

Christopher Davis on Japanese *yo*

Chris Potts, Ling 236: Seminar in Lexical & Constructional Pragmatics, Fall 2009

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1 Overview

Plan

§2 Dynamic discourse model with illocutionary force operators and intonational effects.

§3 Davis (2008) on the Japanese particle *yo*.

§4 Other particles; general questions.

Goals

- i. Critically explore what I regard as a serious, technically well-worked-out application of illocutionary-force operators.
- ii. Begin building the argument that discourse particles are sensitive to QUDs and/or (minimal) decision problems, and illustrate what that might mean for lexical pragmatics.

2 Extended Gunlogsonian discourse model

2.1 Contexts and public commitments

- (5) PB_A and PB_B are sets of propositions representing the public beliefs of A and B , respectively, with respect to a discourse in which A and B are the participants, where
- a. p is a public belief of A iff ‘ A believes p ’ is a mutual belief of A and B ;
 - b. p is a public belief of B iff ‘ B believes p ’ is a mutual belief of A and B .

A context c is a pair $\langle PB_A, PB_B \rangle$, where A and B are the participants. $PB_X(c)$ is the set of public beliefs for X in c , for $X \in \{A, B\}$.

- (6) $CG_{\{A,B\}}(c) \stackrel{def}{=} PB_A(c) \cap PB_B(c)$.

	$\bigcap PB_B \subseteq p$	$\bigcap PB_B \subseteq \neg p$	$\bigcap PB_B \cap p \neq \emptyset \wedge \bigcap PB_B \cap \neg p \neq \emptyset$
$\bigcap PB_A \subseteq p$	resolved for p	p controversial	biased for p
$\bigcap PB_A \subseteq \neg p$	p controversial	resolved for $\neg p$	biased for $\neg p$
$\bigcap PB_A \cap p \neq \emptyset \wedge \bigcap PB_A \cap \neg p \neq \emptyset$	biased for p	biased for $\neg p$	p unresolved

- (A) $PB_X + p \stackrel{def}{=} PB_X \cup \{p\}$

- (B) a. You're a Communist.
 $\langle \text{PB}_{\text{spk}}, \text{PB}_{\text{addr}} \rangle + \llbracket \downarrow S \rrbracket = \langle \text{PB}_{\text{spk}} + \llbracket S \rrbracket, \text{PB}_{\text{addr}} \rangle$
- b. You're a Communist?
 $\langle \text{PB}_{\text{spk}}, \text{PB}_{\text{addr}} \rangle + \llbracket \uparrow S \rrbracket = \langle \text{PB}_{\text{spk}}, \text{PB}_{\text{addr}} + \llbracket S \rrbracket \rangle$

2.2 Assertion

- (7) CCP of assertions
 $\llbracket \text{ASSERT} \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda c. \text{PB}_{\text{spk}}(c) + p$

Illocutionary force For declaratives, the idea is that the assertion act makes the content a public commitment of the speaker, which suggests, conversationally, that the addressee should follow suit. (Roughly: ‘People believe only things that are true, the more beliefs the better, so if I believe it you should too.’)

2.3 Command/Request

The participants each have intention sets, which are also sets of propositions. The context is now a 4-tuple:

$$\langle \text{PB}_A, \text{PB}_B, \text{PI}_A, \text{PI}_B \rangle$$

- (11) CCP of imperatives
 $\llbracket \text{IMP} \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda c. \text{PI}_{\text{spk}}(c) + p$

2.4 Tunes as force adverbials

- (14) a. $\llbracket \uparrow \rrbracket = \begin{cases} \lambda F \lambda p \lambda c. F(p) \left(\text{PB}_{\text{addr}}(c) + p \right) & \text{if } F = \text{ASSERT} \\ \lambda F \lambda p \lambda c. F(p) \left(\text{PI}_{\text{addr}}(c) + p \right) & \text{if } F = \text{IMP} \end{cases}$
- b. $\llbracket \downarrow \rrbracket = \begin{cases} \lambda F \lambda p \lambda c. F(p) \left((\text{PB}_{\text{addr}}(c) \downarrow q) + p \right) & \text{if } F = \text{ASSERT} \\ \lambda F \lambda p \lambda c. F(p) \left((\text{PI}_{\text{addr}}(c) \downarrow q) + p \right) & \text{if } F = \text{IMP} \end{cases}$

- F is a force head (ASSERT, IMP).
- q is “a free propositional variable whose value must be contextually supplied” — sometimes it is the negation of the propositional argument p , whereas other times the value is less easy to get a grip on (p. 8).

