

The dimensions of inversion exclamatives (in discourse)

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Non-at-issue Meaning and Information Structure
May 8-10, 2017

Inversion exclamatives

(1) Boy, is this spicy!

(**positive** inversion exclamative)
(cf., McCawley 1973; Huddleston 1993
Rett 2011; Zanuttini & Portner 2003)

(2) Isn't this spicy!

(**negative** inversion exclamative)
(cf., Taniguchi 2016c;b; Wood 2014)

Today's questions

1. What are you communicating when you use an exclamative?
2. Why do they look like questions?
3. How is non-at-issue-ness represented in discourse?

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1. What are you communicating when you use an exclamative?
2. Why do they look like questions?
3. How is non-at-issue-ness represented in discourse?

Spoiler alert:

1. The speaker is expressing something for the sake of expressing something; not up for discussion
2. Inversion exclamatives are still “questions,” but they force the discourse to go in a certain way
3. Meanings that manipulate particular parts of the discourse structure

Outline

1. Data: Known observations
2. Data: New observations
3. Framework
4. Analysis
5. Discussion and conclusion

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Question form

- (3) A: Is this spicy? / Isn't this spicy?
B: This is spicy.
- (4) A: Boy, is this spicy! / Isn't this spicy!
B: ?? This is spicy.

The exclamative debate

There's a debate in the literature as to whether exclamatives have an underlying question semantics.

- ▶ The **question approach** says they do (Gutiérrez-Rexach 1996; Zanuttini & Portner 2003; Chernilovskaya 2010; Taniguchi 2016b;c; and more).
- ▶ The **degree approach** says they don't; they have a covert degree operator (Castroviejo Miró 2006; 2008b;a; Rett 2011; Wood 2014; and more).

I argue that the semantics of two inversion exclamatives, which are fairly understudied, make a convincing case for the **question approach**.

Gradability

- (5) a. Boy, is this { spicy, fun, small, tasty, tall, }!
 b. Isn't this { scary, difficult, beautiful }!
- (6) a. ?? Boy, is this { non-refundable, wooden, }!
 (a) prime (number), electronic }!
 b. ?? Isn't this { non-refundable, wooden, }!
 (a) prime (number), electronic }!

But slightly different flavor

Speakers report that Neg-Ex's can have a sarcastic (or otherwise insincere/jokey) flair. Pos-Ex's don't have this property.

- (7) a. Isn't this fantastic!
b. Aren't you a linguist!
c. Isn't this spicy!

(Taniguchi 2016c)

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But first: diagnostics

You can't challenge the **truth value** of non-at-issue meaning (Potts 2007; among others):

- (8) A: The damn republican won.
B: ?? That's not true! You're a republican!

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You can challenge the **felicitousness** of the use.

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You can't challenge the **truth value** of non-at-issue meaning (Potts 2007; among others):

- (12) A: The damn republican won.
B: ?? That's not true! You're a republican!

You can challenge the **felicitousness** of the use.

TFWT test:

- (13) A: The damn republican won.
B: The fuck was that? You're a republican!

But first: diagnostics

TFWT is strange for challenging at-issue meaning:

(14) A: Hillary won the election.

B: That's not true!

(15) A: Hillary won the election.

B: ?? The fuck was that?

Different sources of intensification

The overdramatic milk:

(16) (You run out of milk while pouring a glass.)

A: ?? Boy, is this inconvenient!

A': Isn't this inconvenient!

Different sources of intensification

The overdramatic milk:

(18) (You run out of milk while pouring a glass.)

A: ?? Boy, is this inconvenient!

A': Isn't this inconvenient!

Common knowledge habanero:

(19) (You know that habaneros are spicy, but you've never actually tried one — until now.)

A: Boy, are habaneros spicy!

A': ?? Aren't habaneros spicy!

Non-at-issue-ness

(You run out of milk while pouring a glass.)

(20) A: Boy, is this inconvenient!

B: ?? That's not true! This isn't super inconvenient!

(21) A: Boy, is this inconvenient!

B: The fuck was that? This isn't super inconvenient!

Non-at-issue-ness

(You know that habaneros are spicy, but you've never actually tried one — until now.)

(22) A: Aren't habaneros spicy!

B: ?? That's not true! Everyone already knows habaneros are spicy.

(23) A: Aren't habaneros spicy!

B: The fuck was that? Everyone already knows habaneros are spicy.

Not up for discussion

Exclamatives make bad debate starters:

- (24) a. So, yes or no: Mayonnaise is gross.
b. So, yes or no: Is mayonnaise gross?
c. ?? So, yes or no: Boy, is mayonnaise gross! / Isn't mayonnaise gross!
- ▶ In other words: you're not necessarily looking for input from anyone.
 - ▶ Exclamatives are used for the sake of expressing something (Castroviejo Miró 2008a).

