

## Article

# Verbs That Express Passive Hearing in Catalan and French: Semantic Change of the Forms *sentir* (Catalan) and *entendre* (French)

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to study the meanings of passive auditory perception verbs in Catalan (*sentir*) and French (*entendre*) with regards to diachronic semantic change and from the point of view of cognitive semantics. These verbs do not originally encode the meaning related to perception, at least not historically. By taking examples drawn from diachronic and synchronic lexicographical sources, I have analyzed the meanings conveyed by these two verbs and their metaphorical and metonymic projections from their origin to their current use. This research provides new data on semantic extensions related to verbs of perception: certain projections that are frequently related to this kind of verb do not always occur in the direction predicted by inter-linguistic studies. Particularly, the study of the evolution in the French form *entendre* contradicts the expectations that can be drawn from other studies of verbs on this conceptual domain in that it seems to have evolved in the opposite direction, i.e., from intellectual understanding to sensorial perception.

**Keywords:** perception verbs; passive hearing; semantic change; metaphor; metonymy



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## 1. Introduction

The semantic domain of perception has five components: visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory. Thus, in standard Catalan, for example, the main verbs of perception are *veure* 'to see', *mirar* 'to look', *sentir* 'to hear', *escoltar* 'to listen (to)', *tocar* 'to touch', *olorar* 'to smell', and *tastar* 'to taste'.<sup>1</sup> In Catalan, some of the components have two associated verbs: *veure* and *mirar* for sight or *sentir* and *escoltar* for hearing. The main meanings of these lexical pairs show differences that have been generally described in numerous studies on verbs of perception: these types of verbs can be classified into groups according to the subject cognitive abilities, i.e., what in the literature has been called "semantics of the subject" (Ibarretxe-Antunano 1999, p. 42). This research focuses on a group that includes verbs whose subject does not control the stimulus of perception. They are called: "passive perception verbs" (Palmer 1966); "stative with experiencer subject verbs" (Lehrer 1990); or "experience verbs" (Viberg 1984). The verbs *veure* 'to see' and *sentir* 'to hear' are examples of this group when they encode their prototypical meaning, as demonstrated in the following sentences: *En Daniel va veure un mosquit* 'Daniel saw a mosquito' and *En Daniel va sentir un mosquit* 'Daniel heard a mosquito'.

These verbs stand in contrast with active perception verbs (such as *mirar* 'to look' or *escoltar* 'to listen' in the sentences *En Daniel mira una pel·lícula* 'Daniel is watching a film' and *En Daniel escolta la ràdio* 'Daniel is listening to the radio') as well as with what are called "stimulus subject verbs" (Lehrer 1990) or "copulative verbs" (Viberg 1984), in which the subject is the stimulus of perception, as in the sentences *La comida olía/sabía bien* 'The food smells/tastes good' in Spanish, and *La sopa sent a farigola* 'The soup smells like thyme' in Catalan, now archaic, DCBV (s.v. *sentir*).

As stated above, this research focuses on the first group mentioned. I begin from an onomasiological point of view to see how certain Romance languages encode passive

auditory perception. Then, from a semasiological perspective, I analyze the polysemous meanings associated with these forms.

Romance languages have the following forms for hearing verbs (always taking into account their prototypical meanings) (See Table 1):

**Table 1.** Auditory perception verbs in Romance languages.

Language	Passive Hearing	Active Hearing
Spanish	Oír	Escuchar
Catalan	Sentir (oir)	Escoltar
French	Entendre (ouïr)	Écouter
Friulian	Sintî (uldî)	Scoltá
Galician	Oir, ouvir	Escoitar
Italian	Sentire (udire)	Ascoltare
Occitan	Ausir, entendre	Escotar
Portuguese	Ouvir	Escutar
Romanian	A auzi	A asculta
Romansh (Engadine)	Udir, dudir	Tadlar
Sardinian	Intèndere	Ascurtare
Sicilian	Sèntiri (udiri)	Ascutari

As seen in Table 1, passive auditory perception verbs present greater variation in forms than active perception verbs in Romance languages. The latter share a common derivation from the Latin *auscūltare*, with the sole exception of *tadlar* in Romansh. Several forms related to passive perception come from the form *audire* in Latin, which already featured ‘hear’ as a prototypical meaning. However, from a synchronic approach, the preservation of *audio* is not predominant in Latin-speaking territories. On the contrary, the innovative forms spread through Sardinia and all of Italian, Catalan, Franco-Provençal, and Oil territories.

In some languages such as Catalan, forms related to passive perception derive from *sēntīre*, which had the prototypical meaning of “perceiving through any sense” in Latin (it is pertinent to note that, in addition, in this language, it also encoded other meanings, such as ‘feel’ or ‘experience’).

In this tendency, our language [Catalan] has been accompanied more by Italian and Occitan than by French or Spanish, which have been refractory to it: French, entirely, while in classical Spanish and, above all, in modern American Spanish this is not the case [ . . . ]. The Italians go a little further, in the sense of using it to ‘listen’ (aspectual role of ‘determinative’): “*sentà, amico . . .*”, “*mi faccia il piacere di sentire . . .*” (Corominas 1980–1991, s.v. *sentir*).<sup>2</sup>

Other languages, such as French, have forms derived from *intendēre*, which had as a prototypical meaning ‘to put in tension, to stretch’ in Latin, with a semantic value of directionality: in Latin, *tendo* and *intendo* are largely synonymous, but the prefix *in-* introduces the value of directing movement, which is essential for analyzing the matter at hand in this research. Hence, this verb also encodes the meanings ‘to indicate’, ‘to point’, and ‘to direct attention’, which are fundamental to the semantic developments addressed.

It should be noted that some languages have verbs derived from all the Latin forms we are referring to: in Catalan, in addition to *sentir*, we find the examples *oir* and *entendre*, but they are scarcely used or not at all in present-day Catalan. In fact, all languages using the equivalents of *sentir* and *entendre* as primary forms—except Sardinian—also present the result from the Latin *audire*, which is, however, archaic or marginal, with different uses according to the tradition of each language.<sup>3</sup>

This article analyzes an example of each verb that encodes passive auditory perception with a form that did not have the prototypical meaning of ‘hear’ in Latin: the form *sentir* in Catalan and the form *entendre* in French. Accordingly, our aim is to describe the semantics of these two verbs in each language and to make a comparison. This comparison will take

into account the diachronic data, which establishes the evolution of the meanings codified for these words throughout history. It is not the main goal of this study to go further into diachronic analysis but to use examples extracted from lexicographical sources. Despite this, systematically delving into it through examples extracted from textual corpora would be interesting in following studies.

As described in Section 1, perception verbs are highly polysemous. Therefore, within the theoretical framework of cognitive semantics, this research analyzes the metaphorical and metonymic projections that are established between the meanings and shows, from a diachronic point of view, the meanings encoded by each verb and which semantic changes have taken place.

## 2. Theoretical Issues

### 2.1. The Semantics of Perception Verbs

Throughout history, sensory perception has been studied from various points of view such as biology, psychology, anthropology, and philosophy, among others. Sensory perception has also been analyzed from different perspectives and theoretical frameworks within the field of linguistics. For example, verbs that encode perceptual processes are interesting as they offer complex syntactic relations, lexicalize varied polysemous meanings, and can become discursive markers, among other characteristics (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019). The polysemous meanings of perception verbs have been studied from cognitive semantics based on the conceptual metaphor theory. A verb such as *veure* 'to see' in Catalan can encode polysemous meanings and mean, for example, 'to understand'. The sensory experience related to vision would be the source domain that is projected to a meta-domain related to cognition, which could result in metaphorical expressions such as *Ja veig el que em vols dir* 'I see what you mean'.

According to cognitive semantics, meaning is based on how humans experience the world. The motivation of conceptual metaphors is also embodied, that is, it is based on the interaction individuals have with the physical world in which they live (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The concept of embodiment has led to talk of universality in some cases: from the fact that bodily experiences are the same for all humans, it could be inferred that meaning, which is grounded in embodiment, is also the same for all, regardless of other factors such as culture. One of the most cited examples by cognitive studies when referring to the universality of certain conceptual metaphors related to both active and passive perception relates the sense of sight to cognition, as sight is deemed the most reliable of the senses (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

If meaning was determined solely by human bodily experiences, it would be universal, yet several studies show that this is not the case: bodily experience is modified by sociocultural information; it is filtered through the sieve of each particular culture (for a comprehensive study on the links between embodiment, language, and culture, see Yu 2014). As with the study of other meanings, the study of this type of metaphor must also take into account the relationship of human experience with sociocultural filters. Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2008) compiled examples reported by other researchers who show that conceptual metaphors relating sight to cognition are not present in all languages. One of the best-known examples is from Evans and Wilkins (2000) on certain Australian languages: the authors show how these languages relate intellect and cognition to the sense of hearing. In fact, although there was already talk of the relationship between sight and cognition in the cognitivist study of metaphors from the beginning (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), at the same time, Sweetser (1990) was already expanding this relationship and spoke of the MIND-AS-BODY metaphor, rather than INTELLECT IS SIGHT. The author stated that metaphorical projections from the body as a source domain towards the mind as a target domain do occur systematically, unlike those related only to sight.

