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Patterns and variants

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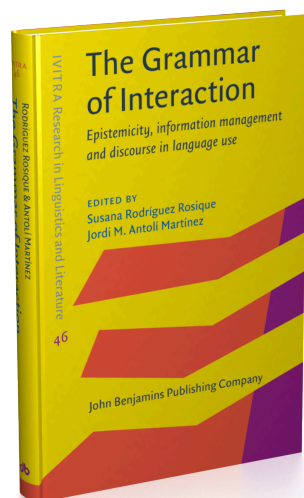
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How Catalan expresses indifference

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The Catalan language offers various resources through which speakers can express indifference toward the alternatives presented to them. The most widespread ones, documented in both normative works and descriptive sources, are fixed constructions derived from equality comparatives. These include qualitative comparatives with the adjective *igual* ‘same’ and quantitative comparatives in which *tant* ‘as much’ precedes the verb it modifies, typically *ésser* ‘to be’, *fer* ‘to do’, or *valer* ‘to be worth’. However, an examination of the geolinguistic survey *Atles Lingüístic del Domini Català* (ALDC) and the corpora *Corpus Textual Informatitzat de la Llengua Catalana* (CTILC) and *Corpus Informatitzat del Valencià* (CIVAL) reveals lesser-known equivalent expressions, such as those based on the verb *tenir* ‘to have’.

Keywords: Catalan language, indifference expressions, equality comparatives, exclamatory questions, *tenir*-based indifference constructions

1. Introduction

Decision-making is an essential aspect of daily life, encompassing everything from minor choices to more significant ones. In social interactions, we are often prompted to express our preferences: “Fish or meat for lunch?”, “Will you tell her what happened, or should I?”, “Shall we go for a walk or watch TV?”. At times, our preferences are clear: “Fish, please!”, “You should tell her”, “I’m too tired — let’s stay home”. But there are also moments when choices present themselves without sparking a clear inclination toward any option. In such cases, language offers a repertoire of fixed expressions to signal indifference. For example, when asked “Should we take the bus or the subway?”, a speaker might respond with neutral phrases like “It’s all the same” or “It doesn’t matter — it’ll take as long either way”. Alternatively, they might convey their disengagement saying: “I don’t mind” or

“I don’t care — it’s up to you”. These expressions illustrate how language allows speakers to navigate decision-making processes while avoiding commitment to a specific choice.

This chapter examines, from both the syntactic and semantic perspectives, the linguistic strategies used to express indifference in Catalan, starting with the most widespread fixed constructions and concluding with those that have a more restricted scope. The analysis is structured as follows:

- Section 2 examines the constructional variants of structures described in the *Gramàtica de la llengua catalana* by the Institut d’Estudis Catalans as equality comparatives expressing indifference (GIEC: §30.3.5b), specifically: *és igual [una cosa] com [l'altra]* ‘it’s the same [one thing] as [the other]’ and *tant {és / hi fa / se val} [una cosa] com [l'altra]* ‘it makes no difference whether [one thing] or [the other]’.
- Section 3 explores the broader semantic network formed by these constructions with the verbs *ésser* ‘to be’, *fer* ‘to do’, and *valer* ‘to be worth’, alongside related expressions involving *donar* ‘to give’, such as *tant se me’n dona [una cosa] com [l'altra]* ‘I don’t care whether [one thing] or [the other]’, and *importar* ‘to matter’, as in *no m’importa* ‘it doesn’t matter to me’, with a focus on their pragmatic functions on the basis of examples obtained from the *Corpus Textual Informatitzat de la Llengua Catalana* (CTILC).
- Section 4 discusses colloquial strategies that enhance the expressive potential of these constructions, including the insertion of adverbial intensifiers, such as *ben* ‘well’ in *més ben igual*; the substitution of neutral verb *fer* by more vulgar ones, such as *(re)fotre* or *(re)fúmer*; and the addition of evaluative, scatological, or sexual minimizers, like *rave* ‘radish’, *merda* ‘shit’, or *carall* ‘dick’, as in *(no) m’importa {un rave / una merda / un carall}*.
- Section 5 highlights expressions of indifference with more restricted dialectal distributions, as found in the geolinguistic work *Atles Lingüístic del Domini Català* in the map “Tant se me’n dona” (ALDC: map 2166), particularly those featuring verbs like *estimar* ‘to value’ and *tenir* ‘to have’ in first person: *tant m’estim(o), ho tinc igual*.
- Section 6 focuses on *tenir*-based indifference constructions, which include the qualitative comparative *té igual... (com)*, the quantitative comparative *tant té... (com)*, and exclamatory questions such as *què té?*, *què més té?*, *què té més?*, and *què té de més?*

Together, these sections provide a comprehensive overview of how indifference is linguistically encoded in Catalan, revealing both structural diversity and functional nuance.

2. Equality comparatives as expressions of indifference

In Catalan, the syntactic pattern of comparative structures, particularly equality comparatives, has given rise to a set of fixed constructions that enable speakers to express indifference, as illustrated in Table 1. Among these, *és igual... com* ‘it’s the same... as’ features a qualitative equality comparative construction where the adjective *igual* ‘same’ functions as the trigger for comparison. Other constructions conveying a similar meaning are *tant és... com*, *tant hi fa... com* (or *tant li fa... com*), and *tant se val... com*, which are based on a quantitative equality comparative pattern, with *tant* ‘as much’ serving as the central element. Interestingly, in these forms, *tant* is preposed to the verbs *ésser* ‘to be’, *fer* ‘to do’, or *valer* ‘to be worth’, diverging from the more typical post-verbal position observed in non-lexicalized uses (GIEC: §28.2.2a).

Table 1. Catalan equality comparatives conveying indifference

Expressions of indifference	
Qualitative equality comparatives (<i>igual</i> ‘same’)	Quantitative equality comparatives (<i>tant</i> ‘as much’)
<i>és igual... com</i>	<i>tant és... com</i> <i>tant hi fa... com</i> (or <i>tant li fa... com</i>) <i>tant se val... com</i>

All these constructions exhibit a function similar to that of disjunctive concessive clauses, which consist of an initial predicate in the subjunctive mood coordinated with another predicate expressing an opposing situation through the disjunctive conjunction *o* ‘or’ (GIEC: §30.3.5b). A comparable concessive interpretation can also arise from conditional protases linked by the correlation *tant... com* ‘as much... as’, where the verb appears in the indicative mood (GIEC: §30.3.5b). The proximity between equality comparative constructions expressing indifference and the aforementioned concessive constructions can be observed both in the examples in (1), which depict two opposing situations, laughing and crying, that are relevant but do not encompass all possible scenarios, and in those in (2), which present two contrasting facts, passing and failing, that cover the entire range of possibilities. It is worth noting that indifference comparative structures can be formed either with indicative subordinate clauses introduced by *si* ‘if’ or with subjunctive complement clauses introduced by *que* ‘that’.

- (1) a. *Riguís o ploris,* ell va a la seua.
 laugh.SUBJ.2SG or cry.SUBJ.2SG he goes to his
 'Whether you laugh or cry, he does his own thing.'
- b. *Tant si rius com si plores,* ell va a la seua.
 as.much if laugh.IND.2SG as if cry.IND.2SG he goes to his
 'Whether you laugh or cry, he does his own thing.'
- c. {*És igual / Tant és / Tant hi fa / Tant se val*}
 {is same / as.much is / as.much does / as.much REFL values}
si rius com si plores, ell va a la seua.
 if laugh.IND.2SG as if cry.IND.2SG he goes to his
 '{It's the same / It's all the same / It doesn't matter / It's of no importance}'
 whether you laugh or cry, he does his own thing.'
- d. {*És igual / Tant és / Tant hi fa / Tant se val*}
 {is same / as.much is / as.much does / as.much REFL values}
que riguís com que ploris, ell va a la seua.
 that laugh.SUBJ.2SG as that cry.SUBJ.2SG he goes to his
 '{It's the same / It's all the same / It doesn't matter / It's of no importance}'
 whether you laugh or cry, he does his own thing.'
- (2) a. *Aprovi o no (aprovi),* cal felicitar-lo per l'
 pass.SUBJ.3SG or not (pass.SUBJ.3SG) must congratulate.INF-him for the
 esforç que ha fet.
 effort that has made
 'Whether he passes or not, he must be congratulated for the effort he has made.'
- b. *Tant si aprova com si no (aprova),* cal
 as.much if pass.IND.3SG as if not (pass.IND.3SG) must
 felicitar-lo per l' esforç que ha fet.
 congratulate.INF-him for the effort that has made
 'Whether he passes or not, he must be congratulated for the effort he has made.'
- c. {*És igual / Tant és / Tant hi fa / Tant se val*} *si*
 {is same / as.much is / as.much does / as.much REFL values} if
aprova com si no (aprova), cal felicitar-lo per l'
 pass.IND.3SG as if not (pass.IND.3SG) must congratulate.INF-him for the
 esforç que ha fet.
 effort that has made
 '{It's the same / It's all the same / It doesn't matter / It's of no importance}'
 whether he passes or not, he must be congratulated for the effort he has made.'

