

So what? – on the nature of *gam2* in Cantonese

噉即係點？——粵語「噉」字性質再探

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The story

- Demonstratives are attested cross-linguistically, which allows us to “point at” different ontological types anaphorically or deictically (Diessel 1999; Anderson and Morzycki 2015; König and Umbach 2018).
- But their realizations vary along (at least) two dimensions.
 - Orientation (distance contrasts)
 - Content (various ontological categories)

Entity	Time	Place	Degree	Manner	Quality
呢個 個個	呢陣 個陣	呢度 個度	咁 gam3	噉 gam2	噉 gam2

- (1) a. A: 條繩有三米 咁 長。 B: 咁 長都唔夠嘅。 (Sio and Tang 2007, (55))
- b. 佢（馬馬虎虎） 噉 做野唔得架。 ((1), modified)
- c. Peter係（成日遲到） 噉 架。 ((51), modified)

The story

- Demonstratives beyond the nominal domain are less studied (König and Umbach 2018).
- This talk focuses on their **distribution and the range of interpretations**.
 - For a diachronic review on *gam*, see Cheung (2013).
 - Readers interested Chinese varieties or typological distribution of demonstratives should refer to Wu, Lai, and Liu (2024).
- This talk builds on Peng (2003) and Sio and Tang (2007, 2008), and supply my observations on *gam*_{2/3} in Cantonese.
- Ultimately, I come up with a slightly different classification of the *gam*-family.

The story

- In addition to Degree, Manner, Quality, I include these cases as well:

- (2) a. 噏 唔係幾好嘅。 (Peng 2003, (6))
- b. 如果你學過少少日文 噏，可以考慮插班。
- c. 噏 呀，我畀先啦。 (Sio and Tang 2008, (53))
- d. 我想黎幫吓手 噏 啫。 (Peng 2003)
- 張三食咗啲咩 噏 呀？ (Lee 2018, (33b))

- These cases have been analyzed as discourse markers or sentence-final particles (see **LaiR:2023**; Lee (2018)).
- But I side with Peng (2003) and Sio and Tang (2007, 2008) in that they are the same demonstrative, but one that refers to a **Situation**.

The story

- What's not in the story are the usages that are neither anaphoric nor deictic. Some are idiomatic.

(3) Other usages of *gam*

a. Aspectual adverb: 阿明 係噏 喊，喊到天光都唔停。

b. Manner adverb: 你 係噏意 買份生果上去探佢啦。

c. Verbal suffix: 佢食 噏 一個蘋果。

(Tang 2003)

- I set these cases aside.

The story

- Long story short,
 - there are many *gams* in Cantonese.
 - Modifier *gam*
 - Clausal *gam*
 - I think that they are the same *gam*, sharing the same underlying structure.
 - *Gam* as a grammatical marker, introducing an empty category
 - until I find two mishaved *gams*,
 - in the form of 'so-do' and 'so-THINK'
 - so I conclude with a non-uniform approach to *gam*
 - *gam* as a grammatical marker, and
 - *gam* as a genuine anaphoric/deictic expression

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Two types of content

- According to the distribution of *gam*, it can be classified into two groups.
 - **Modifiers** denoting (i) manner, (ii) degree, or (iii) quality
 - **Clauses** denoting (i) quality, (ii) situation, or (iii) proposition
 - We will get into each case, and keep track of the possibility of **apposition** 同位結構 (Cheung 2007) (or what Sio & Tang calls **establishing usage**).
- (4) a. 條繩有三米 咁 長。 vs. 條繩有 咁 長。
- b. 佢馬馬虎虎 噉 做野唔得架。 vs. 佢 噉 做野唔得架。
- = whether the antecedent and *gam* can co-occur

Modifiers - manner

- *Gam2* is most commonly used to refer to manner of different sorts.

