Cantonese gwai2 as a pure expressive

Regine Lai, Zoe Luk and Grégoire Winterstein
gregoire@eduhk.hk

EdUHK – LML Department

December 12, 2016
Contents

1 Distribution of *gwai2*

2 The expressive dimension of *gwai2*

3 Negator *gwai2*: a mixed expressive?

4 Intensifier vs. Negator *gwai2*
Overview

Today’s topic: the Cantonese morpheme gwai2 and (some of) its expressive uses:

(1) Hou2 gwai2 maa4faan4!
    very GWAI annoying
    [This/He] is very annoying.
Overview

Today’s topic: the Cantonese morpheme gwai2 and (some of) its expressive uses:

(1) Hou2 gwai2 maa4faan4!
very GWAI annoying
[This/He] is very annoying.

gwai2 modify a wide range of elements in Cantonese and may convey:

- A form of **intensification**
- **Negation**
Overview

Today’s topic: the Cantonese morpheme gwai2 and (some of) its expressive uses:

(1) Hou2 gwai2 maa4faan4!
very GWAI annoying
[This/He] is very annoying.

- gwai2 modify a wide range of elements in Cantonese and may convey:
  - A form of intensification
  - Negation

- Today: distribution of gwai2, and zoom on its use as an infix:

(2) a. mou5-gwai2-jung6!
not-have-GWAI-use
Damn useless!

b. jau5-gwai2-jung6!
have-GWAI-use
Damn useless!
Contents

1 Distribution of gwai2

2 The expressive dimension of gwai2

3 Negator gwai2: a mixed expressive?

4 Intensifier vs. Negator gwai2
Distribution of gwai2

- Literally gwai2 (鬼) means 'ghost', but has other (expressive) uses in modern Cantonese.

- Two main uses for expressive-gwai2:
  - As an NP expressing “no one”
  - As an affix on different expressions
    - Adverbs
    - Verbs
    - Adjectives
    - Wh-words
    - Quantifiers
    - Some but not all nouns

- Minimally, the use of gwai2 will convey that the speaker is in some sort of emotional state, plus other effects that depend on the construction.


- Matthews & Yip (2011) mention gwai2 but only in its intensification reading.
## Distribution of gwai2

The expressive dimension of gwai2

### Negator gwai2: a mixed expressive?

Intensifier vs. Negator gwai2

### Denial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective infix</td>
<td>jau5 gwai2 jung6</td>
<td>'useless'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective non-infix</td>
<td>leng3 gwai2</td>
<td>'not pretty'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb stem</td>
<td>sik1 gwai2</td>
<td>'not know'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb affixes</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-pronouns, quantifiers</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Intensify

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mou5 gwai2 jung6</td>
<td>'useless'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hou2 gwai2 (leng3)</td>
<td>'very (pretty)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sik6 gwai2 maai4</td>
<td>'finish eating'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bin1 gwai2 go3</td>
<td>'who'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**gwai2 with adjectives**

- *gwai2* works as a prefix for all adjectives, a suffix for monosyllabic ones and an infix for multisyllabic ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Infix</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monosyll.</strong></td>
<td><em>gwai2leng3</em></td>
<td>![X]</td>
<td><em>leng3gwai2</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'not pretty'</td>
<td></td>
<td>'not pretty'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multisyll.</strong></td>
<td><em>gwai2cung1ming4</em></td>
<td><em>cung1gwai2ming4</em></td>
<td>![*]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'not smart'</td>
<td></td>
<td>'not smart' (!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cantonese *gwai2* as a pure expressive
Roadmap for today

- Characterize the semantic contribution of gwai2 in finer terms, notably:
  - Its semantic effects (negation and intensification) and their expressive status
  - Any other at-issue content
  - The factors that trigger a negative or intensifier reading
Roadmap for today

- Characterize the semantic contribution of gwai2 in finer terms, notably:
  - Its semantic effects (negation and intensification) and their expressive status
  - Any other at-issue content
  - The factors that trigger a negative or intensifier reading

- In a nutshell:
  - gwai2 is not a mixed expressive (contra Beltrama & Lee 2015)
  - Neg-gwai2 is a dialogic denial operator
  - Neg-gwai2 and Int-gwai2 are different facets of its pure expressive content (?)
Contents

1 Distribution of gwai2

2 The expressive dimension of gwai2

3 Negator gwai2: a mixed expressive?

4 Intensifier vs. Negator gwai2
Expressive content

Expressive content are treated as conventional implicatures, i.e. semantic material which supplements the main at-issue content of its host sentence but does not affect its truth-conditions (Potts, 2005; McCready, 2010).