- d. {*És igual* / *Tant és* / *Tant hi fa* / *Tant se val*} *que*
{is same / as.much is / as.much does / as.much REFL values} *that*
aprovi com que no (aprovi), cal felicitar-lo
pass.SUBJ.3SG as that not (pass.SUBJ.3SG) must congratulate.INF-him
per l' esforç que ha fet.
for the effort that has made
'{It's the same / It's all the same / It doesn't matter / It's of no importance}
whether he passes or not, he must be congratulated for the effort he has
made.'

According to the variants described in the *Gramàtica del català contemporani* (GCC) (Quer 2002: §25.2.2.1e; Cuenca 2002: §31.3.4.1) and the GIEC (§30.3.5b), three verbs are alternately used in these comparative constructions of indifference, as summarized in Table 2. These verbs include the copular *ésser* 'to be', found both in constructions *és igual... com* and *tant és... com*; the light verb *fer* 'to do', which appears with an inherent clitic – either *hi* or *li* – that serves no syntactic function, as well as in *tant hi fa... com* and *tant li fa... com*; and the evaluative verb *valer* 'to be worth', which occurs in its pronominal form *valer-se*, as in *tant se val... com*.

Table 2. Verbs used in equality comparatives expressing indifference

Verbs in constructions of indifference		
Copular	Light	Evaluative
<i>ésser</i> 'to be'	<i>fer</i> 'to do' with an inherent clitic	<i>valer</i> 'to be worth' in its pronominal form
<i>és igual... com</i> <i>tant és... com</i>	<i>tant hi/li fa... com</i>	<i>tant se val... com</i>

3. Semantic network and pragmatic functions of indifference constructions

In the examples in (3), the fixed constructions analysed in this chapter convey the concept of [EQUIVALENCE], a type of equality that specifically denotes an 'equality of value' between two situations or elements being compared.¹ This notion is expressed through the constructions {*És igual* / *Tant és* / *Tant hi fa* / *Tant se val*} *A com B*, which can be translated as 'it makes no difference whether A or B'.

1. Unless otherwise stated, all examples are taken from the CTILC.

- (3) a. Al capdevall, quan no es té res a fer, *és igual* viure en un lloc *com* en un altre. (1964, Jordi Elias, *10 Anys de circ*)
 ‘Ultimately, when there is nothing to do, it’s all the same living in one place as in another.’
- b. Sinó que quan un home ha nascut per a viure al cubell de la desgràcia, *tant és* que es mogui *com* que dormi.
 (1937, Xavier Benguerel, *El casament de la Xela*)
 ‘But when a man is born to dwell in the bucket of misfortune, it makes no difference whether he moves or sleeps.’
- c. *Tant hi fa* que fos Zola *com* un altre: el gir venia preconitzat per molts factors simultanis (1964, Joan Fuster, *Diccionari per a ociosos*)
 ‘It makes no difference whether it was Zola or someone else: the shift was foreshadowed by many simultaneous factors’
- d. *Tant li fa* ésser criat d’un amo *com* amo d’un criat. És igualment pesat.
 (1950, Josep Pla, *Bodegó amb peixos*)
 ‘It makes no difference whether one is servant to a master or master to a servant. It is equally burdensome.’
- e. *Tant se val* el monisme materialista de Haeckel *com* el monisme idealista de von Uexküll. (1938, Antoni Oriol, *Conceptes 1939*)
 ‘It makes no difference whether it is Haeckel’s materialist monism or von Uexküll’s idealist monism.’

Notably, as shown in the examples in (4), these constructions can convey [EQUIVALENCE] specifically between an event and the absence of that same event. This is expressed through structures such as {*És igual* / *Tant és* / *Tant hi fa* / *Tant se val*} *A com no A*, which can be translated as ‘it makes no difference whether A or not A’.

- (4) a. Vui dir que *és igual* que avisem *com* que no avisem
 (1920, Josep M. Folch i Torres, *La ventafocs*)
 ‘I mean, it makes no difference whether we notify or not’
- b. *Tant és* que xiulin *com* que no xiulin. (1983, Joan Brossa, *Xeix*)
 ‘It makes no difference whether they whistle or not.’
- c. Si se’ls carrega tots, *tant hi fa* que sobrevisqui *com* que no
 (2019, Miquel de Palol, *Angèlica i Rafel*)
 ‘If he kills them all, it doesn’t matter whether he survives or not’
- d. *Tant se val* que t’escarrassis *com* que nò. Moriràs!
 (1913, Eduard Girbal, *El castell d’iràs y no en tornaràs*)
 ‘It makes no difference whether you struggle or not. You will die!’

This equivalence between a situation and its opposite forms the basis of the notion of [IRRELEVANCE], as A is deemed irrelevant if it makes no difference whether A occurs or does not occur. This semantic concept is conveyed by the verbal expressions *és igual*, *tant és*, *tant hi fa*, and *tant se val*, which emerge from

the truncation of equality comparative constructions through the omission of the comparative coda, as illustrated in (5).

- (5) a. A jo m'hauria agradat tenir una dona, *és igual* si no era guapa, però que fos amorosa. (2009, Ponç Pons, *Lokus*)
 'I would have liked to have a wife, it wouldn't matter if she wasn't beautiful, as long as she was loving.'
- b. Sempre ens passen la mà per la cara, però ens fan creure que som nosaltres qui portem la batuta. Al final, però, *tant és*, perquè la vida en parella és un projecte col·lectiu. (2015, Albert Rami, *Dones i homes al descobert*)
 'They always outdo us, but they make us believe that we're the ones in charge. In the end, though, it doesn't matter, because life as a couple is a collective project.'
- c. Sigui com sigui, el centre de gravetat del país havia de seguir essent, com és, la zona catalana. *Tant hi faria* que li afegissin tota la província de Conca! (1962, Joan Fuster, *Nosaltres, els valencians*)
 'Be that as it may, the centre of gravity of the country had to remain, as it is, the Catalan area. It would make no difference if they added the entire province of Cuenca to it!'
- d. *Tant se val* que ells triomfin amb la teva capitulació, què t'importa el seu triomf o la seva derrota? (1967, M. Aurèlia Capmany, *Un lloc entre els morts*)
 'It is of no importance if they triumph with your capitulation; what do you care about their triumph or defeat?'

Cuenca (2002: §31.3.4.1) classifies these truncated forms as improper expressive interjections that convey a sense of indifference. Similarly, the *Gramàtica normativa valenciana* (GNV: §35.2.2) refers to them as interjections and documents the construction with *fer* in the variant *tant fa*, notably lacking the inherent clitic pronoun. All these lexicalised expressions function as response formulas that allow the speaker to react to events introduced in the conversation, typically by downplaying their significance. The examples in (6) illustrate their diverse pragmatic functions. For instance, *és igual* in (6a) responds to an apology by minimising the fault; *tant és* in (6b) dismisses an impediment; *tant hi fa* in (6c) counters an objection; *tant li fa* in (6d) puts an end to a pointless debate; and *tant se val* in (6e) neutralises an offer of help.

- (6) a. Es va excusar: [/] – M'han fet venir fins aquí, don Rafel... Jo no sabia... [...] – *És igual, és igual*. [...] Seguiu-me, don Jerónimo. (1991, Jaume Cabré, *Senyoria*)
 'He excused himself: [/] "They made me come here, Don Rafel... I didn't know..." [...] "It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. [...] Follow me, Don Jerónimo."