According to studies carried out thus far, the domain of hearing, which is what I am addressing in this article, is projected to domains related mainly to the intellect and communication (see, for example, Evans and Wilkins 2000; Vanhove 2008; San Roque et al.

2018; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019). The following table shows some metaphorical projections that have been found in different languages, compiled by Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2019):

**Hearing** PAYING ATTENTION/HEEDING IS HEARING

OBEYING IS HEARING

BEING TOLD/KNOWING IS HEARING

BEING RECEPTIVE IS HEARING

TAKING SOMETHING SERIOUSLY IS LISTENING

UNDERSTANDING IS HEARING

NOTICING IS HEARING

BEING TRAINED IS BEING HEARD

HAVING AN AGREEMENT IS HEARING

Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2019, p. 47)<sup>4</sup>

It should be pointed out that, as the author herself notes, the distribution of these projections varies inter- and intra-linguistically: the fact that there is a given metaphor in a language does not mean that it is widely used in that language or that it is also generally used in the same way in different languages. Moreover, it is also worth highlighting that certain domains can be the target domain for different source domains. For example, all perceptual modalities can be projected towards the domain of the intellect. However, the type of cognition may not be exactly the same: sight is usually related to reliable knowledge, hearing to indirect knowledge, smell to intuitive knowledge, and touch and taste to experiential knowledge (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019, p. 48).

As mentioned above, one of the least studied issues in the field of research on perceptual metaphors, according to Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2013, 2019), refers to the distribution of these metaphors. The author states that inter-linguistic studies usually compare lists of metaphors present in several languages, and that this may lead to the exclusion of projections that are only present in one language, such as the link between the domains of cognition and taste in Spanish with the verb *saber*:

What is interesting about this metaphor is not only that Spanish keeps both meanings, but also that the link between taste and cognition questions the hegemony of vision for this target domain. [ . . . ] If it is true that the senses are our windows to the world, i.e., our means to gather information, a more serious account of why some languages like Latin and the Romance family choose the sense of taste for the cognition domain is in place. (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2013, p. 125)

Thus, within the same linguistic family, we therefore observe meanings of perception verbs that are present in only one of the languages. The discovery of these meanings can lead to new findings that, in this case, link the sense of taste to the intellect and cognitive abilities, which occurs infrequently in the languages analyzed in this type of research. In this regard, Sweetser (1990) points out that the study of projections between the body (as a source domain) and the mind (as a target domain) can be explained by certain diachronic changes. The author analyzes examples of Indo-European words that connect the sense of hearing with obedience: “Why should ‘hear’ come to mean ‘obey’? This I shall discuss in detail; the case I have primarily in mind is IE \**k’leu-s-*, which gives Gk. *klúo*: ‘hear’, Eng. *listen*, Dan. *lystre* ‘obey’, and Rus. *sluśat* ‘listen to’/ *sluśat’s’a* ‘obey’” (Sweetser 1990, p. 28). With these examples, she shows that some languages such as English or Russian retain the physical and metaphorical meanings of verbs, while in Danish, *lystre* solely retains the metaphorical meaning currently.

## 2.2. Diachronic Semantic Change

As previously mentioned, this study analyzes semantic change from a diachronic perspective, taking into account recent research related to cognitive semantics. This article analyzes polysemous words from a semasiological perspective. Although I am beginning

with the meanings of passive auditory perception to understand which words encode it in Catalan and French, the study focuses on the analysis of the meanings related to these polysemous words, as the words and the meanings they convey cannot be studied separately. Authors such as Grzega and Schöner (2007) and Koch (2016) explain that semantic change falls within a broader framework of study, which is *lexical change*. Koch points out that “a complete picture of lexical change can only be obtained if the semasiological and onomasiological perspectives are combined” (Koch 2016, p. 23). Semantic change shows that polysemy is quite common. In fact, polysemy is the synchronic result of semantic change (Durkin 2009; Koch 2016).

The semantic changes that have the greatest impact on a study such as this one refer to the phenomena of metonymy and metaphor. Another change that should be taken into consideration in a work of this nature, related to metaphorical change, is that of grammaticalization: perception verbs sometimes show a quasi-auxiliary behavior. In fact, grammaticalization is the result of a process of semantic change that involves an increase in abstraction that is developed through metaphorical projections (Sweetser 1990; Marín 2004). In the case of perception verbs, they move from a physical domain to a discursive meaning, and perform functions related to discursive organization as functional and categorical modifications are produced (Marín 2004, 2005; San Roque et al. 2018).

With regard to the characteristics of the semantic change produced by metaphorical or metonymic projections, we first define these two phenomena. It is worth noting that metaphorical and metonymic processes can relate to one another in semantic change: on the one hand, a metonymic change can become a metaphorical change while, on the other hand, a metonymic semantic extension can be interpreted, retrospectively, as metaphorical. Moreover, the boundaries between the two phenomena are not clear.

From the point of view of cognitive semantics, metonymy is the phenomenon by which a source concept and a target concept are related within the same semantic domain or framework (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Radden and Kövecses 1999; Barcelona 2002) and, more specifically, when the two concepts have a contiguous relationship (Dirven 1993; Geeraerts 1997, 2010; Grzega and Schöner 2007; Koch 2016). An example of semantic change due to the phenomenon of metonymy is the following:

CLat. *focus* “fireplace” → Fr. *feu*, Sp. *fuego*, It. *fuoco*, etc. “fire”

(cf. Rey 1992, s.v. *feu*; Corominas and Pascual 1980–1991, s.v. *fuego*; Cortelazzo and Zolli 1999, (sic) s.v. *fuoco*). (Koch 2016, p. 41)

Metaphorical semantic change occurs when a source concept and a target concept that are not part of the same semantic domain are related. In this sense, the encyclopedic knowledge of a language’s speakers plays a more relevant role (Langacker 1987). Unlike other types of semantic change, changes due to metaphorical processes are not based on pre-existing relationships in the world, but on similarities detected by speakers (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Koch (2016, p. 49) points out that the theory of conceptual metaphor makes it possible to explain a large number of diachronic semantic changes. Conceptual metaphors establish patterns of relationships between two domains, and there are some underlying patterns that explain a large number of metaphorical expressions that respond to semantic changes:

MEngl. *Spenden* “to pay out” → “to employ, pass (time)”

(OED, s.v. *spend*, v1, 1.a. and 4.a.). (Koch 2016, p. 41)

Related to this example from English, the theory of conceptual metaphor explains the projection between frameworks. Thus, the source domain MONEY and the concepts associated with it are also related to the target domain TIME and the concepts associated with this domain. Some more recent theories go beyond the idea of conceptual metaphor. For example, Geeraerts (2010) describes the notion of the interaction of mental spaces, which allows us to explain even expressive metaphors that can lead to semantic changes.

An important issue to bear in mind at this point, and because of the nature of our work, is that it is difficult to differentiate precisely between a metaphor and a metonymy: it



is hard to pinpoint what exactly the limits of a semantic domain are, which is why some authors (Goosens 1995; Traugott and Dasher 2001, etc.) agree in asserting that semantic contiguity is at the basis of metonymy, while semantic similarity is at the basis of metaphor (Traugott and Dasher 2001, p. 79). This idea is important for the study we are carrying out, since it is on this basis that we discuss the nature of some of the semantic projections in the data analysis. Semantic change occurs in relation to all types of words. This article focuses on the study of verbs as they present slightly more complex behavior than other lexical categories:

Since, because of their argument structure (valency), in semantic terms verbs express frames corresponding to all situation structures and in syntactic terms create whole sentence patterns, the panorama of meaning change in verbs turns out on closer inspection to be considerably more complex than in other word types. (Koch 2016, pp. 53–54)

For example, semantic change can, thus, affect the argument structure of verbs from both a semantic and a syntactic point of view. This paper focuses exclusively on issues related to semantics, but I make some remarks in this respect that I expect to develop in subsequent studies. Continuing with an example from Koch (2016), the word *sortir* from the French ('to leave' → 'to remove') undergoes modifications in its semantic and syntactic structure through a metonymic change.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. The Form *Sentir* in Catalan

The following lists the different meanings of the verb *sentir* in Catalan from a diachronic point of view. The different diachronic meanings of *sentir* are drawn from the Corominas 1980–1991 and the Alcover and Moll (1968).

