different means in different semantic fields has been discussed to a lesser extent (Moline and Stosic, 2016; Corona and Pietrandrea, 2021). In spite of the minority of studies, the insights they contain accredit the idea that speakers use a wider range of means to express the peculiar unfolding of an event. These are linguistic, inferential, discursive and prosodic means and also co-verbal gestures. These means cut across the semantic classes of events,

i.e. they do not specify only motion events. This is where the present work comes in, aiming to highlighting the richness of the repertoire through which Manner can be expressed in Italian. Specifically, a method will be proposed for analysing some types of Manner expressions containing the paucal indefinite quantifiers *niente* (“nothing”), *qualcosa* (“something.DIM”), *poc-/po’* (“a few”), *certo*¹ (“a certain”) and the pattern *N/V [da N/V]* (“N/V [da.PREP² N/V]”). In Section 2 the many ways of expressing and defining Manner will be discussed. Section 3 is devoted to theoretical insights on Manner, inferential Manner expressions and the proximity between Manner and Aspectuality. Section 4 introduces the data collection, explains the inference test adopted for identifying the occurrences expressing Manner and explains the relevance of the cotextual reinforcement. In Section 5 the conclusion puts together the reflections about the expression of Manner through indefinites.

2. *Many ways of expressing and defining Manner*

Manner is famously defined as a seme expressing the way in which an event or behaviour takes place. According to Talmy (2000), languages would be divided into two classes: one would express Manner through lexicalisation in the verb root, the other through adverbial modifiers outside the verb. In fact, still today, definitions of Manner derive from the well-known works of Talmy (e.g. 2000) and Slobin (e.g. 2004; 2006). Talmy adopts a compositional semantic approach to motion verbs and defines Manner as a specific semantic component called ‘Co-event’ which is «an additional activity that the Figure of the Motion event exhibits – an activity that directly pertains

¹ *Certo* has different uses and meanings. As an adjective or adverb means “for sure” (ex. *un indizio certo* “a definite clue”; *ne sono certo* “I am sure”); as a pronoun means “some of them” (ex. *certi parlano* “some of them talk”), as an indefinite adjective means “an indeterminate quantity of X with some indeterminate qualities” (ex. *sentivo certe voci* “I heard certain peculiar voices”). Only this last use of *certo* will be considered in this research.

² The Italian preposition *da* can be translated in English in many different ways: *from, to, at, through*. Since none of these seems to fit the Italian unconventional meaning of *da* in this pattern, it is indicated as ‘da.PREP’.

to the Motion event but that is distinct from it» (Talmy, 2000: 45). Slobin (2004: 255) defines Manner very broadly as «an ill-defined set of dimensions that modulate motion, including motor pattern, rate, rhythm, posture, affect, and evaluative factors».

Apart from these two well-known definitions of Manner, there are few others with different characteristics. There are circular definitions, such as «a manner adverbial [...] characterise[s] the manner or way in which a certain activity is carried out» (Dik, 1975: 97). Such tautologies can be found also in Cernecca (1971: 420), Serianni and Castelvechi (2003 [1997¹]: 72) and Prendes Alvarogonzalez (2021: 90). Then there are semasiological definitions of Manner: the authors just mentioned but also Schwarze (2009), Roman and Rémi-Giraud (1998), González García (1997) circumscribe Manner according to the syntactic behaviour of typical adverbs³ (ex. *confusamente* “unclearly”)

³ Adverbials highlight the proximity between similar notions. In this regard, an anonymous reviewer points out how indeed their distributional behaviour provides useful clues to distinguish between adverbials of Manner and those expressing Modality (Dik, 1997: 225 ff.; LANGACKER, 2008: 362; MOLINE, 2011). Adverbs of Modality do not specify a peculiar unfolding of the event but are intended as means of expressing the speaker's attitude towards the conditions of truth, reality, probability, certainty, or validity of the utterance. For example:

- (i) *Mario cucina svogliatamente* (“Mario cooks listlessly”)
- (ii) *La scorsa settimana Mario ha cucinato svogliatamente* (“Last week Mario cooked listlessly”)
- (iii) *Forse/Effettivamente/Purtroppo la scorsa settimana Mario ha cucinato svogliatamente* (“Maybe/Actually/Unfortunately last week Mario cooked listlessly”)
- (iv) *?Svogliatamente/da matti, la scorsa settimana Mario ha cucinato* (“?Listlessly/like crazy, last week Mario cooked”)
- (v) *Mario non cucina svogliatamente* (“Mario doesn't cook listlessly”)
- (vi) *Mario forse non cucina / Forse Mario non cucina (svogliatamente)* (“Mario maybe doesn't cook / Maybe Mario doesn't cook (listlessly)”)
- (vii) *Mario cucina, e lo fa svogliatamente/da matti/come niente* (“Mario cooks, and he does it listlessly/like crazy/easily”)
- (viii) **Mario cucina, e lo fa forse/probabilmente/effettivamente* (“*Mario cooks, and he does it maybe/probably/actually”)

In (i) and (ii), adverbs of Manner have scope over the predicate and the predication. In (iii), adverbs expressing Modality have scope over the entire utterance. Extending the scope of Manner adverbs to the entire utterance, as in (iv), makes the sentence anomalous or strongly marked. In (v), the adverb *svogliatamente* is within the scope of negation and specifies the predicate *cucina*. In (vi), on the other hand, the adverb *forse* has the negation / the predication within its scope. Examples (vii) and (viii) also demonstrate that Manner adverbials can be separated from the nuclear predication, unlike Modality adverbs. Hence, we can identify Manner adverbials by their primary role as modifiers of the predicate or the predication.

or of adverbial adjectives (*confuso* “unclear”) or of prepositional adverbs (*con poca chiarezza* “with little clarity”).

Finally, there is a small number of definitions that consider Manner a complex meaning that cannot be defined semasiologically (Goddard and Wierzbicka, 2002: 53; Moline and Stosic, 2016; Legallois, 2007a; 2007b; Voghera, 2017; Corona and Pietrandrea, 2021). Indeed, the expression of Manner is not limited to motion events and the means of expressing it are very diverse, as the following examples show:

- (1) a. It. *Mi ha risposto* [*sussurr-ando/rid-acchi-ando*].
 OBL has answered whisper-GER/laugh-EVAL.SUFF-GER
 “S/he answered me [whispering/tee-heeing].”
- b. Ru. *On [ostorožno] pisal pis'mo.*
 he carefully wrote letter
 “He wrote the letter [carefully].”
 (Lakoff, 1965, cited in Miller, 1970: 490)
- c. Sp. *Le dijo Tom Nevinson [con seriedad].*
 OBL told Tom Nevinson with severity
 “Tom Nevinson told him/her [seriously].”
 (Prendes Alvarogonzalez, 2021: 91)
- d. En. The ball moved and [bounced].
- e. Tu. *Birlikte [cumbadanak]⁴ bir suya düşüyorlar.*
 together IDEO some in water they fall
 “Together [cubadadanak] they fall into some water.”
 (Slobin, 2004: 233)
- f. It. *Ha fatto quella presentazione [gesto del bacio].*
 s/he did that presentation kiss GESTURE⁵
 “S/he did that presentation [perfectly and pleasantly].”
- g. Ja. [*Gasyaan*], *Zimen no ue ni bingoto otitesimattanodesu.*
 crash.MIM ground gen top GOAL jar with it has fallen
 “Craash. [The dog] ended up falling on the ground with a jar on.”
 (Akita and Matsumoto, 2020: 157)

⁴ Sound symbolism plays a role in specifying manners of motion. The ideophone *cumbadanak* can be compared to the Italian *paffete/pamfete* (GOMEZ GANE, 2015). They are phonosymbols that imitate the sound of an object falling suddenly and violently.

⁵ The gesture can be viewed at [https://www.nandaolivieri.it/Gestures/gestures.htm#:~:text=Al%20bacio!,o%20di%20qualcuno%20\(fisicamente\)](https://www.nandaolivieri.it/Gestures/gestures.htm#:~:text=Al%20bacio!,o%20di%20qualcuno%20(fisicamente)) [last visited: 26.10.2022]. See also NOBILI (2019).

These examples show that speakers of very distant languages need to specify the unfolding of events and they do so through much more varied means than mentioned before. The ex. (1a) shows the expression of Manner in Italian through the lexicalisation within the verb root and through morphological alteration; in (1b) and (1c) Manner is expressed respectively in Russian and Spanish by a single-unit adverbial and by an adverbial PP; (1d) shows Manner lexicalisation within the verb root in English; in (1e) Manner is expressed in Turkish by phonosymbolism; in (1f) Manner is expressed by a typical Italian bodily gesture; in (1g) by Japanese «vowel lengthening and prominent intonation» (Akita and Matsumoto, 2020: 150).

The means for the expression of Manner have not all been investigated. Particularly neglected are the morphological ones, ideophones, co-verbal gestures and also some uses of paucal indefinites, which are in some way conceptually contiguous to Manner. The indefinites in the examples below express an indefinite quantity but may in fact trigger a Manner sense⁶:

- (2) a. It. [*Si trucca*]_{event} [*un po'*].
REFL put on make up a bit
“S/he puts on some makeup (lazily/without commitment/lightly).”
- b. It. [*Leggo*]_{event} [*qualcosina*] e vado a letto.
read.1SG something.DIM and go.1SG to bed
“I read a little something (lazily/without commitment) and go to bed.”

