The pragmatics of ‘at least’: Saltem, utique, dumtaxat, certe

La pragmatique d’« au moins » : saltem, utique, dumtaxat et certe

RÉSUMÉS

English

Dictionaries and translations create the impression that there is an overlap in the meaning of the Latin particles saltem, utique, dumtaxat, and certe, which all seem to express, in some of their uses, the equivalent of English ‘at least’. However, an analysis in terms of focus particles and scalarity reveals that this overlap is only superficial. Whereas saltem and certe (in some of its uses) can indeed be analysed as scalar particles expressing a medium value, utique and dumtaxat are non-scalar, expressing an inclusive maximal and a restrictive minimal value, respectively.

Dictionnaires et traductions donnent souvent l'impression que la signification des particules saltem, utique, dumtaxat et certe se recouvre, parce qu'elles peuvent toutes exprimer, dans certains contextes, le sens d'« au moins ». Cependant, une analyse détaillée révèle que la ressemblance entre ces emplois n'est que superficielle. Seules les particules saltem et (dans certains contextes) certe peuvent être analysées comme particules vraiment scalaires, tandis que utique et dumtaxat sont des particules non-scalaires : utique a une valeur dite « inclusive », dumtaxat est « restrictif ».

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés: particule, focus, scalarité, valeur inclusive, valeur restrictive
Keywords: particle, focus, scalarity, inclusive value, restrictive value
In Latin we find a number of so-called focus particles that seem to be used to indicate a relatively low ranking on a scale of expectation and can be translated in English by means of ‘at least’ or ‘at any rate’: saltem, utique, dumtaxat, and – in some of its uses – certe. Thus, in examples (1)-(4) these particles could be analysed as evoking a comparison with higher ranking alternatives, which are either explicitly listed (in 1, 2, and 4) or implied (in 3); the element in the scope of these particles is presented as more realistic.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I will offer a contrastive analysis of these four particles, which aims at demonstrating how they differ, in spite of their apparent similarity, in their orientation and scalar implications. My starting point will be the analysis of saltem as a scalar particle proposed by Bortolussi and Sznajder (2001). They convincingly claim that saltem is a scalar particle that is used to focalize items whose referents are less preferable, but more feasible than alternatives to which they are explicitly (as in ex. 1) or implicitly compared. Scalar uses of certe are briefly discussed by Schrickx (2011, p. 214-220), while the differences between saltem and the scalar uses of certe has been discussed in Bertocchi (1998 and 1999).

Utique and dumtaxat, on the other hand, have not received much attention.

In his comparative study of focus particles, König makes a number of useful distinctions, of which I repeat here only the ones relevant for our present purpose:

Focus particles, like even or only, do not only mark the elements in their scope as having focus, but usually ‘evoke’ a set of alternatives for the element in their scope that are relevant in the context. Thus, only in ‘only John went home’ evokes a set of alternative persons who did not go home (e.g. Peter, or John’s wife). The alternatives that are evoked by the use of focus particles are either included or excluded, depending

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on the meaning of the particle. When focus particles are used to include the set of evoked alternatives, they are so-called “additive particles” (e.g. also, even, in particular; Latin quoque, etiam); when the alternatives are excluded, we speak of “restrictive particles” (e.g. only, just, exactly; Latin tantum, modo).

Secondly, focus particles may or may not impose a scalar ranking on the element in their scope in relation to the alternatives evoked, even when these alternatives are not intrinsically ordered. Examples of scalar focus particles are even, just and Latin modo, etiam. Non-scalar particles are e.g. also, only, and Latin quoque, tantum. Scalar particles evaluate their scope as ranking either higher or lower on a relevant scale than the alternatives that are evoked. Thus, in a sentence like ‘even John went home’, even indicates not only that the alternative persons evoked went home as well, but also that ‘John’ ranks higher than all others on the scale involved, and that his position on this scale implies that if he went home, the others went as well. Focus particles like even (or Latin etiam) therefore indicate a “maximal scalar value”. On the other hand, just (like Latin modo) indicates a “minimal scalar value”, as we can see in a sentence like ‘Just John went home’, because the use of just implies that all others, who are ranking higher on a scale of whom one would have expected to go home, did not go. English only and Latin tantum, on the other hand, do evoke alternatives, but do not impose scalar ranking in terms of expectations.