- b. **ELL:** Per què vol que vingui a passejar? [...] Jo ara camino molt a poc a poc i em canso de seguida. No aniríem gaire lluny. [/] **DONA:** *Tant és.*
(2004, Lluïsa Cunillé, *Barcelona, mapa d'ombres*)
'HE: Why do you want me to go for a walk? [...] I walk very slowly now and get tired quickly. We wouldn't get very far. [/] **WOMAN:** It doesn't matter.'
- c. « No ho sé ben bé, però en tot cas me'n mantinc a distància, jueu i alemany és una barreja que no m'agrada ». [/] — No és austríac? — vaig preguntar. [/] — *Tant hi fa*, no? La mateixa llengua, la mateixa manera de pensar.
(2012, Carme Arenas, translator, *El cementiri de Praga*)²
'I'm not entirely sure, but in any case, I keep my distance — Jewish and German is a mix I don't like.' [/] "Isn't he Austrian?" I asked. [/] "What's the difference, right? Same language, same way of thinking."
- d. Finalment quedava la petita, l'última de morir perquè mentre mataven els grans s'havia amagat sota el llit. No, sota el llit no, sota el banc del foc. Doncs a jo m'han dit que es va amagar dintre del sac de la farina. *Tant li fa*, el cas és que, després de morta, se la van menjar els gossos de la casa, pobrissona.
(2013, Josep Coll, *Dos taüts negres i dos de blancs*)
'Finally, there was the youngest one, the last to die because, while they were killing the older ones, she had hidden under the bed. No, not under the bed, under the hearth bench. Well, I was told she hid inside the sack of flour. It doesn't matter; the fact is that, after she died, the house dogs ate her, poor child.'
- e. — Me l'ha tornat, però... — va mirar als seus peus com si li resultés inexplicable no veure'l lluir en l'ombra — l'he perdut ara mateix. [/] — T'ajudaré a buscar-lo. [/] — *Tant se val!* Mai més no em farà falta!
(1955, Xavier Benguerel, *El testament*)
'He gave it back to me, but...' — he looked down at his feet as though it were inexplicable not to see it gleaming in the shadow — 'I've just lost it again.' 'I'll help you look for it.' 'It doesn't matter! I'll never need it again!'

One of the verbs involved in these constructions, *fer* 'to do', combined with the lexicalised clitic *hi*, has given rise to two additional structures associated with the notion of [IRRELEVANCE], as shown in Table 3: the negative polarity construction *No hi fa res* 'It makes no difference!', featuring the negative adverb *no* 'not' and the indefinite pronoun *res* 'nothing', as exemplified in (7a), and *Què hi fa?* 'What does it matter?', with the interrogative pronoun *què* 'what', as illustrated in (7b). The latter is an exclamatory question — an interrogative structure pronounced with the intonational contour of an exclamation — employed by the speaker to emphatically convey a subjective pragmatic value (Payrató 2002: §3.4.5.1). Similarly, the verb of estimation *importar* 'to matter' has given rise to two equivalent formulas:

2. Catalan translation of the Italian book *Il cimitero di Praga*, by Umberto Eco.

the negative declarative construction *No importa!* ‘It doesn’t matter!’, as illustrated in (7c), and the exclamatory question *Què importa?* ‘What does it matter?’, shown in (7d). It is worth noting that exclamatory questions may undergo verb ellipsis when preceded by the coordinating conjunction *i* ‘and’, resulting in the reduced form *I què?* ‘So what?’, as shown in (7e).

- (7) a. — Perdoneu [...]. Això forma part del curs altern, ens ho sabem de memòria. [/] — *No hi fa res*. Que potser no és veritat?
(1967, Manuel de Pedrolo, *Totes les bèsties de càrrega*)
“Excuse me [...] This is part of the alternate course; we know it by heart.”
[/] “That doesn’t matter. Is it not true, perhaps?”
- b. — Però això és lluny. [/] — Tu no ho entens, Roc. *Què hi fa?* Treballaré en un sol indret, no hauré d’anar per les cases...
(1971, Josep Vallverdú, *En Roc drapaire*)
“But that’s far away.” [/] “You don’t understand, Roc. What does it matter? I’ll work in one single place; I won’t have to go house to house...”
- c. CREONT: Pro devastava el país, mentre l’altre [/] el defensava amb el seu noble esforç. [/] ANTÍGONA: *No importa!* L’Hades reclama aquest ritu.
(2019, Feliu Formosa, translator, *Antígona*)³
‘CREON: But one was laying waste to the land, while the other [/] defended it with noble effort. [/] ANTIGONE: It matters not! Hades demands this rite.’
- d. Salvar la pell, *¿què importa?* La pell no és nostra, l’han portada altres abans — perquè la matèria orgànica és la mateixa (1956, Joan Sales, *Incerta glòria*)
‘Saving one’s skin, what does it matter? The skin is not ours; others have worn it before — because the organic matter is the same’
- e. — Podia costar-te la vida. [/] — *I què!* ¿Per salvar la teva no hauria estat ben empleada?
(1927, Josep M. Folch i Torres, *Les aventures d’en Boi Delit o el braçalet de Marciana*)
“It could have cost you your life.” [/] “So what! Wouldn’t it have been well spent to save yours?”

Table 3. Alternative constructions to comparatives for expressing indifference

Alternative constructions conveying indifference	Negative declarative constructions	Exclamatory questions	Truncated question
With <i>fer</i> ‘to do’	<i>No hi fa res!</i>	<i>Què hi fa?</i>	<i>I què?</i>
With <i>importar</i> ‘to matter’	<i>No importa!</i>	<i>Què importa?</i>	<i>I què?</i>

3. Catalan translation of Sophocles’ Greek tragedy *Antigone*.

The constructions analysed thus far, with the exception of the one formed with the verb *valer* ‘to be worth’, can be expanded through the insertion of a dative element that fulfils the semantic role of experiencer. This addition prompts a semantic shift from an external, objective domain to a more internal and subjective one, thereby subjectifying the structure (Traugott & Dasher 2002; Traugott 2012). Consequently, the [EQUIVALENCE] between the two compared situations or the [IRRELEVANCE] of the reported event is no longer framed as an objective reality but is instead explicitly linked to the perspective and evaluation of the experiencer. The inclusion of the dative thus extends the semantic range of these constructions, allowing them to convey a subjective sense of indifference, understood either as a [LACK OF PREFERENCE] between two alternatives or as [DISINTEREST] in a particular event, as represented in Table 4.

Table 4. Semantic network of four nodes in indifference constructions

Indifference constructions	With comparative coda	Truncated forms
Without dative	[EQUIVALENCE]	[IRRELEVANCE]
With experiencer dative	[LACK OF PREFERENCE]	[DISINTEREST]

The introduction of the dative is possible in structures with both *ésser* ‘to be’ and *fer* ‘to do’, as illustrated in (8). In the case of *fer*, the clitic *hi* ceases to appear; if the pronoun *li* is present, it is no longer lexicalised but instead functions syntactically as an indirect object equivalent to ‘to him’ or ‘to her’, in complementary distribution with *em/me* ‘to me’, *et/te* ‘to you.SING’, *ens* ‘to us’, *us* ‘to you.PL’, and *els* ‘to them’.

- (8) a. Si Nietzsche deia que a ell li era igual que parlés Tucídides com Pericles, nosaltres direm que *tant ens és* que parli el català com el portuguès

(1926, Francesc Pujols, *Història de l’hegemonia catalana en la política espanyola*)

‘If Nietzsche said that he didn’t care whether it was Thucydides or Pericles speaking, we will say that it doesn’t matter to us whether it’s the Catalan or the Portuguese man speaking’

- b. Pel que em sembla, *tant te fa* que jo obri bé o malament.

(1965, Jaume Berenguer, translator, *Alexis Zorbàs*)⁴

‘It seems to me that it makes no difference to you whether I do things right or wrong.’

4. Catalan translation of the novel written in Greek by Nikos Kazantzakis.

- c. L'home honrat, quan ha de matar, se'n dóna vergonya i cerca que la nit el tapi. *Al criminal nat, tant li fa.*
 (1955, Pere Calders, *Cròniques de la veritat oculta*)
 'The honest man, when he has to kill, feels ashamed and seeks the cover of night. To the born criminal, it makes no difference.'

Both negative declarative structures and exclamatory questions with *fer* 'to do' and *importar* 'to matter' can likewise be extended by incorporating a dative with the semantic role of experiencer, as illustrated in (9).

- (9) a. Que viatgi, i que (no cal que sigui gaire d'amagat) tingui altres dones, a més d'ella. *A ella no li fa res* (1993, Quim Monzó, *El perquè de tot plegat*)
 'Let him travel, and let him (without needing to be too secretive about it) have other women besides her. She doesn't mind'
- b. ANDREU: Que us confesseu? [/] CLAVELL: I *a tu què et fa?*
 (1937, Xavier Benguerel, *El casament de la Xela*)
 'ANDREU: Do you go to confession? [/] CLAVELL: What's it to you?'
- c. ¿La devem a les formacions espirituals forjades en la més primera Marca o bé és un producte de la lluita que hem menat des del segle XVII per redreçar-nos? *No ens importa.*
 (1960, Jaume Vicens i Vives, *Notícia de Catalunya*)
 'Do we owe it to the spiritual formations forged in the earliest March, or is it a product of the struggle we have waged since the 17th century to straighten ourselves out? We don't care.'
- d. MATEU: Com hauran pogut escapar aquests? [/] BERNAT: *A nosaltres què ens importa?* Dorm i no m'atabalis
 (1970, Josep M. Benet i Jornet, *Marc i Jofre, o els alquimistes de la fortuna*)
 'MATEU: How could they have escaped? [/] BERNAT: What do we care? Go to sleep and stop bothering me'

Another similar structure with an experiencer dative is constructed with *donar* 'to give', even though this verb does not form equality comparatives – neither qualitative ones with *igual* 'same' nor quantitative ones with *tant* 'as much' – and, as a result, it has not generated corresponding truncated forms. This contrasts with Spanish *dar* 'to give', which does display such uses with *igual* 'same', as in *¡Da igual!* 'It doesn't matter!', and with *tanto* 'as much', as in *¡Tanto da!* 'It's all the same!', and which has given rise to the exclamatory question *¿Qué más da?* 'What difference does it make?', featuring the quantifier *más* 'more'. Nonetheless, when *donar* 'to give' combines with a pronominal cluster consisting of the reflexive *se* and the partitive *en*, and is accompanied by an obligatory experiencer dative, it forms a construction similar to quantitative comparatives with preposed *tant* 'as much'. This construction conveys the notion of [LACK OF PREFERENCE] between

alternatives, as illustrated in (10a), or [DISINTEREST] towards an event, as in (10b). In addition to the form with the more general pronominal cluster, such as *tant se li'n dona* (GIEC: §8.4.3.3), there is a variant in which the reflexive *se* combines with the adverbial clitic *hi*, again requiring the presence of an obligatory experiencer dative: for example, *tant se m'hi dona* (GNV: §23.4.2).