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Dynamic semantics

- ▶ What does it mean for something to be ‘not up for discussion’?
- ▶ This points to certain **components of discourse structure** exclamatives are sensitive to
- ▶ A useful framework for modeling this interactive, non-static nature of sentence meaning: DYNAMIC SEMANTICS
- ★ In particular: Farkas & Bruce (2010)

Farkas and Bruce 2010 (simplified)

- ▶ *The observation*: both assertions and questions pend confirmation (or denial) from the hearer.
- ▶ *The innovation*: assertions (and questions) PROPOSE to update the CG (contra Gunlogson (2004))
- ▶ *The parts*:
 - ▶ **Table**: Issues under discussion (stack of sets of propositions)
 - ▶ **DC_X**: Discourse commitment of X (set of propositions)
 - ▶ **CG**: Discourse participants' mutual belief (set of propositions)
 - ▶ **PS**: Mutually anticipated CG (set of set of propositions)
- ▶ *The analysis*: Assertions and questions update the context by manipulating these parts in specific ways

Compositional discourse semantics

Assertion:

(25) $\llbracket \text{Kim is home} \rrbracket = \llbracket \text{ASSERT Kim is home} \rrbracket$

Polar question:

(26) $\llbracket \text{Is Kim home?} \rrbracket = \llbracket \text{Q Kim is home} \rrbracket$

Compositional discourse semantics

Sentence meaning in terms of CONTEXT CHANGE POTENTIALS

(cf., Stalnaker 1978; Heim 1982; 1983; Gunlogson 2004)

- (27) a. C = input context
b. C' = output context
c. $\lambda C \lambda C'$ $\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{here is how I want the discourse} \\ \text{structure to look post-utterance} \end{array} \right]$

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- ▶ **Table:** Issues under discussion
- ▶ **DC_X:** Discourse commitment of X
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- ▶ **PS:** Mutually anticipated CG

Example

$$\llbracket \text{Kim is home} \rrbracket = \llbracket \text{ASSERT Kim is home} \rrbracket$$

$$(29) \quad \llbracket \text{ASSERT } p \rrbracket_{C, C'} \\ = \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ p \} \quad \wedge \\ DC_{\text{SPKR}}^{C'} = DC_{\text{SPKR}}^C \cup \{ p \} \wedge \\ PS_{C'} = \{ CG_C \cup \{ p \} \} \end{array} \right]$$

A problem: VERUM

- (30) A: I'm not sure if Kim is home / Is Kim home? / Kim is not home.
B: Kim IS home.

- ▶ 'It's wrong for you to entertain the possibility that Kim is not home.'
- ▶ Concerns **certainty** of the positive polarity (Höhle 1992; Romero & Han 2004; Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró 2011)
- ▶ Infelicitous **out of the blue** (Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró 2011)

Modifying Farkas and Bruce

‘It’s wrong of **you** to entertain the possibility that Kim is not home.’

The parts:

- ▶ **Table:** Issues under discussion (stack of sets of propositions)
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Modifying the discourse parts

‘It’s wrong of **you** to entertain the possibility that Kim is not home.’

The parts, modified:

- ▶ **Table:** Issues under discussion (stack of sets of propositions)
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- ▶ **PS_X:** Anticipated CG of X (set of set of propositions)

Modifying the discourse parts

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The parts, modified:

- ▶ **Table:** Issues under discussion (stack of sets of propositions)
- ▶ **DC_X:** Discourse commitment of X (set of propositions)
- ▶ **CG:** Discourse participants’ mutual belief (set of propositions)
- ▶ **PS_X:** Anticipated CG of X (set of set of propositions)
 - ▶ When everyone’s PS matches, the CG gets updated

(see also Malamud & Stephenson 2015)

Analyzing VERUM

An illocutionary modifier:

$$(31) \quad \llbracket \text{VERUM} \rrbracket \\ = \lambda L_{\langle c, ct \rangle} \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} L(C)(C') \\ PS_{\text{ADDR}_C}^{C'} = PS_{\text{ADDR}_C}^C \wedge - \{CG_C \cup \{\neg p\}\} \end{array} \right]$$

‘Take **adding** *Kim is not home to the CG* out of your PS’

Analyzing VERUM

(32) Kim IS home!

a. $\llbracket \text{ASSERT } p \rrbracket$

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ p \} \quad \wedge \\ DC_{\text{SPKR}}^{C'} = DC_{\text{SPKR}}^C \cup \{ p \} \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{C'} = \{ CG_C \cup \{ p \} \} \end{array} \right]$$

b. $\llbracket \text{VERUM} \rrbracket (\text{ASSERT } p)$

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ p \} \quad \wedge \\ DC_{\text{SPKR}}^{C'} = DC_{\text{SPKR}}^C \cup \{ p \} \quad \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{C'} = \{ CG_C \cup \{ p \} \} \quad \wedge \\ PS_{\text{ADDR}_c}^{C'} = PS_{\text{ADDR}_c}^C - \{ CG_C \cup \{ \neg p \} \} \end{array} \right]$$

‘Kim is home; why are you even considering the option that she might not be home? Don’t.’