The various distinctions made above are summarized in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>inclusive</th>
<th>non-scalar</th>
<th>scalar</th>
<th>value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>also</td>
<td>even - etiam</td>
<td>maximal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restrictive</td>
<td>only</td>
<td>just - modo</td>
<td>minimal</td>
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### 3. Medium value: saltem and certe

Some focus particles, however, do not evaluate their scope as either maximal or minimal, but as having a “medium value”, and here at least comes in. When we say ‘at least John went home’, at least indicates that not all alternative persons evoked went home, but some probably did; John occupies neither a maximal nor a minimal position on the scale evoked.

In the case of a medium value, the focus of attention can be either on what is included (and, hence, ranks lower on a positive scale) or on what is excluded (and ranks higher on a positive scale). As Bortolussi and Szajder have shown, following Bertocchi (1998), this is exactly the difference between saltem and certe. They claim that ‘certe X’ means ‘at least X, but possibly more than X’, which includes and confirms lower ranking alternatives, while ‘saltem X’ means ‘not more than X but at least X’, which excludes higher ranking alternatives. Saltem does not indicate that its scope has the minimal value but that it has a lower value than alternatives that may be preferable, but are not feasible. In addition, they stress that by means of certe the speaker commits himself in assertive speech acts to the inclusion of the lower ranking alternatives up to the medium value, while saltem is often used in non-factive environments (directives, wishes, questions, counterfactuals, etc.).

Table 2 summarizes the medium value as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>non-scalar</th>
<th>scalar</th>
<th>value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>inclusive</td>
<td>saltem</td>
<td>maximal</td>
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<tr>
<td>restrictive</td>
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Table 2: Minimal, maximal, and medium values of scalar and non-scalar focus particles
4. Non-scalar focus particles: dumtaxat and utique

Let us start with dumtaxat, which is relatively straightforward. Example (9=3), repeated here, gives the impression that its function is similar to either certe, asserting the various ways in which Pliny imitates Demosthenes and including all lower values up to and including the figuris orationis, or limiting his attempts to imitate Demosthenes to the figures of speech, excluding higher ranking forms of imitation. The latter seems to
be suggested by the Loeb translation ‘though only’ quoted here:

Temptavi enim imitari Demosthenen semper tuum, Calvum nuper meum, dumtaxat figuris orationis. (Plin. Epist. 1, 2, 2)

(9) “I have tried to model myself on Demosthenes, as you always do, and lately on my favourite Calvus, though only in figures of speech.’

However, as many other examples make clear, dumtaxat is usually not scalar at all, and does not impose a scalar ranking on the alternatives evoked. Instead, it is a non-scalar restrictive focus particle, very much like English ‘only’ and Latin tantum discussed earlier. A first indication is the fact that it actually correlates quite regularly with these two, cf. (10):

Nam Theopompus, ante quem nemo mentionem habuit, urbe dumtaxat a Gallis captam dixit, Clitarchus ab eo proximus legationem tantum ad Alexandrum missam. (Plin. Nat. 3, 57)

(10) ‘For Theopompus, before whom nobody mentioned them, merely states that Rome was taken by the Gauls, and Clitarchus, the next after him, only that an embassy was sent to Alexander.’

A further indication is found in examples such as (11), where the exclusion of alternatives evoked is explicitly non-scalar (de ceteris rebus).

Ad ea quae scripsisti commodius equidem possem de singulis ad te rebus scribere si M. Tullius, scriba meus, adesset. A quo mihi exploratum est in rationibus dumtaxat referendis (de ceteris rebus affirmare non possum) nihil eum fecisse scientem quod esset contra aut rem aut exstimationem tuam. (Cic. Fam. 5, 20, 1)

(11) ‘It would be easier for me to reply to your letter in detail if my Secretary, M. Tullius, were here. As to him, I am fully assured that so far as the rendering of accounts goes (on other matters I cannot speak for certain) he has not intentionally done anything contrary to your financial interest or reputation.’