(3)  a. John, a banker I know, played golf with Bernie yesterday.
    b. That damn John forgot to call me.
Expressive content

Expressive content are treated as conventional implicatures, i.e. semantic material which supplements the main at-issue content of its host sentence but does not affect its truth-conditions (Potts, 2005; McCready, 2010).

(3)  a. John, a banker I know, played golf with Bernie yesterday.
    b. That damn John forgot to call me.

McCready (2010) argues for the existence of mixed expressives: linguistic expressions which introduce at the same at-issue and expressive content (e.g. Wong4Cung4/蝗螞)
Expressive content

Expressive content are treated as conventional implicatures, i.e. semantic material which supplements the main at-issue content of its host sentence but does not affect its truth-conditions (Potts, 2005; McCready, 2010).

(3) a. John, *a banker I know*, played golf with Bernie yesterday.  
   b. That *damn* John forgot to call me.

McCready (2010) argues for the existence of mixed expressives: linguistic expressions which introduce at the same at-issue and expressive content (e.g. *Wong4Cung4/蝗蟲*)

Expressives have a set of characteristic properties:

- Scopelessness (akin to presuppositions)
- Impossibility to be bound
- Impossibility to be targeted by denials
- General ineffability
There is little doubt that gwai2 conveys an expressive component conveying some heightened emotional state of the speaker.

(4) Keoi5 jau5mou5 sik6-gwai2-maai4 di1 coi3 a? s/he have-have-not eat-GWAI-PRT CL vegetables SFP
Did he (damn) finish his vegetables?

(5) #jyu4gwo2 ngo5 m4gou1hing3 ge3 wa6, keoi5 if I not-happy PRT PRT s/he mou5-gwai2-sik6saai3 di1 coi3 have-not-GWAI-eat-all CL vegetables (int.) If I’m unhappy about it, s/he (damn) did not finish eating the vegetables.
The expressive side of gwai2 II

(6)  a. Keoi5 sik6-gwai2-zo2 di1 sung3.
    s/he eat-GWAI-PFV CL dish
    s/he finished eating all the food
b. #M4hai6 aak3, nei5 hou2 hoi1sam1 a3.
    No SFP, you very happy SFP
    (int.) No, you are quite happy.

 Marks the emotion of the speaker:

(7)  a. Why do the students like that teacher so much?
b. Jan1wai6 keoi5dei6 gok3dak1 keoi5 gaau2 lan2 siu3
    because they think he stir LAN laugh
    a1 ma3
    SFP SFP
    Because they think he’s fucking funny.
The exact emotional state of the speaker is similar to English *damn*: it can be either negative or positive (Constant et al., 2009).

(8)  
\begin{itemize}
  \item a. That damn burger was good.
  \item b. That damn burger gave me diarrhea.
\end{itemize}

...but *gwai2* has a preference for negative emotions in some contexts (cf. infra).
Contents

1 Distribution of gwai2

2 The expressive dimension of gwai2

3 Negator gwai2: a mixed expressive?

4 Intensifier vs. Negator gwai2
Beltrama & Lee (2015) analyze neg- gwai2 as a mixed expressive conveying “’not’+expressive”:

(9) \[ gwai2 \langle t, t \rangle \bullet \langle t, u \rangle \]

Arguments for treating the negation as at-issue:

1. Denial ("independence"):

(10) a. Keoi5 gwai2 sik1.
    s/he GWAI know
    He doesn’t goddamn know.

b. m4hai6, kei4sat6 keoi5 sik1.
    No, actually he knows.

c. #m4hai6, lei5 m4 lau1.
    No, you’re not mad.
Negator gwai2 II

2 Non-displaceability:

(11) Keoi5 gwai2 wui5 ting1jat6 heoi3.
s/he GWAI will tomorrow go.
He won’t goddamn go tomorrow. (and I’m mad now)

3 Mid-utterance perspective shift:

(12) a. Keoi5 waa6 keoi5dei6 gwai2 sin1 zi1, daan6hai6 s/he say they GWAI only know but ngo5 gok3dak1 kei4sat6 keoi5dei6 zi1.
I think actually they know
She wonders how on earth they would know, but I think they actually do.

b. #Keoi5 waa6 keoi5dei6 gwai2 sin1 zi1, daan6hai6 s/he say they GWAI only know but ngo5 m4 gik1dung6.
I not emotional
(int.) She wonders how on earth they would know, but I am not mad.
Negator gwai2 III

4. (13) is a double negation, but the expressivity is unaltered.