⁶ I would like to thank the reviewer for making an observation regarding the sense of ‘little quantity’ and the attenuating function of the illocutionary force expressed by the indefinites. In the communicative interaction, examples such as (2d) and (9c): *Perché non saliamo da me a bere qualcosina?* (“Why don’t we go up to mine to drink something.DIM?”) represent requests. In these cases, it is indeed challenging to overlook the function of attenuation of the illocutionary force carried out by paucal indefinites. As mitigators (see also § 3.1), they trigger an interpersonal closeness and make the request more acceptable. Certainly, the sense of little quantity is absent. Asking to take just a few steps together, or asking to drink together, specifying that one will drink in a small amount, are anomalous interpretations. As I point out in the analysis to follow, for *poc-/po’* and *qualcosina* the sense of Manner is not conventionalised. The sense of small quantity, vagueness, and the mitigating function prevail. However, the co(n)textual construction, like that of the examples discussed here, invites the inference of a specific Manner of performing the event.

- c. En. He's leaning against the wall in a nearly empty venue fancying [a bit of] [a chat round a table with other people]_{event}.
 "He's leaning against the wall in a nearly empty venue fancying a (friendly/undemanding) chat round a table with other people."
 (Corpus UkWac)
- d. Fr. [*Faisons* [*quelques*] *pas*]_{event} *ensemble*.
 take.1PL some steps together
 "Let's go for a walk together (without commitment or destination)."
 (Gréa, 2012: 1)

The common feature of these sentences is the specification of the event operated by the semantics of the indefinite quantifiers in bold. In fact, it is very likely to interpret the make-up event as attenuated and undemanding; the reading, chatting and walking events as performed in a relaxed and careless way aiming also at establishing with the interlocutor an intersubjective closeness. Hence, some indefinite quantifiers seem to express the way in which the events are performed, i.e. they express Manner.

Given the wide variety of means by which Manner can be expressed, the traditional definitions of Manner seem somewhat restrictive, so I propose a revised, broader definition. It appears more functional than the previous ones because it allows for the inclusion of all possible means of expression of Manner that would escape the other definitions; it accounts for the intrinsic semantic complexity of Manner. The definition is:

Manner is a content category that specifies an event. It expresses a deviation of some properties of the event, perceived as salient by the speaker, compared to its (proto)typical manifestation.

The wording 'perceived as salient by the speaker' is not to be understood as a 'subjective evaluation', but rather as the properties, the values of the event that attract the speaker's attention and are verbalised because of the deviation they have in comparison to the internalised (proto)typical event (Schmid, 2007). The bracketed word '(proto)typical' means "prototypical and/or typical values". Throughout this work, the words 'prototypical' and 'typical' are used. Their ex-

planation is provided in the following section. For reasons of space, the theoretical review concerning the ‘prototypical event’ and the ‘(proto) typical event values’ is not dealt with in this article. In this regard, refer to the work of Pulman (1983), Antonopoulou (1987), Violi (1997), Divjak (2010) and section 2.4 of Russo (2021).

Below some theoretical aspects of this definition are clarified as well as the type of expressions to which this definition will be applied.

3. *Theoretical framework*

Two aspects of the definition of Manner just given are to be considered essential. The first is that Manner expression occurs through the exploitation of other semantic areas (Minoccheri and Stosic, 2022) that are expressed not only through lexical variation (cf. (1f) and (1g)). The second is that Manner expresses an implicit comparison. In fact, expressing a Manner specification in performing an event means specifying a deviation of the (proto)typical semantic values associated with it. Simultaneously, the deviated event triggers a comparison with its prototype. The prototypical values to which I refer are those values that speakers presume to be shared with the interlocutor without the need for constant clarification (Violi, 1997: 217-225). Drawing on the work of Violi (1997), I assume two types of values: prototypical values, that are essential or entailed and typical values, that are not entailed, that can be cancelled but may be very salient. Table 1 below contains some examples. The event ‘to drink’ entails the essential value [ANIMATE], otherwise the meaning of the word must be renegotiated; ‘cat’, instead, typically implies [PURRING] but this value can be cancelled and may have different levels of salience according to the speech community. The event ‘to cook’, in the same way, has values characterised by strong implicature (ex. [PROCESS FOOD]; the value [MAKE FOOD EDIBLE] is less strongly implicated) but also falsifiable values which may be very typical (ex. [CONCENTRATION], [GESTURALITY]). An expression such as *cucina svogliatamente* (“s/he cooks listlessly”) expresses a Manner of cooking through the adverb and implies an implicit comparison with the mutually shared prototypical manifestation of cooking (Table 1).

	ENTAILED OR STRONGLY IMPLICATED VALUE		TYPICAL VALUE
to drink	[ANIMATE]		[QUENCH THE THIRST]
cat	[MAMMAL]		[PURRING]
to cook	[PROCESS FOOD]	[MAKE FOOD EDIBLE]	[CONCENTRATION] [GESTURALITY]
s/he cooks listlessly	[PROCESS FOOD]	[MAKE FOOD EDIBLE]	~[CONCENTRATION] ~[GESTURALITY]

Table 1. *Events and their entailed or typical values.*

In *cucina svogliatamente* a deviation of the typical Psychological and Bodily Attitude⁷ of the cooking event is expressed. The deviation is signalled in the table with the symbol ~ next to the values [CONCENTRATION] and [GESTURALITY]. They pertain to two semantic areas that Manner has exploited and clustered for its expression. The semantic areas that Manner exploits and clusters vary according to the type of values that constitute the event and that can be perceived as deviated. In addition to Psychological and Bodily Attitude we can have deviations in the typical Sonority, in the Strength typically applied, in the Dedication typically required, in the level of Discretion or Speed typically required; an event that typically requires the achievement of a Goal or a Purpose may be performed aimlessly etc. The complete list of semantic areas that Manner exploits has not yet been compiled⁸. In this work, the Manner expressions containing indefinites will allow to focus on some of them, specifically on the degree of Dedication, on the values pertaining to the temporality of the event, i.e. Aspectuality values (cf. § 3.2), and marginally on the Psychological/Bodily Attitude of the agent.

Another relevant aspect is that there are Manner means that explicit better than others what are the deviated values. Verbal root lexicalisation like *parla* (“speaks”) vs. *sussurra* (“whispers”), adverbs like

⁷ A deviation in the Psychological/Bodily Attitude is also likely to lead to a deviation in the overall performance of the event, because «the manner of performing the event is closely related to the psychological attitude of the person performing it, so it is very often difficult to regard them as strictly separate» (MOLINE and STOSIC, 2016: 27). This is why the values associated with the Manner sense are also those that are not intrinsically lexicalised.

⁸ Two relevant attempts are those made by MOLINE and STOSIC (2016) and by CORONA and PIETRANDREA (2021) for French and Italian respectively.

svogliatamente (“listlessly”) or adjectives like *svogliato* (ex. *uno studio svogliato* “a listless study”) are the strategies that tend to maximise the clarity of the Manner sense. Indeed, in these cases, it is possible to identify even out of co(n)text the semantic areas of low Sonority and lazy Psychological/Bodily Attitude clustered for the expression of Manner.

However, Manner sense can also be inferred through a more complex process of interpretation that takes into account the aid of the co(n)textual construction of the sense. This is because it seems appropriate to hypothesise that when non maximally clear Manner strategies occur it is likely to find cotextual reinforcements that aid the interpretation process foregrounding one sense or some possible senses while backgrounding others (cf. Violi, 1997: 274-281; Corona and Russo, 2023). For example, one can say that the PP *da pazzoide* (“like a wacky”) in *una risata da pazzoide* (“a laugh like a wacky”) expresses quite clearly which is the Manner of laughing intended. In *ti sorride alla gne he he* (“s/he smiles at you like gne he he”) instead, the Manner expressed by the ideophone *gne he he* is quite obscure. In cases like this, the analysis of the construction of the Manner sense in co(n)text can be helpful because cotextual reinforcements might be present. Ex.: *ti sorride alla gne he he [con delle smorfie snervanti]* (“h/she smiles at you like gne he he, [with some unnervating grimaces]”) points out that Manner specifies and exploits the Bodily Attitude of the agent in performing the event ‘laugh’.

I believe that the theoretical principles considered so far and the interest in the expression of Manner through different means have highlighted the relevance of inferences. This means accepting the idea that it is very likely for some expressions to induce specific types of inferences about the manner of performing the event. For instance, in Table 2 the use of *qualcosina* can induce different kinds of inferences. In fact, the use of *qualcosina* seems to be inferentially related to the semantic areas of Dedication and Duration.

OCCURRENCE	INFERENCES
<i>Cos'hai fatto ieri pomeriggio? Ho studiato qualcosina.</i> “What did you do yesterday afternoon? I studied something.DIM”	s/he didn't really want to study s/he studied for a short time s/he studied messily

Table 2. Possible inferences deriving from the use of *qualcosina*.

The following step would be to test the coherence of inferences of this type on a larger set of data, in order to check for a possible regular correlation between *qualcosina* and the inferences related to Dedication and Duration.

This approach is onomasiological and is largely adaptable because it makes possible to identify the expression of Manner through every kind of linguistic strategy. It still remains valid in cases of gestural coding. Indeed, even in the case of utterances accompanied by gestures, it is possible to hypothesise the most probable Manner inferences, to find the least coherent ones and circumscribe the most consistent set of Manner inferences expressed by those gestures both intra and interlinguistically. The inferences to be tested are naturally not absolute but conform to the cultural specificities. I mentioned the typical value of [GESTURALITY] for the cooking event, and the inference of little Dedication for *qualcosina*. The [GESTURALITY] value may not be salient in some cultures and the inference of little Dedication may not be induced by evaluative/diminutive verbal suffixes in some languages. However, the inference test (see § 4.1.2 for its application) proves to be flexible enough to take into account each time typical values and inferences that are appropriate to the specific culture and language. Such generality may be a drawback of this method, which may be overcome by a vast-scale application in different languages. Because it is only in applying the method on many data that regular inferences, regular correlations and regular typicalities can be collected and generalised.