3 Japanese yo

3.1 Basic facts

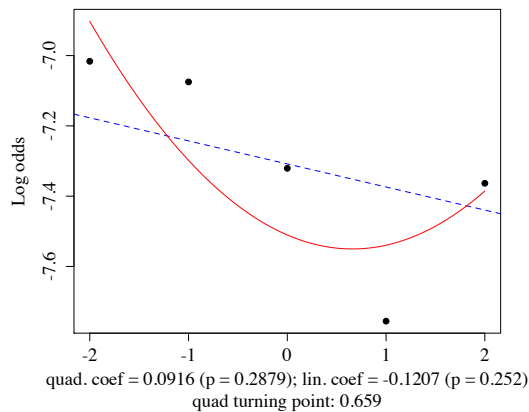
- i. Sentence-final and unembeddable outside of direct quotation (p. 2).
- ii. Part of the cluster of sentence-final particles in Japanese, which have fairly fixed orders and interesting (quasi?)compositionality.
- iii. Not morphologically required (cf. many evidential morphemes in other languages), but sometimes required to save a sentence from infelicity.
- iv. Generally restricted to dialogue situations:

The Corpus of Spoken Japanese (CSJ; numbers from Chris Davis, p.c.)

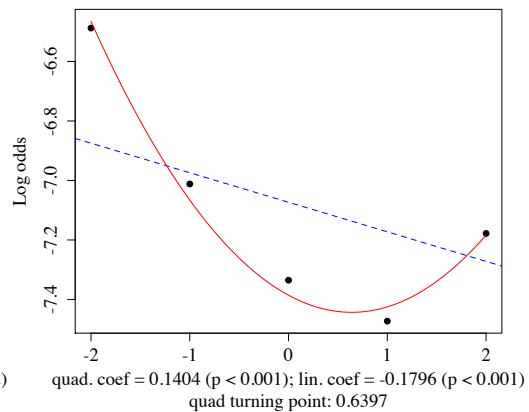
	Dialogue	Monologue
Sentence doesn't contain yo	96,006	77,210
Sentence contains yo	713	80

- v. yo in the old Amazon sentiment corpus and the new one. The search was done in a way that excluded closing exclamation points, to get a clearer picture of what yo alone conveys.

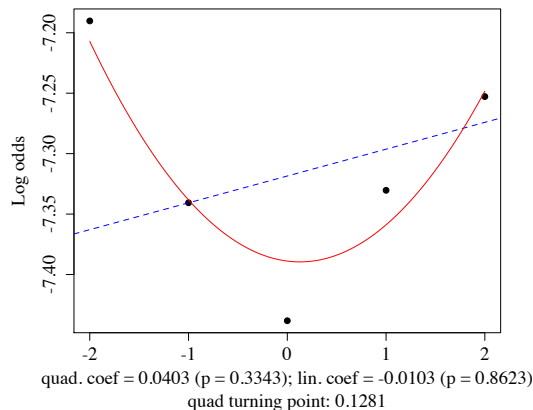
Old Amazon corpus, summary field



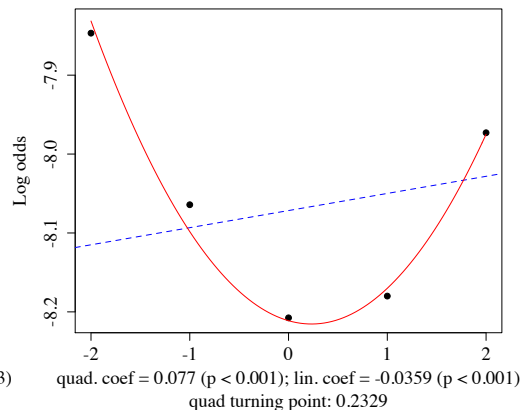
Old Amazon corpus, review field



New Amazon corpus, summary field



New Amazon corpus, review field



- vi. Appears in declaratives, imperatives, and interrogatives.
- vii. (Roughly) two intonational tunes:
 - a. Rise ($yo\uparrow$): final L%H% (33 examples in the CSJ X-JToBI fragment)
 - b. Fall ($yo\downarrow$): final L% (12 examples in the CSJ X-JToBI fragment)
 (The prepub version gives the total as 41. It should be 55; presumably 10 occurrences have neither tune.)

3.2 In declaratives

- (20) [The speaker *A* and addressee *A* are waiting for the bus. The bus is pulling up, but *A* remains lost in his reading, apparently unaware of the bus's arrival. *S* says:]

densha-ga ki-ta #($yo\uparrow$)
 train-NOM come-PAST #($yo\uparrow$)

'The train is here $yo\uparrow$.'