(5) Antecedent = manner adjunct

- 阿明 [靜靜地] 食意粉，阿芬都 噉 食。 so-V
- Apposition: 阿明 [靜靜地] 噉 食意粉。 ADJ-so-V
- 阿明 [用一隻筷子] 食意粉，阿芬都 噉 食。 so-V
- Apposition: 阿明 [用一隻筷子] 噉 食意粉。 PP-so-V
- *阿明 [成個model] 行。 *NP V (Sio and Tang 2008, (7))
- Apposition: 阿明 [成個model] 噉 行，阿芬都 噉 行。 NP-so-V

- When the antecedent is an NP, *gam2* is required.

Modifiers - degree

- When *gam* refers to content related to degree or scale, it is realized as *gam3*.

(6) Antecedent = degree adjuncts

a. 阿明有 [二米] 高，阿芬都有 咁 高。 so-ADJ

b. Apposition: 阿明有 [二米] 咁 高。 NP-so-ADJ

c. *阿明個樣 [通咗幾晚頂] 殘。 *VP ADJ

d. Apposition: 阿明個樣 [通咗幾晚頂] 咁 殘。 VP-so-ADJ

- When the antecedent is a VP, *gam3* is required.
- Note that it is not uncommon degree demonstrative may be realized different from manner/quality ones; see Wu, Lai, and Liu (2024).

Modifiers - degree

- A related string: *gam3zai6*, a scalar approximator (“almost”), where *zai6* can be considered an adjective.

(7) a. 佢去咗成三次 咁滯 ◦ (Tang 2006b, (42))

b. 佢做起篇文 咁滯 ◦ (Tang 2009, (2))

- In these cases, the antecedent is required.

(8) *佢都 咁滯 ◦

- See also Tang (2006a, 2009), Cheng (2015), and Lee, Hsiao, and Lin (2024) for detailed descriptions.

Modifiers - quality

- *Gam2* can occur before a limited set of nouns, specifying their meaning.

(9) a. 老虎𩚑 𩚑 脾性 (Peng 2003, (32))

b. 個校巴司機 𩚑 脾性，真係唔好再揸車搵食啦 news

c. 落雨 𩚑 聲 (Cheung 2007, p.99)

d. 稟神 𩚑 聲／割豬 𩚑 聲／打鑼 𩚑 聲／鬼殺 𩚑 聲／牙痛 𩚑 聲

- Note that the 𩚑聲 strings are typically used as predicates, rather than nominals. Roughly, it conveys 發出好似～嘅聲音.

(10) a. 出面落雨 𩚑 聲。

b. ??尋日落雨 𩚑 聲嘈醒我。 OK 尋日落雨聲嘈醒我。

Sio & Tang's Analysis

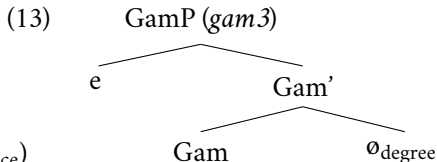
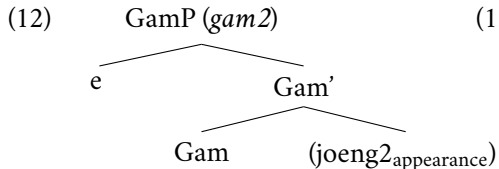
- A central issue concerns what precisely is responsible for anaphoricity/deicticity.

(11) The status of *gam*

- Anaphor/deictic (as in *gam2 zou6* 'do so') (Wei and Li 2016)
- A grammatical marker (Peng 2003; Sio and Tang 2007)

Sio & Tang's Analysis

- Sio and Tang (2007) proposes that *gam* is a functional head that takes two arguments, whose internal argument affects its phonological realizations.
 - 1st argument: a restriction contributed by *joeng2* 'appearance' or \emptyset 'degree'
 - 2nd argument: a variable bound by
 - an overt description (the establishing use)
 - the immediate context (the deictic use)
 - a reference in the previous discourse (the anaphoric use)



Evidence (briefly)

- ① The structure is syntactically elaborated enough to allow apposition and the long form 噉樣.
- ② It explains why sometimes *gam* is required, as it can turn non-manner/degree/quality expression into the right sort.