3.1. *Paucal indefinites and Approximation*

The interest underlying this research on Manner paucal indefinites starts from some research about small quantity items that, rather than quantifying, mainly attenuate the illocutionary force of the utterance and also approximate the event's semantics. To approximate a referent means to blur its values in a way that it fuzzily corresponds to a reference class (Mihatsch, 2010a; 2010b; Bazzanella, 2011; Voghera, 2012). For example, in the German expression *drei Tropfen* ("three drops"), used for rain, coffee or alcohol (Lavric, 2010: 127), *drei* actu-

ally loses its cardinal sense and expresses a paucal⁹ indefinite quantity, an attenuation of the illocutionary force and, when referred to rain, an attenuated Manner of raining. Russo (2017) has shown how remote is the use of small numerals as vague quantifiers in ancient Italian texts, finding occurrences already in the XIV century. Voghera (2017; 2019) studied Idiomatic Numeral Constructions in which the small numerals *due* and *quattro*, semantically shift from quantity to a quality meaning. They syntagmatically fix in constructions that express a relaxed way of performing the event, for ex.: *facciamo due/quattro passi* (lit. “let’s take two/four steps”) means “let’s go for an informal and carefree walk”.

Drawing on these premises, the idea developed to extend the study towards paucal forms like *poc-/po’* (“a few”) and *qualcosa* (“something.DIM”) but also negative items like *niente* (“nothing”) because it can be said that all of them operate as diminishers indicating a lower degree (Haspelmath, 1997; Cacchiani, 2017). Since the forms examined in this work (including *certo*) pertain to the semantic area of smallness and/or are indefinite forms, I define them ‘paucal indefinites’.

Paucal indefinites, similarly to diminutives and some verbal suffixes, are used to express both Approximation and Manner. For ex. *studia un po’* (“s/he studies a little”) typically expresses a vague approximation of quantity; *lezionc-ina* (“lecture.DIM”) and *studi-acchiare* (“study.EVAL.INF”) approximate properties of the base as they question their belonging to the category *lezione* (“lesson”) and *studiare* (“to study”). The overlap in the use of the same linguistic means to express different notions demonstrates a contiguity between the two domains. For reasons of space, I will explain below how Manner is characterised. For further insights on Approximation and on the contiguity between Manner and Approximation in verbal morphology, please refer to Masini *et al.* (2023, eds.) Corona and Russo (2023), Katunar (2013).

⁹ Paucals are «similar to the English quantifier ‘a few’ in meaning, particularly in that there is no specific upper bound that can be put on its use. Its lower bound [...] will vary according to the system in which it is embedded» (CORBETT, 2000: 22).

Both Approximation (Rainer, 2015; Grandi, 2017) and Manner have a downtoning and intensifying function. Both Manner and Approximation question category membership due to the deviation of the entity's prototypical values. Manner qualifies as referring specifically to events (verbal and nominal events). It expresses the deviation of entailed and non-entailed values, prototypical and/or typical values which are recognisable by the speech community. Finally, Manner expressions also express clusters of deviant values. E.g., in *per me sollevare un tronco è poca cosa* ("to me, lifting a log is little.F.SG thing.F.SG") the construction *poca cosa* ("little.F.SG thing.F.SG") expresses both the deviation of the difficulty of execution, which is a core value of the event 'lifting a log', and the deviation of the psychological attitude, which is not a core value of the event. In the co(n)textual construction, the psychological attitude is definable as particularly relaxed (see also § 3.3). In contrast to constructions like *poca cosa*, that have acquired a specific syntactic and semantic cohesion (a more explicit sense of Manner, in this case), certainly, for the paucal indefinites *poc-/po'* and *qualcosina* and other means such as the suffixes *-ino/a* and *-cchiare*, the meaning of Manner is not conventionalised and the general sense of Approximation prevails. This means that the interpretation of Manner, or rather, the way these means invite inference of Manner, is constructed in context. This occurs because where less conventionalised or less explicit Manner strategies are used, co(n)textual cues often come into play, foregrounding specific senses while backgrounding others in the interpretation process, as we shall see in § 4.1.3.

3.2. *Conceptual correlation between Manner and Aspectuality*

Manner is a content category that exploits other semantic areas. On closer inspection, a particular correlation seems to exist. That is, when Manner expresses low Dedication in the execution of the event, a particularly short time Duration seems to correlate; when Manner expresses high Dedication, a particularly long time Duration seems to correlate. Before saying what the actual level of correlation is, let us provide some more detailed explanation of the definition of Aspectuality.

Aspectuality is the content category that, in the onomasiological unidimensional approaches, subsumes the verbal categories of aspect and *Aktionsart*, traditionally kept separate. It brings together the semantic values that give structure to the temporality of the event. Dessì Schmid (2019), collecting all the different lexico-grammatical linguistic coding strategies in four romance languages, shows that Aspectuality is not associated with a specific linguistic means. It is a complex category that can be expressed at all linguistic levels, and we can assume is verbalised in all languages and consequently is a universal cognitive category.

Traditionally, the base concepts that give structure to the temporality of the event are time, aspect and *Aktionsart*. Time and aspect have been studied mainly in their expression through verbal morphological means, in fact they are considered as grammatical categories; *Aktionsart* is, instead, considered a lexical category (in fact the distinction is also known as grammatical aspect and lexical aspect). The sentence¹⁰ *è segno che sto impazzendo* (“it’s a sign that I’m going crazy”) is traditionally analysed considering that: the time is present with respect to the point of speech; the aspect is imperfective and is expressed through the *stare + gerund* Italian periphrasis; the *Aktionsart* classification is that of an achievement verb (according to the classification by Vendler, 1967) or a resultative verb (according to Bertinetto, 2001). The onomasiological view of Aspectuality allows to describe the temporality structure of events without semasiological classifications and without treating time, aspect and *Aktionsart* separately.

Both Aspectuality and Manner are complex categories, they are structured in interaction with cotextual reinforcements and with the shared common knowledge; it is possible to express them at all linguistic levels, except that Aspectuality is partially an obligatory grammatical category in Italian, whereas the expression of Manner is optional. There are some linguistic means that show the conceptual connection between the two categories. The first one is a set of adverbs such as *lentamente* (“slowly”), the metaphorised *timidamente* (“shyly”) and *dolcemente* (“sweetly”), as in *il sole va timidamente a dormire* (“the sun shyly goes to sleep”). They can be defined as adverbs of Manner

¹⁰ Adapted from DESSÌ SCHMID (2019: 191).

(Stosic, 2020: 9), as adverbs of motion that trigger a perceived slowness of time (Smith, 2012: 2583) and as durative elements (Dessi Schmid, 2019: 98). Their meaning is placed somewhere in between Aspectuality (i.e. temporality) and Manner sense.

The second means is Italian evaluative morphology. According to the co(n)textual foregrounding or backgrounding of some senses, verbs like *leggi-ucchiare* (“read-EVAL.INF”) or *cant-icchiare* (“sing-EVAL.INF”) can be interpreted as more related to the Manner-Aspectuality sense than to the Approximation sense (see also Corona and Russo, 2023: 113). They can express: (i) an iterated event; (ii) a particularly undemanding Manner; (iii) a particularly undemanding Manner plus a particularly short Duration compared to the prototypical performance.

The third means is a type of constructions containing paucal temporal quantifiers, studied by Legallois (2007b; 2012) in French but traceable in Italian as well. They are based on the pattern *être un/le N de qt Nt* (“to be a/the Noun of quantifier Noun(of time)”) like *c’est l’affaire de deux minutes* (lit. “it is the business of two minutes”) or *c’est un/l’histoire de quelques secondes* (lit. “it is a/the history of some seconds”). In this case, the conceptual connection between Manner and Aspectuality is directly expressed through the paucal quantification of time and relies upon «a qualitative implication based on the topos: what takes a little bit of time is easy to do» (Legallois, 2007a: 346; my translation). In fact, a sentence like *le réparer c’est l’histoire de cinq minutes* (lit. “fix it is the history of five minutes”) means “fix it is an effortless and particularly short task”.

Based on this perspective, I decided to verify the intuition that other less investigated paucal indefinite forms become part of constructions that convey a Manner meaning correlated to Aspectuality.

3.3. *Metaphorical/inferential Manner constructions*

The aim of this work is to study how Manner is coded in Italian through expressions other than the verb, specifically investigating paucal indefinites used in metaphorical/inferential Manner constructions. This kind of Manner coding proves very productive because it involves the speaker’s creative use of the language, as in:

- (3) *Il processo è stato fatto [alla leggera].*
 “The trial has been done [lightly (lit. at the light.F.SG)].”
- (4) *Se solo si liberasse di quegli occhiali preistorici... Potrei presentarlo al mio chirurgo, tesoro. È proprio [una cosa da niente], un tocco di laser e via.*
 “If only he got rid of those prehistoric glasses... I could introduce him to my surgeon, darling. It’s really [an easy little thing (lit. a thing.F.SG da.PREP nothing)] a touch of laser and that’s it.” (Corpus ItWac)

In (3) we find the PP *alla leggera*, composed of the articulated preposition *alla* < *a* “at” + *the* “the.F.SG” governing an adjective in the feminine singular. This pattern is taken from the French *à la* + feminine adjective (ex. *à l’ancienne* “in an ancient way”, *à la grèque* “in the Greek way”) and produces adverbial constructions of Manner (Moline and Stosic, 2016; Lo Nostro, 2019). Indeed, in French the complete pattern often makes explicit the terms *manière* “manner”/ *façon* “way” and the like (*à la manière grèque* “in the Greek manner”, *à la manière furtive* “in a furtive manner”). In (3) the Manner meaning is obtained through the metaphorical sense of the multiverbal word *alla leggera* (lit. “at the light.F.SG” = “lightly/carefreely”) and through the comparison with the inferences deriving from the prototypical performance of a trial. Typically, a trial induces to infer deep reasoning, physical and mental commitment and a certain period of time to be presented. A term like *leggera* induces to infer effortlessness. Hence, the conceptual domain of importance (of the trial) is metaphorically understood in terms of (light) weight (IMPORTANCE IS WEIGHT metaphor). The result is a Manner of performing the trial that clusters a low degree of Dedication and a realistic Aspectuality sense of short Duration. In fact, a possible paraphrase for (3) is “the trial has been particularly superficial and short”.