- (10) a. *Els analfabets tant se'l's en donava* que els receptessin en un idioma com en un altre (1953, Francesc Curet, *Visions barcelonines: 1760–1860*)
 ‘To the illiterate, it didn’t matter whether they were given prescriptions in one language or another’
- b. *A mi tant se me'n dóna* que em critiquin (1932, Josep M. de Sagarra, *Vida privada*)
 ‘I couldn’t care less if they criticise me’

In Table 5 indifference constructions with and without experiencer dative are summarised.

Table 5. Verbs in indifference constructions by presence or absence of an experiencer dative

Verbs	Without dative	With experiencer dative
<i>ésser</i> ‘to be’	<i>és igual... (com)</i> <i>tant és... (com)</i>	<i>m'és igual... (com)</i> , etc. <i>tant m'és... (com)</i> , etc.
<i>fer</i> ‘to do’	<i>tant (hi/li) fa... (com)</i> <i>no hi fa res</i> <i>què hi fa?</i>	<i>tant me fa... (com)</i> , etc. <i>no em fa res</i> , etc. <i>què em fa?</i> , etc.
<i>valer</i> ‘to be worth’	<i>tant se val... (com)</i>	---
<i>importar</i> ‘to matter’	<i>no importa</i> <i>què importa?</i>	<i>no m'importa</i> , etc. <i>què m'importa?</i> , etc.
<i>donar</i> ‘to give’	---	<i>tant se {me'n/m'hi} dona</i> , etc.

The introduction of subjectivity, through the inclusion of the experiencer dative in these constructions, paves the way for pretence. The expression of indifference by the speaker may be either genuine or feigned, as illustrated in Example (11), where spite is conveyed.

- (11) O jo o les altres: tría! Si dius res a cap, si't mires a cap, jo ho sabré, jo ho endevinaré, porque aquestes coses s'endevinen sempre, y aleshores, tot desfet; me caso ab en Xamot, o ab el primer que passi: *tant me fa!*

(1907, Caterina Albert, *Cayres vius*)

'Either me or the other women: choose! If you say anything to any of them, if you look at them, I'll know, I'll figure it out, because these things are always figured out, and then, everything's ruined; I'll marry Xamot, or the first man who comes along: it's all the same to me!'

These constructions often emerge within a dynamic interplay between interlocutors. One party introduces a topic, presuming it holds some relevance or interest for the addressee and anticipating a reaction, whether positive or negative. When raised with malicious intent, the topic can carry an implicit challenge or provocation. The addressee, in turn, may downplay or deny any personal impact, even when the matter genuinely affects them. In such instances, the use of indifference constructions serves a dual purpose: to signal disinterest – whether genuine or feigned – and to express irritation with the interlocutor for raising the subject, particularly if having done so is perceived as antagonistic. This interaction exemplifies the domain of intersubjectivity (Traugott & Dasher 2002; Traugott 2012), as in (12), where the speaker's response reveals bitterness towards the woman who rejected him and, even more sharply, anger at the interlocutor for maliciously mentioning her marriage to another man.

- (12) ASLAK: N'hi haurà alguna que et voldrà, ja veuràs. Adéu! Donaré records a la núvia de part teva. [(Se'n van rient i parlant a mitja veu.)] [/] PEER [(els segueix amb els ulls un instant, aixeca les espatlles i fa mitja volta)]: ¡Que es casi amb qui vulgui, la noia de Haegstad! *Tant me fa!* [...] [(Picant de peus:)] Ah! ¡El menyspreu d'aquests homes! ¡De bona gana agafaria un ganivet d'escorxador per arrancar-los tot aquest menyspreu del ventre!

(1936, Joan Puig i Ferrer & Ventura Gassol, translators, *Peer Gynt*)⁵

'ASLAK: There'll be someone who'll want you, you'll see. Goodbye! I'll give your regards to the bride. [(They leave, laughing and speaking in low voices.)] [/] PEER [(watches them go for a moment, shrugs, and turns away)]: She can marry whoever she wants, the girl from Haegstad! I don't care! [...] [(Stamping his foot:)] Ah! The contempt of those men! I'd gladly grab a butcher's knife to carve all that contempt out of their guts!'

5. Catalan translation of Henrik Ibsen's play, originally written in Norwegian.

4. Linguistic strategies for the intensification of indifference constructions

Building on the pragmatic nuances discussed in §3, which imbue the expression of indifference with undertones of disdain and latent anger, speakers often amplify the expressive force of these constructions through various strategies. One such strategy involves inserting the intensifier *ben* ‘well’ or other adverbs of intensity, such as *absolutament* ‘absolutely’, *completament* ‘completely’, and *perfectament* ‘perfectly’, into the construction with the adjective *igual*, as illustrated in (13).

- (13) a. ja sé que no ho entendràs, o no ho voldràs entendre, però *m'és ben igual*, [...] jo ja he pres la meva decisió (2007, M. Antònia Oliver, *Colors de mar*)
 ‘I already know you won’t understand it, or you won’t want to understand it, but I honestly don’t care, [...] I’ve already made my decisión’
- b. si espera que tingui ganes de veure'l després d'aquell numeret, ho té clar. *M'és absolutament igual*. I no és rancúnia, és indiferència.
 (2021, Carme Junyent, *Tancat temporalment*)
 ‘if he expects me to feel like seeing him after that little scene, he’s got another think coming. I couldn’t care less. And it’s not resentment – it’s indifference.’
- c. BLAI: I si ella i jo... eh? [/] LENA: Pallasso! No et posis neguitós. Facis el que facis, *m'és completament igual*.
 (1984, Agustí Bartra, *L'hivern plora gebre damunt el gerani*)
 BLAI: And what if she and I... huh? [/] LENA: Don’t be absurd! Stay calm. Whatever you do, I couldn’t care less.
- d. Però, si us haig d'èsser franc, això *m'és perfectament igual*, perquè l'art és una cosa completament secundària. (1928, Josep Pla, *Vida de Manolo*)
 ‘But, to be honest, I couldn’t care less about that, because art is something completely secondary.’

The verb *fer* ‘to do’, in turn, may be supplanted by the vulgar *fotre*, which originally carried a sexual connotation (‘to fuck’), or by its euphemistic variant *fúmer*, a softened adaptation of the former (DECat: IV, 151–155). This substitution occurs either in constructions parallel to *tant me fa*, yielding forms such as *tant me fot* or *tant me fum*, or in structures where the verb is paired with a pronominal cluster comprising the reflexive *se*, the partitive *en*, and an obligatory dative with the semantic role of experiencer. In the latter case, the verb may be further intensified by the prefix *re-*, and the quantifier *tant* is often omitted: (*tant*) *se me'n (re)fot*, (*tant*) *se me'n (re)fum*, as shown in (14).

- (14) a. — Si et poses filla de puta, ho esbombaré als diaris. Et juro que a mi *tant me fot*. Però t'imagines, l'escàndol? (2004, Jaume Cabré, *Les veus del Pamano*)
 'If you act like a fucking bitch, I'll get it published in the newspapers. I swear I couldn't care less. But can you imagine the scandal?'
- b. El més greu de tot és que intueixo que els Riveras, Arrimadas i Lorena Roldán [...] saben que és mentida. [...] Però *se'ls en fum*. Són uns irresponsables (2019, Xevi Xirgo, *El punt Avui*, no. 14014)
 'The worst of it all is that I sense that the Riveras, Arrimadas, and Lorena Roldán [...] know it's a lie. [...] But they couldn't care less. They're an irresponsible bunch'
- c. Jo decideixo amb qui vull viure i *se me'n refot* si és família o no. (2011, Ramon Solsona, *L'home de la maleta*)
 'I decide who I want to live with, and I couldn't care less if they're family or not.'