McCready's insight A declarative with *yo* is typically used to assert its propositional content, but it also conveys a speaker presupposition that the content has an informativity value for the hearer that exceeds some contextually determined threshold for informativity.

Intonational meaning According to Koyama (1997), $yo\uparrow$ can indicate "notification, information transmission, and attention-calling", where $yo\downarrow$ suggests "that there is some kind of conflict or incompatibility in the speaker's and addressee's understanding" (p. 7).

- (8) Outright conflict \Rightarrow demands $yo\downarrow$:

A: souridajin-ga nakunata-ta
 prime.minister-NOM die-PAST
 'The prime minister died.'

B: sin-de-nai $yo\downarrow$ / # $yo\uparrow$
 die-INF-NEG $yo\downarrow$ / # $yo\uparrow$
 '(No,) he did not die.'

A: $\llbracket \text{ASSERT}(\mathbf{dead}(\mathbf{pm})) \rrbracket = \lambda c. \text{PB}_A(c) + \llbracket \mathbf{dead}(\mathbf{pm}) \rrbracket$

B: $\llbracket \uparrow \text{ASSERT}(\neg \mathbf{dead}(\mathbf{pm})) \rrbracket = \lambda c. \text{PB}_A(c) + \llbracket \neg \mathbf{dead}(\mathbf{pm}) \rrbracket$

Compose these functions:

$$\lambda c \llbracket \uparrow \text{ASSERT}(\neg \mathbf{dead}(\mathbf{pm})) \rrbracket \left(\llbracket \text{ASSERT}(\mathbf{dead}(\mathbf{pm})) \rrbracket c \right)$$

Without a downdate, A is led to contradictory beliefs. Thus, the downdating $yo\downarrow$ is required.

(9) No outright conflict \Rightarrow *yo*↓ and *yo*↑ can work:

A: go-han mou tabe-ta?

HON-rice already eat-PAST

‘Did you eat already?’

B: tabe-ta (*yo*↑ / *yo*↓)

eat-PAST (*yo*↑ / *yo*↓)

(Yeah,) I ate.

Davis’s proposal *yo* is a modifier of things with the force head already incorporated:

$$yo \uparrow(\text{ASSERT}(p)) \quad yo \downarrow(\text{IMP}(p)) \quad \dots$$

3.3 In imperatives

(12) From the manga *Maison Ikkoku*: Mitaka, trying to climb to a high spot, has Godai on all fours, and is using him as a footstool. He says to Godai:

sikkari sasae-te-te-kure $yo \uparrow / \#yo \downarrow$

firmly support-INF-PROG-give.IMP $yo \uparrow / \#yo \downarrow$

‘(Be sure and) Keep steady!’

yo↓ is felicitous if Godai has given some indication that he is going to let Mitaka fall — if he is behaving as if his public intentions don’t include keeping Mitaka from falling (p. 11).

Davis’s proposal Because *yo* is a modifier of things with the force head already incorporated, it makes sense that it can be used in imperatives, since it just modifies context-change potentials. Updating and downdating here manipulate the public intention lists, and *yo* can signal ‘misalignment’ between what the speaker thinks is the right course of action and what the speaker thinks the hearer thinks (or is behaving as if he thinks) is the right course of action.

3.4 In interrogatives

The distribution of *yo* in interrogatives is the most complex of all. Davis discusses these facts mainly in section 3.4. He says that many interrogatives with both *yo* and the canonical interrogative particle *ka* sound bad (see (30)), but that there are good examples, so this is likely not a morphosyntactic restriction (31). In the good examples, the interrogatives receive highly rhetorical readings. He thus seeks an account of the distribution of *yo* in interrogatives at the level of his decision-theoretic analysis. (Note: Chris is actively working on *yo* and other discourse particles in interrogatives, so his views have probably changed since he wrote this paper.)

3.5 *yo* as a CCP modifier

(17) Context: A is standing by an obviously immobilized car and is approached by B.

A: I am out of petrol.

B: kono miti-o zutto it-ta tokoro ni gasorinsutando-ga ari-masu #(*yo*↑)
 this road-ACC straight go-PAST place at gas.station-NOM be-HON
 ‘There’s a gas station straight down the road *yo*↑.’

