

## Cantonese *gwai2* as a pure expressive

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# 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:
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very GWAI annoying  
[This/He] is very annoying.

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 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!

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## 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.
- Two main papers discussing *gwai2*: Lee & Chin (2007) and Beltrama & Lee (2015) (and some more references therein).
- Matthews & Yip (2011) mention *gwai2* but only in its intensification reading.

	Denial	Intensify
Adjective infix	jau5 gwai2 jung6 'useless'	mou5 gwai2 jung6 'useless'
Adjective non-infix	leng3 gwai2 'not pretty'	✗
Verb stem	sik1 gwai2 'not know'	✗
Adverbs	✗	hou2 gwai2 (leng3) 'very (pretty)'
Verb affixes	✗	sik6 gwai2 maai4 'finish eating'
Wh-pronouns, quantifiers	✗	bin1 gwai2 go3 'who'



## *gwai2* with adjectives

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

	Prefix	Infix	Suffix
<i>Monosyll.</i>	<i>gwai2leng3</i> 'not pretty'	✗	<i>leng3gwai2</i> 'not pretty'
<i>Multisyll.</i>	<i>gwai2cung1ming4</i> 'not smart'	<i>cung1gwai2ming4</i> 'not smart' (!)	*

# 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

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  - 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 (?)

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## 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.

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          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

## The expressive side of *gwai2* I

- 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 hoilsam1 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 expressive side of *gwai2* III

- The exact emotional state of the speaker is similar to English **damn**: it can be either negative or positive (Constant et al., 2009).

- (8)
- a. That damn burger was good.
  - b. That damn burger gave me diarrhea.

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

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# Negator *gwai2* I

- 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)
- \*Keoi5 hai6m4hai6 gwai2sik1 a3?  
s/he is-not-is GWAI-know SFP  
(int.) Doesn't he (goddamn) know ?
  - \*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.
  - \*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

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- 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-GWAI 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 /hɛŋ.səŋ.ɛn.hɔŋ/ (not /hən.sən.ɛn.hɔn/).

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

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## *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*

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- ⇒ 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**:
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- 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

## Annotation Results

	Neg. Pol.	Pos. Pol.	Neutral	Tot.
<i>Intensification</i>	<b>116</b>	4	22	142
<i>Negation</i>	12	<b>164</b>	53	229
<i>Both</i>	10	17	9	36

⇒ 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.

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- 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

	Denial	Intensify
Adjective infix	✓	✓
Adjective non-infix	✓	✗
Verb stem	✓	✗
Adverbs	✗	✓
Verb affixes	✗	✓
Wh-pronouns, quantifiers	✗	✓

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- 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.

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

Thank you for your attention

# References I

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