(13) Keoi5 gwai2 m4 sik1.
    s/he  GWAI not know
    He (damn) knows.

- We challenge the idea that gwai2 introduces a simple at-issue negation plus some expressive emotional component.
Negation as at-issue I

If gwai2 contributes an at-issue negation, it should be affected by standard truth-conditional affecting environments:

(14)  

a. *Keoi5 hai6m4hai6 gwai2sik1 a3?  
s/he is-not-is GWAI-know SFP  
(int.) Doesn’t he (goddamn) know?  
b. *Jyu4gwo2 keoi5 gwai2 sik1, nei5 zau6 jiu2 gong2  
if s/he GWAI know, you then need tell  
bei2 keoi5 zi1.  
give s/he know  
(int.) If he doesn’t know, you need to tell him/her.  
c. *Waak6ze2 keoi5 gwai2 sik1.  
maybe s/he GWAI know  
(int.) Maybe s/he doesn’t know.
Negation as at-issue II

- gwai2 does not have the same distribution as standard negation:

(15) [At a coffee place, the speaker just picked up his cup.]

a. Ni1 bui1 gaa3fe1 m4 jit6 ge2!
   DEM CL coffee NOT hot SFP
   This coffee’s not hot.

b. #Ni1 bui1 gaa3fe1 gwai2 jit6 ge2!
   DEM CL coffee GWAI hot SFP
   (int.) This coffee’s not hot.
gwai2 as denial

To work as a negation, gwai2 requires a previous assertion, i.e. it is a denial operator, with properties comparable to metalinguistic negation (Horn, 1989).
**gwai2 as denial**

- To work as a negation, *gwai2* requires a previous assertion, i.e. it is a **denial** operator, with properties comparable to metalinguistic negation (Horn, 1989).

- It can target conventionally conveyed content (CI, presuppositions, at-issue)

(16) a. Siu-ming, the linguist, came to the party.
   b. Keoi5 hai6 gwai2 linguist.
      he is GWAI linguist
      Like hell he’s a linguist.

(17) a. A-Mei discovered that Juan is Spanish.
   b. hai6 gwai2, keoi5 hai6 pou4tou4ngaa4 jan4.
      is GWAI he is Portugal person
      Like hell, he is Portuguese.
gwai2 as denial II

... but gwai2 has more difficulty targeting conversational implicatures or other aspects of an utterance,

(18)  a. John read a few of Chomsky’s books.
    b. ?Hai6gwai2 keoi2 tai2saai3 Chomsky so2jau5 ge3 syu1
       Is-GWAII he read-all Chomsky all REL book
       Like hell, he read ALL of Chomsky’s book.

(19)  a. I saw Bob with a young woman last night in a bar.
    b. #hai6gwai2, that was his daughter.

(20)  ??hai6gwai2, you went to /heŋ.sen.en.hon/ (not /hen.sen.en.hon/).

(21)  a. Ngo5 zung1ji3 tai2 syu6.
       I like read/look tree
       I like to look at trees.
    b. Hai6gwai2, nei5 zung1ji tai2 syu1.
       Is-GWAII you like read books
       No, you like to read BOOKS.
Contents

1 Distribution of gwai2

2 The expressive dimension of gwai2

3 Negator gwai2: a mixed expressive?

4 Intensifier vs. Negator gwai2
gwai2 and intensification

- The other reading of gwai2 is usually glossed as “intensifying”.
- It is typically involved with gradable adjectives and adverbs:

  (22) keoi5 hou2 gwai2 leng3.
      s/he very GWAI pretty
      s/he is damn good looking.

- The same reading is also supposedly at play with elements for which scalarity makes little sense:

  (23) bin1-gwai2-go3 jam2zo2 ngo5 ge3 be1zau2 a?
      who-GWAI drink-PFV me GEN beer SFP
      Who the hell drank my beer?