(4) presents an example of the very kind of constructions of interest for this research: paucal indefinites like *niente* (“nothing”) that are involved in a semantic mutation towards Manner. In fact, the possible paraphrase for (4) is “an eye surgery is an easy, undemanding task and is likely to be particularly short”. This interpretation derives from: (i) inferences about the (un)typical semantic values of the events (i.e. a surgery is dubiously typically associated to a simple and

careless task); (ii) knowledge of the basic semantics of the indefinites; (iii) the role of inferencing and semantic extension of a form (the indefinite *niente*) placed in an atypical syntagmatic environment. The hypothesis is that there is a possible path in which the semantic mutation of indefinites such as *niente* (“nothing”), *qualcosa* (“something.DIM”), *poc-/po’* (“little”, “a few”, “a bit”), *certo* (“a certain”) relies on the metaphor MORE IS UP LESS IS DOWN, conceivable as ‘small or absent quantity > small or absent quality’; this ‘small or absent quality’ when referred to events switches (invites the inference of¹¹) a downtoned, specific Manner of performing the event. This concept is summarised in Table 3 below:

<i>niente</i> (“nothing”)	MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN	Entity/object: small or absent quantity > small or absent quality
<i>qualcosa</i> (“something.DIM”)		= Event: small or absent quantity > small or absent quality ≥ (invites the inference of) downtoned, specific Manner of performing the event
<i>poc-/po’</i> (“little”, “a few”, “a bit”)		
<i>certo</i> (“a certain”)		

Table 3. *Hypothesised path from small Quantity to Manner sense.*

4. *From theory to practice*

This section and the next one put into practice the concepts outlined so far. The broad definition of Manner in section 2 has enabled the collection of expressions of very different nature compared to the encoding of Manner in the verbal roots (§ 4.1.1). The interest in inferences and the co(n)textual construction of meaning made possible the structuring and application of an inference test (§§ 4.1.2, 4.1.3). The

¹¹ Among the works that deal with inferential semantics see NORRICK (1981), VIOLI (1997), TRAUOGT (1988; 1989; 1995; 2018), TRAUOGT and DASHER (2002), DAVIDSE *et al.* (2010).

results reveal not only concrete data on Manner expressed through paucal indefinites but also some evidences of its correlation with Aspectuality (§ 5).

4.1. Methodology

4.1.1. Data collection

The starting point was the comparison of the different meanings of several expressions containing the PP *da* [SN]. For example:

- (5) a. *un biglietto da 3€* (“a 3€ ticket”)
 b. *arma da fuoco* (lit. “weapon da.PREP fire” – “firearm”)
 c. *un lavoro da favola* (lit. “a job da.PREP fable” – “a wonderful job”)
 d. *un lavoro da niente* (lit. “a job da.PREP nothing” – “a little job”, “a careless job”)
 e. *un commediante da poco* (lit. “a comedian da.PREP nothing” – “an unimportant comedian”, “an incompetent comedian”)

In (5a) the meaning is to quantify the ticket price; in (5b) the PP specifies the type of weapon. In (5c) the PP *da favola* expresses a hyperbolic positive quality of the event *lavoro* using *favola* as a comparison. In (5d) the PP *da niente* not only expresses a negative quality of the event *lavoro*, but also induces an inference of a simple and undemanding Manner of performing it; in this case *niente* does not have the meaning of “absence of quantity or referent” but seems to undergo a semantic shift towards Manner. Similarly in (5e) the PP *da poco* expresses an evaluation of the quality of the comedian and it is not improbable to infer an inadequate, unprofessional Manner of acting; here too *poco* does not have the meaning of “a few, a bit” but seems to undergo a semantic shift towards Manner.

Multiverbal words of the type *arma da fuoco* and evaluative expressions of the type *un lavoro da favola* have been investigated in depth in several works (De Mauro and Voghera, 1994; Voghera, 2004; Piunno, 2017; Benigni, 2017). Little attention has been paid to expressions containing specifically the indefinites *niente* and *poco*, which seem to be characterised by a Manner meaning.

At this point, the main objective was to collect as many types of constructions in which a paucal indefinite appears. To do this, several steps were necessary. The first step consisted of searching the PP *da niente* in different corpora in order to verify through an inference test the frequency of use with Manner meaning. Then, the forms *niente*, *poc-/po'* and *qualcosina*, that are semantically related to *da niente*, have been investigated with the same aim. They have been queried without any syntagmatic constraint. Only the form *certo* has been queried with the constraint of preceding a noun in order to circumscribe the data of interest. Lastly, in order to find more Manner expressions containing the preposition *da* but different from *da niente*, the preposition *da* alone and the patterns *N+da+N*, *N+da+V.Inf.* and *V+da+V.Inf.* have been queried.

Data have been extracted from five corpora:

VoLIP (Voce del LIP)	It was collected by T. De Mauro, F. Mancini, M. Vedovelli and M. Voghera in the early 1990s. It allows the consultation of the audio files associated with their orthographic transcriptions. It consists of about 500,000 occurrences for about 60 hours of recordings
CorDIC (spoken section)	It is a section of the CorDIC LABLITA (<i>Corpora Didattici Italiani di Confronto</i>) corpora that were designed to allow a comparison of the written and oral varieties of Italian with a didactic intent. Each collection contains approximately 500,000 words. The CorDIC-spoken corpus contains transcriptions of the spontaneous speech corpus collected at LABLITA (<i>Laboratorio Linguistico Italiano</i> of the University of Florence)
ItWac (Italian Web Corpus)	(Baroni <i>et al.</i> , 2009) is an Italian language corpus composed of texts collected from the Internet and contains approximately 1.5 billion words
ItTenTen	It is a corpus composed of texts collected from the Internet and is part of the TenTen corpora family, which is a collection of web corpora. The corpus I used is itTenTen16 (Italian Web, 2016) and contains 4.9 billion words
DiaCORIS	It includes written texts dating from 1861 to 2001. It is divided into homogeneous historical periods and contains over 100 million words

Table 4. *List of corpora used.*

In order to increase the possibility of obtaining a sufficient number of occurrences of Manner and, above all, a wide variety of constructions, I decided to extract 1000 occurrences for each form. The 1000 occurrences were collected by summing: 120 occurrences extracted from VoLIP, 120 from CorDIC, 120 from ItWac, 120 from ItTenTen, 104 from DiaCORIS period 1861-1900, 104 from DiaCORIS period 1901-1922, 104 from DiaCORIS period 1923-1945, 104 from DiaCORIS period 1946-1967, 104 from DiaCORIS period 1968-2001 (see Table 5). When there were no or insufficient occurrences in the corpus, they were collected in the remaining usable corpora.

As the primary goal of this research is to uncover paucal indefinite constructions with Manner sense, the analysis should be primarily viewed as qualitative.

	VoLIP	CORDIC- PARLATO	ITWAC	ITTenTen	DIACORIS	TOT.
<i>da niente</i> “da.PREP nothing”	0	0	480	480	40	1000
<i>niente</i> “nothing”	120	120	120	120	520	1000
<i>po’</i> “a bit” (elided)	40	60	60	60	260	1000
<i>poc-</i> “a bit”	80	60	60	60	260	
<i>qualcosa</i> “something.DIM”	3	7	490	490	10	1000
<i>certo</i> “a certain”	120	120	120	120	520	1000
<i>N/V [da N/V]</i> “N/V [da.PREP N/V]” ex. <i>pugni da far tremare</i> (lit. “fists to make tremble”)	120	120	120	120	520	1000

Table 5. *Number of occurrences for each form in each corpus.*

4.1.2. *The inference test*

Expressions containing paucal indefinites like *una cosa da niente* (lit. “a thing da.PREP nothing”) seem either specify the degree of Dedication of an event, when it is not specified by other means, or express a deviation of the typical degree of Dedication of an event.

In Table 6, there are some events. The first three have no typical degree of Dedication; the second group is composed of events with a typically high degree of Dedication; the last group is composed of events with a typically low degree of Dedication. The last column adds to the event the expression *è una cosa da niente*, ex.: *ascoltare è una cosa da niente* (“to listen is a thing da.PREP nothing”), and lists the result of this addition. When the expression is added to events that have no typical degree of Dedication (NdD), it specifies a careless Manner of performing them. When the expression is added to events that have a typically high degree of Dedication (HdD), it downtones their typical performance. When the expression is added to events that have a typically low degree of Dedication (LdD), it strengthens the typical careless performance.

Event	NdD	HdD	LdD	Resulting deviation
<i>ascoltare</i> (“to listen”) <i>questo gesto</i> (“this gesture”) <i>creare siti web</i> (“to create websites”)	+	-	-	Specification of a careless Manner
<i>seguire le lezioni</i> (“to attend lessons”) <i>imparare a leggere</i> (“to learn to read”) <i>industrializzazione</i> (“industrialisation”)	-	+	-	Deviation (downtoning) of the typical performance
<i>rispondere al telefono</i> (“to answer the telephone”) <i>prendere una boccata d’aria</i> (“to catch some fresh air”)	-	-	+	Deviation with particular strengthening of the typical careless performance

Table 6. *Deviations due to the addition of è una cosa da niente to different types of events.*

To verify that the construction containing a paucal indefinite specifies the Manner of performing the event and its possible Aspectual value (duration), inferential sentences have been associated to every occurrence extracted. Four sentences expliciting the Manner and Aspectuality senses have been attached to all the 6000 occurrences. They are:

In fact it is particularly undemanding (P.U.)	} when marked with + the occurrence is coherent with the Manner sense and/or with the Aspectuality sense (see Table 7)
In fact it is particularly demanding (P.D.)	
In fact it has a particularly short duration (P.S.D.)	
In fact it has a particularly long duration (P.L.D.)	