Finally, in those examples with dumtaxat in which a scalar ranking does seem to be involved, this ranking is either an inherent, semantically determined scalar order that is not evoked or imposed by dumtaxat (cf. ex. (12), where the length of a period is involved), or the evoked alternative is part of a binary opposition instead of a scale. In the latter case the alternative is often introduced by e.g. quidem (for which see e.g. Kroon, 2005; 2011), as in (13).

ut [...] pleraque senatus auctoritate et instituto ac more gerentur, atque uti consules potestatem haberent tempore dumtaxat annuum genere ipso ac iure regiam… (Cic. Rep. 2, 56)

(12) ‘practically everything being done by the authority of the senate and in accordance with its established customs, and that the consuls held a power which, though only of one year’s duration, was truly regal in general character and in legal sanction…’

… cum is inimicus qui ad meam perniciem vocem suam communibus hostibus praebuisse spiritu dumtaxat viveret, re quidem infra omnes mortuos amandatus esset. (Cic. P. red. ad Quir. 10)

(13) ‘… while that enemy of mine who had lent his voice to the foes of the state to work my downfall lived indeed, in the sense that breath was yet in his body but in truth he had been removed to a lower depth than all the dead.’

Finally, I want to discuss an example in which dumtaxat is often interpreted as being interchangeable with saltem, the whole phrase meaning ‘preferably longer but at least / at any rate until May 6’. The context makes clear, however, that Cicero wants to get away as soon as possible, because he is bothered and disturbed by his talkative neighbours. Dumtaxat therefore means ‘only’ here, as is explained in the next sentence vide enim… Moreover, dumtaxat is not scalar here, either, because it does not evoke a comparison with alternatives that are lower or higher on a scale of expectation. If saltem was used here, Cicero would evoke higher ranking alternatives, that were more
feasible but not realistic. But if a comparison is at stake here at all, it is with *statim*; the alternative of a longer stay is simply and straightforwardly rejected.\(^12\)

*Quo me vertam? Statim mehercule Arpinum irem, ni te in Formiano commodissime exspectari viderem, dumtaxat ad prid. Non. Mai. Vide enim quibus hominibus aures sint deditae meae.* (Cic. Att. 2, 14, 2)

\('Where is a man to turn? I would go to Arpinum right away upon my word, only it's clearly most convenient for me to expect you at Formiae – up to 6 May that is, no longer, for look at the kind of people I am condemned to listen to!'\)

Let us now turn to the last particle that in some of its uses is taken as another 'at least' equivalent, viz. *utique*. Thus, e.g. the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* lists example (15=2) under the heading of 'at least'. In this particular case, the addition of *si minus* may have been taken as an indication that, as in instances with *saltem*, the preceding clause (*velim ante possis*) presents a preferred, higher ranking alternative, and that in the *si minus* clause the scope of *utique* is presented as less desirable, but more feasible. In fact, nothing in the context of the example prevents such as a reading. Moreover, a second similarity seems to be that with *utique*, as with *saltem*, we relatively often find directives and wishes, rather than assertions.

\(\text{Velim ante possis; si minus, } \textit{utique} \text { simul simus cum Brutus veniet in Tusculanum. Magni interest mea una nos esse.} \text { (Cic. Att. 13, 4, 2)}\)

\('I wish you could manage it before, but if not, let us at any rate be together when Brutus comes to Tusculum. It is of great importance to me that we should both be there.'\)

However, when we turn to a number of comparable instances in Cicero's letters, we observe that often the importance of the scope of *utique* is stressed, what seems to be an indication of merely focusing, i.e. a singling out, rather than evoking more preferable but less feasible alternatives. Some examples are (16) and (17), which, again, both are directives:

\(\text{Velim tamen si quid est de Antoni adventu quod audieris scribas ad me et, quoniam huc non venis, cenes apud nos } \textit{utique} \text { prid. Kal. Cave aliter facias. Cura ut valeas.} \text { (Cic. Att. 2, 2, 3)}\)

\('Still, if you get any news about Antonius' arrival I should be obliged if you would write to me; and as you are not coming here, dine with us by all means on the 29th. Don't do otherwise, and take good care of yourself.'\)

\(\text{Sed ante quam proficiscare, } \textit{utique} \text { explicatum sit illud HS XX'et DCCC'; hoc velim in maximis rebus et maxime necessaritis habeas, ut quod auctore te velle coepi adiutore adsequar.} \text { (Cic. Att. 5, 5, 2)}\)