The verb *importar* 'to matter', aside from appearing in the negative declarative structure *no m'importa* 'it doesn't matter to me', has also given rise to other constructions where it combines with an evaluative minimiser — a noun referring to an element of negligible value, such as *rave* 'radish' — or a taboo minimiser, both of which function as adverbial quantifiers (Llop 2020). Taboo minimisers may include nouns with scatological connotations, such as *merda* 'shit', or sexual ones, such as *carall* 'dick'. These constructions do not require the presence of the negative operator *no*, as illustrated in (15).

- (15) a. però allò que sí que es nota cada vegada amb més claredat són dues classes d'espanyols, els qui tenen ploma i veu públics [...] i aquells que *els importa un rave* allò que diguin o escriguin els altres (1987, Lluís Racionero, *El discurs*)
 'but what is increasingly noticeable is the emergence of two kinds of Spaniards: those who wield a public voice and pen [...] and those who couldn't care less about what others say or write'
- b. Però mai no l'havia vista fent petar els dits, exigint tornar a veure la documentació de propietat de can Casic i dient, després d'un silenci, *m'importa una pputa merda* el que digui aquest document. (2011, Jaume Cabré, *Jo confesso*)⁶
 'But I had never seen her snapping her fingers, demanding to see the ownership documents for Can Casic again, and then, after a pause, saying, "I don't give a damn what this document says."
- c. Com es coneix que [...] no es tornarà a presentar per a alcalde: ha vist que ja *no li importem un carall*? (1998, Jordi Soler, *El Punt*, no. 698)
 'How obvious it is that [he] won't run for mayor again! Have you seen that he doesn't give a damn about us anymore?'

In the CTILC, the minimisers that appear, in order of frequency, are: *rave* 'radish', 84 occurrences; *merda* 'shit', 26 (including *una puta merda* 'a fucking shit', *una bona merda* 'a big shit', and *una merda i mitja* 'a shit and a half'); *carall* 'dick', 5 (including *carallot*, which features the augmentative-pejorative suffix *-ot*); *collo* 'ball', 3; the Castilianism *bledo* 'goosefoot', 2; *pimentó* 'pimento', 1; *bufa d'ànec* 'duck's bladder' or 'duck's silent fart', 1; *treseta*, an old coin of little value, 1; and *daixonses* 'thingumabob', 1. In the ALDC materials, the minimisers employed by informants are exclusively evaluative rather than taboo, as would be expected in a survey setting with a stranger. Moreover, they are predominantly Castilianisms, reflecting the significant influence of Spanish on the colloquial register, at least in the 1960s and 1970s, when the data were collected. These minimisers include the Castilianisms *pito* 'whistle', 46 occurrences (including *tres pitos*, featuring the culturally significant number three); *pepino* 'cucumber', 4; *pico* 'beak', 1; *bledo* 'goosefoot', 1; and *bufo* 'puff', 1. The only Catalan minimisers attested, each with a single occurrence, are *rave* 'radish' and *punyeta*. The latter originally carried a sexual meaning (*fer-se la punyeta* 'to masturbate') but has undergone semantic bleaching (Hopper & Traugott 2003) to acquire the more general meanings of 'annoying thing' and 'worthless thing'.

A similar strategy involves inserting taboo words of a religious nature, such as *dimoni* 'devil' (sometimes intensified with the prefix *re-*: *redimoni*), or of a sexual nature, such as *collons* 'balls', after the interrogative pronoun *què* 'what' in exclamatory questions with *fer* 'to do' or *importar* 'to matter', as illustrated in (16).

- (16) a. Jo penso que de fa molts anys que no estic inscrit al registre de Déu, però
què redimoni hi fa! (1965, Jaume Berenguer, translator, *Alexis Zorbàs*)
 ‘I think I haven’t been on God’s register for many years, but what the devil
 does it matter anyway!’
 b. – On tens el teu gipó? [/] – I a tu *què collons t’importa?*
 (2011, Jaume Cabré, *Jo confesso*)
 “Where is your doublet?” [/] “And what the fuck do you care?”

In Table 6, the various linguistic resources through which the constructions of indifference analysed in this study can be intensified are summarised.

6. The duplication of the initial consonant in *pputa* ‘where’ is intentional, serving as a graphic device employed by the author throughout the work to highlight the emphasis with which the character enunciates the word.

Table 6. Linguistic strategies that amplify the expressive force of constructions of indifference

Indifference constructions		
Unmarked form	Marked form	Linguistic strategy
<i>m'és igual</i>	<i>m'és ben igual</i> <i>m'és absolutament igual</i>	insertion of adverbial intensifiers, such as <i>ben</i> 'well' or <i>absolutament</i> 'absolutely'
<i>tant me fa</i>	<i>tant me fot/fum</i> <i>(tant) se me'n fot/fum</i> <i>(tant) se me'n refot/refum</i>	substitution of the neutral verb <i>fer</i> by vulgar <i>fotre</i> or <i>fúmer</i> prefixation of <i>fotre</i> or <i>fúmer</i> with the intensifying prefix <i>re-</i>
<i>no m'importa</i>	<i>(no) m'importa un rave</i> <i>(no) m'importa una merda</i> <i>(no) m'importa un carall</i>	insertion of an evaluative minimiser, such as <i>rave</i> 'radish' insertion of a scatological taboo minimiser, such as <i>merda</i> 'shit' insertion of a sexual taboo minimiser, such as <i>carall</i> 'dick'
<i>què hi fa?</i> <i>què m'importa?</i>	<i>què dimoni hi fa?</i> <i>què collons m'importa?</i>	insertion of a religious taboo intensifier, such as <i>dimoni</i> 'devil' insertion of a sexual taboo intensifier, such as <i>collons</i> 'balls'

In contemporary Catalan, in colloquial interactions, emphatic expressions of disinterest can also be conveyed through structures unrelated to comparative constructions, originating instead from sexual metaphors. These constructions invariably involve a clitic cluster consisting of a dative pronoun with the semantic role of experiencer (e.g. *me* 'to me') and the feminine singular accusative pronoun (*la* 'her'), combined with verbs such as *bufar* 'to blow', *pelar* 'to peel', *suar* 'to sweat', and the phrasal verb *portar-la fluixa* 'to have it soft'. These expressions, which are perceived as highly vulgar, are poorly represented in the CTILC, with most attestations dating from the 21st century: *me la porta fluixa* (7 occurrences, 1st attested in 1980), *me la sua* (5, 1st in 1996), *me la bufa* (8, 1st in 2000), and *me la pela* (not attested in the CTILC), as illustrated in (17).

- (17) a. Ben mirat, però, tant si és una cosa com una altra, tot això *me l'hauria de portar fluixa*. (2015, Joaquim Carbó, *Va com va!*)
'All things considered, though, whether it's one thing or another, all this should not matter a damn to me.'

- b. *Tant se me'n fot* qui mani, si són de dretes, d'esquerres, vermells, blaus, grocs o verd pistatxo. *Me la sua*.
(2017, Guillem Clua, *Al damunt dels nostres cants*)
'I couldn't care less who's in charge, whether they're right-wing, left-wing, red, blue, yellow, or pistachio green. I don't give a damn.'
- c. A mi, Noruega *me la bufa*. Ha estat un instrument i punt.
(2000, Jaume Cabré, *Viatge d'hivern*)
'To me, Norway doesn't matter at all. It has been a tool, and that's it.'

The equivalent constructions in Spanish have been analysed by Cifuentes (2018: 350–362). According to this author, the feminine clitic refers to the penis (in line with its vulgar denomination *polla*, a feminine noun), and these expressions originate from a sexual metaphor – either of lack of arousal (*me la trae floja*) or of a sexual act potentially perceived as degrading, such as fellatio (*me la sopla*) or masturbation (*me la pela*). The shift from the sexual domain to the expression of indifference would have arisen through two processes: in the first case, the generalisation of sexual disinterest to a broader sense of detachment, and in the second, the extension of contempt for a sexual act to a more abstract expression of disregard. In this latter case, it is worth recalling the discussion in §3 regarding the potentially fictitious nature of indifference constructions with a dative experiencer and the underlying tones of disdain they can convey.

5. Other indifference constructions with more limited dialectal reach

The expressions of indifference examined thus far are widely attested and have been catalogued in reference works such as *Diccionari de sinònims de frases fetes* (Espinal 2004: entries *indiferència*, *indiferent*, *indiferentment*). However, there exist other, more restricted indifference constructions, such as those documented in the map for “*Tant se me'n dona*” in the ALDC (map 2166). This map specifically records the linguistic expression of [DISINTEREST] across 190 survey points within the Catalan-speaking area, yielding nearly 300 responses, as some informants provide multiple alternative forms. A detailed analysis of these data falls beyond the scope of this chapter, but we outline a preliminary classification.