Analyzing VERUM (in negative polar questions)

- ▶ Isn't Kim home? (speaker bias)
- ▶ *Assumption:* Negative polar questions are VERUM + polar question (Romero & Han 2004)

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(34) Isn't Kim home?

a. $[[Q\ p]]$

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ p, \neg p \} \quad \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{C'} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} CG_C \cup \{p\}, \\ CG_C \cup \{\neg p\} \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right]$$

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(35) Isn't Kim home?

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b. $[[\text{VERUM } Q\ p]]$

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ p, \neg p \} \quad \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{C'} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} CG_C \cup \{p\}, \\ CG_C \cup \{\neg p\} \end{array} \right\} \quad \wedge \\ PS_{\text{ADDR}_c}^{C'} = PS_{\text{ADDR}_c}^C - \{ CG_C \cup \{\neg p\} \} \end{array} \right]$$

‘Here’s a question: is Kim home? I’m in principle expecting both answers, but you’re going to say yes, right?’

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Analysis: Inversion exclamatives

Recap:

- ▶ *The basic idea:* Inversion exclamatives derive from polar questions
- ▶ *Discourse property:* ‘Not up for discussion’
 - *My take:* ‘I’m not talking to anyone’

Analysis: Inversion exclamatives

$$(36) \quad \llbracket \text{EXCL} \rrbracket = \lambda L \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} L(C)(C') \wedge \\ \neg \exists x. \text{ADDR}_{C'}(x) \end{array} \right]$$

- ▶ Literally, ‘there is no addressee in the output context’
- ▶ Re: expressing for the sake of expressing

Analysis: Inversion exclamatives

Fun Japanese fact:

- (37) a. nante karai -no **-daroo** -ka
 how spicy NMLZ DAROO Q
 ‘How spicy this is!’
- b. doregurai karai -no **-daroo** -ka
 how.much spicy NMLZ DAROO Q
 ‘I wonder how spicy this is’

(cf., Ono 2006)

About *boy*

The particle *boy* (or the like) in Pos-Ex's is obligatory for many speakers.

- (38) a. { Boy, man, god
 { shit, damn, fuck } was that spicy!
- b. ?? Was that spicy!

- ▶ **McCready (2008)**: *boy* is a sentential *very*; it says the degree of a gradable predicate inside a proposition is high.
- ▶ It's also expressive (non-at-issue):

- (39) A: Boy, it's hot in here! (40) A: Boy, it's hot in here!
 B: That's not true! B: TFWT?

Expressive meaning

- ▶ *One way of thinking about it:* It's literally separate from at-issue meaning (Potts 2005; 2007)
- ▶ A *discourse* way of thinking about it: Expressive content automatically gets added to CG (hence you can't challenge it) (AnderBois et al. 2010)

Expressive meaning

- ▶ *One way of thinking about it:* It's literally separate from at-issue meaning (Potts 2005; 2007)
- ▶ *A **discourse** way of thinking about it:* Expressive content automatically gets added to CG (hence you can't challenge it) (AnderBois et al. 2010)
 - ★ *Some perks:* A more articulated notion of non-at-issue-ness

Analysis: Positive inversion exclamatives

(53) was that spicy!

a. \llbracket Q this was spicy \rrbracket

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ \text{that was spicy}, \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{C'} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} CG_C \cup \{ \text{that was spicy} \}, \\ CG_C \cup \{ \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right]$$

Analysis: Positive inversion exclamatives

(53) was that spicy!

a. $\llbracket \text{Q this was spicy} \rrbracket$

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ \text{that was spicy}, \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{C'} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} CG_C \cup \{ \text{that was spicy} \}, \\ CG_C \cup \{ \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right]$$

b. $\llbracket \text{EXCL} \rrbracket (\text{Q } p)$

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Analysis: Positive inversion exclamatives

(54) Boy, was that spicy!

b. $\llbracket \text{EXCL Q } p \rrbracket$

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ \text{that was spicy}, \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{C'} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} CG_C \cup \{ \text{that was spicy} \}, \\ CG_C \cup \{ \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \end{array} \right\} \wedge \\ \neg \exists x. \text{ADDR}_{C'}(x) \end{array} \right]$$

c. $\llbracket \text{boy} \rrbracket (\text{EXCL Q } p)$

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ \text{that was spicy}, \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{C'} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} CG_C \cup \{ \text{that was spicy} \}, \\ CG_C \cup \{ \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \end{array} \right\} \wedge \\ \neg \exists x. \text{ADDR}_{C'}(x) \wedge \\ CG_{C'} = CG_C \cup \{ \text{that was very spicy} \} \end{array} \right]$$

‘I wonder if that was spicy ...oh yes, **VERY** spicy.’