A certain percentage of ambiguity cannot be excluded. Namely, some cases may be unclear, in which the construction containing the paucal indefinite expresses a Manner or a Quality/Value of the event and also the correlation with Aspectuality. However, the aim of this study and the aim of the application of this method is to find even a few solid hints of the expression of Manner through paucal indefinites; so, after this first tentative, improvements will be made.

Finally, all the useful occurrences have been annotated also with other six parameters. These are acronyms that summarise the speaker's positive or negative evaluation of the event and the sense of intensification or attenuation brought about by the construction containing the paucal indefinite together with the co(n)textual elements.

- Manner_Positive_Attenuation (M.P.A.): a positive sense towards the event and an encouraging sense of a simple performance is expressed
- Manner_Positive_Intensification (M.P.I.): this sense is expressed when a negation or an epistemic verb is present; a positive sense towards the event and a sense of a complex performance is expressed
- Manner_Negative_Attenuation (M.N.A.): this sense expresses devaluation and/or a belittled performance of the event
- Manner_Negative_Intensification (M.N.I.): this sense is expressed when a negation or an epistemic verb is present; a negative sense towards the event and a sense of a complex performance is expressed
- Irony: when the sense is ironic, the occurrence asserts the contrary of what it actually means
- Manner of Being (M.o.B.): the noun is a human entity or its close attribute. The inference sentences are not valid for this kind of Manner

The complete annotation scheme is represented in Table 7¹². This method¹³ verifies whether the construction containing the

¹² In the Table, the first column (starting from the left side) contains two examples of the occurrences extracted; the next four columns contain the sentences that explicit the Manner and Aspectuality senses, in turn attached to each occurrence; the remaining columns contain the six parameters examined.

¹³ The inference test was unsuitable for the *poc-/po'* occurrences, that will be more generally commented.

paucal indefinite expresses a non-(proto)typical Manner of performing the event, specifying namely its typical degree of Dedication. The deviation of the typical degree of Dedication of the event has proven to be correlated to the deviation of the typical duration of the event. Hence, the particularly demanding Manner sense, the particularly undemanding Manner sense, the particularly short duration sense and the particularly long duration sense have been tested by adding a sentence after the occurrence and marking it with + if coherent.

For each occurrence, the result is a semantic cluster that allows to show the specific Manner sense expressed. The semantic clusters that result from the examples in Table 7 are the following:

- Manner_Careless + Aspectuality_Short_Duration + Manner_Positive_Attenuative
- Manner_Careless + Aspectuality_Short_Duration + Manner_Positive_Attenuative + Irony

This means that the sense intended is very likely to be: (i) “the event ‘eye surgery’ requires a relaxed attitude and is easy to perform; it takes particularly short time; the speaker has a positive attitude towards this attenuation of the event”; (ii) “the event ‘release the Humankind’ requires a relaxed attitude and is easy to perform; it takes particularly short time; the speaker has a positive attitude towards this attenuation of the event but is ironic”.

4.1.3. *Cotextual reinforcements*

The analysis of the *da niente* occurrences revealed a non-accidental use of cotextual reinforcements. They form a set of strategies that: (i) help in the disambiguation of the Manner vs. Quality/Value sense; (ii) reinforce the possible Aspectuality sense. They do so through the backgrounding/foregrounding process discussed before (cf. § 3).

Seven strategies have been identified and are reported in Table 8. They proved valid also for the construction of the Manner sense of the other forms considered.

EXAMPLES	SENTENCES CONTAINING THE INFERENTIAL MANNER SENSE					MANNER EVALUATION				
	P.U.	P.S.D.	P.D.	P.L.D.	M.P.A.	M.P.I.	M.N.A.	M.N.I.	Irony	M.o.B.
<p><i>Se solo si liberasse di quegli occhiali preistorici... Potrei presentarlo al mio chirurgo, tesoro. È proprio [una cosa da niente], un tocco di laser e via.</i></p> <p>“If only he got rid of that prehistoric glasses... I could introduce him to my surgeon, darling. It’s really [(lit.) a thing da.PREP nothing], a touch of laser and that’s it.” (Corpus IrWac)</p>	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
<p><i>Perché sa benissimo che l’unico è Sigfrido, l’eroe libero che deve liberare l’Umanità. [Un compito da niente] con tra i piedi le Sacre Rune, le leggi fondamentali del mondo, e una Fricka che rema contro con le sue leggi formali...</i></p> <p>“Because he knows well that the only one is Sigfrid, the free hero who has to release Humankind. [(lit.) A task da.PREP nothing] with the Sacred Runes on his way, the fundamental laws of the world, and a Fricka that goes against his formal laws...” (Corpus IrTen)</p>	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-

Table 7. Complete annotation scheme of the Inference Test.

COTEXTUAL ELEMENT	WHAT IT EXPRESSES	EXAMPLES
CO1	The amount of elements required to perform the event	<p><i>Per fare un cavaliere</i> [[<i>ci voleva innanzitutto un cavallo, un lungo addestramento, un feudo e un castello</i>]].</p> <p>“To become a knight [[one firstly needed a horse, a long training, a feud and a castle].”</p>
CO2	List construction ¹⁴ of events that share the same typical Manner and/or typical Aspectuality	<p>[[<i>Alzarsi nelle pause pubblicitarie per svuotarsi la vescica, rientrare e farsi una doccia bollente, uscire dal bagno con la pelle leggermente increspata e, infine, andare a letto</i>]_{LIST}], magari leggendo [<i>qualcosa</i>] con la sola luce gialla e soffusa del comodino. Questa è la routine.</p> <p>“[[To stand up during the advertising breaks to empty the bladder, to come back and have a hot shower, to come out from the bathroom with your skin slightly wrinkled and, finally, go to bed]_{LIST}], maybe reading [something]_{DIM} only with the night table low yellow light. That’s the routine.” (Corpus ItWac)</p>
CO3	Linguistic elements that attenuate/minimise or intensify/strengthen the event ¹⁵	<p>È un sorriso [[<i>discreto, quasi impercettibile</i>]].</p> <p>“It’s a [[discreet, almost imperceptible] smile.”</p>
CO4	Reformulation that reinforces the particularly careless/careful Manner sense and/or the Aspectuality sense of the event	<p><i>La preparazione della catasta di legno, è affidata ai pignarulârs e potrebbe sembrare [un lavoro da niente], tuttavia</i> [[<i>riuscire a innalzare una catasta in sicurezza non è uno scherzo</i>]_{REFORMUL}].</p> <p>“The woodpile preparation is assigned to the pignarulârs and could seem [(lit.) a work da.PREP nothing], however [[being able to safely erect a pile is not a joke]_{REFORMUL}.” (Corpus ItTenTen)</p>

Table 8. *Cotextual reinforcements (in double square brackets in the examples) (continues).*

¹⁴ See MASINI *et al.* (2018).

¹⁵ They are linguistic elements of different kind: morphemes, nouns, adjectives, clauses.

CO5	Contrast of the event expressed with another characterised by opposed Manner/Aspectuality	<i>È arrivato il momento di chiedergli un aumento dello stipendio. Sembra [una cosa da niente], [[ma a volte piuttosto che il coraggio prevale il timore]].</i> “The time has come to ask him for a raise. It seems [a small thing], [[but sometimes rather than courage fear prevails]].”
CO6	Description of the behaviour of a human referent	<i>[[Era sempre svenuta, col capo ciondoloni, abbandonata in tutte le membra]]. Che [donnetta da niente].</i> “[[She was always passed out, head drooping]], all her limbs collapsed. What a [(lit.) woman da.PREP nothing].”
CO7	Description of the Psychological/Bodily Attitude throughout the event / Description of the development of the event	<i>Quand'uno ha imparato a [[mettere insieme vocali e consonanti in tutti i modi]_{DEVEL}], sa leggere. Ma non vi crediate sia [cosa da niente]. Le lettere dell'alfabeto sono la bellezza di ventiquattro, due dozzine.</i> “When one has learnt how to put [[together vowels and consonants in every way] _{DEVEL}], can read. But don't think it's [(lit.) thing da.PREP nothing]. The alphabet letters are a glorious twenty-four, two dozens.”
ABSENT	No cotextual reinforcements	<i>Ho due signor che mi stanno montando un pezzo di cucina trapano e martello li sento.</i> “I have two gentlemen who are assembling a piece of my kitchen hammer and drill, I hear them.”

Table 8. Cotextual reinforcements (in double square brackets in the examples).

4.2. Paucal indefinites that express Manner

The general quantitative data are meaningful: the set of the indefinite forms *da niente*, *niente*, *poc-/po'*, *qualcosina* and *certo* is used with a Manner sense in 6.3% of cases (313 occ. out of 5000). The detailed results of the analysis are given below.