- (14) a. *阿明 [成個model] 行。 *NP V
 b. *阿明個樣 [通咗幾晚頂] 殘。 *VP ADJ

- ③ It captures the grammatical function of *gam* - forcing a manner/degree/quality reading.

- (15) a. ??尋日落雨 噉 聲嘈醒我。 vs. ^{OK}尋日落雨聲嘈醒我。
 b. Manner: 佢好快 噉 走咗喇。 ≠ Temporal: 佢好快走咗喇。
 c. Manner: ??你可以是但 噉 精讀一本書。 vs.
 Free choice: 你可以是但精讀一本書。

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Clause - quality

- Turning to clausal cases, *gam* can also be used to refer to qualities or states.

- (16) a. 阿明 [喺尖沙咀租樓住] , 阿芬都會 噏 。 V-so
- b. Apposition: 阿明會 [喺尖沙咀租樓住] 噏 。 V-VP-so
- c. 阿明諗住 [得閒上黎食吓飯] , 阿芬都諗住 噏 。 V-so
- d. Apposition: 阿明諗住 [得閒上黎食吓飯] 噏 。 V-VP-so
- e. 呢棵樹 [落晒葉] , 個棵樹都係 噏 。 V-so
- f. Apposition: 個棵樹係 [落晒葉] 噏 。 V-VP-so

Clause - quality

- Unsurprisingly, *gam* can be used in a relative structure.

- (17) a. 呢舊野好似gel。噏 嘅一舊野有咩用？ so-GE3-NP
- b. Apposition: [好似gel] 噏 嘅一舊野 NP-so-GE3-NP (Sio and Tang 2008, (19a))
- c. 呢隻狗成日吠。噏 嘅一隻狗通常都好細膽。 so-GE3-NP
- d. Apposition: [成日吠] 噏 嘅狗 VP-so-GE3-NP ((25))
- e. 佢地兩公婆成日嗌交。噏 嘅事已經見怪不怪。 so-GE3-NP
- f. Apposition: [兩公婆嗌交] 噏 嘅事 VP-so-GE3-NP (Cheung 2007, p.99)

Clause - situation

- *Gam* can also appear in subject position, referring to a situation.

- (18) a. 噉 唔係幾好啫。 so (Peng 2003, (6))
- b. Apposition: [成日匿喺屋企] 噉 唔係幾好啫。 VP-so
- c. 噉 都得？ so
- d. Apposition: [前一日先準備] 噉 都得？ VP-so

Clause - situation

- This extends naturally to subordinate clauses.

- (19) a. 如果 噉, 可以考慮插班。 C-so
- b. Apposition:
如果 [你學過少少日文] 噉, 可以考慮插班。 C-TP-so
- c. (如果) 噉 呀, 我畀先啦。 (C-)so (Sio and Tang 2008, (53))
- d. Apposition:
(如果) [你有帶現金] 噉 呀, 我畀先啦。 (C-)TP-so

Clause - proposition

- Matrix clauses can be considered along the same line, except that *gam2* refers to the preceding proposition as a whole.

(20) a. [我想黎幫吓手] 噏 啫。 (Peng 2003)

b. [張三只鍾意瑪莉] 噏 囉。 (Lee 2018, (7))

c. [張三食咗啲咩] 噏 呀？ ((33b))

d. [今日想傾啲咩] 噏 呀？

e. [餵紅蟲又洗唔洗消毒] 噏 呀？ forum

- In these cases, the matrix clause cannot be omitted, unlike other cases.

Against *gam2* as an SFP

- Since *gam2* appears clausal-finally in all these cases, it is reasonable to suspect that *gam2* is grammaticalized as a SFP.
- Lee (2018) suggests that it is a CP-level discourse particle that carries the assertive force which updates the Common Ground of the discourse.
- However, clausal-final *gam2* pattern with other cases in that it can also take long form.