Sections 3.1.1–3.1.3 focus on the main meanings of this word: 'to perceive through the senses', 'to experience subjectively', and 'to think, to opine'. The fact that we have highlighted these three meanings does not mean that they are not related to one another (as the meanings of polysemous words always are) nor that there are no more semantic extensions derived from them (e.g., 'to lament', derived from 'to experience subjectively'). Further on, in Section 4.1.1, we bring all of this together and make a systematic semantic analysis of the verb from the point of view of cognitive semantics.

##### 3.1.1. Multi-Sense Perception: Perceiving through the Senses Is Feeling

In Latin, the verb *sentire* is a multi-sense verb: it encodes any perception through any of the five senses. It is a transitive verb whose complement semantically constraints its meaning:<sup>5</sup>

- (1) *Sonitum, colorem*  
*Principio sucum sentimus in ore.* LVCR.  
*ubi me ad filiam ire sensit,* TER.  
*odore nasum sentiat, si intus sit,* PL.  
 (DE, s.v. *sentio*).

This verb appears in Catalan with a multi-sense meaning starting with Ramon Llull (Corominas 1980–1991, s.v. *sentir*), and simultaneously specializes for two senses: touch, as we see in (2), and smell, as we see in (3):

- (2) *Veer, hoir, adorar, gustar, sentir,* Llull (1287–1289), (Corominas 1980–1991, s.v. *sentir*).<sup>6</sup>
- (3) *Lo Lehó, per consell de Na Renart, féu porter del Pahó, qui sent fortament.* Llull (1287–1289), (Corominas 1980–1991, s.v. *sentir*).

In Example (3), in an intransitive form, this verb would be classified, semantically, within the third group shown in the introduction: verbs for which the subject is stimulating the perception. However, according to Corominas (1980–1991), we also find the verb in

this era as an active and a passive (transitive) perception verb with a vague meaning, as in Latin.

Regarding the forms related to smell (especially with odor, as opposed to what happens in French, for example), both [Corominas \(1980–1991\)](#) and [Alcover and Moll \(1968, s.v. sentir\)](#) state that it remained in use in modern Catalan in the same form as in (3), at least until the first half of the 20th century, in sentences such as the following example:

- (4) *La sopa que sent a farigola.* ([Alcover and Moll 1968, s.v. sentir](#)).

In these cases, as we have seen in the medieval example of (3), *sentir* would be part of the group of verbs in which the subject is stimulating the perception. In any case, if it is still used, its use is quite residual in central Catalan and not included by [Institut d'Estudis Catalans](#).

Regarding touch, one would have a hard time finding a statement in modern Catalan similar to the one Lull made (*veer, hoir, adorar, gustar, sentir*), in which *sentir* referred to tactile perception. Therefore, although we could use this verb in sentences such as *Sents, que és suau?*, the verb *sentir* used here would have a meaning closer to physical perception in general, equivalent to *notar* 'to perceive'.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the verb *sentir* maintains a meaning related to multi-sense perception in modern Catalan. This is the first meaning listed in the dictionary we consulted: "To perceive through the senses, usually with the exception of sight." ([Institut d'Estudis Catalans, s.v. sentir](#)). In modern Catalan, the verb specializes in the domain of hearing. In medieval Catalan, although less so than in the modern language, it appeared to be increasingly related to hearing. Currently, the meaning 'hear' is generally encoded by this verb (except in *oir missa* 'listen to mass', [Corominas \(1980–1991\)](#), [Alcover and Moll \(1968\)](#), and in technical uses) and it is not functionally marked. Hence, in modern Catalan, the sensory specialization of the verb *sentir* is essentially restricted to the domain of hearing, in both the transitive (5) and the intransitive (6) forms:

- (5) *Sentir gent que enraona* ([Institut d'Estudis Catalans, s.v. sentir](#)).  
 (6) *No hi sent: és sord* ([Institut d'Estudis Catalans, s.v. sentir](#)).

Within the same meaning (the meaning referring to 'hear'), [Institut d'Estudis Catalans](#) lists a meaning linked to the intellect, 'to be aware of' or 'have knowledge of something':

- (7) *He sentit que el president dimitirà* ([Institut d'Estudis Catalans, s.v. sentir](#)) adapted.

[Alcover and Moll \(1968\)](#) also includes examples in its transitive form related to this meaning, which I have listed in (8) and (9):

- (8) *És ops que tampoch se'n senta res tro fins que sia cosa feyta*, Muntaner, [Alcover and Moll \(1968, s.v. sentir\)](#).  
 (9) *Vench a Çaragoça hon era lo Archabisbe . . . per dar-li a sentir com lo senyor rey volia cobrar* *Nós e nostre frare*, Pere IV, ([Alcover and Moll 1968, s.v. sentir](#)).

### 3.1.2. Subjective Experience: Experiencing Is Feeling

In Latin, the verb *sentire* also encodes the meaning related to subjective experience. There are medieval examples of the transitive form of the verb *sentir* having this meaning, both from a physical (10) and an emotional (11) point of view:

- (10) *Lo infant . . . per poch fret que senta tantost li fa mal.* Genebreda (c. 1360), ([Alcover and Moll 1968, s.v. sentir](#)).  
 (11) *Nulla glòria no fa a comparar ab cella que ells sintran per l'amor que us hauran.* Lull (1271–1274), ([Alcover and Moll 1968, s.v. sentir](#)).

[Corominas 1980–1991, \(s.v. sentir\)](#) does not contain any examples of the verb *sentir* listed with this meaning. However, the entry does include words that are related, such as *sentiment* and *sentimental*:

- (12) *La Princesa li prenia les mans per scusa de besarles, e levà-li lo anell del dit, que ell no hagué sentiment, e dix-li.* Martorell (c. 1460), (Corominas 1980–1991, s.v. *sentir*).

In modern Catalan, Institut d'Estudis Catalans lists for the verb *sentir* the following senses: First of all, the meaning conveyed by the pronominal form, which refers to subjective experience from a physical point of view (13) with which the proprioceptive meanings—i.e., meanings related to the sense that informs us of aspects related to one's own body, such as the position of body parts—are also related. Secondly, the meaning also referred to subjective experience but from a psychological point of view (14), from which the meaning of 'lament' is derived, listed under a new definition (15). The latter meaning is modern, according to Alcover and Moll (1968, s.v. *sentir*), and borrowed from Spanish:

- (13) *Sentir-se malalt* (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, s.v. *sentir*).  
 (14) *Sentir una alegria* (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, s.v. *sentir*).  
 (15) *Sentir la mort d'un amic* (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, s.v. *sentir*).

### 3.1.3. The Intellect: Thinking Is Feeling

In Latin, according to the DE (s.v. *sentire*), the verb *sentire* can have meanings related to cognition. Thus, according to this source, it can mean 'to opine, to think, to feel, and to agree (with)' and, followed by an accusative, 'to imply, to understand'. Alcover and Moll (1968, s.v. *sentir*) lists examples of the verb *sentir* with meanings related to the intellect in the medieval period, especially regarding 'opining':

- (16) *Que'm digats què n'han escrit los dits doctors, y vós què'n sentits.* Metge, (Alcover and Moll 1968, s.v. *sentir*).

In modern Catalan, we find uses approaching subjective experience linked to the intellect. Let us look at the connection of the word *sentiment* with other verbs such as *pensar* 'to think', *creure* 'to believe', and *estar convençut* 'to be convinced', all within the cognitive semantic domain, and some with a nuance of subjective experimentation:

Said trap is nothing more than **thinking** and **believing** that the world of our youth has been miserably torn, distorted, and corrupted. However, it would be a great lie if I said that this is my general **feeling**. On the contrary, **I am convinced** that we live, if not in the best, yes, at least in the most comfortable and rewarding of the worlds known thus far.<sup>8</sup> (Bujosa 2011)

## 3.2. The Form Entendre in French

The following lists the different meanings of the verb *entendre* in French from a diachronic point of view. The different diachronic meanings of *entendre* have been drawn from von Wartburg (1922–1967) and (ATILF 2020).