- Most likely, the intensification is a consequence of the expressive part of gwai2
gwai2 as an infix

When used as infix in *disyllabic adjectives*, the effect of *gwai2* varies between its negation and intensification readings:
gwai2 as an infix

When used as infix in **disyllabic adjectives**, the effect of gwai2 varies between its negation and intensification readings:

- **jau5-gwai2-jung**: useless (lit. gwai2-useful)
gwai2 as an infix

When used as infix in disyllabic adjectives, the effect of gwai2 varies between its negation and intensification readings:

- *jau5-gwai2-jung*: useless (lit. gwai2-useful)
- *mou5-gwai2-jung*: useless (lit. gwai2-useless)
gwai2 as an infix

When used as infix in **disyllabic adjectives**, the effect of gwai2 varies between its negation and intensification readings:

- *jau5-gwai2-jung*: useless (lit. gwai2-useful)
- *mou5-gwai2-jung*: useless (lit. gwai2-useless)

The negation reading is the dialogic denial but the intensification is not dialogic.
gwai2 as an infix

- When used as infix in **disyllabic adjectives**, the effect of gwai2 varies between its negation and intensification readings:
  - jau5-gwai2-jung: useless (lit. gwai2-useful)
  - mou5-gwai2-jung: useless (lit. gwai2-useless)

- The negation reading is the dialogic denial but the intensification is not dialogic.

- Not all adjectives seem to allow the intensification reading.
gwai2 as an infix

When used as infix in disyllabic adjectives, the effect of gwai2 varies between its negation and intensification readings:

- jau5-gwai2-jung: useless (lit. gwai2-useful)
- mou5-gwai2-jung: useless (lit. gwai2-useless)

The negation reading is the dialogic denial but the intensification is not dialogic.

Not all adjectives seem to allow the intensification reading.

- Lee & Chin (2007): only adjectives with a “negative polarity” allow it
**gwai2 as an infix**

- When used as infix in **disyllabic adjectives**, the effect of **gwai2** varies between its negation and intensification readings:
  - *jau5-gwai2-jung*: useless (lit. gwai2-useful)
  - *mou5-gwai2-jung*: useless (lit. gwai2-useless)

- The negation reading is the dialogic denial but the intensification is not dialogic.

- Not all adjectives seem to allow the intensification reading.
  - Lee & Chin (2007): only adjectives with a “negative polarity” allow it

⇒ Annotation task.
Data

- List of 2047 disyllabic adjectives (extracted from a MOR grammar for CHAT Data http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/morgrams/)
- Each adjective was manually annotated by at least 2 annotators
- Four possible judgments for the effect of infix gwai2: 
  - Impossible
  - Intensification
  - Negation
  - Both

Results:
- 431 unanimously judged impossible (e.g. wai2jyun2 'indirect', tou4jin4 'useless')
- 899 judged impossible by at least one annotator
- Out of the remaining 717, 407 were annotated unanimously:
  - 229 are negated
  - 142 are intensified
  - 36 are both
- Those 407 adjectives were further annotated for polarity (Pos/Neg/Neutral) by two different annotators
Data

- List of 2047 disyllabic adjectives (extracted from a MOR grammar for CHAT Data http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/morgrams/)
- Each adjective was manually annotated by at least 2 annotators
- Four possible judgments for the effect of infix gwai2:
  - Impossible
  - Intensification
  - Negation
  - Both

Results:
- 431 unanimously judged impossible (e.g. wai2jyun2 'indirect', tou4jin4 'useless')
- 899 judged impossible by at least one annotator
- Out of the remaining 717, 407 were annotated unanimously:
  - 229 are negated
  - 142 are intensified
  - 36 are both
- Those 407 adjectives were further annotated for polarity (Pos/Neg/Neutral) by two different annotators
The Lee & Chin hypothesis is mostly supported, with some exceptions:

- Adjectives like \textit{waan4koeng4} (tenacious), \textit{daai6lik6} (strong), \textit{haak3hei3} (polite), \textit{hou2je5} (excellent) are positive and get intensified.
- That intensification is best glossed as \textit{too X} for the situation.
The Lee & Chin hypothesis is mostly supported, with some exceptions:

- Adjectives like *waan4koeng4* (tenacious), *daai6lik6* (strong), *haak3hei3* (polite), *hou2je5* (excellent) are positive and get intensified.
- That intensification is best glossed as “too $X$” for the situation.
- Adjectives like *ciu4seoi5* (haggard, gaunt), *hung1heoi1* (hollow, void) are negative and don’t get intensified.
The Lee & Chin hypothesis is mostly supported, with some exceptions:

- Adjectives like *waan4koeng4* (tenacious), *daai6lik6* (strong), *haak3hei3* (polite), *hou2je5* (excellent) are positive and get intensified.
- That intensification is best glossed as “too X” for the situation.
- Adjectives like *ciu4seoi5* (haggard, gaunt), *hung1heoi1* (hollow, void) are negative and don’t get intensified.