As stated in § 4.1.1, the first occurrences analysed were those containing the PP *da niente* (“da.PREP nothing”). The initial set of 1000 raw occurrences have been submitted to the inference test as pre-

sented in Table 7. A set of 113 occurrences revealed a Manner sense. They have also been annotated with cotextual parameters as in Table 8. These 113 occurrences all contain the partially filled construction *NP* [*da niente*]. This pattern is composed by: an optional determiner (*cosa da niente* “thing da.PREP nothing”; *la/una/quella cosa da niente* “the/a/that thing da.PREP nothing”); a general noun or an eventive noun often morphologically altered (*cosa/roba/robetta da niente* “thing/stuff/stuff.DIM da.PREP nothing”; *scioperino da niente* “strike.DIM da.PREP nothing”); the PP *da niente*. If the noun is semantically general it has the function of an anaphoric or cataphoric encapsulator¹⁶ referring to an event expressed before or after it (cf. (4), Table 7 and ex. (6) below); if, instead, the noun is eventive, it is directly modified by the PP (ex. *scioperino/domanda da niente* “strike.DIM/question da.PREP nothing”). Shifting the constituent’s order it is possible to see how the construction is cohesive. In fact one can say *un lavoretto da niente sarà* (lit. “a work.DIM da.PREP nothing will be”), *sarà un lavoretto da niente* (lit. “will be a work.DIM da.PREP nothing”), but **da niente un lavoretto sarà* (lit. “*da.PREP nothing a work.DIM will be”). A brief search on the corpus of ancient Italian OVI points out that the construction could be split and interrupted in the XIV century¹⁷, i.e. the syntagmatic cohesion has evolved over time. Moreover, during that period no cotextual reinforcements aided in disambiguating the sense of Manner from that of Quality/Value. Nowadays the ambiguity diminishes thanks to a greater number of cotextual reinforcements that foreground/background one of the senses. In fact, it is not yet possible to talk about a conventionalised form-meaning pairing (i.e. *NP* [*da niente*] = “in a careless Manner”), but rather of contextual implicatures and invited inferences that allow these occurrences to be defined as bridging contexts (Heine, 2002).

¹⁶ See LALA’s (2010) *incapsulatori* page on the Enciclopedia dell’Italiano: https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/incapsulatori_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/.

¹⁷ An example (OVI, Giovanni da San Miniato, *Moralia*, a. 1415 (tusc.) L. 21, prol.) is: *essa santa Scrittura non paia grave a’ lettori per troppa sottile esaminazione, e dall’altro lato non paia vana e [da niente], s’ella sia poco esposta e chiarita* (“Holy Writing does not seem arduous to readers for the too-thin examination, on the other hand let it not seem vain and [da.PREP niente], whether it is poorly explained and clarified”).

As for the Manner sense expressed by the extracted occurrences, 40 of them out of 113 express Manner_Careless correlated to Aspectuality_Short_Duration. This occurs when the event has a typical duration and NP [*da niente*] expresses its deviation. When, instead, the event is not characterised by a typical duration and no cotextual Aspectuality reinforcements are present, the most likely foregrounded sense is only Manner_Careless¹⁸. Examples in (6a) and (6b) are cases in which the events ('trials' and 'surgery') are typically demanding and long: in these cases, the use of NP [*da niente*] shows the correlation of Manner_Careless with Aspectuality_Short_Duration. Example (6c) is a case in which the event ('to arrive unseen at the San Nicolò del Lido church') has no typical duration and no pertinent cotextual reinforcement is present, so the foregrounded sense of NP [*da niente*] would be only Manner_Careless:

- (6) a. *Caricalo di processi bagatellari, di [processi da niente].*
 "Overload him of bagatell trials, of [trials (lit.) da.PREP nothing]."
 (Corpus ItTenTen)
- b. *Se solo si liberasse di quegli occhiali preistorici...Potrei presentarlo al mio chirurgo, tesoro. È proprio [una cosa da niente], [[un tocco di laser e via]_{CO5}].*
 "If only he got rid of those prehistoric glasses...I could introduce him to my surgeon, darling. It's really [(lit.) a thing da.PREP nothing], [[a touch of laser and that's it]_{CO5}]."
 (Corpus ItWac)
- c. *Arrivare non visti alla chiesa di San Nicolò del Lido doveva essere [un giochetto da niente] per gente abile e determinata. Anche oggi la chiesa è un po' fuori mano.*
 "To arrive unseen at the San Nicolò del Lido church had to be [(lit.) a game.DIM da.PREP nothing] for skilled and decisive people. Even today the church is a bit out of the way."
 (Corpus ItWac)

The same quantity of occurrences expresses the Manner_Careful sense: 40 out of 113. In 19 occurrences out of 40 the Manner_Careful sense correlates with Aspectuality_Long_Duration. The par-

¹⁸ The possibility of inferencing a particularly short duration cannot be excluded unconditionally.

ticularly demanding/complex Manner is expressed when the pattern NP [*da niente*] is negated¹⁹ or when an epistemic verb is used, e.g.: in (7a) the epistemic verb *potrebbe sembrare* (“could seem”) strengthens the typical demanding and long performance that characterises the event (‘the preparation of a folkloric woodpile’). Its global sense expresses a correlation of Manner_Careful + Aspectuality_Long_Duration. The same happens in (7b), where the cotextual reinforcement of the amount of elements required to complete the event ‘water and electricity system connections’ strengthens the typical particularly demanding Manner and the particularly long Duration:

- (7) a. *La preparazione della catasta di legno, è affidata ai pignarulàrs e potrebbe sembrare [un lavoro da niente], tuttavia riuscire a innalzare una catasta in sicurezza non è uno scherzo.*

“The woodpile preparation is assigned to the pignarulàrs and could seem [(lit.) a work da.PREP nothing], however being able to safely erect a pile is not a joke.” (Corpus ItTenTen)

- b. *E poi ci sono gli allacciamenti all’acqua e al sistema elettrico da completarsi: [non un lavoro da niente], visto che [[nella zona di bar, ristoranti, servizi igienici, spazi commerciali, assistenza, servizi per la sicurezza e tutte le cosiddette “architetture di servizio”]_{CO2}] si è ancora attaccati al generatore.*

“And then there are the water and the electrical system connections to be completed: [(lit.) not a work da.PREP nothing], since [[in the area of cafés, restaurants, toilet facilities, commercial areas, assistance, security services and all the so called “service architectures” they are still connected to the power unit]_{CO2}].” (Corpus ItTenTen)

¹⁹ An anonymous reviewer introduces an important consideration about the role of negation scope over the sentence, which induces the positive intensifying value. For example, in the sentence *Il piccolo, il quotidiano, non sono cose da niente* (“Little things, the everyday life, are not [(lit.) things da.PREP nothing]”), a discontinuous negation is employed: a preverbal *non* and an additional negative element (*niente*) in postverbal position. The particle *non* precedes the finite element of the verbal phrase within the statement. *Niente* is in a NP (*cose da niente*) which is in the scope of negation. The sentence is thus negated inducing a positive intensifying value but without altering the Manner sense of the NP: “It is not true that little things, the everyday life are things da.PREP nothing”, which means that “It is not true that little things, the everyday life are worthless and effortless events”.

The Manner occurrences containing *niente* (“nothing”) obtained from the inference test are 23, corresponding to seven types of constructions:

- *fare finta di niente* (lit. “to do pretend of nothing” – “to play it cool”)
- *come se niente fosse/come niente* (lit. “as if nothing was” – “like nothing”)
- *non volerci niente* (lit. “not take.PRON.ENCL nothing” – “it doesn’t take much”)
- *niente di che* (lit. “nothing of what” – “no big deal”)
- *essere un niente* (lit. “to be a nothing” – “to be a pure nothing”)
- *non Pron[+dat] costare niente* (lit. “not PRON.DAT cost nothing” – “it’s no effort”)
- *bastare un niente* (lit. “suffices a nothing” – “it won’t take much”)

The first two are the most frequent, the others are hapaxes. They are all definable as filled idiomatic constructions except for the open slot [Pron+DAT]. They are characterised by a very high level of cohesion both syntagmatically and paradigmatically.

These constructions express Manner_Careless or Manner_of_Being. They never express Manner_Careful and, even if the Aspectuality_Short_Duration seems easily inferable, in my few occurrences this correlation is never evident enough.

Fare finta di niente (lit. “to do pretend of nothing”) is an economic way to express the concept ‘to behave so as not to express that something has happened’. This construction expresses a Manner of Being.

Come se niente fosse/come niente (lit. “as if nothing was/like nothing”) express a comparison between the course of the event and a null quantity. In this case – as well as with *da niente*, *poc-/po’* and *qualcosa* – the Manner sense relies on the metaphorical abstraction path from the concrete sense of Quantity to an intermediate Quality/Value step (that needs to be better delved into) to the inference of a Manner of performing the event. An occurrence like *altri Paesi ratificheranno come se niente fosse* (“other countries will ratify (lit.) as if nothing was”) means that the performance of the event *ratificheranno* (“will

ratify”) is implicitly compared to nothing. If the performance of the event *ratificheranno* is like nothing, it invites the inference that it is a particularly undemanding task (see Table 3).

Non volerci niente (lit. “not take.PRON.ENCL nothing”) is an almost fixed construction, because it is generally used with the verb only in the third person singular. The only occurrence found is reported in (8). It expresses Manner_Careless with the cotextual reinforcement of a list of events that share the undemanding performance; no correlation with Aspectuality is expressed.

- (8) [[*Di ozicare, mangiare o andare al gabinetto*]_{CO3}] *sono capaci tutti; [non ci vuole niente] e, men che meno, non serve leggersi un mattone scritto da qualche filosofo incartapecorito per saperlo fare.*
 “[We’re all good at loafing around, eating or going to the toilet]_{CO3}]; [(lit.) not PRON.ENCL take.3SG nothing] and, much less, it doesn’t need to read a huge book written by some mummified philosopher to be able to do that.”
 (Corpus ItWac)

The Manner occurrences containing *qualcosa* (“something.DIM”) obtained from the inference test are 97. The most interesting case is the *V qualcosa* pattern, found in 90 occurrences. Few occurrences contain *prendere qualcosa fuori* (“to take something.DIM out”) and *qualcosa alla N* (“something.DIM at N-style”). All the *qualcosa* occurrences never express Manner_Careful. Generally, they express Manner_Careless that may correlate with Aspectuality_Short_Duration.