- (21) a. 即係你揸個螢光幕呢，佢就會出啲野畀你睇 噏（樣）。
- ((19))
- b. 張三想幫吓手 噏樣 啫。

Against *gam2* as an SFP

- As shown above, *gam2* can appear in various embedded contexts.

- (22) a. 如果 [你學過少少日文] 噏 , 可以考慮插班。
 b. [兩公婆嗌交] 噏 嘅事

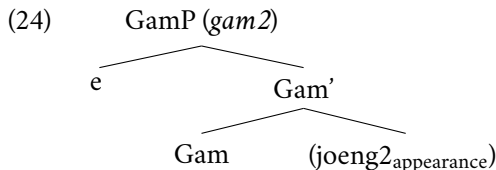
- Also, *gam2* can appear before a range of SFPs before CP level.

- (23) a. 虎仗係男主 點都要寫到佢好快勁咗 噏 掛。
 b. 地震震到個頭好似雜草 噏 添。
 c. 整野食佢好堅持要洗乾淨隻手 噏 先。

- In light of a potential unified treatment of *gam*, it is less attractive to posit a new discourse marker handling a few subcases.

Analysis

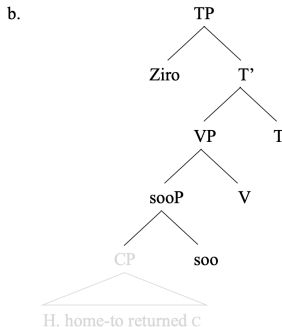
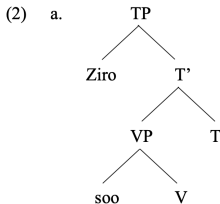
- I suggest that the same structure in Sio and Tang (2007) can handle these cases straightforwardly.
 - e* can be a clausal element (denoting quality, situation or proposition)
 - GamP* can either serve as a modifier (an adjunct) or a clause (a complement).



- This suggestion receives support from Japanese, which shows a similar apposition structure.

- Sakamoto (2016) argues that Japanese *soo* involves involves ellipsis when it replaces CP complements.

- (25) a. Taroo-wa [_{CP} Hanako-ga uti-ni kaetta to] (*soo*) omotteiru.
 Taro-TOP Hanako-NOM home-to returned C so think
 lit: 'Taro thinks so, that Hanako returned home.'
- b. Ziroo-mo [_{CP} *soo*] omotteiru.
 Ziroo-also so think
 'Ziroo also thinks so.'



Analysis

- A remaining issue concerns the grammatical contribution of *gam*.
 - Unlike modifier *gam*, it does not turn a clause into a modifier or a clause.
 - It does not seem to affect the truth-condition of the sentence.
 - It seems that *gam* offers nominalization, similar to Mandarin *de*, Cantonese *ge3*, or Japanese *no*. I leave this to future research.

Interim summary

- Despite this, we got a better picture of *gam*.

(26) The classification on various usages of *gam*

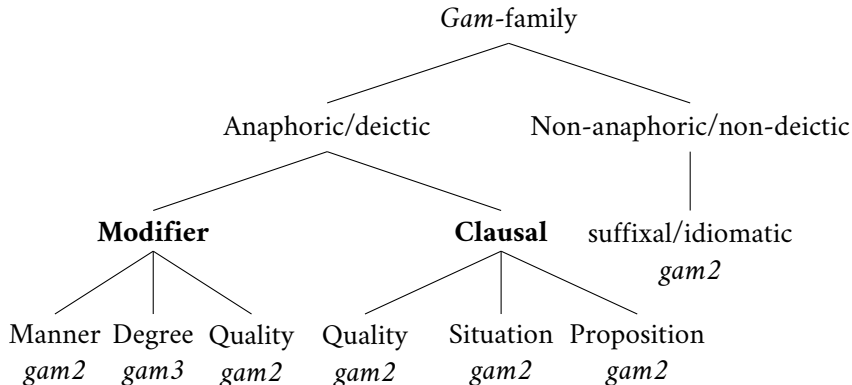


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A complication

- So far, we haven't discuss *gam2zou6* 'so-do', which, however, do not allow apposition.