As expected, the most frequent responses feature the verbs previously discussed: *importar*, 160 occurrences; *donar*, 35; *fer*, 23; *fotre*, 18 (along with its euphemistic variant *fúmer*, 2); and *ésser*, 15.⁷ Notably, however, the ALDC data

7. The ALDC informant from Cervelló (El Baix Llobregat) coordinates the expressions of indifference with the neutral verb *fer* and the euphemistic *fúmer*: *ni em fa ni em fum!* He also provides the response with the vulgar verb *fotre*: *tant me fot!*, to which he hastens to add *parlant amb perdó* ‘Pardon my speech!’

reveal an expansion of the constructional possibilities for these verbs. For instance, *ésser*, which typically occurs in either the qualitative comparative construction *m'és igual* or the quantitative comparative *tant m'és*, appears in several survey points on the island of Mallorca in less conventional patterns. These include the oppositional correlation *tant m'és com no m'és* (Llucmajor), the negative polarity construction *no m'és res* (Santanyi), and the exclamatory question *i a jo què m'és?* (Son Servera). In fact, these structures had already been attested, but they were formed with other verbs.

Moreover, this geolinguistic work reveals a series of responses featuring new verbs. The most frequent among them is *interessar* 'to be of interest', which appears in 14 purely denotative responses and is typically framed within a negative polarity construction: *no m'interessa* 'this is of no interest to me'. However, it is also attested in an affirmative declarative sentence accompanied by a scalar quantifier of low degree: *m'interessa molt poc* 'this is of very little interest to me'. The remaining responses that diverge from fixed indifference constructions employ verbs or phrasal verbs — often with only a single occurrence — that can express various nuances of [DISINTEREST] or related notions such as [LACK OF IMPACT] or [LACK OF CONCERN]. Specifically:

- Phrasal verbs that align with the semantics of [DISINTEREST] include *no dir res [a algú]* 'not mean a thing [to someone]', which conveys a nuance of 'not attracting', and *no portar cuidado [a algú]* 'not to worry [someone]', which expresses a nuance of 'not being a source of concern': *a mi no em diu res*, Les Llosses (El Ripollès); *no em porta cuidado*, Arbeca (Les Garrigues).⁸
- In contrast, responses based on the notion of [LACK OF IMPACT] involve the verb *implicar* 'to involve' and the phrasal verb *no anar-hi res [en alguna cosa]* 'to have nothing at stake [in something]': *a mi no m'implica res*, Vilamarxant (El Camp de Túria); *no m'hi va res*, Móra la Nova (La Ribera d'Ebre).
- Finally, responses grounded in the notion of [LACK OF CONCERN] include the verb *incumbir* 'to concern' and the phrasal verbs *no haver de fer res [d'alguna cosa]* 'to have nothing to do [with something]' (or its variant *no tenir que fer res [d'alguna cosa]*, which is a syntactic calque from Spanish) and *no fregar-ne res [d'alguna cosa]* 'not be [someone's] business': *no m'incumbix*, Torís (La Ribera Alta); *no n'haig de fer res*, Les Llosses (El Ripollès), Barcelona (El Barcelonès), and Sant Boi de Llobregat (El Baix Llobregat); *no en tinc que fer res*, Oix (La Garrotxa); *no me'n frega res*, L'Alguer (Sardinia).

8. After the name of each Catalan and Valencian locality, the corresponding *comarca* is indicated in parentheses. The *comarca* is a local administrative division based on historical, geographical, and human criteria, roughly equivalent to a district.

But what is most noteworthy is that, within the domain of comparative constructions, data from the ALDC bring to light two verbs that warrant closer examination. Notably, a truncated quantitative comparative involving *estimar* ‘to value’ is attested at five survey points in Catalonia. This verb, which functions as an estimation verb akin to *valer* in the construction *tant se val*, also appears in pronominal forms, such as *tant m'estimo* or *tant m'estim*. Unlike the previously discussed comparative constructions, however, it occurs not in the third person but rather in the first person, thereby assigning the semantic role of experiencer to the subject.

The alternation between two morphological variants merits attention. On the one hand, *tant m'estimo* is attested in Àger (La Noguera), L'Ametlla de Mar (El Baix Ebre), and Amposta (El Montsià), within the central and Tortosine area of Northwestern Catalan, and features the inflected form with *-o*, now characteristic of this region. On the other hand, *tant m'estim*, lacking a vocalic marker, is documented in Llobera (El Solsonès) and Cambrils (El Baix Camp), within the Central Catalan area transitioning to Northwestern Catalan. This latter form was universal in Catalan during the medieval period. However, for first-conjugation verbs such as *estimar*, it is now preserved exclusively in Balearic and Alguerese varieties. In the survey points cited, *tant m'estim* represents an archaic morphological form that has become fossilised in this particular expression of indifference.

The other verb identified in the ALDC materials, not previously mentioned, appears within a truncated qualitative comparative. It is *tenir* ‘to have’, a light verb comparable to *ésser* ‘to be’, *fer* ‘to do’, and *donar* ‘to give’. The specific form documented in the ALDC is *ho tinc igual*, appearing in the first person and assigning the semantic role of experiencer to the subject. This variant of indifference constructions is attested at a Valencian survey point, L'Alqueria de la Comtessa (La Safor).

The GNV, published in 2006, does not document any form with *tenir* in the section on expressive interjections (GNV: §35.2.2), which is cited above (§3). However, an indifference construction with *tenir* is mentioned in a different section of this work, which addresses non-normative uses of the definite article *lo* (GNV: §15.5). In this context, it is suggested that *Lo mateix em dona: no tinc manies*, which contains a syntactic calque of the Spanish indifference expression *Lo mismo me da* (cf. §3), could be replaced with *Em té igual: no tinc manies*, alongside *Tant me fa: no tinc manies*, all expressing the meaning ‘It doesn't matter to me: I'm not fussy’. Note the use of the verb in the third person and the presence of the experiencer dative, contrasting with the response collected in the ALDC, where the verb appears in the first person and the experiencer role is realised as the subject.

In the *Gramàtica valenciana bàsica*, published a decade later in 2016, the construction with *tenir* is incorporated into the list of expressive interjections (GVB: §42.2.1), while the comparative construction with *ésser* is relegated to a secondary position, enclosed in parentheses. Furthermore, the example *M'és igual el que*

puga pensar Pere ‘It’s all the same to me what Pere might think’ (GNV: § 35.2.2), with the verb *ésser*, is replaced by *Em té igual! No pensava fer-li cas* ‘It’s all the same to me! I wasn’t planning to pay him any attention’ (GVB: § 42.2.1), now employing the verb *tenir*. Two additional instances of this construction are provided in other sections: *Que ho sàpia o no em té igual* ‘Whether they know it or not, it’s all the same to me’ (GVB: § 19.2.8) and *Em té igual si se n’ha penedit o no: jo no li ho he perdonat* ‘It’s all the same to me whether they regret it or not: I haven’t forgiven them’ (GVB: § 41.4.1).

Similarly, the *Diccionari normatiu valencià* (DNV: entry *igual*) lists three possible constructions of indifference with *igual*: “tindre (o ser, o fer) igual”. The first construction uses the dialectal variant *tindre* of *tenir* ‘to have’, the second employs the previously discussed verb (*és*)*ser* ‘to be’, and the third introduces the verb *fer* ‘to do’, resulting in the not previously seen construction *fer igual*. This final option is exemplified by sentences such as *Fa igual hui que demà!* ‘Today or tomorrow, it makes no difference!’, and *Vull anar-hi, em fa igual que ploja* ‘I want to go; it doesn’t matter to me if it rains’, the latter featuring a dative experiencer.

The CTILC, covering the period from 1832 to 2020, provides six examples of the collocation *tenir* + *igual*, with and without a dative, from five different authors, all of whom are Valencian. These examples are presented in (18). It is worth noting that the frequency of this form has increased since 2018 (the works where it appears are from 1978, 1986, 2018, 2019, and 2020, as seen in Table 7), and the type of source in which the construction occurs has also diversified, shifting from narrative to non-literary sources.

Table 7. Distribution of *tenir igual* constructions in the CTILC

							1978		
					1986				
							2018	2019	2020

- (18) a. Escolta, Dick, ¿és bona esta manteta? És que, si no, te donaré la meua. A mi
em té igual..., sense manta... (1978, Maria Mulet, *Pere*)
‘Listen, Dick, is this blanket any good? Because if not, I’ll give you mine. I
don’t mind..., without a blanket...’