As in the previous section, I dedicate Sections 3.2.1–3.2.4 to the main meanings of this word: 'to direct thinking', 'to hear', 'to have the intention', and 'to perceive through intelligence', without taking into account in the distribution of the sections, for the moment, the distinction between the relations that the meanings of the polysemous words and the possible semantic extensions that derive from them always have with each other. Further on, in Section 4.1.2, all of this is brought together to make a systematic semantic analysis of the verb from the point of view of cognitive semantics.

### 3.2.1. The Intellect: Directing thought Is Understanding

The entry relating to the transitive form *intendere* (DE, s.v. *intendo*) lists the first meaning as 'to stretch, to lengthen, to extend' and, with a semantic value of directionality, 'to point', 'to aim (a weapon)', and 'to direct attention'. The idea of tension, but not in a necessarily physical sense, is preserved in Middle French, referring to movement (17) or intellectual activities (18):



- (17) *C'est tres bon que le mouuement qui est simple et perpetuel sanz cesser soit entendant au plus hounorable.* Oresme (1377), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).
- (18) *Meditacion perseuere et entent a une chose, contemplacion entour une chose voit choses innumerables.* Ciboule (c. 1452), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).

This first meaning derives from Latin, related to the domain of cognition ('directing or concentrating thought, attention'), which is also preserved in Middle French (19), often specialized in 'to take care of something or someone' (20):

- (19) *Celui qui est politique et actif labeure ou entende plus a son corps.* Oresme (1370), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).
- (20) *Et là sus le place on entendi à monsieur Gallehaut de Ribeumont qui estoit durement navrés.* Froissart (1375–1400), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).

In medieval French, the meaning of 'having authority over someone' (21) was also associated, through a relationship of contiguity, with the idea of 'taking care of someone':

- (21) *Et eurent chilouurier un cleric qui entendoit sus euls et qui les faisoit paier.* Froissart (1400), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).

The meanings listed in Section 3.2.1 are not present in modern French.

### 3.2.2. Audition: Hearing Is Understanding

French language encoded auditory value with *entendre* in Old French (Rey 1992, s.v. *entendre*, with the first example dating to the year 1050). However, it was rarely used in medieval French and the use of *ouïr* dominated. In this period, *entendre*, followed by the preposition *à*, was mostly used in the sense of 'paying attention to what someone is saying':

- (22) *Plaise vous que vous entendez, Archadès, a ce que vueil dire Et m'en dire vostre avis.* Mir. St Alexis (1382), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).

According to the Rey 1992 (s.v. *entendre*), the verb *ouïr* was dominant up until the classical period for expressing 'to hear'. Later, *entendre* became the most common way to encode hearing. However, there were already medieval examples in this regard, in a transitive form, without the preposition *à*. This change is possibly related to an approach to the auditory sense of the verb, despite the more prominent meaning of 'paying attention to':

- (23) *Or vous levez et entendez bien mes parolles et les retenez.* La Sale (1456), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).
- (24) *Ilz entendirent moult de piteuses voix qui griefment se lamentoient.* Arras (1392–1393), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).

The above meanings ('directing attention', 'hearing', 'listening to') later specialized in French in meanings related to legal contexts, and are also present in modern French (25) and in religious use, attested since the 17th century according to the Rey 1992 (s.v. *entendre*), but rarely used today (26):

- (25) *Entendre les avocats des deux parties. Entendre des témoins.* Académie française 1841 (s.v. *entendre*).
- (26) *Entendre la messe.* Académie française 1841 (s.v. *entendre*).

In this sense, the Rey 1992 also lists the meaning of 'knowing from a public rumor', and points out that this meaning has disappeared today. However, other meanings related to 'hear', such as 'attend as a listener', are indeed present in modern French:

- (27) *Entendre le concert.*

Related to the meanings I have listed in this subsection, the word *entendre* also acquired other meanings in the medieval period, such as 'to acquiesce to a demand', 'to agree to do something', and 'to accept', which are not present in modern French. This form, with this meaning, is also followed by a prepositional complement headed by *a*:

- (28) *Je les voel croire et entendre a lors volontés.* Froissart (1400), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *entendre*).

### 3.2.3. Intention Is Understanding

According to the [Rey 1992](#) (s.v. *entendre*), this verb began to have the meaning of ‘to have the intention’ in the 12th century:

- (29) *Ilz promistrent et jurerent li uns à l'autre que jamaiz jours de leurs vies ne feroient aucun autre mestier que gagner où ilz pourroient trouver à gagner, lequel gaing il entendoit et entend embler.* Reg. Crim. Chât. (1389–1392), ([ATILF 2020](#), s.v. *entendre*).

This meaning remains in the modern language. In addition, the meaning of ‘to demand’ is related:

- (30) *J'entends que vous restiez avec moi.* [Académie française 1841](#) (s.v. *entendre*).

The [Rey 1992](#) (s.v. *entendre*) also includes a modern example in the form of an expression, *comment l'entendez-vous*, with the meaning of ‘what are your intentions?’ in the 17th century. Currently, this phrase is understood in the following manner: ‘how do you understand it?’. Meanings like this one, related to cognition, are listed in Section 3.2.4.

### 3.2.4. The Intellect: Perceiving through Intelligence Is Understanding

The meaning of ‘perceiving through intelligence’, is documented in Middle French, and was dominant until the 17th century:

- (31) *Maintenant s'entendra qui m'a meu de tenir si long compte de ceste matière.* CNN (1456–1467), ([ATILF 2020](#), s.v. *entendre*).

The [Rey 1992](#) states that “le verbe entre avec cette valeur dans quelques locutions, employées dans un style recherché à cause du vieillissement de l'acception: *donner* (1300), *laisser* (1680) à *entendre* ‘faire comprendre sans exprimer clairement’ [ . . . ]” ([Rey 1992](#), s.v. *entendre*).

The meaning ‘perceiving through intelligence’ for *entendre* is less common in modern French, although the [Académie française \(1841\)](#) lists examples:

- (32) *Ce texte est difficile à entendre,* ([Académie française 1841](#), s.v. *entendre*).  
 (33) *Entendez-moi, entendez-moi bien,* ([Académie française 1841](#), s.v. *entendre*).

Example (33) has an ambiguous status in relation to the coding of meanings associated with auditory perception and perception through intelligence. This is discussed again further on (see Section 3.1.2).

The meaning ‘perceiving through intelligence’ remains in use in modern French, yet under the pronominal form of the verb (*s'entendre (avec qqn)*) in the sense of ‘agreeing’ (34), and other dictionaries document modern (35) and medieval (36) uses:

- (34) *J'ai besoin de m'entendre avec vous là-dessus,* ([Académie française 1841](#), s.v. *entendre*).  
 (35) *S'entendre comme larrons en foire.* (1650), ([Académie française 1841](#), s.v. *entendre*).  
 (36) *Ledict seigneur de Warvic s'entendoit toujours avec le roy nostre maistre.* Commines (1489–1491), ([ATILF 2020](#), s.v. *entendre*).

Regarding meanings related to cognitive aspects, I should highlight the meaning ‘to know profoundly, to be skilled at an activity’, present in the French language since medieval times (37) and which remains in the pronominal form in some cases in modern French (38):

- (37) *Ceulx qui seront de nous plus entendus A l'empereur facent la reverence.* La Vigne (1496), ([ATILF 2020](#), s.v. *entendre*).  
 (38) *Il s'entend à faire valoir ses terres,* ([Académie française 1841](#), s.v. *entendre*).

The participle form *entendu* is used today in the same sense as these examples from the 15th and 16th centuries listed in the [Rey 1992](#): *home entendu*, *faire l'entendu*, and compound forms derived from it, such as *malentendu*, documented in 1558, with the meaning of ‘misunderstanding’, or derivatives such as *entendement*, associated with intelligence.