“The plain declarative without *yo* in this context is felt by informants to be rather less natural than the version with *yo*. Native speakers report that if B uses the bare declarative without *yo*, it sounds as if B is simply stating a fact, with no connection to A’s problem, and with no implication that this information will help A resolve his problem [...]” (p. 15)

(C) **Actions:** Contexts have associated with them a set of actions \mathcal{A} ,

$$\langle \text{PB}_A, \text{PB}_B, \text{PI}_A, \text{PI}_B, \mathcal{A} \rangle$$

where each $a \in \mathcal{A}$ is a property.

(23) $\llbracket yo \rrbracket(\text{CCP})(c)$ is defined iff

$$\exists a \in \mathcal{A}(\text{CCP}(c))$$

$$\forall w_i, w_j \in \bigcap \text{CG}(\text{CCP}(c))$$

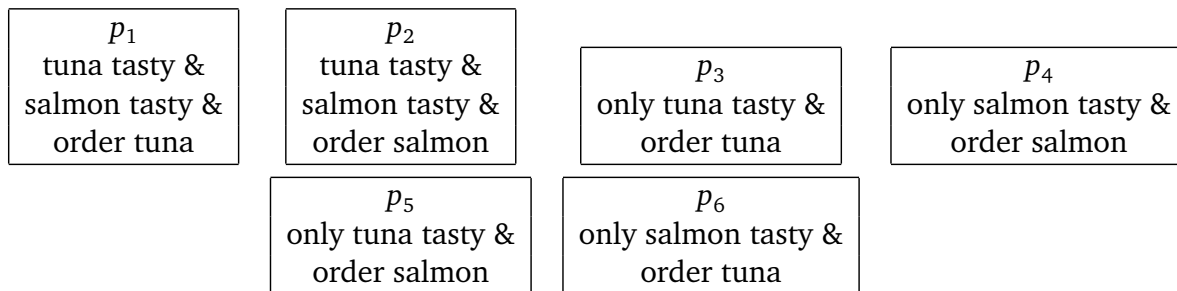
$$[a(\text{addr})(w_i) \wedge w_i <_{\text{CCP}(c)} w_j] \rightarrow a(\text{addr})(w_j)$$

where $<$ is an ordering relation on worlds

Where defined, $\llbracket yo \rrbracket(\text{CCP})(c) = \text{CCP}(c)$

(18) A: aa, mayot-ta. dono susi-ni si-you ka na.
 oh at.a.loss-PAST which sushi-DAT do-HORT Q PRT.
 ‘I’m stuck — I wonder which sort of sushi I should get?’

B: koko-no maguro-wa oisi-i #(*yo*↑)
 here-GEN tuna-TOP tasty-NONPAST #(*yo*↑)
 ‘The tuna here is good *yo*↑.’



If A credibly asserts ‘the tuna is tasty’, then we eliminate p_4 and p_6 , and thus we remove the propositions for which choosing salmon is ranked above choosing tuna, per the presumptions of *yo*.

4 General questions and assessment

4.1 Other particles

- Pasha Siraj studies the Singaporean English ‘rebuttal’ particle *wàt*. He provides lots of examples, which bring him to a denotation that has a similar shape as Davis’s $\llbracket yo \rrbracket$, though with differences in how it relates the two propositions p and q . (In both cases, q comes from the context.)

https://udrive.oit.umass.edu/xythoswfs/webui/_xy-4502055_1

- Kratzer and Matthewson, in their 2009 SULA abstract, move away from the view that *ja* signals something about the hearer’s knowledge of the propositional content, arguing instead that, for a sentence α containing *ja*, *ja* “in a context c indicates that the speaker of c is firmly committed to p (where p is the descriptive content of α), and moreover doesn’t consider the question whether or not p to be on the agenda for either the current or any future inquiry”. They further argue for a similar characterization of the Salish particle *qa7*.

http://web.mit.edu/sula5/SULA5_abstracts.zip

- Beaver and Clark (2008) argue that what makes *only* a discourse particle is the fact that it engages the questions under discussion. (More on this later in the quarter.)

4.2 Conceptual questions

- Could Davis’s argument be recast without appeal to illocutionary force markers? What would we gain/lose in the process?
- Davis suggests that Japanese makes use of discourse particles where English can get by with no explicit marking (or perhaps just intonational marking).
 - Is he right?
 - What does the truth tell us about pragmatic enrichment?
 - What does the truth tell us about cross-linguistic lexical pragmatics?
- Can we think of other operators that could be usefully packed into this meaning space

$$\lambda p \lambda c. \dots q \dots$$

with targeted updates to the speaker or hearer’s epistemic state (as captured in the context itself)?

References

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