- b. El donyet, a causa dels cops, anava de dreta a esquerra, però ben prompte trobà la manera d'assegurar-se: s'agafà a una cosa semblant a uns cabells, uns cabells o uns cabdells? *té igual*, ni ho sabia ni li importava
(1986, Empar de Lanuza, *Criatures minúscules*)
'The goblin, due to the blows, was swaying from side to side, but soon found a way to steady himself: he grabbed onto something resembling hair – hair or threads? It didn't matter; he neither knew nor cared'
- c. No pugué recordar en quin quart es trobava la lluna perquè de nit mirava poques vegades el cel i això no li ho deia la seua maquineta compta-dies-hores-minuts i segons però... *tenia igual*!
(1986, Empar de Lanuza, *Criatures minúscules*)
'He couldn't remember which phase the moon was in because at night he rarely looked at the sky, and his little device that counted days, hours, minutes, and seconds didn't tell him that, but... it didn't matter'
- d. A aquesta gent li *té igual* una paella de casa que una d'aquestes que ja venen mig cuites.
(2018, Vicent Usó, *El paradís a les fosques*)
'These people don't care whether it's a homemade paella or one of those half-cooked ones they sell'
- e. En una ocasió [...] van llançar el missatge als malalts que si la reversió anava avant no rebrien tractament i haurien d'anar a La Fe a València. Això era fals, però *els tenia igual*.
(2019, Sergi Castillo, *La batalla per la sanitat valenciana*)
'On one occasion [...] they spread the message to patients that if the reversal went ahead, they wouldn't receive treatment and would have to go to La Fe in Valencia. This was false, but they didn't care.'
- f. A les teues neurones, *els pot tindre igual* si una persona empra el pitjor perfum del món. Podria pudir com una espadrenya vella i, encara així, enamorar-te. (2020, Teresa Brostea, translator, *Geografia davall del melic*)⁹
'Your neurons might not care if someone wears the worst perfume in the world. They could smell like an old espadrille and still make you fall in love.'

As expected, the *Corpus Informatitzat del Valencià* (CIVAL) provides a more substantial representation of this *tenir*-based construction, tracing its earliest occurrences back to 1930 (without a dative) and 1961 (with a dative), as illustrated in (19). A third example appears in the 1970s, coinciding with the earliest attestations documented in the CTILC, although most (121 out of 135) date from 2000 onwards.¹⁰

9. Catalan translation of the Spanish book *Geografía bajo el ombligo*, by Valentín Coronel.

10. The CIVAL is not lemmatized. The data extraction was performed using sequences of *igual* preceded by the following verbal forms: *té*, 98 occurrences; *tinc*, 9; *tenia*, 25; *tindrà*, 0; *tindria*, 1; *tinga*, 0; *tinguera*, 2; *va tenir*, 0; *tingué*, 0.

- (19) a. — Segur no ho sé; pero me sembla que és cosa de moniatos o patates... *Té igual*: alló que sembre ho ha de cullir en créixens.
(1930, Vicent Pla Mompó, *¿A miches? ¡Ni en la dona!*)
'I'm not sure, but it seems to me it's something about sweet potatoes or regular potatoes... It doesn't matter: whatever they plant, they'll reap in abundance.'
- b. *¿Ho dubta vosté? Em té igual*. La cosa ja està feta i ningú no deu res a ningú... (1961, Eduard Soleriestruch, *De la ingènua veritat*)
'Do you doubt it? I don't care. It's already done, and no one owes anyone anything...'
- c. I en acabant de dir-nos tot allò afegia que quan un és mort ja *tot té igual*, i només servim que per a criar malves.
(1976, Carmelina Sánchez Cutillas, *Matèria de Bretanya*)
'And after telling us all that, he would add that once someone is dead, nothing matters anymore, and we're only good for pushing up daisies.'

6. A diversity of indifference constructions with the verb *tenir* 'to have'

Despite the discussion in §5, the use of *tenir* in indifference constructions does not appear to be restricted to Valencian Catalan. For instance, in the town of Arbeka (Les Garrigues), located within the Northwestern Catalan area, the formula [ketese'məs], pronounced with exclamatory intonation and containing the verbal form *té* (third person singular present indicative of *tenir*), has been documented (personal on-site surveys). This formula likely originates from an exclamative question in which the interrogative pronoun *què* (< QUĬD) 'what', pronounced with [e], as is characteristic of Western Catalan, and the comparative quantifier *més* (< MAGIS) 'more', realised with [ɛ] in the local variety, can be identified. Examples of this formula are presented in (20): (20a) conveys [EQUIVALENCE], while (20b) expresses [IRRELEVANCE], as does (20c), although the latter is specifically employed with the pragmatic function of cancelling an obstacle.

- (20) a. — Quin vols, lo verd o ·l blau? [/] — [ketese'məs] la un que l'altre!
"Which one do you want, the green one or the blue one?" [/] "What difference does it make which one!"
- b. — Ja s'ha tornat a posar les sabates que li fan mal! I en (a)cabat es queix[e].
[/] — [ketese'məs] D(e)ixa-la fer.
"She's put on those shoes that hurt her again! And then she complains." [/]
"What's it to you? Let her do it."

- c. — I com és que no hi vols anar? [/] — És que em fa angúnia. No hi conec ningú. [/] — [ketese'mes] Així comences a fer amics.
 “And why don’t you want to go?” [/] “It gives me the creeps. I don’t know anyone there.” [/] “So what? That’s how you start making friends.”

Extraction of the lemma *tenir* in the CTILC makes it possible to identify various indifference constructions that include this verb, one of which accounts for the formula [ketese'mes], as will be shown. In addition to *té igual*, which appears exclusively in Valencian works (§ 5), five other constructions are identified. One of these structures involves the insertion of *tenir* in a quantitative comparative: *tant té... com*, a construction parallel to *tant hi fa... com*, *tant se val... com*, and *tant és... com*. The sole example of this in the corpus, from Central Catalan, is provided in (21).

- (21) Però si us la pagaven bé, *tant té* guanyar els diners en una cosa *com* en una altra.
 No es això? (1908, Juli Vallmitjana, *Sota Montjuïc*)
 ‘But if they were paying you well, it wouldn’t matter whether you earned the money doing one thing or another. Isn’t that so?’

Furthermore, four types of exclamatory questions are observed. The simplest of these is *què té?*, a construction parallel to *què hi fa?* and *què importa?*, which appears four times in the corpus: three examples are from Central Catalan and one from Balearic Catalan, the last of which is shown in (22).

- (22) Veus Margalideta, en Bernat és un bon al·lot, *què té* si és tres anys més jove que tu! Ses diferències d’edat *no hi fan res*
 (1972, M. Antònia Oliver, *Cròniques de la molt anomenada ciutat de Montcarrà*)
 ‘You see, Margalideta, Bernat is a good boy; what does it matter that he’s three years younger than you! Age differences don’t mean anything’

The other exclamatory questions feature the comparative quantifier *més* ‘more’. In this regard, it parallels the Spanish expression of indifference *¿Qué más da?*, which uses the cognate *más* ‘more’ but with the verb *dar* ‘to give’ (§ 3). In the examples found in the CTILC, *més* can appear in either preverbal or postverbal position. In the preverbal position, as in *què més té?*, thirteen occurrences are identified, nine from Central Catalan, three from Northwestern Catalan — all by the same author, Maria Barbal, such as the one shown in (23) — and one from Valencian Catalan.

- (23) — Tant si ho sabia per endavant com si no, *què més té?* [/] — Què més, què més, però no veus l’escàndol? (2019, Maria Barbal, *A l’amic escocès*)
 “Whether he knew it beforehand or not, what does it matter?” [/] “What does it matter, what does it matter — can’t you see the scandal?”

With the comparative quantifier in the postverbal position, that is, *què té més?*, a larger number of examples are found, eighteen in total, including thirteen from Central Catalan, as in (24a), four from Balearic Catalan, and one from Northwestern Catalan, by Pep Coll, shown in (24b).

- (24) a. “No pot ser, Eulàlia. Em vaig treure el dol abans d’acabar l’any perquè ja saps que no puc resistir els vestits negres; però anar a una festa, és diferent”. L’Eulàlia li posà la mà damunt d’un genoll: “¿*Què té més* deixar passar un any o dos? No t’enterris, creu-me. (1974, Mercè Rodoreda, *Mirall trencat*) “It can’t be, Eulàlia. I put away my mourning clothes before the year was over because you know I can’t stand black dresses; but going to a party is different.” Eulàlia placed her hand on her knee: “What does it matter whether you wait a year or two? Don’t bury yourself, believe me.
- b. — Si toques aquesta mula, t’omplo la cara d’hòsties! [/] — No us feu mala sang! — va dir l’altre soldat —. Fes-te la del costat! *Què té més* una que l’altra! (1989, Josep Coll, *La mula vella*) “If you touch that mule, I’ll punch your face!” [/] “Don’t get worked up!” said the other soldier. “Take the one next to it! What does it matter, one or the other?”