Despite the examples I have listed, this verb is rarely used with the meanings listed in this section.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Analysis of the Polysemous Meanings

#### 4.1.1. The Verb Sentir (Catalan)

This article began with the meaning of ‘hear’, encoded by *sentir* in Catalan, which we have seen has multi-perception as its first meaning, at least in the case where we look at it from a diachronic point of view. The multi-sense verbal forms of Romance languages are a particular case study:

The Romance reflexes of Latin *sentire* represent an unclear case. In the oldest records Latin *sentire* meant simply “perceive” and could be used in any sense modality. In present-day Romance languages, the meaning seems to have been narrowed down in several different ways. In modern Italian, *sentire* is the only current equivalent to English “hear”, and this meaning seems to be very prominent, although the verb may be used of an experience also with respect to touch, taste and smell. In Portuguese and Spanish, the verb has the same range of meanings with one important restriction. The meaning “hear” is not as prominent. Actually, there is another, special verb that is the most common equivalent to “hear”. In French and Romanian, the verbs *sentir* and *simți*, respectively, are used of touch, taste, and smell. As regards the experiences, “feel” seems to be the most prominent meaning (if any). But in French, “smell” in the copulative sense (“have, emit smell”) is also a very prominent meaning. The Romance languages deserve a much closer study than has been undertaken here. (Viberg 1984, p. 149)

In modern Catalan, we have seen that this verb, in spite of being multi-sense as is the case with Latin or in other diachronic stages of Catalan, cannot refer to sight. Fernández-Jaen (2012) gives a biological explanation: proprioceptive verbs such as *sentir* conceptualize basic sensations, and the sense of sight is what develops last in children. However, I believe that proprioceptive meaning derives, in fact, from sensory perception itself, which would, therefore, be the primary meaning.

A hypothesis that would explain why, in certain languages, the verb *sentir* encodes any sensory perception except for sight could be related to the fact that the meaning most frequently encoded by *sentir* is tied to emotional experience (see Section 4.3). Since humans usually associate the sense of sight with more reliable (more intellectual, more cognitive) perception (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), this can have an effect on the first meaning (‘perception through any sense’) and limit its scope.

We have seen that other metonymic meanings derive from the first meaning through the specialization of the meaning of the multi-sense verb in several senses. According to Koch (2016), one of the frequent semantic changes refers to specialization:

[A] taxonomic sub-/super-ordination relationship holds between the two concepts involved [ . . . ]. A change from an abstract to a concrete meaning takes place, i.e., the word becomes, as it were, a hyponym of itself: it loses in extension and gains in intension (specialization). (Koch 2016, p. 31)

In these cases, the specialized term may lose its original meaning (what refers to the superordinate level) or become polysemous and retain both. The case of *sentir* in Catalan would fall under the latter situation. The first specialized meanings indicated are, perhaps, touch (at least if we take into account the sole examples I have found in Lull) and, of course, smell. In fact, in Latin, the verb *sentire* could convey these meanings in a general way, while in Catalan, the verb *sentir* is polysemous. In Latin, the complement that accompanies the verb in its transitive form allows the meaning to be constrained. In this language, then, this verb is a semantically vague form, and not polysemous (for a review of the discussion between vagueness and polysemy, see Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2008).

Thus, the verb *sentir* became specialized in medieval Catalan with the meanings ‘to touch’ (active perception), ‘to smell’ (active perception), ‘smell odor’ (passive perception), and ‘to make odor (or, above all, to stink)’ (copulative perception verb).<sup>9</sup> As we have seen, these specialized meanings have been lost in modern Catalan, although *sentir* can clearly

be included in them in their more general meaning of ‘perceiving through any sense’. However, the relationship with smell is maintained in expressions such as *sentir de nas una cosa* (lit. ‘feel something through the nose’) ‘to track, to have a clue or vague news’ (Alcover and Moll 1968, s.v. *sentir*). This meaning is the product of a metaphorical change between olfactory perception and intuitive knowledge, a projection present in several languages: Ibarretxe-Antuñano (2019) lists SUSPECTING IS SMELLING as a metaphor of perception. In this case, however, it is worth noting that the metaphor is expressed through the phrase *sentir de nas* in which *sentir* ‘to smell/to feel’ possibly refers to a more general perception and *de nas* ‘through the nose’ specializes its meaning.

As we have already seen, the meaning of *sentir* in medieval Catalan started to become specialized in the domain of hearing (Corominas 1980–1991, s.v. *sentir*), displacing the *oir* form. It is now the common word used to refer to passive hearing in Catalan. There is a meaning related to this: ‘to get news’. According to studies on the metaphorical and metonymic extensions of verbs of perception, it is common for hearing verbs to encode meanings such as ‘getting news’ or ‘having knowledge’ (San Roque et al. 2018; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019). Thus, for example, this author lists the metaphor BEING TOLD/KNOWING IS HEARING. This metaphor seems to take shape in Catalan in expressions such as those I have compiled above: *He sentit que el president dimitirà* ‘I heard that the president is going to resign’. Alcover and Moll (1968, s.v. *sentir*) lists medieval examples with the same meaning of ‘getting news’ or ‘having knowledge’, as we have seen in (7). Thus, already in medieval Catalan, the verb *sentir* specialized in ‘hearing’, hence the semantic extension ‘getting news, knowledge’.

Another common semantic extension of auditory perception verbs refers to attention, and we also find this in contemporary Catalan in forms of the verb that are almost grammaticalized, interrogative, and discursive functions of the verb *sentir*:

(39) *No t’entretenguis, ¿sents?*, Vilanova (Alcover and Moll 1968, s.v. *sentir*).

As I mentioned in Section 1, grammaticalization, linked to the abstraction involved in metaphorical change, is a product of the usual diachronic semantic change. Thus, the verb *sentir* in Catalan performs functions related to discursive functions, as in the example. The fact that *sentir* is a verb related to sensory perception explains a semantic extension from this particular domain to the more abstract domain of subjective physical experience and emotional experience. The modern meaning of ‘lament’ derives from the latter which, according to Alcover and Moll (1968), is a recent introduction through Spanish. This meaning would be a metonymic extension of what refers to the subjective emotional experience of a person that is reflected, at the same time, in the conceptualizing person.

Hence, this word was already polysemous in Latin. It appears that the central meaning refers to perception through any sense. Thus, the metonymic proprioceptive meaning of ‘subjective physical experience’ would derive from this, also related to proprioception, from which ‘subjective emotional experience’ would derive. Moreover, the main meaning regarding sensory perception would be metaphorically projected to the domain of cognition: ‘to opine’, ‘to think’.

Diachronically, the first meaning would have specialized metonymically in specific senses (smell, touch—uncertain—and, finally, hearing). The metonymy HEARING FOR FEELING shows metaphorical extensions such as PAYING ATTENTION IS HEARING. This meaning is close to the semantic domain of knowledge gained through communication, as is common with hearing-related verbs (San Roque et al. 2018; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019). Another meaning related to the cognitive domain GETTING NEWS/KNOWLEDGE IS HEARING has been present in Catalan since medieval times. Finally, what was already present in Latin derives from the central meaning of multi-sense experience, related to subjective experience, both physical and psychological (the latter would derive from the former also through a process of metonymy). The meaning of ‘lament’ would be a metonymic extension referring to subjective emotional experience.

#### 4.1.2. The Verb Entendre (French)

In French, unlike in Latin or many other Romance languages (at least synchronically), the verb *entendre* has a meaning related to sensory perception. In modern French, in fact, the most prominent meaning of this verb refers to auditory perception, and this is the first meaning given by the *Académie française* (1841, s.v. *entendre*), for example. This is explained by the semantic change that this form has undergone from a diachronic point of view.

As I have shown, *intendere* in Latin was already a polysemous verb that encoded notions related to directionality, which were also present in the medieval language. The non-literal meaning of ‘directing attention’, and thus ‘directing thought’, derives from these meanings, which are not found in modern French. This happens through a process of metaphor by which a semantic extension occurs from a more concrete domain to a more abstract domain, as predicted by the studies described in the theoretical framework of cognitive semantics on such extensions (Kövecses 2017).

In Middle French, derived from ‘directing attention’, the verb *entendre* already appeared with the meaning of ‘to take care’, from which the sense ‘to have authority over someone’ also arose during the same period. These semantic changes arise through processes of metonymy between concepts that present a relationship of contiguity and are part of the same semantic domain (attention–care–authority). None of these meanings are preserved in modern French.

The meaning referring to the intellect (‘perceiving through intelligence’) appears through the meaning of ‘directing thought’, now obsolete, from which the meanings of ‘agree’ and ‘being able, understanding it’ simultaneously derive. The *Académie française* (1841) lists certain current examples that refer to the meaning of intellection, such as those listed in (32) and (33):

- (32) *Ce texte est difficile à entendre.* (*Académie française* 1841, s.v. *entendre*).  
 (33) *Entendez-moi, entendez-moi bien.* (*Académie française* 1841, s.v. *entendre*).