Qualcosa can easily be confused for a small quantity or for a general mean of attenuation of the illocutionary force. An interesting aspect is the fact that the occurrences that resulted coherent with the Manner inference test have also proven to homogeneously contain: or cotextual reinforcements that foreground the Manner_Careless sense; or *qualcosa* that directly modifies: (i) convivial events, such as *mangiare* (“to eat”), *bere* (“to drink”), *cucinare* (“to cook”), *spiluccare* (“to nibble”), with an evident intention of establishing a close intersubjective interaction; (ii) typically demanding events, without quantifying anything but with a general sense of a relaxed and easy task.

An issue that needs to be better delved into is the comparison between *qualcosa* (“something”) and *qualcosina* (“something.DIM”) because it seems that the Manner sense is mainly conveyed through the altered form.

Below are some examples. (9a) and (9b) invite Aspectuality_Short_Duration more than (9c) in which, more than a quantification or a short duration, a relaxed, informal and friendly event is intended by the speaker:

- (9) a. *È veramente un gran bel vestitino... quanto mi piacerebbe riuscire a [lavorare a maglia]_{event} così bene... riesco a [far qualcosina] [[ma molto molto semplice]_{CO5}... ancora i miei complimenti...*
 “!!It is really a great dress.DIM... how I would like to be able to [knit]_{EV} so good... I can [do something.DIM] [[but very very easy]_{CO5}... congratulations again...” (Corpus ItTenTen)
- b. *Non voglio saperne. Io sono pantalonaia, [ho [arrangiato]_{event} qualcosina] ogni tanto, ma non ho [[mai lavorato davvero]_{CO6}].*
 “I don’t wanna know anything. I’m a trousers’ seamstress, [I have arranged something.DIM] sometimes but I have [[never truly worked]_{CO6}.” (Corpus ItWac)
- c. *Perché invece di stare qui non saliamo da me a [bere]_{event} ancora [qualcosina]? – Grazie, pupa, non bevo. – Seeeee!*
 “Instead of staying here, why don’t we go up to mine to still [drink something.DIM]? – Thank you, babe, I don’t drink. – Baloney!” (Corpus ItTenTen)

The Manner occurrences containing *poc-/po’* (“little”, “a few”, “a bit”) are 25. In this case, the selection of Manner occurrences has not been easy because the forms *poc-/po’* have several functions and meanings that often cooccur in the same utterance. The inference test has been unsuitable to extract the Manner meaning of these forms. For this reason, some bases for discussion are offered in this section rather than clear conclusions.

Poc-/po’ is a vagueness marker (Ghezzi, 2013: ix), attenuates the illocutionary force, expresses an indefinite quantity, is a filler in disfluences, approximates the category of the referent (as said in § 3) etc. Among these functions, one can identify some uses in which *poc-/po’*

convey a downtoned or Manner_Careless sense of performing the event. The correlation with Aspectuality is not clear enough. In fact, in (10b) the interpretation may be auto-antonymically ambiguous between a long or short duration of making television; in (10a) to attend a few lessons means to attend them without full commitment because of the boy's illness; in (10c) a teacher makes the students rewrite an already written essay, so *scrivere un po'* means "to write carelessly, just for the sake of it"; in (10d) the more fixed construction *ridursi a poca cosa* ("to reduce.PRON.RIFL to little.F.SG thing.F.SG") minimises the event's performance.

- (10) a. *MOG: *eh / Franceschino / quande tu ti alzi da i' letto / [un po' di lezioni] tu le farai / eh // eh ?*
 *FRA: *bisogna vede' se sto bene //*
 "MOG: "eh / Franceschino / when you get up / [a few lessons] you will attend / eh // eh ? *FRA: have to see if I'm okay" //
- (Corpus CorDIC_spoken)
- b. *L'ha fatta [un po' di televisione], il professor Calabrese senza combinare granché.*
 "He [made a bit of television], professor Calabrese without achieving anything."
 (Corpus DiaCORIS 1968-2001)
- c. *A: l'ha scritto lo dobbiamo copiare e poi ma gli ho <tto> gli ho fatto copiare il compito anche un t'ho più visto quello sulla _*
 C: *ah sì*
 A: *[[sempre quello vecchio]_{CO4}] ma insomma [[tanto per fare]_{CO5}] per [scrivere un po'] e per eh il compito è sempre quello vecchio ma insomma l'abbiamo*
 C: *mh*
 A: *riscritto*
 "A: he wrote it we have to make the fair copy and then but I made him make the fair copy of the essay also I haven't see you anymore the one on the _
 C: ah yes
 A: [[always the old one]_{CO4}] but well [[just for the sake of it]_{CO5}] for [writing a bit] and for eh the essay is always the old one but weel we have
 C: mh
 A: rewritten" (Corpus VoLIP)

- d. *L'attività clandestina del Partito comunista [si era ridotta a poca cosa].*

“The underground activity of the communist Party [(lit.) was reduced to little.F.SG thing.F.SG].” (Corpus DiaCORIS 1968-2001)

This last section is the digression about the Manner sense of *certo* (“a certain”) and of *N/V [da N/V]* (“N/V [da.PREP N/V]”). They are interesting cases because on one side *certo* is semantically related to Manner and indefiniteness, on the other *N/V [da N/V]* shows a pattern equivalent to *NP [da niente]* but with a more specified Manner sense. The Manner occurrences containing *certo* are 55; those containing *N/V [da N/V]* are 27.

Certo approximates the sense of the eventive noun it modifies as in (11a) and it approximates generically the event performance when used in some fixed expressions as in (11b). With *certo* it is not possible to determine which semantic areas are deviated/exploited to express Manner: they remain underspecified, even when other cotextual reinforcements are present, as in (11c). For this reason, *certo* leans more towards Approximation than Manner.

The *N/V [da N/V]* construction has been studied also by Piunno (2017) and Benigni (2017). They define constructions like *N da N* (ex. *fiesta da paura* (lit.) “party to fear” – “amazing party”) as ‘syntagmatic modifiers with adjectival or adverbial function’ and ‘hyperbolic intensifiers’. What is relevant here is that the Manner sense expressed by *N/V [da N/V]* is so peculiar and idiosyncratic that the deviated/exploited semantic areas are completely incidental and context-dependent. This means that it is difficult to grasp univocally the kind of Manner sense expressed by *N/V [da N/V]*. Examples (12a), (12b), (12c) show very peculiar expressions of Manner:

- (11) a. *Il vecchio prendeva note come un cancelliere; talora si sguardavano. A me quel prendere nota dava sui nervi; e [un certo risolino] loro mi spiaceva.*

“The old man took note like a chancellor; now and then they observed each other. That taking notes got on my nerves; and [a certain giggle] of them upset me.” (Corpus DiaCORIS 1861-1900)

- b. *Stranezze nella scheda fra un orale [in un certo modo] e uno scritto in un altro modo.*
 “Oddities in the form between an oral test [in a certain way] and a written one in another way.”
 (Corpus VoLIP)
- c. *E ci dà [certe occhiate] [[da commuovere i sassi]_{CO4}].*
 “He gives us [certain glances] [[[lit.] to get the stones emotional]_{CO4}].”
- (12) a. *Mi rispondeva con [impertinenze da levare il pelo].*
 “She answered me with [insolences (lit.) to take the hair off].”
 (Corpus DiaCORIS 1861-1900)
- b. [*Battendosi da prodi*]
 “[Struggle like braves]”
 (Corpus DiaCORIS 1861-1900)
- c. *VAL: *eh // mangian peggio di noi / eh //* *MAR: [*mangian da fa’ schifo*] //
 “*VAL: “eh // they eat worse than us / eh // *MAR: [they eat (lit.) to gross out]” //”
 (Corpus CorDIC_spoken)

In conclusion, it is possible to say that *N/V[da N/V]* construction can be defined as the expression of the maximum specification of the Manner sense and is placed at the opposite pole with respect to *certo* Manner sense, which is definable as the minimum specification of Manner.

5. Final discussion

This study reveals that Manner can be expressed in Italian through paucal indefinites that are placed in an atypical and cohesive syntagmatic environment whose meaning is non-compositional. What I found in my occurrences are partially filled constructions such as *NP[da niente]* or *N/V[da N/V]* and filled constructions such as *niente di che* or *basta un niente*. *Qualcosina* and *poc-/po’* do not get fixed in specific constructions but modify an event as single items. They show a shift in meaning, which is not conventionalised, towards Manner according to the co(n)textual features. In absence of cotextual reinforcements, their function is closer to Approximation than to Manner.

This research pointed also to understand whether is possible to include some new paucal forms in the posited semantic path Quantity >

Quality/Value > Manner. The results have proven that many paucal forms actually gravitate towards Manner following a path of increasing abstractness in meaning. *Niente* shows better than the other forms the layering of Quantity/Value and Manner senses. A diachronic analysis would clarify the precise steps of this path for all the forms.

Manner expressions have been extracted by trying the application of an inferential test, consistently with the Manner definition given. It is: Manner is a content category that specifies an event. It expresses a deviation of some properties of the event, perceived as salient by the speaker, compared to its (proto)typical manifestation.

The inferential test required to verify the coherence of the occurrences (13a) followed by some sentences that explicited the Manner inferences (13b). Here below is a sample:

(13) a. Occurrence:

L'attività clandestina del Partito comunista si era ridotta a [poca cosa].