\('But before you leave do without fail get that matter of the 20,000 and the 800,000 straightened out. I should be grateful if you would look on it as something really important and urgent, so that what I came to want with your prompting I may achieve with your assistance.'\)

Whereas the expressions of urgency are not totally incompatible with a meaning of 'at least', the 'mere focussing' is often found in binary (and therefore not scalar) constellations, as in the following example, which occurs in a speech:

\('And consider, tribunes how wide is the difference between my view and yours.') *Vos, etiamsi tunc faciendum non fuerit, nunc *\textit{utique} \text { faciendum putatis: ego contra – nec id mirati sitis priusquam quale sit auditoritis –, etiamsi tum migrandum fuisset incolunti tota urbe, nunc has ruinas relinquendas non censerem.} \text { (Liv. 5, 53, 3)}\)

\('You think that even if then it ought not to have been done, yet now at any rate it ought; I on the contrary – and be not astonished at this, till you have heard what my meaning is –, even if it had been right to migrate then, with the City all intact, should not think it right to abandon these ruins now.'\)

However, the strongest evidence for a non-scalar value of *utique* comes from examples like (19), where the idiomatic *si quando umquam* 'if ever' makes clear that the
alternatives for the scope of *utique* need no scalar ranking, or cannot be ordered at all; cf. also *patria* as an unordered set of people in (20).

> *Agitatum etiam in consilio est, ut, si quando umquam severo ullam imperio bellum administratum esset, tunc *utique* disciplina militaris ad priscos redigeretur mores.* (Liv. 8, 6, 14)

(19) 'It was also urged in the council that if ever any war had been conducted with stern authority, now was the occasion of all others for recalling military discipline to its ancient courses.'

> *Nec nunc me, ut redirem, mea voluntas mutata, sed vestra fortuna perpulit; quippe, ut in sua sede maneret patria, id agebatur, non ut ego *utique* in patria essem.* (Liv. 5, 51, 1)

(20) 'Nor have I now been induced to do so by any change in my desires, but by the alteration in your fortunes. For the issue was this, that my countrymen should abide in their own home, not that I, at any or all costs, should be with my countrymen.'

The scope of *utique* is evaluated as having a maximal value - however, not as the extreme of a scale but as a single maximum among a not necessarily ordered set of alternatives. When there is some sort of scale involved, the set of alternatives often form a series (rather than a scale), with the scope of *utique* as a climax, cf. *in primis* ... *deinde* ...

... *utique postremis mensibus* in (21):

> ('The plebs were tranquil, but the younger patricians began to insult them.') *Ubi tribuni auxilio humilioribus essent, in primis parum proderat; deinde ne ipsi quidem inviolati erant, *utique* postremis mensibus, cum et per coitiones potentiorum injuria fieret et vis potestatis omnis aliquanto posteriori anni parte languidior ferme esset.* (Liv. 3, 65, 8)

(21) 'When the tribunes attempted to assist the lowly, at first their services were of little effect; and later they did not even escape violence themselves, especially in the last months of their term, since not only were wrongs committed through cabals of the more powerful, but the effectiveness of every magistrate rather languished, as a rule, in the latter part of the year.'

Finally, there is an interesting cluster of very similar examples in Livy's first decade containing phrases like (22), where *utique* is combined with a form of *alter*:

> *ut / ne consulum *utique* alter ex plebe crearetur / fieret / fieri* ...¹⁴

(22) *ut / ne consulum *utique* alter ex plebe crearetur / fieret / fieri* ...

The phrase *consulum *utique* alter* is usually translated by 'at least one of the consuls', i.e. as though *utique* were a scalar particle with medium value. I prefer, on the other hand, to translate as 'one of the consuls, by all means / under all circumstances / at any rate'; an interpretation in terms of 'at least' would suggest the possibility that both consuls would be plebeian, which as far as I know never was at issue in the Early Republic. My interpretation seems to be confirmed by an instance like (23), where it is the right of the patricians to name both consuls instead of only one that is clearly at stake:

> *An alter rogat qui *utique* alterum ex plebe fieri consulem iubet nec duos patricios creandi potestatem vobis permittit?* (Liv. 6, 40, 16)

(23) 'For can aught else be his meaning, when he commands that in any case one consul be chosen from the plebs, and deprives you of the power to name two patricians?'