An example such as the one seen in (32) would be difficult to encounter in today’s French. In contrast, Example (33) appears to be more present in French. In this sentence, the verb *entendre* likely has a meaning nearer to hearing (active, in this case), which can, in turn, lead to meanings closer to cognition. If this theory were true, then the meaning of (33) would derive from the meaning related to active perception, which is usually conveyed by *écouter* in French, but also by *entendre* in specific contexts such as those related to the field of law or religion, as highlighted (Examples (25) and (26)).

Although it is common, as mentioned, that the meanings related to cognition which are conveyed by auditory perception verbs derive from auditory meaning, there appears to be a counterexample with the verb *entendre*. The examples of the verb *entendre*, which are related to auditory perception, seem to be generated from ‘perceiving through intelligence’, although at first glance they may seem to derive from the Latin meaning ‘to pay attention’, nearer to the auditory domain. *Entendre*, alongside the form *ouïr*, was already present with the meaning related to passive auditory perception in medieval times, as seen in other Romance languages. Antolí (2015, 2017) discusses this point with reference to medieval Catalan, but the ideas he presents can also be applied to French. The author establishes two hypotheses regarding the derivation of the meaning ‘hear’ for the Romance forms of *entendre*, which coincide with the ones to which I have just referred: he states that this could result from, on the one hand, what he calls “the idea of tension”, that is, from the metaphorical extension of ‘directing attention’, or, on the other, from the idea of intellection with a stative nature (‘perceiving through intelligence’). In the latter case, “the necessary ambiguity is given so that it is inferred that the source of the statement is someone else (a reported statement) and not inferential” (Antolí 2015, p. 68).<sup>10</sup> The author explains that this meaning related to the intellect has a generic value of acquiring knowledge without specifying the means and that, therefore, it is a partial synonym of the verbs *sentir* and *oir*



in contexts in which it is exclusively a linguistic discourse that is perceived and not any other auditory stimulus.

Another explanation on the relationship between intellect and auditory perception, and in relation to what I highlighted before, relates to the fact that the projection established between the two domains is not of a metaphorical type (as seems to be generally assumed) but of a metonymic type, through a relation of contiguity. As indicated, at metaphorical projections that are usually analyzed as metaphorical, we consider that they should be reanalyzed as metonymic: the relationship established between the two domains is not one of similarity but of contiguity. The metonymic relationship would explain the exceptional nature of the change and is based on the fact that what is being understood is what is being heard. The relationship between these two concepts ('understanding', 'hearing') would produce synonymy between the words that encode 'hear' and 'understand', and this synonymy would be at the basis of the semantic change of *entendre* 'understand' → 'hear'.

According to my hypothesis, once the form *entendre* is linked with auditory perception, this verb would be initially used for the perception of linguistic stimuli, then it would undergo a process of generalization. According to Koch (2016), the process of generalization is complementary to the specialization process referred to in Section 3.1.1, which explains the changes in which the source concept and the target concept are found at different taxonomic levels. Through this process, the word becomes a hyperonym of itself: it gains extension.

Either way, what does seem clear is that the meanings related to attention and intellect and the meaning of 'pay attention' do not derive from the meaning 'hear', as it may seem if looked at from a synchronic point of view and by comparison with results obtained in comparative studies on verbs of perception (Sweetser 1990; San Roque et al. 2018; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019), but rather, the semantic extension has been reversed.

Although the main auditory meaning of *entendre* is one of passive auditory perception, we also find meanings of active perception that derive from it, such as the senses related to the judicial or religious fields, or the meaning of 'to attend as a listener'. Associated with auditory meanings, 'to acquiesce to a demand' appears in medieval French, possibly also derived from an active auditory meaning. From this, other projections are established: 'accept to do something' or 'resign oneself'.

As in the case of *sentire*, the word *intendere* in Latin was already polysemous and encoded notions related to orientation in space. The meanings of 'directing attention' and 'directing thought' by processes of metaphor arose herein. The latter two meanings are those from which the extensions generated in medieval French would later give rise to the current meanings. Thus, on the one hand, it generates the metonymic projection TAKE CARE/AUTHORITY FOR DIRECT ATTENTION, and, on the other, the metaphor PERCEIVING THROUGH INTELLIGENCE IS DIRECTING THOUGHT. It is interesting to note here, again, the point we made at the beginning about the distinction between metaphorical and metonymical relations: metaphorical relations are based on the similarity between the source and target concept; metonymical relations, on the other hand, are based on relations of contiguity. This leads us, as we have seen, to reconsider the nature of some of the projections: "such meanings are often presented as metaphorical extensions from embodied physical experience to more abstract domains" (San Roque et al. 2018, p. 371), as I have presented in the theoretical framework at the beginning of this paper, and as I have commented above in relation to other cases. Here, the projection TAKE CARE/AUTHORITY FOR DIRECT ATTENTION is metonymic, since both elements (the source concept and the target concept) present a relationship of contiguity.

The meanings present in the modern language of 'agreeing' and 'being able' derive from the latter on the one hand, while 'hearing' derives on the other hand, especially in the sense of passive auditory perception yet, in some very specific cases, also for active perception.

#### 4.2. Diachronic Semantic Change

In our analysis of these two verbs, we have detected different types of semantic changes: specialization, generalization, metaphoric, and metonymic. The first two, which are complementary, are a type of semantic change related to the taxonomic relationships that are established between concepts. Thus, we have seen that the verb *sentir* ‘sensory perception in general’ is specialized in different stages of the Catalan language as ‘tactile perception’ (questionable), ‘olfactory perception’, or ‘auditory perception’: it loses generality and designates elements of a subordinate level without losing the primary meaning (that is, they add new meanings to a word that was already polysemous). We also found the opposite case: the verb *entendre* related to auditory perception in French goes from designating ‘auditory perception of linguistic stimuli’ to ‘any type of auditory perception’. In this case, however, the semantic change does not imply additional meaning, but rather that the first meaning, the specific one, is lost.

As mentioned, we have also found metaphorical and metonymic extensions. Thus, for example, the verb *sentir* in Catalan can encode notions related to attention in forms that are nearly grammaticalized, as seen with the sentence in (39): *No t’entretinguis, ¿sents?* ‘Don’t get sidetracked, you hear?’. This expression would be a concretization of the metaphor, which is common inter-linguistically, PAYING ATTENTION/HEEDING IS HEARING (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019). In this case, it involves a specialization of what could initially be due to contiguity in discourse. An example of metonymy is found in the French verb *entendre* with the meaning of ‘to take care of’, metonymically derived from ‘directing attention’. This semantic change relates two concepts that are part of the same semantic domain: attention and care. As Koch (2016, p. 39) explains, in some cases, it is difficult to determine whether two concepts are part of the same domain, as is the case with the example I have mentioned. However, attention and care are two related concepts that are contiguous in the situations in which they occur, which is why I have classified this change as a metonymy.

Another case of semantic change worth mentioning takes place in idiomatic expressions as seen in the example *sentir de nas una cosa* lit. ‘smell something through the nose’, ‘to know through intuition, to have a clue’. As established in the corresponding section, the domains of olfactory perception and intuitive knowledge are projected in this sentence. If the meaning of *sentir* is ‘to smell’, semantic extension occurs between the different meanings of this verb. However, related to what I established in Section 3.2, it seems that *sentir* metaphorically encodes subjective perception and the meaning that derives therefrom, ‘knowledge’, while *nas* ‘nose’ relates, also metaphorically, to the domain of intuition.

In the presentation of the data, I briefly referred to the argumental structure of the verbs. As our data suggest, and as Koch (2016) mentions, the change in argumental structure is closely linked to semantic changes. Thus, for example, in Latin, the verb *sentire* ‘to feel through any sense’ is transitive and semantically vague, and the CD restricts its meaning. On the other hand, in Catalan, the verb *sentir*, with a specialized sensory meaning, also has an intransitive form. We have seen other examples: in French, the form *entendre* began encoding auditory perception by ceasing to subcategorize a prepositional phrase headed by the preposition *a*.

#### 4.3. Comparison of Semantic Change in the Forms *Sentir* and *Entendre*

Both verbs exist in Catalan and French and, although they do not synchronically share the meaning I am analyzing here, both have encoded it at some point in history. Moreover, in French, *sentir* has undergone an evolution similar to that in Catalan; although it has ended up specializing in the sense of smell (with active, passive, and copulative perception), in the medieval language, it also codified auditory perception:

- (40) *Il dist que nature n’a pas fait sentir la musique du ciel aus oreilles des mortelz et pour ce l’en ne peut pas dire proprement quelle elle est.* Oresme (c. 1377), (ATILF 2020, s.v. *sentir*).