“The clandestine activity of the communist Party boiled down to [almost nothing (lit. little.F.SG thing.F.SG)].”

b. Addition of inferential Manner sentences:

**L'attività clandestina del Partito comunista si era ridotta a poca cosa, infatti era molto impegnativa.*

*“The clandestine activity of the communist Party boiled down to almost nothing (lit. little.F.SG thing.F.SG), in fact it was particularly demanding.”

L'attività clandestina del Partito comunista si era ridotta a poca cosa, infatti era poco impegnativa.

“The clandestine activity of the communist Party boiled down to almost nothing (lit. little.F.SG thing.F.SG), in fact it was particularly undemanding.”

This method allows to trace expressions of Manner onomasiologically because the verification of the consistency of the inferential sentence added to the occurrence does not depend on the analysis of a specific lexical class. In fact, the addition can be consistent because, for example, an adverb, or a morpheme, a gesture, the root of a verb or a construction containing a paucal indefinite expresses the sense of demanding or undemanding Manner of performing the event.

Undoubtedly, some intricacies arose. Firstly, a percentage of ambiguity between the sense of Manner and that of Value/Quality seems often ineliminable. Secondly, in the study of occurrences that are not created *ad hoc* but are extracted from the concrete use of the language, there are always multiple linguistic components that contribute to constructing and conveying a certain meaning. Hence, this work has been conducted aiming at bringing out the contribution of both paucal indefinites and co(n)textual elements.

The analysis has been mainly qualitative and has revealed fruitful because highlighted expressions that not only are atypical Manner expressions but also interesting, less known Italian ways to use paucal indefinites. The results of this work allow to state that in Italian paucal indefinites are one of the linguistic elements that convey a Manner meaning.

The initial set of data contained 6000 raw occurrences. 340 are those identified as Manner occurrences and represent the 5.7%. The diagram below (Figure 1) shows the Manner occurrences percentages. The form *NP [da niente]* has the higher use with Manner sense, followed by *qualcosina*. In the framed area, there are the forms *certo* and *N/V [da N/V]* for which it is possible to say that, out of 1000 occurrences, respectively 55 times and 27 times they express Manner.

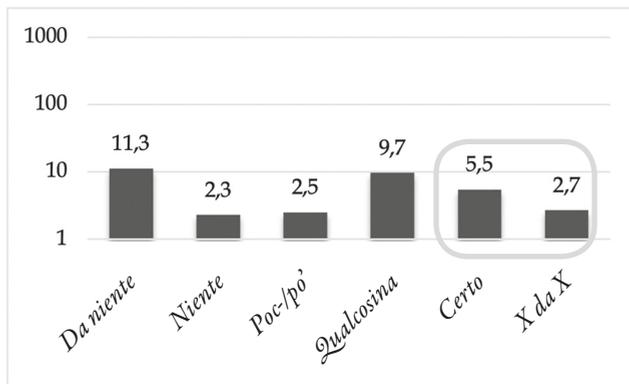


Figure 1. *Manner percentages for each group of 1000 raw occurrences.*

Manner is a complex content category. In this respect, the experiment of the inference test has not only identified Manner expressions containing paucal indefinites and other similar forms but has allowed

to justify the intuition about Manner and Aspectuality correlation. For *NP [da niente]* and *qualcosina*, it has been possible to identify cases in which *Manner_Careless* correlates with the sense that the duration of the event is particularly short (*Aspectuality_Short_Duration*), and *NP [da niente]* shows the correlation between *Manner_Careful* and *Aspectuality_Long_Duration* (Figure 2). As far as the other forms are concerned, the few occurrences of *niente* do not show any Aspectuality sense; for *poc-/po'* it would be inferable with some auto-antonymic cases.

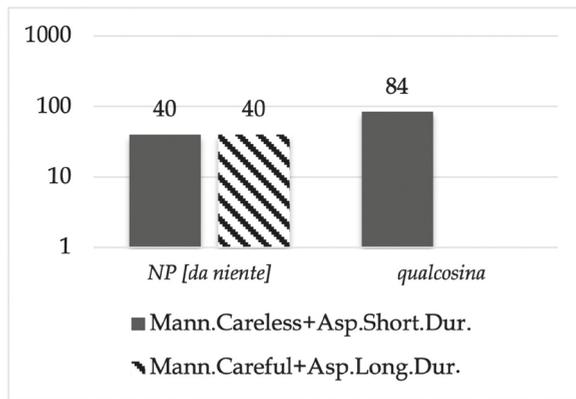


Figure 2. *Manner – Aspectuality correlations.*

Another advantage of the inference test has been the possibility of verifying the additional parameters that summarise the speaker's positive or negative evaluation of the event and the sense of intensification or attenuation brought about by the construction containing the paucal indefinite together with the co(n)textual elements. The diagram below (Figure 3) shows that the Manner sense expressed through paucal indefinite forms is mainly of the kind *Manner_Positive_Attenuation* or *Manner_Negative_Intensification*, i.e. a positive sense towards the event and an encouraging sense of a simple performance, or a negative sense towards the event and a sense of a complex performance²⁰.

²⁰ The parameter *Manner_Neutral/Ambiguous* has been added only for the *qualcosina* occurrences because the other parameters have unexpectedly turned out to be insufficient. Its detailed explanation is omitted because not relevant for this work. For a detailed explanation see Russo (2021: § 5.2 ff.).

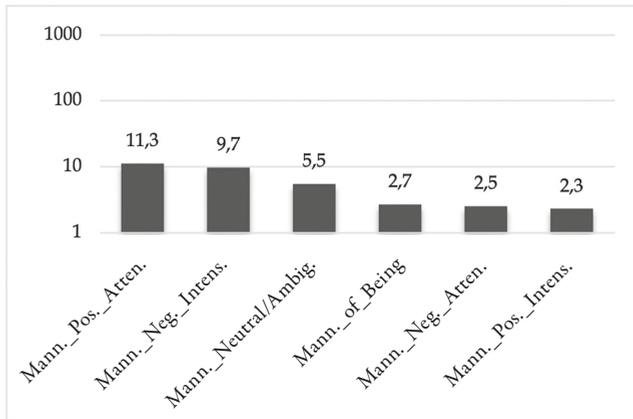


Figure 3. *Most frequent Manner parameters.*

Bringing together all the combinations of the parameters (§ 4.1.2) associated to the occurrences submitted to the test it is possible to state that the more frequent semantic clusters are those reported in Table 9²¹.

<i>NP [DA NIENTE]</i>	
Manner_Careless + Aspectuality_Short_Duration + Manner_Positive_Attenuation	17.7%
Manner_Careless + Manner_Positive_Attenuation	14.2%
Manner_Careful + Aspectuality_Long_Duration + Manner_Positive_Intensification	13.2%
<i>NIENTE</i>	
Manner_Careless + Manner_Negative_Attenuative	30.4%
Manner_of_Being	26%
Manner_Positive_Attenuative + Manner_of_Being	17.4%

Table 9. *Most frequent semantic clusters expressed when the indefinite form has a Manner meaning (continues).*

²¹ Only the percentages of the most frequent semantic clusters are given here. For the complete list of all the semantic clusters and their quantities, see RUSSO (2021: § 5).

<i>QUALCOSINA</i>	
Manner_Careless + Aspectuality_Short_Duration + Manner_Positive_Attenuation	39.1%
Manner_Careless + Aspectuality_Short_Duration + Manner_Neutral/Ambiguous	36%
Manner_Careless + Aspectuality_Short_Duration + Manner_Negative_Attenuation	17.7%

Table 9. *Most frequent semantic clusters expressed when the indefinite form has a Manner meaning.*

Regarding the semantic path Quantity > Quality/Value > Manner, in this research the assumption has been that: little or absent quantity, when referred to an event, in absence of the quantifying sense, invites the inference of an attenuated Manner of performing it. This assumption seems to be justified by the fact that nowadays one can find regular cotextual reinforcements (§ 4.1.3) that foreground the Manner sense backgrounding the Quality/Value sense. Moreover, it is possible to think that the paucal/indefinite quantity expressions have acquired a more frequent Manner sense as a result of a more frequent occurrence with eventive elements, in a sort of host class expansion (Himmelmann, 2004) from concrete reference to abstract events modification: i.e. from *non metterci niente nell'impasto* (lit. “don’t put.PRON.ENCL anything into the pastry” – “don’t put anything into the pastry”) to *non ci mette niente a fare l'impasto* (lit. “s/he doesn’t put.PRON.ENCL nothing to make the pastry” – “it’s way too easy for him/her to make the pastry”); from *questo orologio è poca cosa* (lit. “this watch is little.F.SG thing.F.SG” – “this watch is of little value”) to *questa riparazione è poca cosa* (lit. “this repairing is little.F.SG thing.F.SG” – “this repairing is very easy”), where the second cases are those that express Manner. However, only a deeper diachronic work could produce tangible results for this plausible semantic change.

This paper has also given a Manner definition. The emphasis is on avoiding the association of Manner with one or more lexico-grammatical categories. For this reason, Manner has been defined as a content

category. The ways in which it can be coded rank from affixation to constructions and clauses, from adverbs to adjectival locutions, from ideophones to gestures and indexicality and so on. Whatever the Manner coding strategy adopted, whenever the Manner sense is not explicit or conventionalised, the hearer retrieves it with the help of the co(n)textual inferences together with his/her encyclopedic knowledge about the (proto)typical performance of the event.

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Abbreviations

DAT = dative; DIM = diminutive; ENCL = enclitic; EVAL.SUFF = evaluative suffix; GER = gerund; GESTURE = co-verbal bodily gesture; GOAL = goal; IDEO = ideophone; MIM = mimetic; OBL = oblique; PL = plural; PRON = pronoun; REFL = reflexive; SG = singular.

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