Analysis: Positive inversion exclamatives

(54) Boy, was that spicy!

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‘I wonder if that was spicy ...oh yes, VERY spicy.’

- ▶ The only non-contradictory move after this is $CG \cup \{ \text{that was spicy} \}$
- ▶ The exclamative pushes the discourse to go in a certain way

Analysis: Negative inversion exclamatives

(55) Wasn't that spicy!

a. $\llbracket Q \text{ that was spicy} \rrbracket$

$$= \lambda C \lambda C' \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{top}(T_{C'}) = \{ \text{that was spicy}, \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \wedge \\ PS_{\text{SPKR}_c}^{c'} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} CG_C \cup \{ \text{that was spicy} \}, \\ CG_C \cup \{ \neg \text{that was spicy} \} \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right]$$

b. $\llbracket \text{VERUM } Q \text{ that was spicy} \rrbracket$

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(continued)

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'I wonder: wasn't that spicy? ...'

Analysis: Negative inversion exclamatives

(55) Wasn't that spicy! (continued)

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'I wonder: wasn't that spicy? ...'

- ▶ *Problem:* Still two projected ways to resolve the issue
- ▶ Only relevant participant is the speaker; in principle can choose p or $\neg p$

Sarcasm, revisited

Speakers report that Neg-Ex's can have a sarcastic (or otherwise insincere/jokey) flair.

- (41)
- a. Isn't this fantastic!
 - b. Aren't you a linguist!
 - c. Isn't this spicy!

Sarcasm, revisited

Speakers report that Neg-Ex's can have a sarcastic (or otherwise insincere/jokey) flair.

- (42)
- a. Isn't this fantastic!
 - b. Aren't you a linguist!
 - c. Isn't this spicy!

Maybe this is the source?

Some concerns and some perks

So are exclamatives just modified questions?

- ▶ *This analysis*: Yes. (at least for inversion exclamatives)

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So are exclamatives just modified questions?

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- ▶ *Bonus point*: Unified analysis of exclamations
- ▶ `[[This is spicy!!!]] = EXCL ASSERT this is spicy`

Some concerns and some perks

So are exclamatives just modified questions?

- ▶ *This analysis*: Yes. (at least for inversion exclamatives)
- ▶ *Bonus point*: Unified analysis of exclamations
- ▶ [[This is spicy!!!]] = EXCL ASSERT this is spicy
- ▶ *Work in progress*: WH-exclamatives

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Conclusion

Highlights:

- ▶ Non-at-issue-ness as represented in discourse; how things can “not be on the Table” in different ways

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- ▶ Non-at-issue-ness as represented in discourse; how things can “not be on the Table” in different ways

Discovery:

- ▶ What VERUM tells us about discourse: individualized PS's
- ▶ What exclamatives tell us about discourse: (non-)interactiveness

Conclusion

Highlights:

- ▶ Non-at-issue-ness as represented in discourse; how things can “not be on the Table” in different ways

Discovery:

- ▶ What VERUM tells us about discourse: individualized PS's
- ▶ What exclamation marks tell us about discourse: (non-)interactiveness

Innovation:

- ▶ Pos-Ex's and Neg-Ex's are different
- ▶ Dynamic treatment of exclamation marks
- ▶ Compositional discourse semantics

(but cf., Davis 2011; Taniguchi 2016d;a)

Conclusion

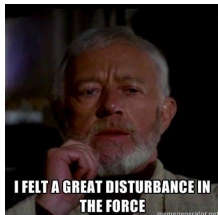
Punchline:

- ▶ Non-lexical intensification: indication of a disturbance in the discourse

Conclusion

Punchline:

- ▶ Non-lexical intensification: indication of a disturbance in the discourse



Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my committee (Marcin Morzycki, Alan Munn, Cristina Schmitt, Mutsuko Endo-Hudson), Curt Anderson (HHU Düsseldorf), and my MSU semantics colleagues (Abhi Parekh, Adam Gobeski, Cara Feldscher, Chris Bartoluzzi, Grant Rodgers Kemp, Josh Herrin, Tess Huelskamp). All errors are my own.

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