In the same way, the verb *entendre* encoded the meaning ‘hear’ in Catalan and in other Romance languages in the medieval era:

The Romance derivatives of the Latin verb *intendĕre*, broadly speaking, can be grouped into two groups; on the one hand, those that currently encode processes or mental states and that we could make equivalent to ‘understand’; and, on the other hand, the evolutions that encode auditory perception and, therefore, replace or coincide with the derivatives of *audĭre*. [ . . . ] In reality, however, it should be noted that in almost all Romance languages (with the exception of Romanian), the derivatives of *intendĕre* have developed—to varying degrees—the auditory value. (Antolí 2015, p. 47)<sup>11</sup>

Synchronically, from the point of view of onomasiology, each one of these verbs is the usual way to refer to the meaning ‘hear’, but the use of these verbs in relation to the meanings they convey is different in the two languages studied: in Catalan, the verb *sentir* is most commonly used when encoding a meaning that does not refer to hearing, while in French, the verb *entendre* is used mainly in this sense. According to the theory of conceptual metaphor, in metaphorical extensions, the projections occur from a more concrete domain to a more abstract domain (Kövecses 2017), as is also the case in the processes of grammaticalization mentioned at the beginning. Thus, regarding the verb *sentir*, for example, the meaning ‘perceiving through the senses’ is included in a source domain related to sensations, which is projected into a target domain related to subjective experience. Although the second meaning, then, is not the primary meaning of the word according to this theory, it is perceived as basic in synchrony and is the meaning that occurs most frequently in the textual corpora. Therefore, if we randomly take 100 occurrences of the verb *sentir* in the *Corpus textual informatitzat de la llengua catalana*, 63 refer to ‘subjective experience’, 27 to ‘hear’, 7 to ‘perceive through any sense’, and only 1 to ‘get news of something’.<sup>12</sup> The same exercise with the verb *entendre* in French (*frWaC*), on the other hand, shows that, synchronically, the most conveyed meaning for this word refers to hearing, followed closely by ‘perceiving through intelligence’: of the 100 occurrences analyzed, 37 refer to ‘perceiving through intelligence’, 55 to ‘perceiving through hearing’, 5 to ‘agreeing’, and 3 to ‘getting news’.

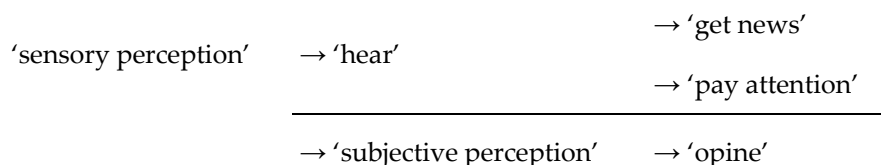
The data taken from the corpora show an apparent contradiction with what studies on cognitive semantics explain about projections that are considered metaphorical: projections towards more abstract domains are established from more concrete meanings (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002). If this is taken into account, it would seem that, in these cases, there has been a relationship in the opposite direction as long as we consider the cognitive meaning more abstract than the meaning related to sensory perception. If we can establish, as mentioned above, that this semantic change is a metonymy, this apparent contradiction is resolved.

From a synchronic point of view, as I have stated above, some meanings conveyed by these two verbs may seem to be derived from the meaning ‘hear’: ‘to get news’, ‘to have knowledge’. Inter-linguistic studies related to verbs of perception include projections of this type: PAYING ATTENTION IS HEARING, KNOWING IS HEARING, GETTING NEWS IS HEARING, or UNDERSTANDING IS HEARING, among others (see Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019 for a list of common projections in a systematic way).

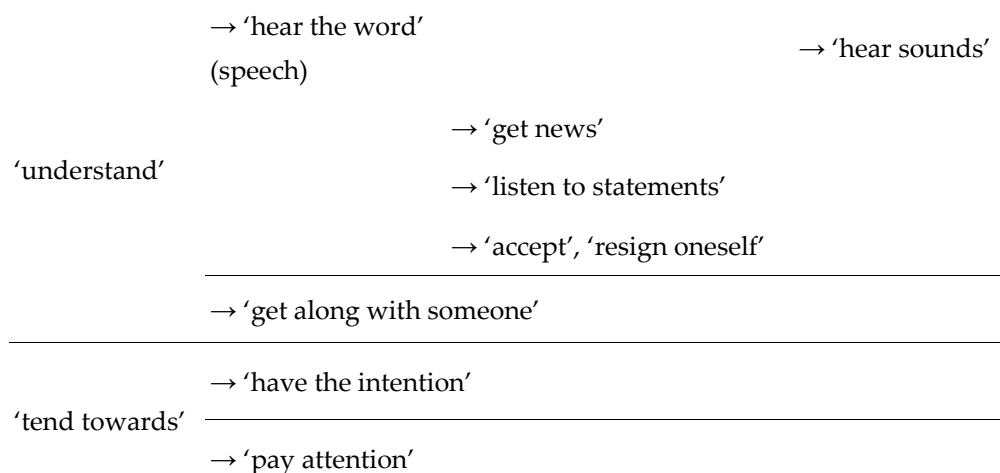
Our hypothesis is that the relationship between the domain of cognition and the domain of auditory perception with a verb such as *entendre* is of a metonymic type: the fact that, in French, the verb *entendre* first conveys meanings linked to cognition and, from there, meanings associated with the comprehension of speech and, from there, meanings related to auditory perception (first of speech and then in general) explains that these semantic extensions can be understood as metonymic, since there is a relationship of contiguity between the different elements of each of the projections we have just mentioned.

Regarding the verb *sentir*, we have seen that, in medieval Catalan, the meanings of ‘to get news’ and ‘to have knowledge’ derive from the meaning ‘hear’ (see Figure 1). Having analyzed examples from French, in other cases, we see that projections of this kind do not always occur in the sense suggested by studies previously mentioned. Regarding the verb *entendre*, and based on our analysis of that data, we have established that the projection is

not of a metaphorical type, but of a metonymic type. On the other hand, the meanings of ‘pay attention’ and ‘have an intention’ were already present in classical Latin and would not derive from the meaning ‘hear’, as occurred in other languages and as described in inter-linguistic studies (San Roque et al. 2018; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019), but rather, with a similar Latin meaning close to the domain of cognition (see Figure 2).



**Figure 1.** Diachronic semantic evolution of the verb *sentir* (Catalan).



**Figure 2.** Diachronic semantic evolution of the verb *entendre* (French).

The meanings that do derive from the meaning ‘hear’ are, in Catalan, precisely the meanings of ‘paying attention’ and ‘getting news’ and, in French, ‘acquiescing to a demand’ (possibly from the active auditory meaning ‘listening’), ‘accepting to do something’ or ‘agreeing’ (another hypothesis would be that they came directly from ‘understanding’), and ‘attending as listener’.<sup>13</sup> Regarding the Catalan meaning of ‘paying attention’, derived from the meaning ‘hear’, I should note that it is encoded, in some cases, through grammaticalized forms and with a discursive function.

The presence of certain projections in several languages, which are even labeled universal, may be called into question when an in-depth study of a particular language is made, especially considering issues of diachronic semantic change.

### 5. Conclusions

The main focus of this study is the semantic analysis of the verbs *sentir* and *entendre*, and it has been explained why the main verbs codifying passive auditory perception in Catalan and French have prototypical meanings not related to audition. On this matter, diachronic analysis enabled the tracing of semantic change. Despite this, the study is not free of limitations: the diachronic analysis has not been systematized as this was not the main goal. In following studies, this could be delved into through data extracted from textual corpora and not only lexicographical sources. The approach in this study was primarily semasiological but it would be interesting in following studies to complete an onomasiological analysis with data extracted from an extensive corpus and from a methodologic field different to the one used in the present article, which is more focused on the semantic study.

Other additional aspects that may be the object of future research are related to one of the issues thoroughly examined in this study, that is, changes in verbal argument structure

related to semantic change and the valency scheme of the verbs under discussion. Changes in meaning of forms can be accompanied by changes in the argumental network of the verb. For example, in medieval French, the verb *entendre*, with a complement introduced by the prepositions *à* or *en*, could have the meaning of ‘directing thought’ or ‘paying attention’. With the meanings of ‘perceiving through intelligence’ or ‘hearing’, the verb becomes transitive.