Finally, a variant of this structure features the comparative quantifier *més* in postverbal position, preceded by the preposition *de* ‘of’ with a partitive function: *què té de més?* This structure appears only once in the CTILC, specifically in (25), where it is attested in a Valencian source.

- (25) — ¿No veus [/] que pòrtes lo cul al aire? — [/] Y li contestí: — ¡Redeu! [/] ¿no porta vosté la cara? [/] Puix digam, ¿*qué té demés* [/] *la cara que ’l cul?* ¿Acás [/] tindre cul es un secret? (1900, Josep Francesc Sanmartín, *Del agre dols*) “Don’t you see [/] that you’re exposing your backside?” [/] And I replied: “Good heavens! [/] Don’t you expose your face? [/] Well then, tell me, what’s the difference [/] between the face and the backside? So are you saying [/] having a backside is a secret?”

In total, the CTILC contains 43 examples of these six types of *tenir*-based constructions, spanning from 1865 to 2020, with relative frequencies ranging from 0.3 per million words (pmw) in Central Catalan to 0.76 pmw in Valencian Catalan, as shown in Table 8.¹¹

11. The CTILC exhibits a marked dialectal imbalance: Central Catalan, 85,515,366 words; Valencian Catalan, 10,555,258; Balearic Catalan, 8,740,029; Northwestern Catalan, 7,905,251; Northern Catalan, 1,042,422.

Table 8. *Tenir*-based indifference constructions in the CTILC

CTILC (1832–2020)	Central Catalan	Balearic Catalan	Northwestern Catalan	Valencian Catalan	Total
<i>té igual</i> [1978–2020]	–	–	–	6	6
<i>tant té... com</i> [1908]	1	–	–	–	1
<i>què té?</i> [1875–1994]	3	1	–	–	4
<i>què més té?</i> [1865–2019]	9	–	3	1	13
<i>què té més?</i> [1867–2010]	13	4	1	–	18
<i>què té de més?</i> [1900]	–	–	–	1	1
Total	26	5	4	8	43
Frequency pmw	0,3	0,57	0,51	0,76	0,37

The variant *què té de més?* may have given rise to the formula [ketese'mes] through a process of dental dissimilation: [keteðe'mes] > [ketese'mes]. Like the CTILC, the CIVAL contains only a single attestation of this indifference construction, documented in a philological work that describes it as characteristic of the traditional speech of Alcoi (L'Alcoià). This source provides the three examples in (26), all featuring the variant *i què té de més?*, introduced by the copulative conjunction *i* 'and'.¹²

- (26) a. *¿I què té de més anar pel de la dreta que pel de l'esquerra si els dos camins són iguals i arriben al mateix lloc?*

(2009, Eugeni S. Reig, *Les nostres paraules*)

'And what difference does it make whether we take the one on the right or the one on the left if both paths are alike and lead to the same place?'

12. The CIVAL also includes one attestation of *què té més?* from the same source and seven instances of *què més té?* from various works dated between 1997 and 2009.

- b. *¿I què té de més que el president de la finca siga el del primer pis o el del tercer, si cap dels dos resoldrà el problema de l'ascensor?*
(2009, Eugeni S. Reig, *Les nostres paraules*)
'And what difference does it make whether the president of the flat owners' association is from the first floor or the third, if neither of them will solve the problem with the elevator?'
- c. *¿I què té de més fer-ho aixina o fer-ho aixana, carabassa?*
(2009, Eugeni S. Reig, *Les nostres paraules*)
'And what difference does it make if you do it this way or that way, you fool?'

7. Conclusions

This study has demonstrated how a network of fixed constructions for expressing indifference has emerged from the syntactic pattern of equality comparatives. These constructions encode the notions of [EQUIVALENCE], [IRRELEVANCE], [LACK OF PREFERENCE], and [DISINTEREST] — all closely tied to the overarching concept of [INDIFFERENCE] — depending on whether they retain the comparative coda or undergo truncation, and on whether they incorporate a dative marking the experiencer, as schematised in Table 9. Pragmatically, they serve a range of discourse functions, including downplaying a fact, accepting an apology, countering an objection, neutralising a potential obstacle, or refusing an offer of help.

In constructions derived from qualitative comparatives, *igual* 'same' functions as the element triggering the comparison, whereas *tant* 'as much' plays this role in quantitative comparatives. However, comparative structures are not the only means of expressing indifference: it can also be conveyed through negative declarative constructions with the adverb *no* 'not' or exclamatory questions introduced by the interrogative pronoun *què* 'what'. The verbs found in these structures form a restricted set and fall into two main categories. On the one hand, there are copular and light verbs, such as *ésser* 'to be', *fer* 'to do', *donar* 'to give', and *tenir* 'to have'. On the other, there are verbs of estimation, including *valer* 'to be worth', *importar* 'to matter', and *estimar* 'to value'.

In colloquial registers, neutral constructions coexist with more expressive variants that enhance intensity through various strategies. These include reinforcing *igual* 'same' with adverbs such as *ben* 'well' or *absolutament* 'absolutely'; replacing *fer* 'to do' with more marked alternatives like *fotre* or *fúmer*; quantifying *importar* 'to matter' with evaluative or taboo minimisers such as *rave* 'radish' or *merda* 'shit'; and strengthening the interrogative pronoun *què* 'what' in exclamatory questions by appending religious or sexual taboo words, such as *dimoni* 'devil' or *collons* 'balls'.

Table 9. Indifference through equality comparatives:
Semantic network and syntactic patterns

Comparative constructions of indifference			
	Full construction	Truncated construction	
<i>és igual... com</i> <i>tant és... com</i> <i>tant hi/li fa... com</i> <i>tant se val... com</i>	[EQUIVALENCE]	[IRRELEVANCE]	<i>és igual!</i> <i>tant és!</i> <i>tant hi/li fa!</i> <i>tant se val!</i>
Without dative	[INDIFFERENCE]		Without dative
With experiencer dative	[LACK OF PREFERENCE]	[DISINTEREST]	With experiencer dative
<i>més igual... com</i> <i>tant més... com</i> <i>tant me fa... com</i> <i>tant se me'n dona... com</i>	Full construction	Truncated construction	<i>més igual!</i> <i>tant més!</i> <i>tant me fa!</i> <i>tant se me'n dona!</i>

From a dialectal perspective, beyond the range of variants documented in the ALDC that express [DISINTEREST] – as well as related notions such as [LACK OF IMPACT] and [LACK OF CONCERN] – the most significant finding is the existence of indifference constructions with *estimar* ‘to value’ and *tenir* ‘to have’ in first person. This pattern implies that the semantic role of the experiencer is encoded as the subject rather than the dative. Furthermore, searches in the CTILC and CIVAL corpora reveal that *tenir*-based constructions for expressing indifference display considerable structural diversity. They include qualitative equality comparatives with *igual* ‘same’, quantitative equality comparatives with *tant* ‘as much’, and a variety of exclamatory questions introduced by *què* ‘what’. The dialectal variants *té igual* and *tinc igual* appear to be specific to Valencian Catalan, while the exclamatory questions *què té?*, *què més té?*, *què té més?*, and *què té de més?* are attested across different Catalan dialects.

Table 10 summarises the neutral expressions of indifference that have been the primary focus of this chapter.

Table 10. Neutral expressions of indifference with copular and light verbs, and with verbs of estimation

Neutral expressions of indifference	Qualitative comparative <i>igual</i> 'same'	Quantitative comparative <i>tant</i> 'as much'	Negative declarative <i>no</i> 'not'	Exclamatory question <i>què</i> 'what'
COPULAR VERBS				
<i>ésser</i> 'to be'	<i>(m')és igual</i>	<i>tant (m')és</i>	<i>no m'és res</i>	<i>i a jo què m'és?</i>
LIGHT VERBS				
<i>fer</i> 'to do'	<i>(em) fa igual</i>	<i>tant (hi/li/em) fa</i>	<i>no hi fa res</i>	<i>què hi fa?</i>
<i>donar</i> 'to give'		<i>tant se me'n/m'hi dona</i>		
<i>tenir</i> 'to have'	<i>(em) té igual</i> <i>tinc igual</i>	<i>tant té</i>		<i>què té?</i> <i>què més té?</i> <i>què té més?</i> <i>què té de més?</i> [ketese'mes]
VERBS OF ESTIMATION				
<i>valer</i> 'to be worth'		<i>tant se val</i>		
<i>importar</i> 'to matter'			<i>no</i> <i>(m')importa</i>	<i>què</i> <i>(m')importa?</i>
<i>estimar</i> 'to value'		<i>tant m'estim(o)</i>		

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