

Rising Declaratives

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Abstract

This talk presents an account of the discourse effect of utterances of declarative sentences accompanied by steeply, monotonically rising intonation (L* H-H%), such as:

- (1) You slapped him?
- (2) There's a deer outside?
- (3) You got the job?

Despite their declarative syntax, these sentences request information rather than asserting it, though unlike standard interrogatives, they communicate an expectation that the answer will be yes. I present a compositional account of rising declaratives that derives their behavior from the standard discourse effect of utterances of declarative sentences (namely, assertion), modulated by the discourse effect of the L* H-H% tune, which I propose calls off speaker commitment (q.v. Truckenbrodt 2006). Pursuing a compositional approach differentiates my proposal from most recent analyses of rising declaratives, which propose construction-specific discourse effects (Krifka 2015, Malamud & Stephenson 2015, Farkas & Roelofsen 2017, Jeong 2018; cf. Gunlogson 2001, Westera 2017). My proposal is additionally differentiated from the current theoretical landscape by virtue of deriving the discourse effect of rising declaratives entirely from the basic primitives of the Table model (Farkas & Bruce 2010) independently necessary for modeling standard assertions and questions, and by virtue of dividing the discourse effect of rising declaratives into the conventional and the pragmatic, deriving the bias profile of rising declaratives from the pragmatics of the Table model. I take this exploration of the pragmatics and expressive power of the Table model to be of broader interest than the study of intonational meaning *per se*, as there is increasing interest in the ability of the model to account for various discourse phenomena (e.g. AnderBois 2018, Beltrama 2018, Rett ms).