Finally, here are resumed and listed the most relevant issues in this study. Despite being two rather similar languages in every sense (genetic, cultural, typological, geographical), the polysemous meanings encoded by the words that prototypically designate passive perception in Catalan and French are quite different. In both cases, they derive from forms that do not have the central meaning of ‘hear’ (in Catalan, neither synchronically nor diachronically; in French, not diachronically).

As for the semantic evolution of *sentir*, it is primarily related to subjective experience and proprioception, from which sensorial perception is derived and, thus, the meaning of ‘hear’, by specialization and displacing the forms derived from *audire* (a displacement produced by the usage of an innovative form, hence perceived as more expressive, which increased usage frequency). From this meaning related to subjective experience also derives the one related to subjective emotional experimentation, which is synchronically the prototypical meaning of this word.

In the case of *entendre*, semantic change derives from the primary senses of ‘to understand’ and ‘to pay attention’, already existent in Latin language. The evolution of ‘hear’, on the other hand, appears later on and derives from ‘understand’. This research on diachronic semantic change provides new data on semantic extensions related to verbs of perception. Particularly, this study of the evolution of the French word *entendre* contradicts the expectations that can be drawn from other studies of verbs on this conceptual domain in that it seems to have evolved in the opposite direction, i.e., from intellectual understanding to sensorial perception.

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## Appendix A. Examples Translation

- (1) Sound, colour. First of all, we feel the taste in our mouth. When he saw that I was entering the girl’s room. My nose would smell him, if he were inside.
- (2) To see, to hear, to smell, to taste, to touch/feel.
- (3) The lion, on the fox’s advice, became the peacock’s who smelled bad.
- (4) The soup that smells like thyme.
- (5) Hearing people talking.
- (6) He/she cannot hear, he/she is deaf.
- (7) I have heard that the president will resign.
- (8) It is necessary that nothing is heard until it is a done deal.
- (9) I came to Saragossa where the archbishop was . . . to let him know that the lord king wanted me and my brother back.
- (10) The child . . . no matter how cold he feels, it hurts him.
- (11) No glory can be compared with that which they will feel for the love they will have for you.



- (12) The princess took his hands with the excuse of kissing them, and took the ring off his finger, which he did not notice, and said to him
- (13) Feeling sick
- (14) Feeling a joy
- (15) Feeling the death of a friend
- (16) Tell me what the aforementioned doctors have written about it, and what do you think.
- (17) It is very good that the movement that is simple and perpetual without stopping is tending to the most honorable.
- (18) Meditation perseveres and directs attention to one thing, contemplation around one thing sees innumerable options.
- (19) He who is political and active works or takes more care of his body.
- (20) And in the same place we took care of monsigneur Gallehaut de Ribeumont who was in great distress.
- (21) And those workers had a priest/a man of letters who took care of them and made them be paid.
- (22) I ask you to pay attention, Archadès, to what I want to say. And to tell me your opinion.
- (23) Get up and pay attention to my words and hold on to them.
- (24) They heard many pitiful voices wailing and lamenting.
- (25) Listen to the lawyers of both parties.
- (26) Listen to the mass.
- (27) Listen to the concert.
- (28) I want to believe and accept their will.
- (29) They promised and swore to each other that they would never do anything but gain where they could find something to gain, which gain he intended and intend to ravish with violence.
- (30) I demand you to stay with me.
- (31) Now you will understand what has made me spend so much time on this subject.
- (32) This text is hard to understand.
- (33) Understand (/listen to) me, understand (/listen to) me well
- (34) I need to agree with you on this point.
- (35) To understand each other as thieves at the fair.
- (36) The lord of Warvic was always on good terms with the king our master
- (37) Those who are more skilled should bow to the emperor.
- (38) He is skilled in asserting its land
- (39) Don't get sidetracked, you hear?
- (40) He says that nature has not made the music of heaven to be heard by the ears of mortals, and for this reason we cannot say with propriety what it is.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Leaving aside less prototypical verbs such as *observar* 'to observe', *guaitar* 'to watch (out)', or *fixar-se* 'to pay attention to, to watch', for example.
- <sup>2</sup> "En aquesta tendència la nostra llengua ha anat més acompanyada amb l'italià i fins l'occità, que amb el francès i el castellà, que s'hi han mostrat refractaris: el francès, del tot, mentre que en castellà clàssic i sobretot el modern d'Amèrica no és així [ . . . ] els italians van fins i tot un poc més enllà que els nostres, en el sentit d'usar-lo per 'escoltar' (paper aspectual de 'determinatiu'): "*senta, amico . . .* ", "*mi faccia il piacere di sentire . . .* " (Corominas 1980–1991, s.v. *sentir*)." Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author. This citation mentions the use of a form derived from *sěntīre* in Occitan. However, the corresponding article from (von Wartburg 1922–1967, s.v. *sěntīre*) explains that this use for hearing is largely absent in Occitan, French, and Franco-Provençal; it can be heard in Niçard nowadays, which has a strong Italian influence.
- <sup>3</sup> The displacement of the forms derived from *audire* in the languages studied here responds to a general principle by which innovative forms are perceived as more expressive until the frequency of usage exhausts expressivity. This usage frequency, which might be explained as the speakers' preference for expressive forms, ends up displacing the original forms. From an onomasiological and diachronic approach, the concept 'to hear' was named by verbs derived from *audire* in the first stages. In

spite of this, the study focuses on the semasiological analysis of the words *sentir* and *entendre*, which, from a diachronic approach, encode passive perception.

- 4 I would like to point out that, regarding certain relations that Ibarretxe-Antuñano lists as metaphorical, I will consider them as metonymic relations of contiguity. With PAYING ATTENTION IS HEARING, for example, the relation present is not “paying attention is like hearing” but “when you pay attention, you hear”. We will come back to this in the discussion of the results.
- 5 Gaffiot (*s.v. sentio*) offers an example in which this verb translates to “see”, but does not seem to categorically affirm that *sentio* is used with this meaning: “No prius salutem scripsit? Nus quam sentio” ‘Have you not written a greeting first? I do not feel it anywhere’. In this case, this verb conveys a sense of perceiving in an emphatic sense of finding a trace of it. It could be translated as ‘I can’t find it anywhere’.
- 6 The Catalan and French examples are translated in Appendix A.
- 7 The only references we find of the verb *sentir* with the meaning of ‘to touch’ in medieval Catalan are found in Llull (Alcover and Moll (1968), Corominas 1980–1991, *s.v. sentir*). It is possible that the author used the generic verb to be able to complete the series mentioned in example (2).
- 8 L’esmentat parany no és un altre que pensar i creure que el món de la nostra juvenesa s’ha esgarriat, desvirtuat i corromput de manera llastimosa. Tanmateix seria una mentida ben grossa si diguéis que aquest és el meu sentiment general. Ben el contrari, estic convençut que vivim, si no en el millor, sí, almenys, en el més confortable i gratificant dels mons fins ara coneguts. (Bujosa 2011). Bold text ours.
- 9 The copulative perception verb *sentir* ‘to have a bad odor’ has a common semantic extension in languages in copulative verbs of olfactory perception: ‘to be spoiled’ (BECOMING BAD (SPOILING, CORRUPTING) IS SMELLING, Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2019, p. 48).
- 10 “es dóna l’ambigüïtat necessària perquè s’inferisca que la 23ctú de l’enunciat és algú altre (és un discurs reportat) i no inferencial”.
- 11 Els derivats romànics del verb llatí *intendĕre*, a grans trets, es poden agrupar en dos grups; d’una banda, els que actualment codifiquen processos o estats mentals i que podríem fer equivaldre a ‘comprendre’; i, de l’altra, les evolucions que codifiquen percepció auditiva i, doncs, substitueixen o conviuen amb els derivats d’*audire*. [...] En realitat, però cal matisar que gairebé en totes les llengües romàniques (excepte el romanès), els derivats d’*intendĕre* han desenvolupat –en graus diversos– el valor auditiu.
- 12 The number of occurrences that refer to more abstract meanings is even higher in languages such as Spanish, where *sentir*, synchronic, is not specialized for any of the five senses. A similar search for Real Academia Española offers 96 occurrences for ‘subjective experience’ and only 4 for ‘perceiving through any sense’.
- 13 In Catalan, it could have this meaning, but usually in the expression *anar a sentir*, in which the verb *anar* has an agentive character and would, therefore, aid in the interpretation of *sentir* as an active perception verb.

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