5. Conclusion

By way of conclusion, Table 3 lists all parameters that have been discussed in this paper.

**Table 3: Summarizing *saltem*, *certe*, *dumtaxat*, and *utique***
As we can see here, the difference between the alleged synonyms can be captured effectively in terms of scalarity, in combination with the opposition between “inclusiveness” and “restrictiveness”, and the various values implied. The combination of parameters defines a basis semantic value for the particles involved, which in various contexts may lead to different interpretations (and translations). More research is needed to elaborate on these (and related) focus particles, but I do hope that this first step has shown that the idea of synonymy and at the same time opposite ‘meanings’ per particle as we find in dictionaries are beside the point.

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DI: 10.1515/joll.2001.7.1.35


DI: 10.1515/joll.2005.9.2.577


Notes

1 Example (1) is taken from Bortolussi and Sznajder, 2001, p. 51, but is also listed in the Oxford Latin Dictionary under meaning 1, ‘at least, at all events, anyhow’. Examples (2) and (3) are also taken from the Oxford Latin Dictionary, s. v. utique meaning 5 ‘certainly, at all events’ and s. v. dumtaxat meaning 4 ‘at any rate, at least’, respectively. Example (4) is taken from Schrickx, 2011, p. 217. My own ideas concerning focus particles took shape during an inspiring MA seminar on Latin particles, which I taught at the University of Amsterdam in 2012. I would like to thank the participants, and especially Thomas den Haan and Julius Roos, for their contributions and the fruitful discussions we had.

2 Unless indicated otherwise, translations are taken from Loeb editions; in this first series of examples I have left out the translation of the particle involved.


4 There is a dissertation on utique by Pfrenzinger, 1919, which gives extensive lists of uses, but is not very helpful as an analysis. The lemma dumtaxat in the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae will be briefly referred to below, in footnote 11; the other three particles have not yet been covered by the Thesaurus.

5 See in particular chapter 3; cf. furthermore Gast and van der Auwera, 2011.

6 For modo, see Risselada, 1994; Bertocchi, 2002.

7 Note that when focus particles are combined with negation, the scales and values are reversed, but in view of limited space, this paper does not deal with the effects of negation on scales, which is extensively discussed by Orlandini, 2001. In note 10, I discuss one example of a negative scale.

8 In view of the fact that the inclusive scalar use of certe is not very frequent (e.g. only 21 instances among the 106 tokens of certe in Plinius the Elder), this seems to be not a basic meaning, but a particular side effect that obtains only in a specific scalar contextual constellation. This is in line with the basic value of truth commitment that Schrickx, 2011, p. 214-220, claims for certe.

9 The translation is my own, adapted from the Loeb translation, which is freer but points in the same direction: ‘Many people consider the nature of beryls be similar, if not identical.’

10 I leave saltem out of consideration here, because it is used in a negative context, which reverses the values on the scale involved. As a result of its combination with ne, saltem here does not exclude alternatives that rank higher on the scale of ‘frightening situations’, but it excludes a situation that is less frightening, namely ‘wolves farther away’, a medium value between ‘no wolves at all’ and ‘wolves coming close’.

11 E.g. in the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, s. v. col. 2238, l. 66-67, under the heading non minus, which at the head of the lemma is paraphrased as “minime, certe, saltem, utique, quidem” (s. v., col. 2236, l. 47-48).

12 Pace Shackleton Bailey, whose translation in the Loeb edition quoted in (14) may suggest a scalar interpretation.

13 I have adapted the translation of Cenes apud nos utique prid. Kal. Cave aliter facias. The Loeb translation (by Shackleton Bailey) points in the same direction of urgency, but is not so very literal, and hence less clear about the meaning of utique: ‘Don’t fail to dine with us on the 29th. Mind you do.’

14 Cf. e.g. Liv. 6, 35, 5-7; 6, 38, 1; 6, 40, 16 (= ex. 23); 8, 12, 14. A slightly different case involving a consul is Liv. 2, 27, 7, where a scalar ‘at least’ interpretation is also not possible.

Pour citer cet article

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