- (27) a. 阿明 [用筷子食意粉] , 阿芬都 噉做 。 so-DO
- b. *Apposition: *阿明 [用筷子食意粉] 噉做 。 *VP-so-DO
- c. 阿明 [買野唔睇價錢] , 阿芬都 噉做 。 so-DO
- d. *Apposition: *阿明 [買野唔睇價錢] 噉做 。 *VP-so-DO
- e. 阿明 [唔用膠餐具] , 阿芬都 噉做 。 so-DO
- f. *Apposition: *阿明 [唔用膠餐具錢] 噉做 。 *VP-so-DO

A complication

- A similar pattern, ‘so-THINK’, shows the same.

- (28) a. 阿明覺得 [食意粉要用筷子] ，阿芬都 噏 覺得。 so-THINK
- b. *Apposition: *阿明係 [食意粉要用筷子] 噏 覺得。 *CP-so-THINK
- c. 阿明以為 [今日星期三] ，阿芬都 噏 以為 so-THINK
- d. *Apposition: *阿明係 [今日星期三] 噏 以為。 *CP-so-THINK
- e. 阿明打算 [聽日去台灣] ，阿芬都 噏 打算 so-THINK
- f. *Apposition: *阿明係 [聽日去台灣] 噏 打算。 *CP-so-THINK

A complication

- More importantly, these cases show an interesting form-meaning mismatch.
 - Despite the modifier position, *gam* does not modify the manner of the following VP.

- (29) a. 阿明去跑步。阿芬都 噉 做。 vs. *阿明去跑步。阿芬都 噉 跑。
b. 阿明話語言學最得意，阿芬都 噉 話。
(Infelicitous follow-up: # 阿芬點樣話?)

- There is no identifiable manner in these cases, but the use of *gam* is allowed.
 - *gam2zou6* refers to a VP as a whole.
 - *gam* in 'so-THINK' refers to the CP content of the verbs of saying.

A complication

- In some cases, so-THINK seems to be identical to THINK-so.

(30) 阿明打算去外國讀書，

a. 我都打算 噏 。

b. 我都 噏 打算 。

- But the set of thinking verbs in these two constructions differ.

(31) a. 我都 噏 講 vs. *我都講 噏

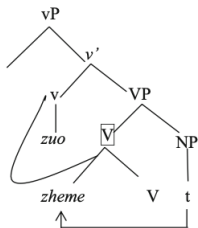
b. *我都 噏 諗住／鍾意 。

- These differences suggest that *gam* in these cases does not fit into the grammatical marker approach to *gam*.

Back to the anaphor/deictic approach

- The ‘so-do’ and ‘so-THINK’ cases may require independent treatment, one that posit no elaborated structure.
- In their discussions on Mandarin ‘so-do’, Wei and Li (2016) take ‘so’ to be a nominal (deep) anaphor that moves up to a pre-verbal position.

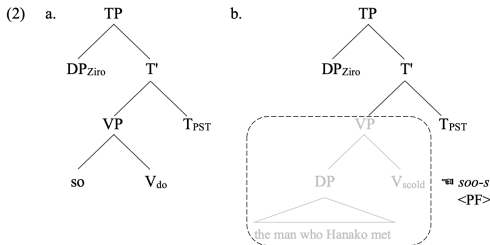
(44) Structure of *zheme-zuo*



- Whether this can be extended to ‘so-THINK,’ and to Cantonese remains to be seen.

Back to the anaphor/deictic approach

- So we end up having
 - ① *gam* as a grammatical marker
 - ② *gam* as a (deep) anaphor/deictic expression
- A non-uniform approach to *gam*-like expression is not unique to Cantonese.
- Sakamoto (2020) proposes an entirely different approach to Japanese *soo* when it replaces a VP (rather than a CP).
 - The crucial difference lies in the impossibility of apposition.



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