- Most likely, the denial effect should be available for all elements, but is blocked when the intensification reading is too salient.
### Taking stock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denial</th>
<th>Intensify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective infix</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective non-infix</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb stem</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb affixes</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-pronouns, quantifiers</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Taking stock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denial</th>
<th>Intensify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective infix</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective non-infix</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb stem</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb affixes</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-pronouns, quantifiers</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there a way to unify the denial and intensification reading?
### Taking stock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denial</th>
<th>Intensify</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective infix</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective non-infix</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb stem</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb affixes</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wh-pronouns, quantifiers</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Is there a way to unify the denial and intensification reading?*

- Beltrama & Lee (2015) argue that the negation reading on verb stem is a relatively recent development (i.e. it is absent in Chin 2015 corpus of mid-20th century Cantonese)
- ...but no mention of the intensification reading.
The way forward

- gwai2 (and related elements) appear interesting among expressives:
The way forward

- \textit{gwai2} (and related elements) appear interesting among expressives:
  - it intensifies in the same way as many other expressives such as \textit{damn} (in both the positive and negative dimension)
The way forward

- **gwai2** (and related elements) appear interesting among expressives:
  - it intensifies in the same way as many other expressives such as **damn** (in both the positive and negative dimension)
  - it negates in the same way as many other expressives such as **bullshit**
The way forward

gwai2 (and related elements) appear interesting among expressives:

- it intensifies in the same way as many other expressives such as damn (in both the positive and negative dimension)
- it negates in the same way as many other expressives such as bullshit
- but we know of no other expressive which allows both at the same time
The way forward

- gwai2 (and related elements) appear interesting among expressives:
  - it intensifies in the same way as many other expressives such as **damn**
    (in both the positive and negative dimension)
  - it negates in the same way as many other expressives such as **bullshit**
  - but we know of no other expressive which allows both at the same time

- The denial and intensification reading have in common the “high emotional state” of the speaker
The way forward

- **gwai2** (and related elements) appear interesting among expressives:
  - it intensifies in the same way as many other expressives such as **damn** (in both the positive and negative dimension)
  - it negates in the same way as many other expressives such as **bullshit**
  - but we know of no other expressive which allows both at the same time

- The denial and intensification reading have in common the “high emotional state” of the speaker

- The infixation data suggests that the intensification favors elements about which the speaker has a negative attitude
The way forward

- **gwai2** (and related elements) appear interesting among expressives:
  - it intensifies in the same way as many other expressives such as *damn* (in both the positive and negative dimension)
  - it negates in the same way as many other expressives such as *bullshit*
  - but we know of no other expressive which allows both at the same time

- The denial and intensification reading have in common the “high emotional state” of the speaker

- The infixation data suggests that the intensification favors elements about which the speaker has a negative attitude

- ...but positive adjectives can be intensified by modifying adverbs with **gwai2**, with no negative overtone:
The way forward

- **gwai2** (and related elements) appear interesting among expressives:
  - it intensifies in the same way as many other expressives such as *damn* (in both the positive and negative dimension)
  - it negates in the same way as many other expressives such as *bullshit*
  - but we know of no other expressive which allows both at the same time

- The denial and intensification reading have in common the “high emotional state” of the speaker

- The infixation data suggests that the intensification favors elements about which the speaker has a negative attitude

- . . . but positive adjectives can be intensified by modifying adverbs with **gwai2**, with no negative overtone:

  (22) Keoi5 hou2 gwai2 leng3.
  s/he very GWAII good-looking
  S/he is damn good looking.

Cantonese gwai2 as a pure expressive
Thank you for your attention
Distribution of gwai2

The expressive dimension of gwai2

Negator gwai2: a mixed expressive?

Intensifier vs. Negator gwai2

References


Noah Constant, Christopher Davis, Christopher Potts, Florian Schwarz (2009). “The Pragmatics of Expressive Content: Evidence from Large Corpora”. In: Sprache und Datenverarbeitung 33, 1–2, pp. 5–21.


